

Teachers ready to vote on whether to strike

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Calaveras Unified School District teachers at Tuesday night's Board of Trustees meeting were expected to announce plans to take a strike vote.

"The district is in the best financial shape it has been in years," said Calaveras Unified Educator's Association President Lorraine Angel. "Now is the time that the school board must invest in our students."

During the last negotiations, the district rejected the teachers' proposals to develop a joint safety committee made up of management, teachers, school employees and parents. CUSD also proposed increasing class sizes for middle and high school students. As a result, teachers are considering a strike vote that will allow the CUEA leadership to call a strike, if necessary.

"The district's refusal to prioritize our students has caused teacher morale to plummet, and has forced many of our teachers to leave our district. This has created an inability to attract and retain the best teachers for Calaveras students," Angel said.

With many teachers retiring or leaving for surrounding school districts for better paying jobs and working conditions, CUSD is expected to struggle filling open positions and will continue to rely on convincing recent college graduates with no teaching experience to take jobs as non-credentialed teachers if they enroll in expedited credential programs, she added.

"Our kids deserve better," said Jaime Cole, a Valley Springs Elementary School parent. "Just because we do not live in a big city does not mean our kids don't deserve a high-quality education."

The latest CUSD records shows that the district came in \$2 million under budget and raised their reserves by \$716,000 in 2016-17 school year, bringing the reserve total to \$4.8 million, according to CUEA.

"It's ridiculous that the board is more concerned increasing their rainy-day fund, when our kids are struggling with unsafe schools, high teacher turnover rates and large class sizes," Cole said.

In addition to a possible teachers' strike, the district's classified employees- such as secretaries, custodians, food service workers and bus drivers- have announced they are at an impasse in their negotiations with the district's leadership.