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## Teachers union and LAFSD reach two-year agreement

By *Nick Marnell*

The Lafayette School District board approved a labor contract between the Lafayette Education Association and the district at its April 18 meeting. The two-year contract covers all district employees.

Under terms of the agreement, employees receive an 0.5 percent salary increase for the 2016-17 school year effective July 1, 2016, plus a 2 percent salary increase for 2017-18, effective July 1, 2017. The district also covers the full cost of employee health benefit premiums, whether for an employee personally, an employee plus a dependent or an employee's entire family. LAFSD also provides full-family dental coverage and single-employee vision coverage.

"We are happy that we were able to come to an agreement, through mediation," said LEA President Carol Kerr, noting that it was the first time the parties had ever used a state-appointed mediator during labor negotiations.

"It was difficult. We would have liked to have given more, but we simply do not receive adequate funding from the state to support our budget," said LAFSD Superintendent Rachel Zinn. "The teachers deserved the raise. No one thinks more highly of our teachers than our board or I do."

In order to fund more than \$460,000 of employee compensation increases, the district had to cut personnel and services, including one K-5 teacher and the district technology coordinator, out of its 2018-19 budget.

"It was heartbreaking that we had to get to that point," Zinn said. "It's so disheartening that we had to resort to the cuts we did. Any time you have to dismantle a program and affect people's lives, it's painful. There was no good choice."

Employees will receive retroactive payments for the past year and a half by the end of June, but Kerr said that the checks should arrive before the end of May.

"We have to negotiate, but our focus is always on the students," Kerr said.

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