



SALINAS VALLEY
FEDERATION OF
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EYE ON THE BOARD

CALENDAR OK'D

Trustees unanimously approved the district calendar for 2004-2005. Winter break is set for Christmas week through the first week of the new year (Dec. 20 to Jan. 7). New teacher days are set for August 11, 12 and a mandatory staff development day is to be held August 16 followed by a teacher work day on August 17. (The Calendar has yet to be negotiated and ratified, however—ed.)

SCHOOL CHOICE TO OPEN

Students can apply for school choice beginning in March, according to Murry Schekman, Mount Toro High School principal.

Although open enrollment is set, Schekman added that Alisal and Salinas high schools are to be closed to school choice. Initial projections indicate both schools are likely to exceed capacity. Salinas High has been closed to school choice for the past two years. Schekman said when a school is closed exceptions are made only for siblings of students already attending the school and for students of parents who work at the school.

TEACHER RECRUITMENT SET

The district plans a teacher recruitment program that will include movie advertisements and teachers from Spain.

Associate Superintendent Alejandro Hogan unveiled the strategies the district expects to use to attract the most qualified teachers. Hogan said his department will continue to advertise in area newspapers, as well as the Los Angeles Times. In addition, the district expects to advertise in movie theaters.

Hogan said a number of job fairs and teacher universities will be visited to interview potential teachers. Most of the job fairs and universities are regular sites for district recruitment. However, one new program is added to the plan – the Visiting Teacher Exchange Program with Spain. Hogan said in 2002 about 295 Spanish teachers filled positions throughout California. Although most were placed in Los Angeles, some were placed in San Jose. Early reports, according to Hogan, are positive.

The Spanish government sponsors the program and pays a recruiter's travel expenses to interview candidates. Candidates, he added, must meet a rigorous set of requirements.

STUDENTS SHOW IMPROVEMENT IN BENCHMARKS

District schools took a step closer to proficiency in most tested subjects according to the results of Benchmarks taken in the fall of 2003.

Robert Martinez, director of research and assessment, told the board that geometry students demonstrated proficiency in the field; social studies, algebra 1, and advanced algebra students achieved basic levels – “a step closer” to the goal of proficiency. He said in most of the subjects students showed improvement between the first and second Benchmarks. Increases in performance level were noted in grades 7 to 11; seniors remained at basic levels for both Benchmarks. Only pre-algebra, Algebra Standards 1 and 2 students tested below basic levels. Test results, he added, become a tool for reteaching in the classroom.

Martinez attributed the improvement to “a strong focus on standards in the classroom.” Teachers, he said, set instructional timelines, reteach subject matter, and get support from district resource coordinators.

The continued low performance in pre-algebra classes could be the result of differences between elementary feeder schools and middle school and high school programs, he said. Director of Curriculum John Favero said the district is currently working on a relationship with elementary feeder schools.

Trustee Phillip Tabera asked if test scores of feeder school students might be available for comparison with the district schools’ test results.

Martinez said the data could be available at the end of the current school year.

BOARD POLICY REVISIONS

The administration presented the trustees with revisions to the following business and instruction policies:

- BP 3312.2 – Educational Travel Program Contracts
- BP 3454 – Student Stores
- BP 3511 – Energy and Water Conservation
- BP 3514.1 – Hazardous Substances
- BP 3515 – Campus Security
- BP 3515.4 – Recovery for Property Loss and Damage
- BP 3515.5 – Sex Offender Notification
- BP 3516 – Emergencies and Disaster Preparedness Plan
- BP 3516.5 – Emergency Schedules
- BP 5020 – Parent Rights and Responsibilities
- BP 5022 – Student and Family Rights
- BP 6161 – Equipment, Books and Materials
- BP 6161.1 – Selection and Evaluation of Instructional Materials
- BP 6161.2 – Damaged or Lost Instructional Materials
- BP 6161.3 – Toxic Art Supplies
- BP 6164.1 – Health Services
- BP 6164.2 – Guidance/Counseling Services
- BP 6164.4 – Identification of Individuals for Special Education
- BP 6175 – Migrant Education Program
- BP 6179 – Supplemental Instruction

BUDGET UPDATE

Calling Special Education services from Monterey County Office of Education “a runaway train,” Assistant Superintendent Jim Earhart told the board that financially there’s “nothing but bad news and it’s likely to get worse.”

Earhart listed Special Ed services, step and column increases for employees and a 25 percent increase in Workers Compensation as the big-ticket items for the district’s budget. A Special Ed charge back comes with a \$485,605 price tag, a planned golden handshake for retirees is likely to cost \$570,000 and the Workers Comp increase amounts to \$368,431, according to Earhart’s report.

He said the district is generally in good shape with a 4 percent reserve and \$3.7 million in additional funds, “but it can go quickly in the face of the increases.”

Earhart said school districts are pinning their hopes on the passage of Propositions 57 and 58. The ballot measures would provide for a one-time only funding. Propositions 57 and 58 are to appear on the March primary ballot. Prop 57 is a school bond measure that requires passage of Prop 58, a balanced budget proposal. If the measures pass, according to Earhart, the district could finance a 1.84 percent COLA.

But if the measures are not passed “all bets are off,” said Assistant Superintendent Roger Anton, sitting in for Superintendent Fernando Elizondo.

Earhart made his presentation based on Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger’s education budget proposals for 2004-05. Right now, the governor’s budget is tentative and not likely to be complete until late summer, he said.

CAMPUS ROUNDUP

La Paz – Susana Bugarin and Robert Cannon earned National Board Certification. The middle school now boasts seven teachers with the national certification.

SHS – The school is instituting a mandatory Breathalyzer test for students attending the Winter Ball. All bags will also be checked. The bag check and Breathalyzing are to be standard procedures at all dances.

CONSENT AGENDA

On a vote of 6-0, Art Gilbert was absent; the trustees approved a consent agenda including the following:

- A contract between the district and Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes for special education services.
- An agreement with Bellinger, Foster and Steinmetz Landscape Architects for the completion of the North Salinas High Stadium Project.
- The issuance of up to \$5 million in Tax and Revenue Anticipation Notes and participation in the California Cash Reserve Program. This includes a request that the Monterey County Board of Supervisors issue and sell the notes. This

resolution allows administration to decide to participate at the time of TRAN issuance.

- A salary agreement for Superintendent Fernando Elizando of \$177,985.70 for 2003-2004.

STUDY TO EXAMINE NEED FOR SCHOOLS

The district is likely to need at least one new middle school and one new high school when planned housing developments outside Salinas city limits are partially completed, researcher Jeanne Gobalet told trustees.

Trustees unanimously approved Gobalet's proposal to study the district's facility needs and the possibility to rework high school boundaries. The \$27,500 study would include enrollment forecasts to 2010 and would help with high school attendance boundary changes.

The new housing developments are most likely to affect Everett Alvarez and Alisal high schools, according to Gobalet, who showed a map of the planned development backing up to Boronda Road.

Boundary changes prompted by requests from families in the Laurel Woods area are to be balanced against enrollment projections, she said. Laurel Woods families, whose students currently attend North Salinas High School, are seeking assignment to Salinas High.

Gobalet said there are approximately 203 high school students in the Laurel Woods area and an additional 61 students in the neighborhoods flanked by Rico Street.

She said the study would examine the capacity for Salinas High to handle the influx of Laurel Woods students. Salinas High is expected to exceed capacity next year.

Gobalet works with Lapkoff & Gobalet Demographic Research, Inc.

Regular Meeting of January 27, 2004

BOARD SEEKS HEALTH BENEFIT OPTIONS

The rising cost of health benefits coupled with decreasing numbers of affordable health care physicians prompted the District to seek a report from Keenan and Associates health care consultants who presented what they called options.

Irene Castro, a trustee for the employees trust, told the board that collective bargaining units were unaware of plans to talk with the consultants. "I'm willing to learn about it, but it would be good to let the collective bargaining members know ahead of time."

Castro said advance notice would give union members an opportunity to talk with consultants.

Bob Schoenherr, vice president of the company, told trustees that Keenan could develop a network of providers to offer more affordable care. Schoenherr couched his promises among a list of consumer requirements. "Employees must change, becoming healthier, wiser consumers," he said. Health care could focus on prevention, including funding for exercise and other wellness programs. Schoenherr described wiser employees shopping

around for better health care, rather than going with the first physician-recommended specialist.

Greater users of benefits would pay more, he said, emphasizing employee education as a “big part of the solution.”

Currently, the Monterey Bay Employees Trust manages health benefits for district staff and teachers, but health care costs have been steadily rising and are expected to continue to increase 15 to 25 percent annually. Health benefits are expected to become more and more of a topic for discussion as negotiations continue, said Assistant Superintendent Jim Earhart.

In his presentation, Schoenherr pointed to the lack of competition in the area as one reason for the high cost of care and benefits. Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula and Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital are among the most expensive in the state. The hospitals’ per diem charges range from \$6,800 at SVMH to \$7,400 at CHOMP, according to the consultant. Those costs compare to \$2,500 to \$3,000 at San Francisco area hospitals. In addition, “there’s no competition to bring physician costs down,” he said.

Despite the lack of competition and increasing costs, Schoenherr said Keenan has been able to maintain health care costs for many of the school districts in the Monterey County Area.

Board trustees told Castro they would keep bargaining units abreast of research in the area in the future. “I’m interested in hearing more about [Keenan and Associates’] program,” said Trustee Sandra Villarreal-Ocampo.