



# SALINAS VALLEY FEDERATION OF T E A C H E R S

*Serving the community of Salinas for 50 years*

## **Board Highlights**

**February 10, 2004**

### **Work to continue on EAHS stadium, Aquatic Center**

The board's unanimous vote set EAHS for smooth sailing on the planned Aquatics Center and stadium. The 7-0 vote okayed the transfer of Measure F funds saved in the AHS modernization project to the stadium and ship-design swim center.

Facilities Manager **Karen Luna** told trustees the EAHS project had been underestimated by \$1.7 million. But, she added, the first part of the Alisal modernization project did not use all the allotted monies. The district saw a savings of \$1.9 million in the bond funds earmarked for the modernization.

Luna told trustees that shifting the money would allow for the completion of the Aquatic Center and stadium, which would include restroom facilities, walkways, sound system and artificial turf. The stadium improvements would put the EAHS facility in line with those of the district's other schools, she added. Expressing concern for the shift of funds from Alisal, Trustee **Phillip Tabera** asked if there was any other place to get the extra money.

## **Reported by Mariann Klinger**

Saying "no," Luna added that the Alisal modernization was to get approximately \$6.9 million from the second bond issue for more improvements.

EAHS Principal **Joe Rice** suggested the district could save some money on the project by putting off the installation of the artificial turf. Rice said he was eager to see the stadium project move forward even without the turf.

The district plans to begin construction of the stadium this year.

## **Auditors say district in good financial condition**

The district maintains a strong financial standing and open access to the books, according to independent auditors, Perry-Smith LLP.

"The board is getting reliable information to make its decisions," said **Perry Smith** in his audit report.

Smith told trustees that the district maintained an appropriate reserve as required by the state and helped auditors with their work by allowing easy access to the district's financial information. The auditor said their findings showed that the district could use help in keeping records for student body activities and staff buy-back day trainings. Smith said student body activities' records lack

internal controls and staff development records indicated discrepancies. Auditors suggested a computer program and centralized procedures could remedy the situation. Trustee **Rich Foster** thanked Associate Superintendent **Jim Earhart** and the staff for keeping the district in good standing.

## AHS and SHS closed to school choice in 2004-05

The doors to SHS and AHS are to remain closed next fall for students seeking school choice transfers. Trustees voted to close the schools after hearing that both are filled to capacity.

Salinas High is at 99 percent capacity and Alisal is at 100 percent, according to Associate Superintendent **Roger Anton**. Both schools will still accept students who have older siblings at the school or a parent or guardian working there, he added.

Anton's report indicated the district maintains 92 percent capacity overall. EMS has the lowest student body with 60 percent of its capacity claimed. In general, the district's middle schools maintain a lower capacity level than the high schools. Student capacity at NSH hits 91 percent; at Mt. Toro it's 112 percent. EAHS is comfortable with 22 new classrooms at 78 percent, Anton said.

Anton said middle school enrollment in the district seems to be leveling, but the high schools will experience the past growth of middle school population over the next few years.

While Alisal and Salinas High are closed to school choice, Anton said the schools would accept applications and maintain a waiting list in case there are future openings.

A Laurel Woods area parent told trustees that families in the area, now assigned to NSH, understand the board's position, but are still hoping that Laurel Woods will one day be reassigned to the Salinas High attendance area.

Trustee Art Gilbert opposed the plan, making the vote 6-1 for transfer closure of the two schools.

## Software to offer boost for students behind in credits

A new computer program will enable students at three district high schools to catch up on credits toward graduation.

The approval of a \$389,000 contract with PLATO learning system paves the way for the program at North Salinas, Salinas High and Mt. Toro.

Students are expected to begin using the program by summer. The program is tied to the district's network upgrades.

Initially, the program will be set to provide independent work in all core subject areas, including social studies, reading, and physical science. The district's plan is to help students to recover missed credits and pass the California Exit Exam.

Along with the computer software, the schools will share a project manager and upgrade the system on a regular basis. Salinas and North Salinas are funding their share of the project with II/USP monies and Mt. Toro is to use categorical funds.

While the focus of the project is to give students a way to recover credits, Anton said it would also help decrease the district's dependency for some support services on the Monterey County Office of Education.

## Timeline set for filling posts at district and school sites

The district expects to hire an associate superintendent to replace Roger Anton, who steps into the top post July 1, and three assistant principals in May. Anton, a district veteran of more than two decades, was named to the superintendent's post earlier this year. The board approved a timeline for the start of the hiring process. The approval begins the process of advertising for candidates, making selections and interviewing with an eye to naming Anton's replacement by Mid-May and three high school principals by the end of that month.

The district expects to form a committee that includes some teachers in the candidate interview process.

## Trustee Tabera honored

Trustee Phillip Tabera was named outstanding graduate of the last decade by the Social Work Department of San Jose State University.

## Crowd weighs in on GPA policy change

A standing-room only crowd of students, parents and teachers pressed trustees to review its elimination of the extra GPA boost for honors and advanced placement classes.

For more than a half hour, a steady parade of speakers described student disappointment and lost opportunities created by the board's decision last February. At that time the board dropped a policy that gave extra credit points to students taking honors and AP classes. The bump-grade system ensured a high class rank for AP and honor students.

The inflated grades meant more students would take the risk of the extra work required in these classes, according to retired teacher **Kathleen Blount**.

Blount said in 1982 she was one of the first to teach AP classes in the district. Because of the extra points students taking the most challenging classes were in line to become the valedictorian, she added. "I want you to reward effort, excellence and academics," she told the board.

Students, teachers and counselors seemed to agree that students might be turned away from the harder classes, if there was no extra credit given. The new policy is "creating mediocrity," said parent **Lupe Garcia**. Good students, she said, would be better off taking easy classes, assuring themselves of a higher GPA.

Anton, who said students manipulated the weighted system, told trustees the issue would be put on a future board agenda. He said the board's decision last February was based on a concern that students were taking the weighted classes out of order for an unfair advantage. For instance, a senior might take a sophomore-level honors class.

## Unions unite on health care issue

Union leaders said they would back the board's search for better health care options, but don't want to be hurried in the effort.

SVFT President **Phil Moore** and CSEA President **Patty Saenz** put on a united front, telling trustees they "don't want to be rushed or played one against the other." In making the statement, union leaders referred to a presentation by Keenan and Associates, health care consultants, at the previous meeting. At

that time, Keenan offered its services to establish a more economical health care network for district employees. Union leaders said they were not informed in advance of Keenan's presentation. "We need to be very careful," said Moore, who asked that trustees not push for a solution by June.

In addition, Moore told trustees that class loads called for more teachers at Salinas High and Alisal. At both schools science classes average 29 students, when lab sections should enroll no more than 26 students, he said.

He said more teachers are needed for English, Spanish and math classes, too. Moore estimated that Salinas High needed at least three more teachers for current enrollment levels and Alisal should add at least one additional teacher.

### Campus round up

**Gloria Estrada**, teacher at Alisal High School, was honored for her work with the AVID program, which emphasizes students' preparation for college. Estrada serves as AVID director for the school, named a National Demonstration School in Leadership and Learning. Estrada said last year 32 of 34 AVID students were accepted by four-year universities.

### Consent Agenda

Trustees approved a number of grants and agreements, including:

- A \$429,922 grant for Door to Hope organization to coordinate an intensive parent education program aimed at helping children who have been exposed to pre-natal or early childhood alcohol or drug abuse.
- A \$509,218 grant for MCOE to expand the School Readiness System. Two new centers are to be added, one at the Salinas Adult School Parent Center and the other at MCOE Salinas Family Center.
- An agreement to purchase new lockers for Harden Middle School.
- An agreement between Salinas Adult School and Monterey County to provide employment and literacy services at the One Stop Center.
- A \$20,000 grant to the Community Foundation of the Monterey Peninsula for the Rehabilitation Education Assistance Program.
- Authorize the purchase of five portable classrooms for WMS.