



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

Serving the community of Salinas for 50 years

EYE ON THE BOARD

Board Highlights

March 23, 2004

‘No E-Mail’ Rule Stirs Controversy

Like the district’s worst computer nightmare – a virus that won’t go away, the controversy over the e-mail policy promises to continue to plague the board. Students and teachers stood ready to resist official policy that cuts them off from outside e-mail.

For the second meeting in a row, the boardroom filled with students, teachers and at least one university official aimed at changing the “no-email” rule. Many did not speak but offered silent support to a vocal Alisal High community – the school experiencing the ill effects of the policy most strongly.

The night, however, belonged to Information Services Manager **Robert Shemwell** offered the board an hour-long presentation and three large reports on e-mail services. Shemwell’s reports painted a worrisome view of the World Wide Web and an administration overwhelmed by the Internet and its access in the classroom.

“We can’t keep up with the constantly changing technology,” said Associate Superintendent **Roger Anton**, who promised the board “a lot of nights like this.”

Reported by Mariann Klinger

When all was said, trustees called for input from students and teachers at schools other than Alisal, and a committee that includes students to seek and evaluate solutions to the problem. “We can discuss with the schools how to meet the needs and monitor use,” said Anton.

The district blocked Web-mail access in December. While all of the district’s students and teachers are affected by the policy, many of the students at Alisal High School have no alternative computer access. Students at Alisal High represent the district’s poorest. More than 30 percent do not have computers at home.

AHS students led the charge at the March 9 meeting, telling the board that the problem of the “no-email” policy was especially acute for juniors and seniors. The upperclassmen need e-mail access to communicate with colleges and universities, according to AHS student **Alfredo Cervantes**. At the earlier meeting with a power point presentation, Cervantes told the board that top e-mail vendors, like Hotmail and Yahoo mail, included sophisticated Spam guards and virus scanners.

“The risks created by technology are real and frightening,” said AHS teacher **Kim O’Hagan** at the most recent meeting.

But, he said, “if we miss the boat, so will students. They may not get a second chance.” The social studies teacher said many schools and districts grapple with the same problem. “But there has not been any school that’s given in to the problem . . . We must defeat it,” he said. Shemwell’s presentation stood as a rebuttal to the students’ power point, letters of support and spokespeople from the previous meeting. “Our ability to conduct business through our district computer network has and will continue to be placed at risk through an increase in viruses, Spam and inappropriate usage,” said Shemwell.

He used pie charts and graphs to show the board the Spam proliferation world wide and global damage from viruses to illustrate the threat to the district’s network. Shemwell also warned trustees that continued use of outside e-mail could put the district out of compliance with the “Child Internet Safety Protection Act” and cost the loss of funds.

Although his report alleged that 75 percent of school internet usage revolved around pornography, he did not press the point saying only that the district put all pictures from Goggle.com, a search engine popular with students and teachers, off limits.

Richard Vasquez, regional coordinator for the UC College Prep Initiative, told the board students must have an e-mail account to take advantage of the programs, on-line courses and SAT training. “If you don’t provide accounts, you will be the first district in the state we can’t work with,” he said. Vasquez, based at UC Santa Cruz, works with Alisal to help students prepare for college.

Trustees questioned Shemwell’s reports and evaluation, focusing on student

access, security issues and a technological society. “We need to find out how other education institutions are dealing with this,” said trustee **Kathryn Ramirez**, praising the AHS student presentation at the previous meeting. A computer expert, Ramirez quizzed Shemwell for specifics on the problem. “What can we do,” she asked, “to take care of the problem at AHS.”

AHS teacher **John Nolan** said student leaders are eager to work with the board to clarify use and consequences for misuse. “All systems will encounter problems. It’s an unrealistic goal to try to prevent normal computer problems,” he said.

Board President **Rich Foster** reminded trustees of the dual side of the issue, referring to the district’s need for protection and its investment in supplying schools with computers in a modern world.

New API Goals Set, Measures Added

Despite new measures, all district schools set academic goals that aim to add seven to 13 points on the current Academic Performance Index (API) in the coming school year.

Along with a chart noting 2003 base levels and growth targets for 2004, Dr. **Robert Martinez** told trustees that most district schools gained in ranking compared to other schools statewide. Statewide rankings range from a high of five at Salinas High School to the low of one at La Paz Middle School, according to Martinez, research director for the district. Most schools ranked three on a scale of ten, having gained or maintained rank from the previous year, he said.

When local schools were compared to similar schools, however, ranking rose to a high of nine for El Sausal Middle School and a low of two at Washington Middle School, according to Martinez. Martinez said current base levels include new criteria, such as the California Science Standards Test and the California High School Exit Exam. Because of the new test indicators it is not accurate to compare current API with past years.

Base levels for the schools range from 542 – LPMS, 548 – AHS, 578 – ESMS, 588 – EAHS, 602 – NSHS, 623 – WMS, 626 – HMS, 652 – SHS. While aiming for a seven to 13-point increase in 2004, the ultimate goal for the district schools is 800 out of a possible 1000.

Unions Address Contract Talks

CSEA focuses on respect, and health care issues

CSEA President **Patty Saenz**, flanked by about 45 union members, called for respect for workers and promised bargaining talks would focus on pay and health care benefits.

Classified workers wore blue baseball caps bearing the union's insignia and buttons featuring Rosie the Riveter, announcing that health care is not a luxury. "We won't tolerate unfair treatment. We will stand together," Saenz said.

Associate Superintendent **Alejandro Hogan** presented an initial proposal to open talks with CSEA on rights and responsibilities of workers, discontinuing the floating holiday and requiring three years of service to be

eligible for 60 days of workers' compensation leave.

SVFT looks for training funds
Calling for teacher training funds and programs, **Phil Moore**, SVFT president, reminded trustees that the latest qualification requirements come on the heels of similar changes.

The "No Child Left Behind" rule marks the third time in recent years that teachers have been required to upgrade qualifications, Moore said.

The most recent training requirement called for teachers to get a CLAD certificate. The CLAD called for training aimed at passing a test or taking three specific college level courses. The district did offer training for testing, but teachers had to pay for the college courses.

Moore said he believed that 5 percent of Title 1 funds were earmarked for qualifying teachers and that other "pots" might have monies to direct at teacher training. He added that the teachers union wanted to negotiate what kind of training the district would offer with available funds.

Campus Round up

AVID Boosts

College Acceptance

When students participate in AVID, they practically guarantee acceptance to a state university or college, according to **AHS teacher Gloria Estrada**.

The AVID program works with middle level students (those with 2.0 to 3.5 GPA) to improve skills and focus on college as a goal. Program classes emphasize writing, critical thinking, reading and collaboration.

Estrada said 88 percent of AHS seniors in the program are accepted by CSU and

38 percent are accepted by a UC. All of the upper-class students in the program take the SAT, she said, adding that 74 percent of the juniors have passed the exit exam.

Japanese Students Visit Sister School in Salinas

AHS played host to six Japanese students from Shiwa High School in Japan. The students visited classes and practice English as part of the 20-year-old Japanese Asian Exchange Program between Shiwa and Alisal high schools, according to Principal **Candy McCarthy**.

Action Items

Trustees voted to approve 7 to 0:

- A limit of three minutes on public input at board meetings with the provision that overall time on a topic may be limited.
- Kasavan Architects to develop plans and specifications concerning environmental issues related to underground fuel and oil tanks.

Consent Agenda

Trustees voted to approve 7 to 0:

- Modtech Inc. as the developer for parking lots at the Adult Education Center.

- An agreement with Monterey Peninsula Engineering to construct the track at LPMS. The firm was the low bidder on the project with a bid of \$98,470.

Policy Changes

(Adopted)

BP 3530 – Risk Management Insurance

BP 3532 – Liability and Property Insurance

BP 3534 – Auxiliary Organizations Insurance

BP 3540 – Transportation

BP 3541.1 – Transportation for School Related Trips

BP 3541.2 – Transportation for Students with Disabilities

BP 3541.3 – Transportation for Non-Public School Students

BP 3543.1 – Non-Instructional Operation – Safety Procedures for Emergencies-Inclement Weather

BP 3580 – District Records

BP 3600 – Consultants

(Rescinded)

BP 3533 – Boiler Insurance

BP 3535 – Employee Bonds

BP 3541.111 – Special Transportation for School Related Trips

BP 3542 – Transportation Employees' Responsibilities and Duties

BP 3543 – Non-Instructional Operations – Safety Procedures for Emergencies

BP 3544.2 – Privately Owned Vehicles