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Eye on the Board 4.13.04

Board Highlights

April 13, 2004

Alisal Helps Find Solutions to e-mail Issue

The district could set AHS electronically free if a problem-solving committee and the board choose option three.

Option three would place AHS on the network directly under the sponsorship of the Monterey County Office of Education, rather than the district's network, according to AHS teacher **Ruben Pizarro**, who spearheaded the campaign to improve on campus e-mail access for teachers and students.

Associate Superintendent **Roger Anton** said the district's Regional Occupation Program is currently electronically independent of the district. The option would allow Alisal to do something similar without endangering the district's information services, he said.

Alisal could do all the same things it's currently doing and set its own standards, he added.

The choice represents an about face on the controversy involving e-mail access on campus, going from no e-mail to an open-ended approach with AHS school
Reported by Mariann Klinger

officials setting the guidelines.

In past weeks, students, teachers and experts have assailed the board with the advantages and disadvantages of e-mail use on campus. The district eliminated e-mail access prior to the start of the second semester. District officials said the move was necessary, because of the potential for viruses to invade and shutdown the network. Students and teachers said open access was needed for school-related business and academics.

In a one-hour presentation at an earlier meeting, Director of Information Services **Robert Shemwell** gave the board an overview of global misuse of the internet, saying game and pornography sites were the most frequently visited by students. He outlined the expense and inconvenience

to the district when a virus was introduced to the network. Shemwell said such viruses often came through e-mail.

Pizarro's students countered the arguments with a power point presentation featuring the availability of virus and Spam guard through popular e-mail providers. They also produced an extensive research packet, including letters from search engine providers and university officials, encouraging e-mail access on campus.

Pizzaro, a government teacher, argued that AHS students needed on campus access because many of them did not have home computers. Juniors and seniors used school e-mail to pursue college applications, financial aid and even classes, he said.

After hearing both sides, the board called for a meeting of the parties to resolve the issue. Pizarro told trustees that three possible solutions came as a result of the meeting. The first proposal would allow AHS 10 computers with open e-mail access at the close of a school day. Pizarro dismissed the suggestion, saying "it's not enough." The second solution would put teachers in the position of evaluating and blocking individual e-mail. Again Pizarro said "no" to the idea. Teachers would not have the time to evaluate every e-mail, he said.

Although he favored option three, Pizarro added that questions remained concerning funding and technology support if AHS were to come directly under the network auspices of MCOE. At the most recent meeting the pressure for e-mail access continued, focusing on academic need. "It's important that students receive the highest level of instruction," said Dr. **Moises Torres**, director of College Prep online at UC

Santa Cruz. The Salinas district controversy, he added, allowed instruction to be driven by the infrastructure.

Technology "must work and it has to be accessible anytime, anywhere, for all users," he said, quoting from the recommendations of the Commission on the Technology on Learning accepted last year by the state Board of Education. Trustee **Phillip Tabera** agreed that the issue was more of an infrastructure problem. He also noted that e-mail access did not seem to present a problem in more affluent areas.

Although teachers from other schools lent support at the earlier meetings, AHS, with the highest enrollment of low socio-economic students, stood in the forefront of the controversy. More than two-thirds of its students lack home computers.

Pizarro, however, stressed that the solution is not just for Alisal, but also for any of the district's other schools that request electronic independence. Following the meeting, Anton said option three would not affect the funding. Technology support, he added, would come in part from the district and partially from MCOE.

Budget Figures Call for Cuts

Many district-level departments can expect to take a five percent budget cut for the coming year and NHS may see its Puente program slashed completely. Presenting the board with preliminary figures on the \$40 million available for priority rank budgeting, Associate Superintendent **James Earhart** said the funding level for most departments came in at 95 percent of requests.

The Performance-based Budgeting team ran out of money by the time it reached the \$77,000 request from the Puente Program, Earhart told trustees.

Although budgeting figures remain preliminary, the advance notice gives departments, program managers and trustees an opportunity to put in a bid for special consideration. Tabera took advantage of the opportunity, putting in a plea to save the North Salinas Puente Program. "I want to plant the seed" to keep the program, he said. The program is seen as a safety net to boost at-risk students' acceptance to four-year colleges.

Tabera asked trustees to find the \$77,000 in the budget or to look for other ways to fund the program.

Week Set to Honor School Employees

Trustees unanimously passed resolutions naming April 19-23 as Public Schools Week and May 17-21 as Classified Employees Week. They also set aside May 11 as the "Day of the Teacher" to honor faculty.

The resolutions recognize teachers and staff for their work with the district schools.

The resolutions note that teachers shape and educate the city's students and honor classified employees for their caring and their deeds in furthering the goals of public education.

The Public Schools Week resolution calls on the community to acknowledge the role of all public schools and the service they provide to the community.

Process Updates Policies, Bylaws

Over the course of more than a year the board has been working on revising policies and bylaws in accordance with changing state guidelines, according to Anton. The board is continuing the process of reviewing and revising all policies and bylaws and, in some cases, updating the format, he said, explaining the long lists of policies on the regular agenda. "It's a major effort to catch up with the changes."

Anton said the information is to be online in the near future.

Campus Round up Portables Become Teacher's Namesake

Portables at the **Salinas Adult School** will bear the name of **Cora Thayer**, credited with making the school's certified nursing assistant program the best in the tri-county area during her 17 years at the school.

The naming became official after trustees unanimously approved a plan to call two adjoining classroom portables the Cora Thayer Health Occupations Center. The move made Thayer's longtime dream a reality. "It was always her dream to have her own center," said Anton. The board's decision offers the district "a rare occasion to recognize a former employee," he added.

Under Thayer's tutelage, the CNA program boasted a 97 percent pass rate on state health exams. The program graduates an average of 187 students a year.

Thayer, who died last September, served in the positions of health occupations instructional leader, vocational education

advisor and in-take nurse for the Rehabilitation Education Assistance Program.

Teacher, Student to Work at NASA Camp

Jana Val Verde of SHS received a scholarship from PLATO Learning to attend the NASA Science Camp. The scholarship includes Val Verde's teacher **Philip Deutschle**, who will also attend the camp.

Deutschle and Val Verde are to work along with NASA engineers and students from all across the country to develop a rocket and a rover-landing device.

Deutschle teaches five sections of astronomy at SHS.

State Award Focuses on Activities Leader

Activities Director **Chuck Norian** of EAHS was recognized for receiving the state Director of Activities award, noting outstanding contributions to student activities.

Norian takes his place alongside other area past winners of the award, including his wife, Margaret, Anton, and Bill Getris.

Consent Agenda

Trustees voted 5 to 0 (**Sandra Villarreal-Ocampo** and **Anne Brown** absent) to

- Authorize the purchase of a 23-passenger bus with wheelchair accessibility, and an 84-passenger bus for the Transportation Department.
- Authorize the purchase of a genie lift to aid in the repair of high

ceiling areas such as the gymnasiums, and a gator to maintain new turf fields. The lift costs \$26,270 and the gator \$16,455.

- Approve an agreement that increases Monterey County School Districts involvement and participation in the MCOE

program for special education programs. The agreement represents a revision of a 20-year-old arrangement.

- Approve the High Risk Youth Education and Public Safety Program Grant Agreement for services provided by the Behavioral Health Division of the Monterey County Health Department to students on probation.
- Approve a \$56,000 contract with Pacific Metrics for online learning systems at nine schools. The company performs data analyses of students' information.

Board Policies

(First reading for adoption)

BP 5141.6 – Student Health and Social Services

BP 6000 – Concepts and Roles in Instruction

BP 6010 – Goals and Objectives/School Careers

BP 6111 – School Calendar

BP 6112 – School Day

BP 6116 – Classroom Interruptions

BP 6141.2 – Recognition of Religious Beliefs and Customs

PB 6142.1 – Sexual Health and
HIV/AIDS Prevention Instruction
BP 6146.12 – Curriculum Comparability
BP 6163.1 – Library/Media Centers
BP 6177 – Summer School
BP 6190 – Evaluation of the
Instructional Program
(Policies to be rescinded)
BP 6164.1 – Health Services.