

Eye On The Board

The Salinas Valley Federation of Teachers

21 West Laurel Drive Suite 61, Salinas, CA 93926-3434

Telephone: 831 -442-8234 ~ Fax: 831 -442-8563 ~ E-mail: president@svft.net

Board Highlights

August 24, 2004

State budget eases some money woes

As final budget figures made their way to the state's schools, administrators and trustees found the district in relatively good shape.

Instead of major cuts, the district is likely to see cost-of-living increases and growth in programs all across the board. Associate Superintendent Jim Earhart offered the good news, along with cautionary advice. While the COLA, equalization and deficit reduction aid is in place, the overall result still reflects a \$2 billion tax cut, he said.

Acknowledging that "education came out pretty well compared to other areas," Earhart reminded trustees that the year's funding does not meet all of education's needs.

The state budget calls for a 2.41 percent COLA and is to reflect an increase in ADA. Deferred maintenance is to be funded at the 90 percent level and a 2.5 percent COLA is earmarked for adult education and special education.

Reported by Mariann Klinger

The lottery had a good year and as a result schools reap some of the benefits – an \$8 increase per ADA, according to Earhart.

Although COLAs are likely to continue each year, ranging from 2.41 percent this year to 2.8 percent in 2008-09, the district remains in "survival mode," he said.

The catch - health care and workers compensation, both "are runaway trains." Earhart predicted continuing increases in health care premiums, hospital and prescription costs.

In the past decade, health care costs rose 151 percent, while worker's comp increased by 391 percent, he said. The increases impact the district's budget, employee negotiations and more immediately the spending power of district workers, Earhart told the trustees.

Teachers can expect higher out of pocket expenses, the loss of the teacher's tax credit and lower raises. In purchasing power, the losses may translate to several hundred dollars less each month, he added.

On the plus side, Earhart said the district's ambitious plans mean its schools are perched to take advantage of the 90 percent deferred maintenance funding and come in "ahead of the curve" on health care issues. Earhart said the district is already taking many of the steps recommended to optimize the use of health care.

He speculated that education fared better than some departments at the state level because educators keep track of budget cuts over the years and maintain records indicating the losses.

CAHSEE results near county, state averages

Last spring, district students closed in on the success rate recorded for county and state students on the California exit exam. Results indicate a gap of between 2 percent and 9 percent for district students.

The success rate reflects a more than 25 percent increase from the previous year, according to Robert Martinez, director of research for the district. Training and teaching strategies were credited with the jump in the success rate of the district's students.

In 2004, district tenth graders logged a pass rate of 68 percent on the English/Language Arts and math portions of the exam. In comparison, 71 percent of the students countywide passed the English portion and 70 percent passed the math. And among students statewide 75 percent passed the math and nearly as many passed the English portion of the exam.

Martinez gave trustees a breakdown by school and a variety of student categories. He reminded the board that the district hopes to achieve an 80 percent pass rate among 10th graders, as the deadline for the CAHSEE requirement draws near. All high school students will be expected to pass the exam as part of graduation requirements by 2006:

At district schools the pass rate in English ranges from 30 percent at Mount Toro to 79 percent at Salinas High School and 17 percent in math at Mount Toro and 78 percent at SHS. Alisal students scored 59 percent in English and 62 percent in Math; Everett Alvarez students scored 66 percent in both portions

and North Salinas rated 70 percent in English and 71 percent in Math.

Teachers have been working in collaboratives and training in recognized successful strategies, he said. Successful strategies from schools and classes with high success rates are being implemented in other district classrooms, he said.

Consent Agenda

Trustees voted 7-0 to approve:

- The bid from Tombleson Inc. for the expansion and remodel project at Harden Middle School. Tombleson was the low bidder with a bid of \$2,551,687.
- Tombleson's bid of 3,630,000 for the construction of the multi-purpose building at La Paz Middle School.
- Agreement granting BCI Coca Cola Bottling Company of Los Angeles exclusive right to sell beverages at Everett Alvarez. The school will receive approximately \$40,000 over a five-year period for the account
- A bid of \$506,506 from Granite Construction for playing fields and landscape upgrades at El Sausal Middle School.