

# Eye On The Board

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Board Highlights  
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## Letter seeks talks with area hospitals

Trustees voted unanimously to call for a health care pricing powwow with area hospital's top executives. The vote endorses a letter to CEOs at Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula and Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital. Health care procedures cost thousands of dollars more at the two local facilities than at hospitals in neighboring counties, according to the letter.

Health care benefits have become a major point in employee negotiations and an increasing expense for the district and employees as health insurance premiums rise.

The letter notes that many employees are being asked to shoulder the total cost or at least a greater share of the cost of medical premiums. This increased out-of-pocket expense comes across as a salary cut for workers during inflationary times, it said. In addition, the letter notes the recent failure of Blue Shield to reach an

**Reported by Mariann Klinger**

agreement with SVMH. This failure "highlights the concern and apprehensions shared by thousands in the labor forces of our communities."

The cost of health care procedures at CHOMP and SVMH is more than double the cost of the same procedure at Stanford University hospital and Dominican Hospital in Santa Cruz. Both local facilities claimed earlier that their pricing parallels Stanford and Dominican, but the letter indicates that is not the case. "We would like to pay to SVMH and CHOMP similar amounts for a given procedure that we actually pay to Stanford and Dominican hospitals."

Administrators said pricing at the two area hospitals effectively defeats the purpose of PPO plans, such as the plans offered to district employees through the Monterey Bay Area Trust. Neither of the hospitals offers a discounted rate to PPO networks. A CHOMP executive offered little consolation when a Monterey Peninsula teacher complained about the high cost of health care. "We must make decisions that, although perhaps not popular with one group within the community, are in the best interest of the entire community," CHOMP Vice President **Laura Zehm** wrote to teacher **Rick Ringler**.

# District may fund final round of repair needs

Schools can expect to get the finishing touches on construction and repair projects, if the trustees decide to dig into district coffers. The district “can pay for the repairs” and have \$3.2 million left in reserve, according to Business Manager **Jim Earhart**.

Earhart said an annual tour of schools revealed a host of repair needs not paid for by bond monies. The estimated cost of the projects is slightly more than \$4 million. While noting district could support the projects, Earhart reminded trustees that the district is on a “roller coaster of school finances.” Enrollment, he said, is expected to level off and could decline slightly in the years ahead.

“Things are going to get a little tight as we go past the growth mode,” he added.

The projects would include a batting cage, pool resurfacing, improvements to inner courtyards and a traffic light for AHS. At SHS the money would fund repair of interior paint, seats in the auditorium, a message board and track reconditioning. NSHS might see tennis courts resurfaced, sod and sprinklers installed and hall cleanup, while EAHS would be in line for new lockers, concrete planters and a front parking lot.

Middle schools would also benefit from the planned projects with locker painting, teacher desks, security systems, parking lot repairs, signs and a marquee or two.

Earhart offered the capital projects presentation as an information item on the agenda. No decision was made at the meeting.

# Despite upbeat report, state targets elude some schools

Four district schools remain designated Program Improvement schools, although all of the schools met some state and federal achievement criteria.

Director of Research **Robert Martinez** broke down the data school-by-school, including subgroups for the board.

On the plus side, Martinez told the board that all of the district schools except for La Paz Middle School met the state’s accountability requirements (API) and all of the high schools met the graduation improvement goal.

The state called for an improvement of one-tenth of 1 percent in the graduation rate. With a chart, Martinez showed that all of the high schools exceeded 90 percent graduation rate with SHS coming in the highest with a 96.8 percent graduation rate.

In addition, AHS and SHS met their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goal, although Alisal will remain a three-year Program Improvement (PI) school. A school must meet its AYP requirements two years in a row to change its status. Washington Middle School will also become a three-year PI school. La Paz and North Salinas High begin as a one-year PI school.

Each year a PI school incurs an increasing amount of state sanctions. In the fourth year, a state takeover is possible, according to Martinez.

Despite the status of PI for several of the district schools, Martinez was positive about the overall progress of students and schools.

Each year students’ scores rise and more schools meet achievement targets, he said. Participation in the state testing – a major

criteria for the AYP – hit 95 percent at all schools except for NSHS, he added. Students are holding their own, according to Martinez. The English and math proficiency rates are steadily increasing. District middle schools proficiency rates range from 12.1 percent at LPMS and 24.5 percent at Harden Middle School. At the high school level proficiency rates range from a high of 53.3 percent at SHS to 27.8 percent at AHS.

“The stakes are high,” said Martinez. High school students must earn a score of 350 to pass the California exit exam in either subject and a score of 380 to earn proficiency status. CAHSEE pass rates, reported earlier, indicate sophomores taking the test pass at an average rate of 70 percent. District officials zero in on a jump to 80 percent pass rate in the near future, according to Martinez. He added that a 100 percent is expected by 2014.

## System features funds, training for new teachers

School busloads of newly-hired teachers toured Salinas, lunched at district expense, met with seasoned teachers and received a \$1500 stipend during a weeklong institute before meeting area students in the classroom.

Large numbers of teachers new to the district, this year 113, prompted the development of the institute program now in its second year.

Associate Superintendent **Alejandro Hogan** introduced new teachers, explained the recruitment process and in a power point presentation showed highlights of the institute.

New teachers offered praise for the institute and the district’s support program. “I am very impressed with the district so

far. I don’t know how the process could have been smoother or easier. Thanks for all you do,” one participant wrote to a survey question. Sixty-five new teachers attended the voluntary event.

Hogan estimated that between 20 and 40 teachers missed the institute because they were hired after the start of school and some were not able to move to the area in time. “We needed their services immediately,” he said, adding that there was no similar program in place for late hires.

Nevertheless, a \$2500 loan was available as start up money for all new teachers, according to Hogan.

In addition, the district expects to track the progress of new teachers over the next two years, said **Diane Hendricks**, human resource director. A support system is in place for the two years a teacher remains on probationary status, she said.

More than 25 of the new teachers arrive with nine or more years of experience; 14 have six to nine years in the classroom; 15 taught for three to five years and 28 are teachers new to the profession.

To find the teachers, district officials took part in ten recruitment fairs, developed a web page seeking new teachers and processed hundreds of applications.

## HS students often drop out after expulsion

Although middle school students are expelled more frequently than their high school counterparts, they are more likely to return to the classroom.

Twice as many middle school students are expelled, compared to their high school counterparts, but the older students tend to choose not to return, according to **Murry Schekman**, director of pupil services.

“We struggle to hang on to expelled high school students. It’s a real challenge,” he told trustees.

Schekman said the district’s expulsion rate jumped 20 percent in the past year. Last year, 74 students met an administrative panel resulting in 65 expulsions. The number of middle school students expelled is nearly twice that of high school students, he said.

Expelled students can gain reentry if they complete a mandated rehabilitation plan. Schekman said middle school students are more likely to complete the plan and seek readmission.

While the numbers of expelled students have increased, Schekman said it’s not excessive. “We always want the number to go down . . . but as a district we’re doing okay.”

## Board weighs dress code for teachers

For the first time in 25 years, the district has proposed a dress code for its teachers.

The Dress and Grooming policy went before the board for a first reading.

The code identifies teachers as role models and calls for a professional standard of dress and grooming “Just as overall attitude and instructional competency contribute to a productive learning environment, so do appropriate dress and grooming,” the policy states.

While no specific type of clothing is mentioned, the policy calls for dress that reflects an image “consistent with their (teachers) job responsibilities.”

The district “is opening up a can of worms,” said SVFT President **Phil Moore**. “It’s more trouble than it’s worth.”

In defending a need for the policy, Trustee **Anne Brown** said “some teachers dress like they’re going to a backyard barbecue.”

Moore suggested that if there is an issue with a teacher’s dress, someone should talk to the individual, rather than institute a dress requirement.

It’s just a general statement, said Anton, adding that there is no mention of setting dress requirements. “It’s just to encourage the staff to dress appropriately.

“The majority of the people know how to dress appropriately,” said Moore. “The issue is about something we are very poor at in this district – talking to an individual,” he added.

### Board Policies

#### **(First reading for adoption)**

BP 4012.61 – Employment references

BP 4112.2 – Certification

BP 4119.22 – Dress and Grooming

BP 4141/4241 – Concerted Action/Work Stoppage

BP 4143/4243 – Negotiations

BP 4300/4400 Management, Supervisory and Confidential Personnel

BP 4317.4/4417.4 – Dismissal/

Suspension/Disciplinary Action