Eye On The Board

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Board Highlights September 27, 2005

Reported by Mariann Klinger

Status report leaves board feeling good

Like an echo in the room, administrators, and trustees took turns reciting "this is not a failing district," following a status report on student achievement.

District officials responded appreciatively to each graph, each chart, each explanation, as Research Director **Robert Martinez** interpreted student progress.

The positive remarks came as Martinez summarized a report that wound its way through the California Standards Test (CST), API, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO).

All high schools met their graduation rate targets.

All high schools met mandated targets for all subgroups in English/Language Arts and math.

All schools met federal test participation rates.

All schools met school wide Academic Performance Index (API) targets, except Washington Middle School. After three years, Alisal High School exited from Program Improvement designation.

While the report was met with approving comments, official reaction reflected the sting of bad press as much as the program details. "We're not failing" like headlines in local newspapers read, said Trustee **Kathryn Ramirez.**

In spite of what they said was good news, trustees continued to question the numbers of students who aren't able to pass the tests and the number of seniors not ready to graduate. "There are 74 percent of kids that can't pass. That has to change," said Trustee **Rich Foster**, referring to the percentage of students that don't test at proficient or advanced.

And while AHS drops PI status, La Paz is under two year sanctions, WMS enters year four and North Salinas High is in year one.

In addition, nearly a quarter of the district's seniors have not passed the California exit exam.

Martinez cited graphs showing anywhere from 1 to 4 percent increase nearly across the board in many of the tested areas. While the increases were small, they were enough to met federal and state expectations, he added.

Furthermore, when compared to previous years, students chart a steady increase in proficiency levels, according to Martinez.

For the most part, charts and graphs on the CSTs reflect student proficiency rates in the mid-20 percent. Student proficiency rates rose higher in Summative math (42 percent for 10th grade), algebra (48 percent for 8th grade), and chemistry (30 percent for 10th grade).

At the same time, student proficiency levels dropped to single digit rates in some areas of math. Proficient rates went to 2 percent for 11th

grade algebra students, 8 percent for 9th grade general math students, a 9 percent average for all grades in algebra two and 12 percent average for all grades in geometry.

Martinez said the drop in proficient rates in math reflect the fact that more students are taking higher level math courses than ever before. “Their performance may not be what we want yet,” he said.

Martinez reminded the board that the annual progress must continue and in the future growth expectations will rise quickly. By 2008 the requirements of AYP, a product of No Child Left Behind, will begin to jump 10 percentage points each year.

On hearing of future expectations, Ramirez asked if immigrant language issues are to affect the standard.

“We’re trying to meet the issue,” said Superintendent Roger Anton. “Right now (English language students) show growth every year.”

Charts and graphs reflected federal accountability requirements including:

- Test participation rates of at least 95 percent
- API growth of 1 point over the previous year of a school-wide score of at least 590.
- High school graduation rate that demonstrates a .1 improvement over the previous year.
- A growth target in proficient levels for all students, including all sub groups, in ELA and math.

Plan sets standards for budget

The district took its first step toward next year’s budget, setting a calendar and guidelines for the Performance Based Budgeting process.

Anton is to submit a list of potential committee members by early November and within a month the first 2006-2007 budget packages are due.

Each budget package must include three levels of funding, said James Earhart, the district’s chief business officer.

The three levels are to reflect a 95 percent funding level, a 97.5 percent funding level and a 100 percent funding level for most, a few will be targeted for a 105 percent growth level, according to Earhart’s plan.

In addition, each package will be given a code for priority rank ordering.

The budget planning committee sets priority for budgets and votes on final ranking. Anton and the board take it from there and may re-rank any department budgets they deem necessary.