

Eye On The Board

The Salinas Valley Federation of Teachers
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Board Highlights Summer, 2005

Reported by Mariann Klinger

Moore offers advice, as he steps down

Outgoing union President **Phil Moore** addressed a laundry list of education concerns in a final official appearance before the board.

Moore brought up many ongoing issues, including class size, teacher retention and student accountability.

Ending his three-year term, Moore called on the board to avoid overloading classes. He cautioned against school administrators placing 35 to 40 students in a class and against dropping electives and social studies from the curriculum. Moore said the latter could hurt student motivation.

Moore also took on the issue of teacher retention, saying that high turnover is not the way to establish stability in education. The district, he said, "is still firing too many good teachers."

Moore said he believed that leaving teacher firing in the hands of a single manager was too much responsibility for the administrator and in some cases prompted the loss of good teachers.

In addition, the long-time SVFT leader said students must be made accountable. Many, he added, are part of a pattern of failure. Students frequently fail four or five classes and still pass. "It's an entrenched pattern from grade school, but it works against the student at the high school level," he said.

Students should be getting ready for high school by the time they are in seventh grade, he added.

Moore, who will go on to teach social studies at Salinas High School, will be replaced as SVFT

president by **John Nolan**, former English teacher at Alisal High School.

Sports policy unveiled, but okay delayed

Trustees delayed approval of a policy at the first meeting in August that outlined athletic behavior for the districts' schools. Board members pressed for a clearer understanding of monitoring and consequences of behavior at sporting events.

"I want to know what teeth it has," said board President **Phillip Tabera**.

Associate Superintendent **Alejandro Hogan** presented the policy package, including the promise of a student behavior manual, a code of conduct and a coaches' handbook. Hogan and Trustee **Art Gilbert** served on the 32-member committee to hammer out an overall policy for student-athletes and their parents.

Defenders of the policy assured trustees the program would work. "It's all built in to the program. Trust the program," said Gilbert.

When Trustee **Kathryn Ramirez** suggested holding the policy for the next meeting, Gilbert pressed on. "I think we have to give it a chance."

Hogan said schools will be rewarded for good sports behavior, putting the responsibility on the host school for behavior at an athletic competition. While that places responsibility on administrators, Hogan added that the coaches would be key players in determining student behavior. A coaches' code of conduct was devised, he said.

“Success of the program depends on how well the parties fill their roles,” said Committee Member **Elgie Bellagio** at the meeting in June.

The policy is not totally new to the district, the committee actually made changes to existing guidelines to include information about the student manual, a survey to check for compliance and a copy of “Pursuing Victory with Honor” guidelines and the local California Interscholastic Federation league rules.

Pursuing Victory with Honor is part of a state program, codifying the conduct of student athletes and parents around six pillars of character. Character expected of the athletes includes trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. Athletes and their parents will be asked to sign a contract, agreeing to follow the code.

The policy stems from an incident last season, when taunting by fans and team members lead to threats prior to a Monterey-Alisal basketball game. The game was postponed and a task force created to develop good sports behavior for the district.

Senate bill offers relief on testing

Trustees make a resolution

The district came out in support of a state Senate bill that calls for a different test for students with limited English proficiency.

In a resolution, trustees offered support for Senate Bill 385 that would bring the state’s testing of LEP students in line with the requirements of No Child Left Behind.

Superintendent **Roger Anton** said he saw the district’s resolution as part of a two-prong attack on state testing of LEP students. The lawsuit represents the other prong, he said.

The district joined a number of California school districts in a lawsuit asking that the state test Spanish immigrant students in their native language and allow accommodations for other LEP students.

According to lawsuit proponents, state tests violate the requirements of NCLB. Currently, state assessments test all students in English, while NCLB calls for “reasonable accommodations” and assessments in a “valid and reliable manner,” the lawsuit said.

An attorney for the school districts said the NCLB mandate requires students to learn and be tested on content, but not necessarily in English.

In addition to testing LEP students in English, current state practice is to assess districts on the outcome of the tests. Districts are being evaluated on test results of students that may be in public education for five years or less. Since many are struggling with English, the content assessment may be skewed, according to lawsuit proponents.

Forty-eight percent of the district’s students qualify as LEP and would be affected by the outcome of Senate Bill 385 and the lawsuit.

CAHSEE pass rate rises as deadline nears

As students near the line in the sand on the CAHSEE, pass rates increase with more than 50 percent of would-be graduates already meeting the requirement.

The 2005-2006 graduation represents the first year for the CAHSEE requirement with a pass rate ranging from 43 percent at AHS to 69 percent at SHS.

But in a report, Dr. **Robert Martinez** told trustees that pass rates seem to be rising with each graduation class. Graduates set to walk in 2007 passed the test by 60 percent (AHS) to 73 percent (SHS).

The district wide pass rate for the CAHSEE comes in at 56 percent for the Class of ’06 and 66 percent for the Class of ’07. EAHS students pass at 53 percent and 65 percent for those years and NSHS students pass at 57 percent and 67 percent respectively.

Seniors who have not passed the test will be enrolled in study classes for the CAHSEE. They have two opportunities to pass the test, one in November and one in March, said Martinez, the district's director of research.

Martinez noted that all the schools reflect a high participation rate in the testing process, but while taking the test, English Language Learners struggle with language issues.

Nevertheless, Martinez said nearly all subgroups reflect an increase in the pass rate from the previous testing year.

The CAHSEE tests students in English/Language Arts through the tenth grade, including multiple-choice questions and an essay. They are also tested in math through Algebra 1.

Consent Agenda

In June trustees voted to approve 6-0 with Tabera absent the following:

- A bid from Granite Construction to pave and surface the rear parking lot at WMS
- A call for bids for the replacement of the heating systems at ESMS and WMS

In August, trustees voted to approve 5-0 with Jim Reaves and Rich Foster absent the following:

- A bid from Granite Construction for the SHS tennis courts project and for the parking lot and interior paving project at EAHS

(First reading in August)

BP 0400 – Comprehensive Plans
 BP 0420.1 – School-Based Program Coordination
 BP 0510 – School Accountability Report Card
 BP 0520 – Intervention for Underperforming Schools
 BP 2121 – Superintendent's Contract
 BP 2140 – Evaluation of Superintendent
 BB 9320 (Exhibit) – Meetings and Notices
 BB 9321 – Closed Session Purposes and Agenda
 BP 3100 – Budget
 BP 3312 – Contracts
 BP 3314 – Payment for Goods and Services
 BP 3320 – Claims and Actions Against the District
 BP 3460 – Financial Reports and Accountability
 BP 3513.3 – Tobacco-Free Schools
 BP 3515.5 – Sex Offender Notification
 BP 3516 – Emergencies and Disaster Preparedness Plan
 BP 3553 – Free and Reduced Price Meals

Teachers' Letter Forum

Teachers are invited to send letters-to-the-editor style comments or questions about newsletter topics or other concerns of general interest to the SVFT membership.

Letters will be printed on a space available basis.

Letter writers should include a name and phone number with any submission.

All letter writers must be identified. Letters may be edited for space considerations. Letters can be sent through the district mail to M. Klinger at

Alisal High School or by email to mklinger@salinas.k12.ca.us

Policies

(Adopted)

BP 0520.1 – High Priority School Grant Program

BP 0520.3 – Title I Program Improvement Districts

BP 1200 – Participation by the Public

BP 1311 – Participation in Community Life

BP 1314 – Soliciting Funds from and by Students and Staff

BP 1320 – Relations Between the Public and Students