

Eye On The Board

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Board Highlights January 22, 2008

Reported by Mariann Klinger

Seniors meet state criteria, pass CAHSEE

Most of the district's seniors passed the state's exit exam. Only about 15 percent of the Class of 2008 has yet to pass the CAHSEE, a requirement for graduation.

AHS, EAHS, NSHS and SHS range from 85 to 91 percent pass rate on the exit exam, with MTHS at 58 percent pass rate.

Currently, about 1764 students are enrolled as seniors with more than 1400 passing the state test, according to a report by **Robert Martinez**, director of research.

Seniors are to have three more opportunities to pass the test before graduation, said Associate Superintendent **Tim Vanoli**.

Vanoli told board members that the district is pushing for an increasingly higher first time pass rate in students' sophomore year.

To pass the test students must achieve scores of 350 or higher in mathematics and English.

The district is using a series of benchmark tests in core subjects throughout the year as preparation for the state tests in the spring. Benchmark testing begins in seventh grade.

Martinez said an increasing number of students achieve proficient levels on the benchmarks.

Middle school principals told trustees that interventions are in place when students do not achieve passing grades on the benchmarks.

Curriculum is aligned with standards and teacher collaboration is focused on improving the success rate, according to **Jacqui Axtell**, principal of HMS.

Some of the middle schools offer interventions at lunch time and after school.

CBO advises calm on threatened cuts

It's not time to push the panic button, despite proposed budget cuts that would take \$2 million off the top of the district's funding.

"We don't need to panic. We have really good reserves," said Chief Business Officer **James Earhart**.

Earhart counseled a wait-and-see attitude, saying that the last word isn't in from the state. "We're fine right now. We just have to watch what we do."

A few weeks ago the governor's budget proposed the largest reduction in K-12 history, but Earhart said the figures are changing already.

Nevertheless, Earhart told trustees that the initial proposal would account for a 2.4 percent cut in the district's ADA, taking \$160 per student from the \$6653 allotted. "It's scary stuff," he added.

About 88 percent of the district's budget is tied to personnel, so any cuts will "make for a difficult year," according to Earhart.

On a positive note, Earhart said that the district's ADA was up by 118. The district lost eight students at the middle school level, but gained 126 in its high schools.

La Paz begins quality Program with grant

LPMS began its planning year with more than \$500,000 earmarked for improving instruction and raising student achievement levels.

The money is part of the Quality Education Investment grant – a seven year program calling for lowering class size to an average of 25 students and for "highly qualified" teachers.

In the planning year, LPMS is to arrange for additional classrooms, to develop teacher coaching and to write a master plan.

The program is to begin implementation in the second year. Years two through seven are to bring the school more than a quarter of a million dollars of grant money each year.

La Paz is the only district school awarded the grant.

Auditors OK major areas; find fault with minor ones

An internal audit found the district in compliance with state standards in major program and funding areas, but continued to note deficiencies in the handling of student body funds.

Also the report by Perry-Smith Accountants made recommendations in the handling of new-teacher loan money, cafeteria cash accounts, attendance reporting and teacher credentialing.

Auditors called for internal controls on student body monies, cafeteria cash and the teacher loan account. Funds could be misappropriated without proper procedures in place, the report said.

Procedures and enforcement were cited as issues in handling employee vacations and teacher credentialing.

The majority of employees have exceeded the five-day maximum for carry over vacations, according to the report. The district does not enforce rollover requirements, the report said. The situation could increase district liability in the future. As a remedy, the district plans to modify when employee vacation time is posted.

In addition, two teachers of limited English students lack CLAD certification, putting the district out of compliance with the education code.

Problems with Scantrons and attendance reporting at NSHS and the adult school may be costing the district funds.

For its part, the district expects to ensure that all teachers earn CLAD certificates. The district began to implement a plan to review attendance and resubmit reports in an effort to collect the additional monies lost.