

Eye On The Board

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Board Highlights January 27, 2009

Reported by Mariann Klinger

Audit notes minor problems, praises budget goal setting

Trustees accepted a generally favorable audit report on the district's finances by a vote of 7-0.

The annual audit by Perry Smith Accountants found no significant problems, but continued to find fault with the handling of student body monies and criticized non-compliance with CalSTRS membership. At the same time, auditors praised the district for being proactive in setting its budget goals.

Noting that the lack of internal controls left student body funds open to possible misappropriation, auditors recommended procedures to remedy the situation.

The complaint cited faulty record keeping and the lack of a process to track sales, verify inventory and double check cash amounts.

In the past, auditors criticized the district for lack of internal controls on student monies. The 2008 document indicates some processes already in place to safeguard student funds. The district works with students, activity directors and clerks on a monthly basis to review problems.

The district passed the most recent problem on to one-site activity directors asking for an explanation of the auditors findings and site plans to correct them.

Auditors also found the district in non-compliance with CalSTRS membership election requirements for substitute teachers and part-time employees.

Part-timers and substitutes should be given a CalSTRS membership form in orientation packets after hiring, the report said. In addition, auditors' recommendation called for district personnel to make sure these employees have an election form on file.

Goal for CAHSEE set at 100 percent for area students

The state exit exam's reach now extends to the eighth grade, as the district presses for a 100 percent pass rate by graduation.

Nearly 85 percent of seniors have already passed the CAHSEE, as they begin the march to graduation. Half of the remaining students have passed at least one part, according to a report.

Associate Superintendent **Tim Vanoli**, who presented the report, outlined the district's plans to meet the goal.

Eighth graders, he said, are using CAHSEE preparation materials and ninth graders are now given a practice test.

After ninth grade, however, the state test taking turns serious. Vanoli said the districts wants to see at least 80 percent of sophomores pass on the first go around. About 73 percent of last year's sophomores passed the first time. Now juniors,

Vanoli said the district hopes to see their overall pass rate go up to 90 percent after they take the test again in March.

Those who don't pass will have the opportunity to attend CAHSEE tutorials and three more times to take the test as seniors. In any case, passing the test is a state graduation requirement, so specific classes focus on training seniors in ELA and Math.

If seniors still do not pass, they can continue to take the test over the next two years. According to Vanoli the district offers CAHSEE preparation programs at school sites for seniors in the fifth year or to students that choose to attend the adult school to complete graduation requirements.

In addition, benchmark tests scheduled throughout the year give all students an opportunity to demonstrate learning in subject matter tested by the state.

"There is an expectation for student achievement," said Vanoli. On the benchmarks and the CAHSEE, students must score proficient or above to pass, he added.

In the second benchmark students demonstrated improvement in nearly all subjects over the previous year with more students scoring at proficient or above, according to the report.

Still, the increases are gradual and the majority of the students in many subject areas perform at basic, below basic and far below basic.

Hiring timeline set for SHS principal

Associate Superintendent **Alejandro Hogan** said the district hopes to recommend a new principal for SHS by April 14.

Advertising the opening has begun and the deadline for applications set for March 19.

Interviews are expected to take place at the end of March.

The new principal will replace acting Principal **Michael Romero**, who took over the position when Principal **John Macias** stepped down last year.

Budget meeting set

Faced with the possibility of mid-year cuts and even more cuts next year, trustees plan to discuss budget changes at 7 PM Tuesday, Feb. 3.

SVFT Co-president **Peggy Carroll** promised trustees the union would be on board. The union, she said, "won't sit around and hope it will go away."

"I don't want to be one of those school districts where people are yelling and screaming."

Carroll praised trustees and administrators for keeping tough times at bay. "The district made financial choices that kept our schools from experiencing much of the trauma that others had to deal with last year," she said.

"The situation is even worse now and you will have to continue to make difficult choices," she added.