

Eye On The Board

The Salinas Valley Federation of Teachers
21 West Laurel Drive, Suite 61, Salinas, CA 93926-3434
(Telephone) 831-442-8234 * (Fax) 831-442-8563
(E-mail) co-presidents@svft.net
Reported by Mariann Klinger

Board Highlights ~ January 8, 2008

Anton to ask state to back off sanctions

In the face of possible sanctions for failing to meet AYP, Superintendent **Roger Anton** expects to tell state educators a tale of success.

Anton laid out his plan for presenting the district's status to the State Board of Education, telling trustees that Salinas High schools have met more than 90 percent of state and federal AYP criteria in past years.

The district, now in Year 3 of Program Improvement, could face corrective action from the state. Anton was scheduled to address the state educators Jan. 11, offering a "snapshot" of the district that could help educators choose a sanction that would help Salinas schools.

"We're not failing. We're making progress," he told trustees.

District schools have consistently demonstrated academic improvement with some schools achieving as much as 200 points in past years, he said. The district has initiated, implemented and refined a major focus on student learning that resulted in significant point gains on the state's API index, he wrote in an October letter to the state.

Standards set by NCLB, do not take into account the uphill challenges facing the district with 40 percent limited English speakers and a 76 percent minority population, he wrote.

The threatened action, he added, doesn't take into consideration the level of achievement already reached by district students.

He listed changes made in district schools over the past eight years, including a Curriculum Management School Audit, extensive staff training and collaboration and aligning curriculum with state standards.

Each year performance criteria increases, "it's a game we can't win," said Anton.

Although the ultimate sanction is takeover by the state, Anton said such a move is unlikely. "The state doesn't know what to do. . . The state doesn't have the resources."

Anton said the district supports recommendations for dealing with the situation from the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA).

The administrators suggested some PI districts, depending on their needs, should be exempt from sanctions, some should receive sanctions that might meet the needs of a failing subgroup, and some should work with a state team to determine interventions.

School bus site could sprout teacher housing

Officials shared the district's vision for its Market Street property, seeing condos instead of a school bus plant.

The site, owned by the district for many years, now houses the Transportation Department, and the Food Service Department in warehouse style buildings. But Chief Business Officer **James Earhart** said he can readily see new teacher housing on the land. It's a good location and it would make a difference in recruiting teachers, he said.

The district began the process looking for a more convenient location for its 46-bus fleet. The student population growth, said Earhart, is in the north and the east. He suggested moving transportation and food service to an area behind the ROP center. The ROP site is more centrally located for transporting 1800 students daily to classes.

Moving the two departments would leave the Market Street property available for development. Earhart said Salinas city seemed receptive to the plan to move transportation and go on to develop teacher housing.

"It's a dream right now . . . I took it to the city and they didn't laugh us out of the room," he added.

Earhart told trustees that the Santa Clara school district's teacher housing enables it to choose from the best recruits.

In addition, Transportation Manager **Bill Chapman** told trustees the department is working on a student ID for bus riders. The ID could be ready as early as next fall, he said.

Timelines, hiring process in place for teachers, principals

Timelines are in place for hiring principals for the Salinas Adult School and for Washington Middle School.

Applications are due for the WMS post by Feb. 22 and for the Adult School by Feb. 29.

Associate Superintendent **Alejandro Hogan** said candidates for the positions would be recommended in March.

In addition to the two administrators, Hogan said his department would conduct an aggressive campaign to recruit new teachers, offering a series of financial inducements.

The district worked with local renters to reduce initial renting requirements.

For the past few years the district in partnership with the Steinbeck Credit Union offered new hires a \$3,000 no-interest loan. While that partnership will be discontinued, Hogan said he is looking for other ways to offer the loan, since new teachers won't get paid until the end of September," he added.

Hogan said the district would also pursue a state teacher recruitment and retention grant that would offer signing bonuses for new teachers.

While many of the teachers are hired from contacts at job fairs, the district also hires teachers from Spain and Mexico. Currently, six teachers from Spain and one administrator and seven teachers from Mexico work in the district.

Briefs

SVFT co-presidents, **Kyle Samuels** and **Peggy Carroll** called for new policies on safety and cell phones.

A threatening incident left teachers feeling unprotected, said Samuels, calling on the board to set guidelines for dealing with anti-social student behavior.

Carroll said current policy banning cell phones on campus is not enforceable. She suggested requiring cell phones to be off in the classroom may be a more workable policy.