

Eye On The Board

The Salinas Valley Federation of Teachers

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Board Highlights from October 27, 2009 and November 10, 2009

Reported by Mary Ellingwood

Summer School Will See Further Reductions in 2010

The October 27th board meeting brought news of reductions to the 2010 summer session. A motion to shorten the summer school session was passed unanimously with a 6-0 vote by the school board reducing the summer school program budget by 40 percent.

These reductions come as a result of budget cuts from the state level and will affect the length of time the summer session will be offered at each school site in the Salinas Union High School District. Each school will conduct summer school for 24 days at 5 hours per day.

There was a brief discussion following the vote where Trustee Tabera pointed out that this means, "2359 students will not receive summer school as a result of the 40 percent cuts."

Assistant Superintendent Tim Vanoli confirmed Mr. Tabera's calculations stating that the "focus will be the students who need to get credits to graduate."

Both Trustee Tabera and Trustee Ramirez expressed concern over the high numbers of students who will be on the streets of Salinas this summer rather than in school. Trustee Ramirez stated, "I will guarantee you that if those kids are on the street, the violence will escalate."

Mr. Earhart said, "We're working through our budget and we're trying to see what we can do." He suggested that the district is considering dipping into the 4% reserves to help resolve some of these pressing issues.

The High School Graduation Requirements of 240 Units Examined

After a presentation by Assistant Superintendent Tim Vanoli at the October 27th board meeting, the school board held a discussion about possible changes to the current high school graduation requirements. The Salinas Union High School District requires 40 units more to graduate than any other high school in the area.

Trustee Ramirez made it clear that she could not get behind reducing the foreign language requirement because, as she said, "It is very important (for students going to college)... and students who don't, need the foreign language requirement to learn to interact with other people in the community."

Trustee Tabera said, "I'll bet you that some of the requirements that students are lacking to graduate are linked to foreign language, social science, P.E., and fine arts." Tabera also pointed out that, "a lot of these classes (are ones that) students are taking in summer school."

The board requested a report be generated that lists how many students are missing graduation due to which requirements. Mr. Vanoli said that he would put one together showing the last three years.

Trustee Bonetti suggested that, "if students cannot complete the courses for graduation then maybe they shouldn't be having to complete so many community service hours."

Trustee Larison concluded the discussion saying, "The nature of being able to complete the (community service) hours may have changed because the economy and changes to people's obligations."

The 240 Unit Requirement Addressed by SVFT

SVFT Peggy Carroll addressed the Board about the SUHSD graduation requirements at the November 10th meeting citing a presentation and discussion that had occurred at the previous board meeting about the graduation requirements. Ms. Carroll said that, “I don’t believe any teacher or anyone is talking about cutting any requirements needed for admission to colleges. But the extra 40 units required here in Salinas make it very difficult for some students.”

She also added that, “We want our students graduating and being able to go to college if they choose that, but there are some extra requirements that, if cut, would provide some breathing room for students to meet their graduation requirements.”

Mr. Marc Rosen, coordinator at Mission Trails ROP also made a statement to the board regarding the graduation requirements. He said, “We’re paying overtime because this district is not aligned with the state of CA...most districts in this state have a 220 unit graduation requirement.”

Rosen went on to say that, “We’re essentially requiring college prep for every student. We’re a comprehensive high school district the last time I checked. Every student doesn’t need that requirement because only about 20 percent of them go to college . . . I think we really need to look at this. We would save money.”

Assistant Superintendent Vanoli suggested that the district form a task force to review the high school graduation requirements. Superintendent Earhart had indicated a need for this at the October 27th board meeting stating, “When this was originally put together, all the stakeholders were involved. I think if we’re going to change it, there will be a lot of stakeholders who will want to get involved.”

Trustee Tabera added, “I don’t look at this as dummed down curriculum...at the time we set these requirements, we may have inadvertently created a problem because, in talking to our counselors, we have a lot of students who aren’t able to graduate because of these requirements.”

Margaret Bonetti Ends Her Tenure as SUHSD Board Trustee

At the November 10th Board meeting, Trustee Margaret Bonetti told the other school board members and a crowd of observers and a news reporter that, “This is my last board meeting and it’s been a pleasure to serve on this board.”

Ms. Bonetti said that she will continue to serve the Salinas community and offered to serve on the graduation requirement committee as a member of the community.

Editor’s Note:

An error was made in the last *Eye on the Board* which called the Mission Trails ROP the “Mission Hills ROP” on several occasions. With much chagrin, the newsletter staff apologizes for this error.