

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: presidents@svft.net

Board Highlights November 13, 2007 by Mariann Klinger

Class parties concern HMS students

The district kept food at classroom parties on the table for further review after a team of students from Harden pleaded their case before trustees.

Students spoke out for food as a reward for good work and expressed concern for a wellness policy that prohibits school parties within two hours before lunch and up to one hour after lunch.

Superintendent **Roger Anton** promised to look at the district's wellness policy with student concerns in mind.

Students laid out their cause in a petition, calling for a continuation of "incentive parties," while not making issue of the district's efforts to implement state and federal guidelines for nutritious foods.

Wellness policies designed along the required state and federal guidelines eliminate soft drinks and candy during the school day. Current law calls for nutritious foods in school cafeterias, fundraisers and vending machines.

Food Service Manager **Christina Varela** said the district is working with vendors, students and parents to improve food offerings on campus. "Things are going to have to change," she said.

In the course of remodeling cafeteria kitchens, Varela said her department revised recipes. Now meals include more whole grains, low fat cheese and more fish entrees. Snacks feature baked chips, yogurt and string cheese. Recently, a student advisory committee gave the nod to yogurt coated edamame as a treat.

Varela said the food service department will continue to work with students, parents, vendors and the community to improve cafeteria and vending machine offerings and encourage a menu change for fundraising snacks. "We need to help groups come up with something reasonable," she told trustees.

Trustee **Phillip Tabera** put out a call to change the culture of school as it regards health. He said exercise should be included and staff should participate.

The district began instituting some of the changes over the past two years. Varela said with candy and soft drinks out, students are eating more vegetables and fruits and drinking milk and juice.

"What's served in the cafeteria will set the standard," SVFT Co-President **Peggy Carroll** told the board. "If it's served, they'll (students) eat it."

Aside from food issues, Varela said long cafeteria lines generate the most complaints. In an effort to deal with problem, Varela said four speed lines were added at AHS, ESMS got three service windows and WMS will pilot a cashless line. (Students pay on account in advance.)

The long lines, she said, put pressure on cafeteria staff as well as on students. Double lunch periods would help ease the stress, she added.

Last year, the district served 281,491 breakfasts, 510,310 lunches with 57 percent as free/reduced meals.

Benchmark data shows increase in higher grades

With the first benchmark data in, high school principals compared results with last year's tests, noting that advanced and proficient grades tended to increase in 2007-2008.

Director of Research **Robert Martinez** said ideally the percentage of students earning advanced and proficient grades should increase, while that of students earning below basic and far below basic should decrease.

Ultimately, the goal is for students to achieve proficient or advanced grades in the spring state tests, according to **August Caresani** of NSHS.

Caresani said that math scores "weren't going the right way now," but more and more students are taking geometry and advanced algebra. High school students did well on the CST's last year. "We hope to repeat it this year," he added.

He praised the middle schools for doing a good job teaching algebra and cited it as the reason for increased numbers in other math classes at the high school level.

EAHS Principal **Darren Sylvia** told trustees that 75 percent of chemistry students and 48 percent of physics students met the top standards, with few falling below basic. This year, he said, is the first year for testing the upper class science students.

Other high school science students showed an increase in the rate of students at advanced and proficient levels, as did social studies and English students.

The principals said the benchmark data serves as a guide for reteaching strategies and tutorials discussed in collaboratives.

Williams committee gives OK

The Williams Visitation Report found no problems with district instructional materials at the school sites.

The committee, however, noted the need for a variety of minor repairs. Maintenance Manager Jerry Stratton, along with a district crew, repaired the problems as the committee noted them, according to Associate Superintendent **Tim Vanoli**.

Budget committee named

Representatives from the school community are to serve as members of the performance based budget committee for the 2008-09 general fund budget.

The following is a list of committee members: **Rich Foster**, parent; **Art Gilbert**, community; **Kyle Samuels**, SVFT; **Azalea Perez**, CSEA; **Paul Quiggle**, **Cynthia Hess** and **Robert Cannon**, teachers; **Michael Romero** and **Judith Peterson**, administration.

District takes on Paradise School

MCOE plans to relinquish the education of students at Paradise School to SUHSD and Santa Rita School District.

The school houses about 120 students with problems annually – some for as long as 90 days.

The school districts are to take responsibility for the education of the students, including providing classrooms.