

Eye On The Board

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Board Highlights November 27, 2007 by Mariann Klinger

More students earn diplomas in Class of 2007

More than 1500 students completed the requirements for a diploma or GED, inching up over the previous year, while fewer nongraduates opted to continue their education.

High school graduates numbered 1496 in 2007, compared with 1447 in 2006. An additional 90 students earned a GED in 2007, compared with 49 in 2006.

Along with the high school students, 35 received a diploma and 306 were awarded GED certificates by the adult

school. In 2006, the adult school presented 42 students with diplomas and 241 with GEDs.

Although 336 nongraduates returned to high school for a fifth year, entered adult school, community college or transferred, 134 chose not to continue their education, compared to 58 in 2006.

In 2006m 380 continued their education.

Associate Superintendent **Tim Vanoli** offered the report, but did not speculate on reasons for the data. He did, however, spell out reasons for the 470 students who did not graduate with the class of 2007.

Only 37 students failed to graduate for a single reason and, of them, only 13 failed to do so because of the CAHSEE, he said.

Most students, about 227, had more than one reason for not graduating with the 2007 class, he added.

To receive a diploma from the district a student must complete 240 credits, achieve a GPA of 2.0 or higher, have an attendance rate of at least 85 percent, pass the CAHSEE, complete a technology requirement, and complete 60 hours of community service or a senior project.

Language learners slow to show fluency in English

Trustees questioned the large number of students demonstrating a lack of ability in the English language.

About 55 percent of the district's students qualify as long-term English learners, according to **Blanca Baltazar-Sabbah**, director of Migrant Education.

Long-time learners are students who spent all or most of their school lives in California schools.

“Obviously there is a problem when they're here for ten years and don't grasp the language,” said Trustee **Kathryn Ramirez**.

“It shouldn't take so long,” said Trustee **Phillip Tabera**, adding that district personnel needed to speak to elementary school districts.

Baltazar-Sabbah said students must demonstrate at least a level four or basic in the CSTs to be designated as English proficient.

Currently, there are 4,864 students classified as ELL.

All ELL students must be tested annually to determine language proficiency. Baltazar-Sabbah said nearly 99 percent of the district's students have been tested during the required time – from July 1 to October 1.

While some of the students are relatively new to the country, most are not. More than half of the students list many years in U.S. schools, she told trustees.

In response to trustees' questions, Superintendent **Roger Anton** said the district has discussed the situation with area elementary school districts. The Alisal Union School District now expects students to achieve proficiency by third grade, he said. But, he added, “we haven't seen those students yet.”

Board briefs

Students attend NY college

AHS junior Maria Pio and senior Liliana Juarez told trustees about their five-week summer school stint at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York.

“The first week was the toughest,” said Pio, “because we were far from home.”

Pio said high school students participating in Skidmore’s summer program earned college credits and got a chance to play tourist in New York City.

The girls attended on a scholarship and credited the district’s Migrant Education program with helping them research colleges.

ZAP pilot meets success

HMS is zapping students into doing their homework, beginning with seventh grade math.

Students, referred by teachers for failure to do homework, must give up 75 percent of their lunch hour to complete the work.

Teachers, who make the referral after a week of no homework from a student, report significant success following time in the program. Most students completed homework at least 75 percent of the time, teachers reported.

The focus of the pilot program is to help students understand that homework is important, according to student representatives Alexa Ibadlit and Natasha Limosenero.

School officials expect to expand ZAP (zeros aren’t permitted) to all classes, the girls said.

Consent Agenda

The following items were passed by the board on a vote of 7-0. The board:

- Authorized the purchased of a modular building to serve as a stadium restroom and concession stand at NSHS. The project is expected to cost \$550,000, an amount covered by Measure F funds.
- Authorized the purchase of a relocatable classroom to be transformed into six classrooms and a restroom at SAS. Estimated costs are less than \$600,000, also from Measure F funds.
- Authorized the purchase of three locatable classrooms at the cost of \$160,799, covered by state funds, at LPMS.

ModTech Inc is responsible for all three projects.