

Eye On The Board

The Salinas Valley Federation of Teachers
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Board Highlights April 14, 2009

Reported by Mariann Klinger

Core counselors back on track; layoffs rescinded

Trustees rescinded layoffs for ten core counselor who received pink slips along with nearly 100 teachers and counselors. The layoff notices were set aside by a vote of 7-0.

The action was the first step taken toward backtracking on recent reductions in the certificated ranks.

As a result of the state budget crisis and the economic downturn core counselors, along with temporary counselors, ROP and adult school teachers, as well as untenured teachers received pink slips last month.

At the start of the meeting, a series of art students pleaded with trustees to reinstate their adult school class. The class was considered under enrolled and slated to be removed from the schedule, along with some other courses and teachers.

The adult school and ROP were hard hit by a budget cut of 15 percent for the year, with an expectation of an additional four percent cut next year.

Cafeterias focus on healthy meals, more student eaters

In 2008-09, school cafeterias served nearly one million meals with an increasing emphasis on following the district's wellness contract, according to Food Service Manager **Christina Varela**.

In raw numbers that means about 306,300 breakfasts, 605,922 lunches and 9,234 snacks this year. She attributed an increase in student participation to better meals, improved processing of enrollment for free and reduced lunches, student feedback on recipes and food

choices, more seating areas at school sites and the addition of intersession service.

In a report to the board, Varela said the district experienced a 12 percent increase in the number of students enrolled for the free or reduced meals program.

Last year all high school cafeteria programs saw an increase in the number of students getting free or reduced meals and this year Everett Alvarez, North Salinas and Salinas high schools increased enrollment again, she added.

Currently 8682 of the district's 13,000 students receive free or reduced meals.

In addition, Varela said the cafeterias served about 16 percent more lunches and 10 percent more no-cost breakfasts in 2008-09.

With a close watch on the district's wellness contract, Varela said the food service program has eliminated sodas from vending machines and counter sales. "If they want it, they have to bring it themselves," she added.

Varela said standard recipes feature more fruits and vegetables and no fried foods. She also said snack choices are "getting more creative," pushing out typical junk food fare.

A pilot program at Washington Middle School features combo meals only – no snack foods, said Varela. The experiment is going well and so is likely to be expanded to La Paz and other school sites soon, she added.

In addition, staff wants to upgrade serving space, so students can access the free and reduced meals in any line.

The department recently underwent an analysis of its menus by the state. "We expect to get suggestions from auditors," she said.

Varela praised the progress made toward meeting the criteria of the wellness policy, but added that "there are still some areas in schools where we can expand the health contract."

One area is the food sold at after-school fundraisers. Trustee **Phillip Tabera** said he still sees sodas and other more unhealthy snacks on campus after school.

“We’ve taken a light approach, but we’re getting more of a buy in” from students, Varela told him. After-school fundraisers, however, are within the guidelines of the district’s wellness policy, according to Varela.

More ELL students reaching proficiency

An increasing number of English language learners are becoming proficient, according to a report by **Blanca Baltazar-Sabbah**, program director.

A revision of ELA curriculum, a focus on writing skills, and collaboration among the district’s English language specialists and resource teachers brought about the growing success, she said.

In 2006-07 about 3 percent of the more than 4,548 ELL students district wide were reclassified to proficient. In 2007-08 that number jumped to 5 percent reclassified and for 2008-09 the 12 percent reached proficiency.

Nearly all the districts high schools and middle schools reflect a similar increase in the number of students becoming English language proficient, according to her report.

Baltazar-Sabbah said the plan is to continue with collaboration and teacher professional development, as well as to build “a bridge” for transitional students by including English language development standards in the ELA curriculum.

She said the program efforts are to expand to math, science and social studies next year.

Consent agenda

Trustees approved the following by a vote of 6-0 (Tabera was absent for the vote.).

- The employment agreement for Chief Business Officer **James Earhart**, who will be taking over as district superintendent July 1. The three-year agreement includes a \$180,000 base salary.
- A waiver of the CAHSEE for students with disabilities in accordance with the state education code, which permits school boards to waive the state test requirement for students with an IEP or 504 plan.
- A proposal for a heating and cooling system in the 1000 wing of AHS. The system would be controlled in each room. The plan is to have the system up and running next fall.

Teachers’ Letter Forum

Teachers are invited to send letters-to-the-editor style comments or questions about newsletter topics or other concerns of general interest to the SVFT membership.

All letter writers must be identified. Letters may be edited for space considerations. Letters can be sent by email to mklinger44@Yahoo.com or to presidents@svft.net