

Eye On The Board

The Salinas Valley Federation of Teachers
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Board Highlights, September 9, 2008

Reported by Mariann Klinger

New teachers find family at institute

Pilot program seeks better new teacher training plan

District officials attributed a teacher retention rate above the national average and a steadily increasing degree of classroom preparedness to the new teacher institute.

About 50 percent of new teachers nationally remain in the classroom after five years. That rate is 63 percent for the new teachers with SUHSD, according to **Diane Hendricks**, district Human Resource director.

Furthermore, said Hendricks, in the past one in 20 teachers was considered unprepared, especially new teachers in the area of classroom management.

Teachers need support and preparation programs, she added. The district attempts to meet the need with its institute, she said.

Now in its fourth year, the teacher institute offers workshops aimed at preparing novice teachers and teachers new to the district for SUHD classrooms.

Hendricks said that the district will also participate in a pilot program to seek out an appropriate training vehicle for new teachers. Currently, new teachers take part in BITSA, a mentor-teacher training program, but Hendricks

said the decades old state program is not enough for today's new teachers.

The week-long institute, along with an orientation familiarizes new teachers with the district's campuses and the Salinas community.

In addition, those who attend receive a \$1500 stipend.

Eighty-seven new teachers joined the district for 2008-2009, including 32 new teachers and 16 with one to two years experience, according to Associated Superintendent **Alejandro Hogan**.

Along with new and veteran teachers, the district hired three teaching couples. **Andrew** and **Chelsea Stockner** told trustees that the institute and orientation helped ease the transition from home. "We were leaving family and friends to join a new family," said social studies teacher Chelsea Farrington Stockner. The Stockners moved from Oregon to Salinas to teach at WMS and HMS respectively.

In an effort to also help teachers become financially comfortable the district offered a \$3000 loan, since they wouldn't get paid until the end of September, Hogan said.

For the past eight to ten years the district has hired between 80 and 100 plus new teachers annually.

Policy changes meet objections to release of student details

Recommended changes to a policy that generated controversy two meetings in a row seemed to satisfy trustee objections.

The policy on the release of student information to the military, colleges and businesses created a stir among trustees and parents. Excessive military recruiter contact and a 15-day opting out period for parents became the sticking points at past meetings.

The policy changes eliminated the 15-day opting out limit. A new form will allow parents to choose to withhold the release of their student's information at anytime, according to Associate Superintendent **Tim Vanoli**.

In addition, Vanoli said parents can opt out of any one or all of the agencies seeking student access.

With the passage of NCLB, military recruiter access to students was mandated. Parents and some trustees objected to military recruiters seemingly over attention to low-income students.

Some parents and students said recruiters often called in the early morning hours and repeatedly came to homes in an effort to encourage students to sign up.

At the meeting, the local army recruiter promised trustees that his subordinates would not harass students.

The student information released by the district includes, name, address, weight and height of athletic team members, dates of attendance, degrees and awards received and most recent school attendance.

The policy is to return to the board for a vote at the next meeting.

Safety team makes difference in student behavior

More students complete rehab

A series of safety intervention talks along with a rehabilitation program was credited with lowering the number of expulsions and increasing the number of student readmissions in 2007-2008.

Last year, a district team went to middle schools to make safety presentations on conflict resolutions, bullying, sexual harassment and weapons on campus. "We went out to middle schools and let students know what would happen" because of offenses. "It made a big difference," said **Scott McColgan**, director of Pupil Personnel Services.

The result was a lesser number of student expulsions. In fact, he said, the number of expulsions was the lowest in four years.

In 2006-2007, the district expelled 189 students; while in 2007-2008 less than half that amount (91 students) were expelled. According to McColgan, the number of expulsions had been steadily increasing.

In the two previous years, 120 plus students were expelled, while in 2003-2004 the district expelled 74.

The main reasons for expulsions last year were weapons, fighting, general conflicts and sexual harassment, McColgan said.

Once expelled students are referred to the Monterey County Office of Education or the district's Community Day School for an educational program and help with the rehabilitation plan. Last year, 48 students were readmitted to the district after completing the rehabilitation program.

Policies (First reading)

BP 3311 – Bids

BP 3514 – Environmental Safety

BP 3517 – Facilities Inspection

BP 3550 – Food Service/Child Nutrition Program

BP 3551 – Food Service Operations/Cafeteria Fund

BP 3553 – Free and Reduced-Price Meals

BP 3554 – Other Food Sales

Consent Agenda**AHS scholarship fund set**

Trustees established a scholarship fund for AHS graduates by a vote of 5-0. Trustees **Phillip Tabera** and **Kathryn Ramirez** were absent for the consent agenda vote.

The scholarship monies in the amount of \$69,689.41, donated by Marcos and Vivian Duran, were placed in Fund 73 to be awarded to graduating AHS students.

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 and include a phone number.

Letters may be edited for space considerations. Letters can be sent by email to co-president@svft.net

“Eye on the Board” Extra**Teacher's book features SPED students, art****Retirement brings SUHSD resource specialist full circle**

Linda Kingsley took rejection to heart and built on it. After sending her manuscripts to publishers for nearly two decades, she says she has enough rejections to paper her walls.

But each rejection held a little encouragement. “Everyone liked my art,” she said. “It was enough to keep me going.”

Now, however, all her determination and talent earned her a place among children's authors. Kingsley's most recent book “Signs of Jays” is set for publishing.

Kingsley, a newly retired district resource specialist, tells the story with the help of her knowledge of special education students.

“Signs of Jays” features deaf students who save and eventually mainstream the birds.

The book, story and art, comes from experience, according to Kingsley.

A graduate of the Philadelphia College of Art, Kingsley began her career as an art teacher to the deaf at the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf. She brought an abandoned nest of birds to the classroom. Students enjoyed taking care of the birds until they began to fly, she said.

Then the birds got into trouble and the students had to help them return to an outdoor life. Just like many of her students the now-grown birds were mainstreamed, she added.

Kingsley also turns to experience for the book's art. She used Monte Vista School of Monterey students as her models and locals can probably recognize Monterey area locations.

Jason and Nordic Publishers of Hollidaysburg, PA will publish the book as part of a series of books for students with disabilities.

“I’m finally getting published. I’ve been almost published several times,” she said.

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Her first children’s book also mixed experience with fiction. “The Spin Dry Cat,” not published as yet, included local areas and her son and daughter as the models for the fictional children.

Kingsley is already at work on another book. Her next book borrows from her time working with resource students at Alisal High School. The storyboard is ready; she needs only to find a publisher.

But this time she expects the process to go more smoothly. In the past rejections pointed out marketing mistakes. Now, Kingsley said she’s not only learned a lot about marketing, but is a published author besides.

She’s already had calls about her book from Border’s and Barnes and Nobles.

After college Kingsley saw herself as an artist, an illustrator, but the need for a regular paycheck led her in another direction. Now, she said, she’s come full circle. Retirement means she can focus on artwork, but her sojourn in teaching gives her an endless supply of story material.

After working with the deaf students for some years, Kingsley moved with her family to Monterey. She taught ESL and American Sign Language classes at Monterey Peninsula College and later joined the staff of SUHSD as a resource specialist.

Since her work as a teacher gave her an in-depth knowledge of children with disabilities, they become the story and the audience for her books. “I want to write stories for children with disabilities,” she said.

Schooled in art, Kingsley spent her entire adult life as a freelance illustrator and artist, along with her work in education. In her home, she displays her portraits and ceramic work prominently. And in her studio, the next storyboard rests on her desk and illustrations fill the bulletin board.

It’s the studio of a children’s book author with previous efforts and current work sharing the space. Kingsley said the years of rejections helped to teach her about the needs of children’s book publishers. There are serious limits on children’s books, she said. Typically, a storybook allows for only 32 pages of story and art. “You have to get to the point quickly,” she added.

While “Signs of Jays” represents the first children’s book published, Kingsley’s thesis “Teaching Art to the Deaf” was published more than 20 years ago and is still in print. “You can get it on Amazon,” she said.

The teaching book is also listed on the California Library Catalogue.

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