



# On The Board

The Salinas Valley Federation of Teachers

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## Board Highlights from March 2017

Reported By Juan Jose Campos

### We Won't Even Say It.

So, it only took 3 years, \$35,000, an Independent evaluation and constant shaming, er I mean, nagging, I mean, gently reminding, by SVFT President Kati Bassler, for our Board to finally see that yes, indeed, our SPED program is well, severely lacking. It's really a shame, but in essence, the report confirmed suspicions that the program is in dire need of support and that students in that program are being underserved. But, before you start pointin' fingers and getting all upset, get over it, ☺ the good news is there is a silver lining. In this case, it came in the form of money. Not gettin' me? Read on: Vicki Barber of Barber and Barber & Associates presented the findings of her firm's independent evaluation of our Special Education program and began with kind words or shall we say, the good stuff. "You have low restrictive settings and have done an incredible job.....You have met many targets, only one other school has done that of 10 comparable schools and you are high in terms of parent involvement...In terms of SELPA, I commend you for being proactive. Your documentation is strong." But, alas, the heavy hand of reality was not far behind her initial comments. With respect to investment per student, Barber had this to say: "Approximately \$54k per student is spent at MCOE vs. \$41,000 at the District level. SPED spending is currently 8.98% vs 9.18%.

You have lower average spending in terms of SELPA." In short, we spend less per SPED students. She then went on to 'kindly suggest' that the District do more to inform the public on where our District stands in terms of inclusiveness for our SPED students. "Details are important, such as listing SPED percentages on website, by not listing them, we're saying to the public 'that's not as important' ....



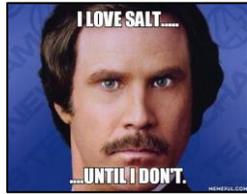
Your best ambassadors are your staff for recruitment." She recommended looking at benefit costs for staff to decrease turnover and suggested exit interviews for outgoing professionals. "If they're leaving because their spouse is moving, that's one thing, but if it's because of pay and they're leaving to another District...then you have some control over that." Despite that, she said our District was doing a great job of retaining Certificated Staff but classified employment needs to be looked at, and again emphasized the importance of data. Barber noted it was difficult get to get a "whole picture" in terms of Staff/student ratios because there were "not many 7-12<sup>th</sup> grade configurations (Districts) in comparable districts" and that "most (Districts) self-report their data, so how much



weight you want to put on the information should be taken with a grain of salt.” ☺

Regardless, in terms of staffing, she expected “to see 27 more staff in the area of SPED.”

Ouch. Kudos for her diplomacy and she really emphasized the grain of salt thing and the fact that we have less staff was repeated several times, but it was pretty clear that our SPED



support was weak in comparison. In other words, she said we're underserving SPED students in the nicest possible way. "You have a greater number of

paraeducators than normal. That's what you've done. You've been cost effective, but you need to be aware of this conscious decision on how you've chosen to serve students with disabilities." Double ouch. Let me explain that one. That's basically saying SUHSD has been investing less in full-time Certificated staff and more on support Staff in the SPED department. She continued, "You also have fewer nursing Staff, ...Psychologists, lower than the SELPA". And if we're to meet LCAP requirements, we gotta' get it right. Buuuut I digress. She then went on to again, 'nicely' suggest that if our "District is too caught up in evaluations, then time or responsiveness to issues being required of staff and instructors is diminished. We need to find some balance with this." And here's where the silver lining I was talking about kicks in. Apparently, for YEARS, our District has been getting the short end of the tax stick when it comes to funding in relation to MCOE. She explained, "Graduation rates need to be addressed. You won't be able to do this individually, you'll need partners...property taxes are levied applied against county Special Ed programs...If they're applied equally, great, if not, the challenge is you (the District) are not participating in County Programs to the same degree, you're not getting your fair share to

the tune of over \$400,000 yearly." She continued, "For you to get the remedy, someone else is going to have to pay a larger amount and this is going to take some time. It needs to be done in a positive way over a 5 year period. Again, we commend you...but you are lower than average in SELPA, and identifying students with disabilities is important. Special education funds in your District have increased at a slower rate in relation to General Fund over time. The General Fund increased 43% vs. SPED funding only increasing 36%." Sheesh. Well, that's that and as you might expect, Trustees were floored, (should they have been?) but appreciative of the new information. Trustee Padilla-Salsberg thanked her "for an intense report. Staffing ratios consider additional Administrative support to our Special Ed Department. In our opinion, it's an impossible task to respond to staff and parents on a timely basis, when our Administration has four times that in terms of number of responsibilities." Trustee Rubio was "glad we have valuable information. Before and after. I see it now." Trustee Ocampo said, "What you have shown us is something we've been looking to see, so our Administration can support Special Education...to give them a less stressful environment...It's not surprising...we're working on these issues, we've known for a while." So, there you go. It is done and it only cost \$35,000 to do it. We will absolutely, unequivocally, not say, we told you so. Buuuuuuuut. ☺ Here's to a positive revamping of our SPED program!



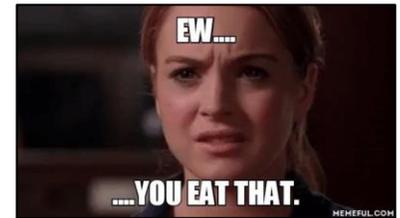
## Follow Through



SVFT President Kati Bassler thanked our Board for following through on the study, “It validates the work we’ve been doing and that was identified in 2013.” She thanked Education Specialists and speech pathologists who helped through the process. She mentioned SVFT was working to get a competitive health care bid for members. “The intention is for retention and recruitment. Healthcare is skyrocketing for Certificated Staff.” She added that SVFT was working with the Alisal High School Media Program to highlight teacher of the year nominees. “Students are excited because it’s a project with relevance.” Again, with respect to the Independent SPED Evaluation, she stated “it was gratifying to read. The task force SVFT participated on, in 2012-13 ...we take our work seriously, when we engage in a project, I look forward to working on projects and that you not drop them....Please listen. Follow-through is what we all need to work on.” Finally, she gave an update on negotiations, which included language, teaching class size, and that the most recent session was positive. “It made no sense to negotiate on a path in conflict with the consultant’s report. Both parties agreed to use what this report presents, so we’re not spinning our wheels.” She then congratulated the Board in their decision to hold Board meetings and awards ceremonies at various high schools. “It’s so much nicer than being jammed in the Board room.” She reminded the Board that looking at the Salary Formula was imperative, “It’s evident we need to look at the salary formula, and that it’s done in a way that is fair, but responsible.” Bassler hoped they all recognized the prudence of last year’s settlement and how difficult it was for Union leadership to reach that agreement. Nevertheless, Bassler reiterated that “it was



the responsible thing to do. Now is the time to look at this, we can see the numbers, and liabilities to the District. I have 3 months left (as Union President), ...I urge the Board to consider discussing this, to make a decision that is good for our District and its employees.” Finally, addressing the Food Services issue, and more importantly, the Cafeteria Fund, that according to Bassler, boasts a whopping \$7.2 million balance and growing! “Our students deserve quality food, hiring cafeteria workers who wish to work more hours....should be a Board priority. I can’t believe this balance continues....there is testing coming up. All students should be provided a quality breakfast. If I see one more wrapped up Twix bar, I will bring one to each of you. Or is it a Cheerios bar or I don’t know what other sugary cereal you put in that you call breakfast. Our District is better than that and our kids deserve it. I look forward to the Wellness Committee.” Ouch. Or should we say....yuck?



### **A Little Bit Of Everything**

During the Individuals Address The Board part of the meeting, CSEA Rep Lorena Garcia let our Board know enrollment numbers projected at all high schools is growing exponentially, along with counselor caseloads, which in turn implies more counseling secretarial staff to help them meet their needs. “They need a clerk, our population is growing, our Counseling staff needs more people”. Salinas Education Center Instructor Tom Lawson said that “Dr. Barber made a few points... I am concerned with the description for Administrative Position Language for the SEC. It is really ambitious...The Adult Education role has its own detail.” Lawson handed out sheets detailing the many jobs the Center encompasses. “We need more classroom space, more teachers. I encourage the Board to look at the job description and consider the needs of our program. Shortly after, CSEA representative Lucy Vega thanked the Board for the recent Professional Development Day



and Alberto Verduzco for spearheading the project, but questioned, “How do we build relationships when some Administrators are still mistreating employees?” Next, our Superintendent Tim Vanoli was approved for a 6.5% raise which uses the “me’too” clause which reflects the one Classified Staff and Administrators recently received. Congrats. Lastly, HR Director Alberto Verduzco informed the Board on the SUHSD’s move to incorporate Frontline’s Human Resources software that will ultimately, “hire the best staff...change is inevitable, or we risk losing. Their solutions are more effective in hiring staff...There is a needs assessment to automate the process, reduce paperwork, decrease recruitment and hiring time. It also keeps Administrators informed and casts a wider net to reach out to more candidates..It will align HR systems.” We have a system?! ☺ Our good Board was pleased to hear that SUHSD’s HR Department will finally be entering the 21st century. Verduzco recommended the Frontline system and added that we were already using Frontline’s absence system, so it was kind of a no brainer. Now, where have I heard that before?



### **Keeping UP!**

Not that we’re keepin’ up with the Joneses, but folks, if neighboring Districts WERE the Joneses, you could say that the Joneses use more modern tools in terms of sharing valuable Board information not only with themselves, but with the public. So, our good Board decided to shop around for the latest and greatest Digital Board tools out there and it seems like they’ve settled on one particular vendor. Director of IT Steve Peters mentioned that said software would “help facilitate meetings” and that their use in Board rooms across the nation has become ubiquitous. Overall, it’s a step in the right direction and he touted savings in time and costs and particularly, “ease of navigation for meetings...as opposed to thumbing through paper documents....we’re aligning tech with what’s being demanded of students and

teachers.” Not to mention all the trees we’ll be saving. Have you seen the size of those Board Meeting packets!? Shout out to the Board for saving the planet! After giving an in-depth, hands on tour of the varying features the software provided, Trustees had varying questions and comments specific to its utilization but again, it was well received. Superintendent Tim Vanoli estimated that, if approved, it (the system) could be implemented by July 1st and Trustee Kathryn Ramirez wanted to know if it would be available to the public to which Vanoli replied in the affirmative.

### **A Little Rhetoric Can’t Hurt**

CSEA Representative Bertha Gascanz briefly addressed the Board or rather...had a few rhetorical questions for them. “I have some questions: Should our students have the opportunity to learn in a safe and nurturing environment? When will there be equity for the Food Services department? We were put on hold because the District said we were too costly. When will the District get it? Classified retention is an issue. Employees need more hours to feel supported.” Need she say more?

### **Board Reports**

During Board Reports, Trustee Patty Padilla-Salsberg again alluded to the dismal future Sunrise House faces. “It has provided services in the past, and it is facing challenges at the time.” She asked Board members to read the minutes and for some closed session time at the subsequent meeting to address the issue. Trustee Eva Marie Martinez commented on the many changes ROP is undergoing. “SO many changes going on, the Irwin foundation...what does that entail, who is fiscally responsible for that funding, how will we use that? I want to talk about a committee put together to see what it is.”

### **Real Quick**

After giving a Budget Update, Manager Of Business Services Ana Aguillon was asked by Trustee Patty Padilla-Salsberg if she felt the Governor’s budget projections were conservative. Aguillon agreed and that overall, “it is as good as it gets right now.” So the outlook in the not too distant future looks



healthy overall but that nagging STRS issue keeps rearing its ugly head. Aguillon cautioned there was a contribution increase to STRS to think about which left the Board feeling pensive. She referenced the famous (or infamous) Fund 17 and upcoming expenditures which prompted Trustee Lila Cann to thank her for making budget reports easier to understand.

### **Here Comes The Sun....Or Not.**

Somebody cue George Harrison! Reaction to a presentation made by Salinas High Instructor Chuck Felice and ROP Vocational Coordinator Melissa Casillas, in support of purchasing Solar Energy upgrades from Opterra lots for the District was less than well received. The reason? A couple of Board members felt it was fast-tracked, and due to it not having gone through the proper bidding process also felt it was well, how shall I put it, a little shady (pun intended). ☺ The company, Opterra, most recently has constructed solar parking lots for Hartnell College and while the idea is generally well-received, Trustee Ramirez raised a concern that its construction had been fast-tracked without discussion. Trustee Martinez said it was “eye opening that someone comes before us, and it comes that quick and yet Food Service has been at the lowest priority, I agree we should have a process.” She went further questioning the return on investment the District would receive in terms of educational opportunities for our students. “I like that it’s CTE, but what kind of certificate would they (students) be getting? Is it a SUHSD certificate or something else?” Again, Ramirez, “I didn’t say, ‘let’s hire a company and let’s start building stuff.’ When I was President, the Board directed me to hold off on solar, and I took the wrath of the Chevron Group...Staff needs to give us an update, see us be open for other people to apply. I want to make sure we are doing things in best interest of the community..Opterra might rise to the top.” Superintendent Tim Vanoli asked, “You want clarification on the RFP (Request For Proposal) process?”, which Ramirez confirmed. Casillas said that for students to get state certification would be lengthy, but that perhaps obtaining an OSHA certificate

related to solar energy, would be more realistic.....“It would require an ROP course.” Referring to the Chevron Group’s previous proposal, Trustee Martinez stated, “That’s not what we were told last time.” Padilla-Salsberg seconded the sentiment, “The Chevron program didn’t involve our students...I have an interest in students being involved.”

Trustee Carlos Rubio wanted to know the numbers. Aguillon stated the cost would be \$26 million, at a savings of \$438,000 a year.

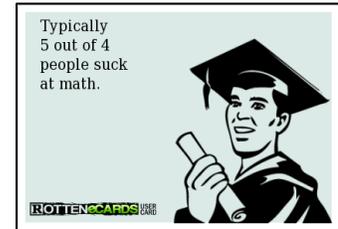
Ok, I’m not that good at math, but uh, that means it would take 59 years to recoup the investment!

Yikes! Perhaps we misunderstood

and the savings was for each site, and if so, it sounds attractive, but it wasn’t really clear. Trustee Phil Tabera asked, “Where do we want ROP to go? I believe there’s a market for wind, solar...I think we need to rethink ROP. Do we have an advisory? Students, community, parents, industry? A committee of experts knowing what the market looks like?” Putting Tabera on the spot, Trustee Martinez asked if he would chair the committee he proposed. Tabera said he would gladly do it. Enter Ramirez again, who stated her “issue is about transparency. One company presents and suddenly we just go. There’s a process.” I don’t know Opterra, do you Lila?” Trying to calm the waters, Trustee Martinez stated she appreciated Ramirez’ comments and the work Staff had done, and that in fact, a committee would be scheduled with “all stakeholders.”

### **You’re Invited! (NOT)**

Trustee Ramirez felt the selection process to be invited to certain conferences, and not others was less than fair. Specifically, she had a bone to pick with NALEO (National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials). “We’re all members of NALEO, but NALEO is not transparent in who they invite to their little institute. I don’t get these invitations, only when a friend of mine is on the Board. Should we fund it? We should all be invited to their institutes and I should get



support from Board members.” She implied or rather didn’t that other SUHSD Board members get invited all the time. “If you’re getting invited all the time, their (NALEO’s) email system is messed up and I think we should write NALEO to

alert them of the issue. It seems like it’s picking and choosing.” Tabera disagreed. “I applied several times....I might receive something every couple of years. It’s normal, I don’t get mad if I don’t get to go.” Ramirez countered, “It’s not transparent, NALEO has free trainings CABE does not.” Superintendent Vanoli chimed in and said “we can use NALEO as an example.”

