

From the Board Room ...

Notes from the Board of Education Meeting: 10/17/02

... informing all

Let's Celebrate!

Good News! *The District was honored to host new Los Angeles County Office of Education Superintendent, Darline Robles.* Dr. Robles addressed the Board and the TV and Council Chambers' audience indicating her delight at having been invited to the district and her pleasure at being able to review the art and science work on display in the Administrative Offices. She also remarked that ours was the first district to have its children sing for her. Kudos to Chris Rhodes and his Samohi singers, Tom Whaley, Fine Arts Coordinator, Tracie Thomas and the entire Food and Nutrition Services staff (the Farmer's Market Fresh Fruit and Salad bar was *totally* impressive), Mark Byrd and Rebel Harrison of ROP for the stunning floral arrangements and the many principals, staff and students who contributed to the success of the event. Thanks!

Highlights. Four students from Olympic High School addressed the Board, Gladys Belloso, Elizabeth Buendia, Mario Munoz and Amelia Tomlin. Although there were multiple variations on this theme, the major idea expressed by each student was his or her increased feeling of self worth and value. Crediting principal, Dr. Suzanne Toyryla, with making a meaningful difference in their lives, the students also remarked on the wide array of programs now available for Olympic students including, counseling, California Jobs for Graduates, videography, Art, Project Echo, the UCLA Weather Station, the school paper (copies of which were distributed) as well as the full spectrum of academics. Each student cited a true sense of belonging as one of the reasons for their increased academic success, as well as being surrounded by a core of truly caring, nurturing, knowledgeable district staffers. Olympic graduated 50 students last year and is on target to surpass that number this year.

Dr. Toyryla briefly addressed the Board indicating that Olympic was on the march! She alerted everyone to watch Olympic for proof of educational reform in alternative education. She also thanked her staff for their steadfastness, courage and just plain hard work.

SMMUSD has been awarded a \$25,000 CDE grant that will enable us to initiate an 18-month planning process to create significant policy changes that will lead to a district Comprehensive Health Plan. The project currently involves Food and Nutrition Services, Health Education and PE departments working on a pilot program with John Muir and Webster Elementary Schools and Lincoln Middle School. District staff will also be working with DAC's and external partners such as RAND to develop the program. The Board can expect a report in June, 2003.

In a break from tradition, the Board has designated that the second meeting in most months this school year will be devoted to in-depth exploration of critical issues facing the learning communities. The majority of this meeting was dedicated to an Update from members of the newly formed Race and Discipline Task Force. The Task Force chairpersons, Irma Carranza, Oscar de la Torre, Delores Gonzales, Ana Jara, Joseph Quarles, along with District staff Peggy Harris and Laurel Schmidt all presented portions of a larger overview which detailed the work of the task force to date. In addition to presenting newly designed District reporting forms and related administrative regulations, an updated student Bill of Rights, and implications for and from the district's Strategic Plan, the committee spokespersons highlighted on-going challenges for the district and community. These challenges include but are not limited to:

- 1) remembering the over-riding goal: all children must be successful in school
- 2) changing cultural perceptions in culturally respectful ways
- 3) safeguarding the civil rights, dignity and confidentiality of all students
- 4) equipping staff with training that leads to understanding
- 5) reflecting on and acting upon the value of schools *versus* jails (proactive prevention works better than draconian measures)
- 6) to tirelessly work toward equality and equity for all students.

A new student handbook is being finalized by the Student Services Department – it will be completed and published by mid-November. Copies will be made available at all school sites and can be reviewed at the school district administrative offices during normal business hours. Staff has already undergone training in the updated procedures; extensive staff development is planned through the year. It is the most sincere hope of all stakeholders that the Race and Discipline Task Force may segue directly into a new District Advisory Committee (DAC) the charge of which will be to advise the Board on policies, practices and programs as they relate to overall student success.

In addition to thanking task force chairs, the Board gratefully acknowledged the help of students, citizens, law enforcement representatives, teachers and classified staff members. In offering remarks, President Brownley echoed the viewpoints of all Board

the voting block

October 17, 2002

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Board Meetings/ Date

All agenda items passed,

6-0 with a motion by

Mrs. Brady

seconded by Mr. Pratt

Dr. Escarce, *in absentia*, no
abstentions, Student Vote: Aye

There was no Closed Session.

*Copies of all documents are
available in the Office of the
Superintendent.*

Of Note

Ratified: SMMCTA Contract

Approved: Superintendent's

Performance Targets 2002-03

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members when she stated that “... it was terrific to live in a community that continued to face hard issues in open and direct ways with a commitment to ‘no taboos.’”