
SMMUSD HR NEWS

Volume 5, Issue 2

The Professional Growth Edition

April 2009

SMMUSD Human Resources Mission Statement

Service, Care, Integrity

Our students learn best when we hire the highest quality staff and support them through personalized attention, proactive communication, and quick and accurate responses to their needs.

BTSA Assists in Teacher Retention

Remember the Tier II Teaching Credential programs you paid for at a university? Remember SMMUSD's former mentoring program? Today, BTSA programs in 95% of school districts across the state combine these support and credentialing programs into one free in-district two-year experience called BTSA Induction.

The Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program (BTSA), found throughout school districts in California, is an important reason many teachers choose to stay in the Education system. Based on statewide data from the 2007-2008 school year, 85% of teachers who have participated in BTSA are still teaching over 3 years after the completion of the program. In comparison, only 35% of teachers who did NOT go through the BTSA program remain in the teaching profession after 3 years.

Happily, **SMMUSD teachers who participate in BTSA have a 95% retention rate.** This year, BTSA has 28 Participating Teachers and 25 Classroom Based Support Providers. SMMUSD's BTSA Induction program as approved by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the California Department of Education includes: Teacher Academy, FACT (the formative assessment program that provides reflective opportunities to build teaching practices which will benefit teachers and students), a Support Provider, Professional Development Opportunities, Orientation to district and site priorities which are aligned with BTSA, release time provided by substitutes or support providers to allow for observations of other teachers, and working conditions advocacy. If you are interested in learning about BTSA, please contact Susan Samarge-Powell, at ssamarge@smmusd.org or (310) 450-8338 x346.

Classified staff - Interested in support towards earning your teaching credential?

The Career Development Program is designed for paraprofessionals who have been employed in SMMUSD for three years who are interested in earning their teaching credentials or other professional certification in the field of education.

This year, the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District's Career Development Program (CDP) is being re-established to increase the pool of teacher candidates from diverse cultural backgrounds. One objective of this program is to encourage SMMUSD paraprofessionals from under-represented groups to consider pursuing a teaching credential. All classified employees (including Instructional Assistants, library techs, bus drivers and any other classified staff) are encouraged to participate in this program

We hope to offer support to our CDP participants in a variety of ways, including: Individual career guidance from the CDP Coordinator; Partial reimbursement of tuition costs; when available, site mentor/supervising teacher support giving the participant opportunities to gain the skills necessary for teaching (i.e. planning and implementing lesson plans); group meetings 3-4 times a year designed to help prepare the participants for a future teaching/specialized position.

Are you interested in learning more about this program? Please contact Susan Samarge-Powell, at ssamarge@smmusd.org or (310) 450-8338 x346.

Shine our HR spotlight on someone special!

Do you know a staff member we should "spotlighted" in our newsletter? Has this person demonstrated growth in the area of Human Resources? For instance, has s/he participated in the Career Development Program (CDP), National Board Certification, BTSA, Professional Growth or used information from the financial planning seminars? Contact Susan Samarge-Powell: ssamarge@smmusd.org and we'll try to get him/her in our next issue! See our first Spotlight on the next page!

The Budget Impact on SMMUSD

We are all aware that the California Budget Crisis is having a dramatically negative impact on school districts. SMMUSD is very proud of the fact that although this crisis is hitting us too, our financial condition is strong enough that the crisis is having far less of an impact on our employees than in almost all surrounding districts. The District at this time is not considering a freeze on certificated employees increasing their salary by step and column increases. Additionally, the District at this time is not considering freezing classified professional growth increments.

We are proceeding cautiously into the 2009-10 school year, with the hope that we will see an improvement in the budget by the 2010-11 school year. The District will continue to collaborate and plan with our employee groups during this difficult financial time. As always, we value the work everyone does to support our students, and we will do our best to support you.

No Child Left Behind

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act requires that “highly qualified” teachers and instructional assistants, as defined by the federal government, be in every classroom.

For our four Title I schools, we are required to send out a letter to parents advising them when this is not the case. The Human Resources office has reviewed each teacher’s credential and “highly qualified” status. We have several teachers who, according to the NCLB, are not highly qualified. Some require relatively easy remedies. The most difficult are secondary SDC teachers who teach our Special Education students in various subjects. The federal government requires them to be highly qualified in each subject they teach. While extremely difficult, we continue to work on solutions towards making sure all our teaching staff are highly qualified as defined by NCLB.

Additionally, the Personnel Commission office has certified our instructional assistants as highly qualified.

If you have questions about your NCLB status, please contact us in HR so we may go through this information with you.

ALL SMMUSD Staff – Be on the lookout !

TB Test Renewal notification letters will be sent out from Human Resources in they spring! Remember, you can’t work if you don’t have an up-to-date TB test on file. Questions? Please call Leyla Platz at x70-275. Many thanks to our nurses for all their help!

Spotlight on...

Gabriela Gonzalez – Career Development Program Alum!

Welcome to our Spotlight section! In this section of our HR news, we will be highlighting some of our very valuable employees who have gone through some of our programs. For this spotlight, we focus on an alumnus of our Career Development Program (CDP) in SMMUSD (see CDP section of this newsletter for more information).

Gabriela Gonzalez is a Resource Specialist Teacher at McKinley Elementary School. In the middle of her sixth year, Gaby is a valued member of the McKinley community. She began her tenure in our district as an Instructional Assistant in a Special Day Class – Intensive Services (SDC-IS). She is now the teacher for the Resource Specialist Program for Special Education at McKinley. Gaby works with students throughout the school who qualify for Special Education and require some additional assistance to support their work in the regular education classroom.

Gaby decided to go through our CDP program because she felt it would be a good learning opportunity. The CDP program also offered her an opportunity to connect with people who were in similar work situations and were going through the same type of experiences. She thought she might also get some more information about the district and what working for SMMUSD as a teacher might entail.

While working as an Instructional Assistant, Gaby got her degree from California State, Dominguez Hills. She felt that working with the CDP program offered her a chance to have great support while going to school to earn her teaching credential.

Her advice to people who might be considering going through our program is, “You can’t afford not to do it! The workload just doesn’t feel as heavy if you have someone else who shares your experience!”

Happily, Gaby’s experience in SMMUSD is not unique! Over the next few HR issues, you will be meeting some more of our amazing SMMUSD teachers and administrators who went through our CDP program and want to share their experiences! We are very fortunate to have Gaby as a teacher in our district!

Perk up your Work!

In these unsettling economic times, your SMMUSD HR office wants to support you and your families the best we can. We have found a way to help you get some *Great Work Perks* as a result of being a part of our school district.

Great Work Perks is an organization that finds unique and premium employee discounts to local restaurants, goods and services in the Greater Los Angeles area that you cannot find elsewhere! Great Work Perks' mission is to "...obtain exclusive discounts and benefits from trusted local and national goods and services providers for [SMMUSD] employees." These perks include discounts on everyday meals, services, activities and necessities from a wide variety of places! Some of the places where you can receive Great Work Perks' discounts include:

- Burke Williams Day Spa
- Disneyland
- AMC, Lowes and Odeon Movie Theatres
- Right Start Baby retail stores
- Various Restaurants

Be on the look out at your sites for the Great Work Perks cards that will be arriving at your sites for ALL employees soon. We hope these Great Perks help you feel valued at work! Visit www.greatworkperks.com for more information.

CONGRATULATIONS to our newest National Board Certified Teachers!

On January 15, 2009 our newest National Board Certified Teachers were honored by our SMMUSD Board of Education and Superintendent for their achievement of this high honor. We want to congratulate:

Sarah Frederick
Roosevelt Elementary School

Libby Maccani
Webster Elementary School

Constanza Murcia
Edison Language Academy

Marybeth Reardon
Santa Monica High School

National Board Certified Teachers Serve SMMUSD!!

National Board Certification is a symbol of professional teaching excellence. It was created so that teachers, like professionals in other fields, can achieve distinction by demonstrating through a demanding performance assessment that they meet high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should be able to do.

Teachers must demonstrate their knowledge and skills through a series of performance-based assessments that include student work samples, videotapes and rigorous analysis of their classroom teaching and student learning. Written exercises probe the depth of their subject-matter knowledge and their understanding of how to teach those subjects to their students. Teachers have explained that they are strengthened in their practice and the beneficiaries of their improvement are the students in their classrooms.

Each year our National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT), receive an annual stipend, and they provide service hours in the area of Professional Development for colleagues in the school district. This year, our 52 NBCT's have taken on a variety of ways to serve our district. From acting as BTSA Support Providers, to facilitating LessonLink teams to planning and implementing Professional Development at sites, our NBCT's are already hard at work serving colleagues and sites with their expertise. We are excited with how SMMUSD NBCTs are supporting the district, and look forward to seeing some great results at the end of the school year.

Though support for the National Boards process varies nationally, in SMMUSD we offer support to our candidates by reimbursing them for all application fees, providing one-on-one support from current NBCTs, providing sub days while working on the process, and a monetary reimbursement for supplies when they complete the process. When they achieve certification, the district offers a stipend for the ten years teachers are certified.

This year we have 18 teachers throughout our district who are pursuing National Board Certification. These teachers are committed to continued lifelong learning and student support. We as a district are committed to supporting them as they pursue this high honor.

While just over 1% of California's teachers are National Board Certified, we are excited to announce that SMMUSD has over 8% of our teachers who are National Board Certified. This is wonderful, and a true example of the dedicated staff we have in SMMUSD. Are you interested in pursuing National Board Certification yourself? Please contact Susan Samarge-Powell at ssamarge@smmusd.org or (310) 450-8338 x346.

Crosscultural, Language and Academic Development (CLAD) Certificate

As a District committed to closing the achievement gap, and as a district required to comply with state laws, every SMMUSD teacher must have a CLAD certificate or its equivalent. The district is committed to having 100% of our teachers CLAD-credentialed, and we have tried to do everything possible to assist our teachers in gaining that certificate. Many of our teachers have already completed their coursework or have taken the CLAD exam.

California Education Code and the Williams settlement are very clear. Teachers must have a CLAD certificate or equivalent if they have one or more English Learners in their classroom. This certificate demonstrates that the teacher possesses the knowledge and skills needed to address the linguistic and academic needs of EL students.

Teachers who currently do not have a CLAD or equivalent have been notified and have until June 30, 2009 to obtain the certificate. Teachers who have not earned a CLAD certificate may apply for an emergency CLAD certificate for up to two years. Beginning in the 2009-2010 school year, teachers without a full or emergency CLAD certificate may be reassigned or released.

There are 3 CTEL exams you must pass in order to earn your CLAD. Courses to prepare for these exams have traditionally been offered through SMMUSD. After this year, courses will no longer be offered through SMMUSD, though LACOE will continue to offer courses. There is one course remaining in SMMUSD to assist for CTEL 3: Culture and Inclusion. The dates to take this course are: April 28, 30, May 5, 7 & 12. If you are interested in attending this free class, please contact Aida Diaz immediately at adiaz@smmusd.org or at x70-331. If you attend all of the classes you may also earn 1 district salary unit (15 hours). University Credit is also available. After this, two options remain to earn the CLAD:

Option 1: University Coursework

This certificate may be earned by completing the CTEL coursework from a state approved university program. For more information go to www.ctc.ca.gov to see the leaflet CL628C about the CTEL coursework.

Option 2: State Test Only

The CLAD may be earned by taking and passing the three (3) state California Teacher of English Learners (CTEL) subtests. The examinations are given twice annually, during December and June. For more CTEL information, go to www.ctel.nesinc.com.

If you have any question about the CLAD certificate requirements, please contact Marcia Hagen, at mhagen@smmusd.org.

Classified Employees -- Participate in the Professional Growth Program! Increase your Knowledge! Improve your Job Skills! Raise your Salary!

By taking courses or seminars related to your job skills, you can earn points toward salary advancement! Here's how:

- You must be a regular, monthly classified employee.
- You must have been with SMMUSD for two years before you can be awarded Professional Growth Points (though you can start taking classes before you reach the 2-year date).
- Classes must be taken on your own time, not during your work day.
- A semester college course unit is equal to 1 point (quarter units are 2/3 a point). For all other courses, points are determined by a 15 hour = 1 point calculation.
- Classes chosen must benefit you and the District in your current position or provide promotional opportunities for other positions available within the District. 2 points from non-work-related courses are permitted per increment.
- You may earn up to 5 Professional Growth increments, though you can only be awarded the 5% salary increase once per year.

I want to participate - what do I do?

1. Find a class/seminar/workshop and fill out a Professional Growth Form for pre-approval(found either from your Office Manager, the district office or on our website at smmusd.org, under Forms in the Classified Personnel section)
2. Submit the pre-approval form to Lisa Andersen in Human Resources.
3. Take the class, do your homework, and complete the class with flying colors!
4. Submit your transcript/certificate to the HR office and after a review, be awarded the appropriate points.
5. Once you have earned 10 points, you will be awarded a 5% salary increase.