

Another Award Winning SAS Teacher!

Congratulations to our own Maria Ramirez, 2009 recipient of the Child Abuse Prevention Council Front Line Award! Maria is one of the original PAT parent educators in Monterey County, as well as a Tiempo teacher, a teacher for family education classes and a parent in our preschool co-op program.

Keeping Priorities

Two weeks ago I chaired a visit of a WASC accreditation team to another adult school which is having even more economic uncertainty than we are. Seeing how a group of adult educators was working hard to explore how to improve instructional programs for adult students in the midst of potentially gloomy news inspired and motivated me. It is easy to be reactive in a time of budget crisis and lose track of what our priorities are. Over the years I've seen great things happen in adult schools that don't take the status quo for granted, who examine how programs might improve, and work together, as a team, to pursue continuous improvement. A lot of work was done a couple of years ago here to identify how our school's programs can work together to improve what students experience in our classes. We set as our common goals to provide greater opportunities for students to 1) become self-directed learners, 2) have access to the resources they need including 3) use technology for their purposes and in all this we 4) assess what students learn in more and more meaningful ways. This last, to me, is always the key question in continuous improvement in a school: ***How do we know our students are getting what they need and want?*** As we build a program for next year and the following years, even with diminished funding, we must look at how these four student goals are being pursued. Next year we will have to study this and report our progress to WASC; the time for that study is, well, now. Our students deserve no less.

What Can We Do? Adult Ed Week in Salinas May 18-22

As we adjust to the reality of smaller programs, and try to find our footings in the shifting sands of our state funding, I hear many teachers, staff and students express a sense of powerlessness, and I hear the questions, What can we do? I've heard it said that the distinguishing difference between stress and distress is the feeling that there is something one can do to act upon events, to have some power about one's circumstance. Our school has reacted to our current challenges in one very healthy way I think; we are planning an Adult Education Week in Salinas that will celebrate our traditions and accomplishments, confirm our importance to our community and our district, and provide a platform for advocating for our future. A committee has quickly come up with a schedule for the week, which will be timed to coincide with our annual Cultural Fair. Please contact Gina or Bob Wilde with ideas or offers to help. Here is the very tentative schedule for Adult Ed Week in Salinas:

Activities:

- Monday, May 18 City-wide publicity
Homecoming for former students/Open House
- Tuesday, May 19 Community Advisory Council
Opening of Cultural Fair, 12:00
Open House
- Wednesday, May 20 Cultural Fair
Salsa Contest
Open House
- Thursday, May 21 Cultural Fair (close at 12:30 p.m.)
Open House
- Friday, May 22 Honoring our "longest serving" teacher
Teacher "study circle" on health literacy

Status Report: When will know about next year?

In the last few weeks we have been planning the instructional program for next year, although of course there are many more complications than other years. Teachers and students are anxious to know about the plans, and what next year will look like. Teachers who received lay-off notices are waiting to hear about their assignments.

It is important to remember that the layoff notices that were given to permanent teachers can only be rescinded by the board of our district. We still must wait on the timing of when the district reviews, and our board acts, on what our instructional plan is. There are many complications of funding, including what continues to happen at the state and local district level, and what is being recommended to school districts across the state. Again, this is new territory for all of us, we have never seen this situation in our lifetime.

It is also important to remember that our permanent teachers will be assigned before our temporary teachers if the permanent teachers have the appropriate credentials enabling them to teach the classes that are planned. It may be a while until we are able to determine how many more assignments will be made to temporary teachers after our permanent teachers are assigned.

Many have asked what are the criteria to determine what classes will run next year, given that we must be much smaller than this year and in the past. We have shared this before, but it bears repeating, and also sharing with students who express concern and interest:

- 1. Has the class been well-attended, has it paid for itself?*
- 2. Is the class what our community needs at this time, in this economic climate?*
- 3. Is the class available in other places?*
- 4. Is the class a class? (Remember the intention of the state has always been for all of our classes “the class cannot be repeated once instructional objectives are met.”). What is the measureable educational outcome of the class for students?*
- 5. Is the class connected to, or supported by other funding sources: e.g. federal adult ed funds, state of local grants?*
- 6. Is the class a part of our tradition, e.g. running a “comprehensive adult school?”*

Even with these criteria that are pretty clear cut, there can be subjective responses. It's difficult to conceive that any of our classes may not run, and teachers and students will understandably have very personal stakes in some of these decisions. My hope is that we are careful about how we advocate for our programs, and that our message is about what this means to our entire program of adult ed., here in Salinas and in all the state. How adult ed is viewed statewide is crucial to what will happen in these next couple months. Let's be careful not to win a pyrrhic victory. (The first one to tell me the definition of pyrrhic victory *in person* wins \$10!!).