

August/September, 2011

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome back after what I hope was a relaxing and refreshing summer: a rest well earned! Not unexpectedly, I foresee a busy year for all of us. To bring you up to date, here is a recap of what went on during the summer:

* Teachers interested in contributing to the development and implementation of a transitional kindergarten program, which must be up and running by the Fall of 2012, met and formed an initial work force to research programs currently in existence in other districts. Because there are a number of program components with bargaining agreement implications, SMETA's involvement in the formation of SMFC's mandated change to kindergarten admission protocols is crucial. Collaborative discussions with District representatives will begin later this school year. If you have an interest in working with our Transitional Kindergarten team, please let me know.

* Our new Superintendent, Dr. Cynthia Simms, began her tenure. During a very positive and informative meeting, I was pleased to learn of her interest in, experience with, and desire to continue our IBB (Interest Based Bargaining) collaborative approach to working together on issues. She also enthusiastically supported the re-formation of the Labor Management Task Force, a vehicle for facilitating collaboration and communication between the District and SMETA outside of negotiations.

* I met with Joan Rosas and Susan Totaro to discuss the pluses and minuses of our new calendar pilot program for early release Wednesdays. It was gratifying to see that essentially every school in our district had created a calendar using the protocols established in the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding). After gathering feedback from principals and SMETA calendar reps, the two groups will sit down, via the Labor Management Task Force, to discuss how best to support and improve this new program. If improvements to the system need to be made, they will be made well before the end of the school year, when the process begins for year 2 of the pilot.

* A small contingent of Summer Warriors journeyed to Sacramento and continued advocating for budgetary reforms and legislative support necessary to improve the climate surrounding education in California.

SMETA Executive Board and Governing Council meetings begin in September. Approved minutes of past meetings, information on important issues, school board meeting briefs, and SMETA contact information is located on our web site at: www.smeta.org. I know I've said it before, but it's important that we all remember that the work SMETA does on behalf of its members, is work we do for ourselves; protection of our CBA (Collective Bargaining Agreement) is the responsibility of every member; participation by members on committees means that issues of concern for all members will be heard; having and attending monthly SMETA meetings at your site is a way of making sure information is accurately and promptly distributed. Stay active and stay informed! Remember that your SMETA representatives are a resource and remember that SMETA is your voice.

Have a great opening to your new school year.

Janet Chappell, SMETA President