

Ask John
November 26, 2007

1) *The decibel level of fire alarms at all school sites is a safety concern. What is a safe decibel level? Shouldn't the decibel level be set for the length of time that an alarm would be going during an actual emergency, as opposed to the duration of a drill?* John Rogers gave us a memo from Garth Maijala, Coordinator of Industrial Hygiene, Schools Insurance Program for Employees (SIPE). SIPE conducted a noise evaluation at Creston Elementary and at Atascadero High School. According to OSHA the levels are permissible. We were provided with the report of the levels. John Miron provided other information from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970; Public Law 91-596) which says the "risk assessment reaffirms support for the 85-dBA REL." John Miron also had a "Fire Alarm Update" from the Superintendent of Tamalpais Union High School District in Marin County. This district had the same concerns we have and notes that the audible signal "intended for operation in the Public Mode...must have a sound level of not less than 75 dBA at 10 feet from the unit." Johnna Maguire brought up that our approach should be to have the minimum dBA allowed under the law, not the maximum. John Rogers will continue to look at standards other than OSHA.

2) *At Atascadero Junior High School, 18 of 27 teachers are over class size goals. All math teachers are over; all science teachers are over; all but one social studies teachers are over; half of PE is over. Eight teachers are over by ten or more students. What is the District doing about this?*

The junior high has additional students over last year's projected numbers. This also happened last year and teaching positions were added to accommodate the increase. The Math and English Enrichment classes are small, which then impacts the other classes. If the junior high and high school shared the same schedule, staff could be shared between the two staffs. If the District were to hire someone, the person would need to be credentialed in all subject areas. Current numbers are 376 7th graders, 405 8th grade, 314 6th graders. John Rogers will look at balancing the classes at the semester and will also suggest new ways of creating a master schedule for next year.

3. *This was not on the original agenda. Susie brought it up at the meeting.* Many more students with severe needs (educational, physical, emotional, social) are enrolled in regular education classes. Teachers are spending more and more time in meetings discussing the "problems." Can the school psychologists come up with a plan to help teachers prepare for incoming

students? John Rogers notes that this is a concern.

Below is an updated response from John Rogers about the information from the meeting.

This note is to provide an update on several issues brought up in our last discussion.

1. Decibel level's: As Stu Stoddard had been charged with the responsibility of researching this topic with the manufacturer's, the Fire Marshal, and the EPS, I have had to re-assign this task to Rolfe Neslon. He began work on this on Monday. Results will be shared, once we have received the information.
2. AJHS Class size: Students receiving failing grades in LA will be assigned to an additional intervention class. This will reduce class in some electives. The same will happen in math. The PE sizes are large two days per week, and the other three days are reduced by having Scot Griffin available to distribute the students. We have no way to adjust the schedule to reduce 8th grade core math and social science classes, and the AJHS schedule does not allow us to share staff with either the FAA or AHS. To resolve this issue, we have generated a Personnel Requisition to hire new staff for two sections of math and two sections of social studies. This should bring those class sizes into our 'goal language' range. As the Junior High continues to enroll new students, we have a continually moving target.

As we receive new information, we will share it with you.