

# Mount Tallac High coping with physical disrepair

By Kathryn Reed

Reusing portables isn't possible.

That's the message the state Department of Education has delivered to Lake Tahoe Unified School District officials. This is because the overcrowded relief grant money is designed to rid campuses of portables, not move them around to be used in a different manner.

South Tahoe High and South Tahoe Middle schools each received these types of grants, that with matching money from the voter approved Measure G bond brings new buildings to the schools. For STHS it's the completed Stadium View Building. Construction at STMS will begin this summer.



Neglected  
portable  
sitting in  
Mount Tallac's  
parking lot  
must be  
removed.

Photos/Kathryn  
Reed

The news, that has yet to be widely disseminated among school

officials, will come as a blow to Mount Tallac High staff and students.

Just last Thursday the belief was the portable sitting in the parking lot of the continuation school still might become an extension of the school for outside agencies like Tahoe Youth & Family Services, probation and others to meet with students.

Susan Baker, who runs Mount Tallac, told *Lake Tahoe News* on Feb. 3, "It definitely feels like we're being neglected when we're told time and time again these things are going to be taken care of and they aren't. For me, we could do so much for kids if these things were in place."

"These things" being the dilapidated portable that has been sitting in the parking lot since August. She said Principal Ivone Larson, school facilities Director Steve Morales and Superintendent Jim Tarwater told her that portable would be converted into a usable facility.

Instead, it has sat all winter becoming a moldy, smelly mess. A leaky roof was repaired long after the problem was reported. Stepping in the dank building one does not want to linger.

It's possible even if the state didn't tell the district it can't keep these portables on campus (Tallac and STHS are considered one campus), the portable in the parking lot would no longer pass muster because of mold issues.

Morales said converting that particular portable into a usable facility was talked about, but was never guaranteed. "They weren't interested in hearing that it might not happen," Morales told *Lake Tahoe News* on Feb. 7.

He said the district is going to look into whether portables from other campuses that did not receive the overcrowding grant could be moved to Mount Tallac in the future, which could be as early as this summer. But it would still have to go through the permitting process.

What will happen to these portables remains an unknown. A couple have been given to Lake Valley Fire Department in exchange for defensible space work.

While STHS reaps the bulk of the benefits of the \$65 million bond that with matches from state grants is closer to \$100 million, Mount Tallac will not receive a dime. That's how the bond measure was written.

Instead, teachers this year have listened to the ping of water dripping inside a classroom before the roof was finally repaired.



The boys' bathroom at Mount Tallac.

Students must use bathrooms that make some port-a-potties look more appealing.

Larson and Morales said they have not seen the bathrooms in question.

The irony is board meeting after board meeting the elected officials and administrators tout the importance of facilities, how creating a learning environment that is vibrant allows students to learn better.

"I think a lot of times there is a misnomer out there these kids don't care about education as much as AP students," Baker said.

She said all she wants is a clean, safe environment.

“Everything is triage and Band-Aids,” Baker said.

Harry Segal, a volunteer at Mount Tallac, questioned whether the neglect that is happening at Mount Tallac would be allowed to happen at the district office or the environmental school.