

LTUSD has multiple principal openings

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe Unified School District on Monday will be posting jobs for three principals, a vice principal and instructor to oversee the Sports Medicine Academy at South Tahoe High School.

The school board created the vacancy at Bijou Community School Tuesday night when the five unanimously agreed to move Karen Tinlin to Mount Tallac High School as principal.



Karen Tinlin is moving from Bijou to Mount Tallac starting in the 2013-14 school year. Photo/LTN

The Tallac opening is because longtime Principal Susan Baker is retiring at the end of the school year. She is responsible for creating the Young Parents Program at the continuation school, which provides a nursery-day care for the children of students.

Other openings:

- Mark Romagnolo, principal at Tahoe Valley Elementary School, is retiring.

- Superintendent Jim Tarwater is giving up his principal duties at the environmental magnet school. He is also in charge of human resources for the district.
- Pat Hartnett is going from South Tahoe Middle School to South Tahoe High School as vice principal.
- The sports medicine job is new. The facility will open in August for the 2013-14 school year.

The district will be looking for someone who is bilingual to lead Bijou. The hope is this will make the 6-year-old Two-Way Immersion program even stronger.

While STHS chemistry teacher Joel Damerl has been an administrative intern at the Meyers elementary school, he must apply for that principalship like everyone else.

At Tahoe Valley, the candidate for the top job must have a performing arts background because in the 2014-15 school year it will have that as its focus.

Tinlin's move to Tallac is not completely voluntary. Bijou per the federal No Child Left Behind Act became a program improvement school in 2004-05, having been put on notice two years prior.

While significant gains were made in test scores in 2010, they reversed course for the last two years. The rule makers say move the principal if things aren't working.

Tarwater said he would not have made the change if not forced to by the state.

"The system and structure created this type of situation," Tarwater told *Lake Tahoe News* after the March 26 school board meeting.

He has long been vocal in his dislike for the Academic Performance Index standardized test because it compares one

grade level to another instead of calculating if a class is improving or not from year to year. Special ed and English learners are given the same test as everyone else and expected to know just as much.

With more than 60 percent of LTUSD's students on free or reduced lunches, it proves people are struggling. And studies have shown students from poor families don't have the academic success middle class families have.

Time will tell if moving the principal will change the test scores.

In the meantime, Tinlin told *Lake Tahoe News* she is excited about the challenges and changes coming her way. This will be her fourth school in the 37 years she's been with LTUSD. She was also principal of what was Meyers Elementary School and the now closed Al Tahoe Elementary. She also taught at Meyers and Bijou. She has been principal at Bijou for the last eight years.

"I think it's an advantage to have contacts and connections. It will help with the transition," Tinlin responded when asked if she or someone new to the district might have an easier time taking over from Baker, who has been entrenched at the Gardner Mountain site for years.

She's worked with many of the agencies that are involved with Tallac students. And Tinlin is bound to know some of the students, which she believes will help her. And while her career has not been with this age group, she has raised four children and many of their friends call her mom.

"I think change is good," Tinlin said. She is looking forward to finishing her career – which will probably be after two more years – at Mount Tallac.

