

Supt. Entry Plan defines goals and action

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Providing assurance of his intent to become familiar with Holyoke School District Re-1J, new Supt. Bret Miles outlined his Superintendent's Entry Plan at a work session following the board's regular meeting July 7.

Miles explained his plan for establishing working relationships, gathering information, creating avenues for shared leadership, familiarizing himself with district procedures and beginning the assessment of the district for the board.

This plan is a fluid document that is subject to change throughout the year, Miles told the board. It is his intent to give a report to the board as to the progress of the entry plan once a month. Goals are outlined in timeliness, some to be met in July-December and others January-June.

Miles was quick to point out to the board this plan is not just for him, but to help build teams in the district. He added he is certainly open to input.

Individual interviews with board members, administrators, classified and licensed staff, parents, taxpayers and business leaders will be part of Miles' general goals in order to learn first-hand the perspectives of the district.

He plans a regular report to the board as to how many interviews have been conducted, and hopes to have met with all board members, staff, accountability committee members and community leaders by the end of December.

Miles emphasized his recognition of the importance of getting to know the district and community, and sees the interviews as the first step in building relationships.

Shared leadership is cited in Supt. Miles' Entry Plan. His focus is to build trust and develop working relationships necessary for achieving excellence.

Four teams are proposed by Miles: leadership team, standard of excellence team, budget and facilities committee and superintendent's advisory committee. Inclusion of a couple of community members, as well as two board members on each team was highlighted.

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Miles proposed to continue the existing leadership team for curriculum and professional development. Purpose of the standard of excellence team will be to collectively determine a measuring stick for performance in the district and to monitor progress.

The budget and facilities committee will be concerned with long-term planning. Miles sees the addition of two or three community members as an asset. Purpose of this group will be to provide a conduit for two-way communication between the board and the school-community with regard to maintenance and long-term planning related to facilities and grounds.

Intent of the superintendent's advisory committee is to create easy access to the superintendent for direct questions and answers. Miles noted it will give people a direction to go if they think certain policies need to be looked at. This committee will include one teacher and one classified employee from the elementary, middle and high schools, plus two other district-wide employees.

Board response to the Entry Plan was positive. With regard to the evaluation process of the superintendent, Miles said if the board's pleased with the current evaluation instrument and it's working, there's no need to recreate another. In the measurement of success, Miles said he would like to see the superintendent evaluation tied as closely as possible to the work they want to get done in the district.

Board member Dan Kafka liked the idea, in particular, of opening up the budget and facilities committee to a couple of community members. He asked how members would be selected in order not to offend anyone if they're not chosen.

Specific board policy will be reviewed and followed, with selection preference being at the discretion of the board and appointments made by the board president. All community members will be encouraged to follow the activity of any group or committee.

Board president Kendon Olofson said he'd like to see board members on these teams. Linda Jelden added the investment of time will be worth it.

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Miles would like to have much of the entry plan timelines and proposals in place by opening day of this school year. For the plan's success, some sort of summary will be reported at board meetings and placed on the web site, as well.

Information gathered through the Superintendent's Entry Plan will be key for an overall evaluation of the district. Additionally, the evaluation objective is to provide the district with information as to strengths and areas for growth. This can be used for prioritizing resources and solving issues important to the employees.

A board retreat for building the board-superintendent relationship is scheduled Tuesday, July 21 at 5:30 p.m. in the school administration office.