

Sixth grade to return to elementary school

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Holyoke sixth grade classes will return to the elementary school for the 2010-11 school year.

An extensive study process involving meetings with parents and staff, as well as data study, led to the recommendation at the May 4 school board meeting.

While it is within the administration's authority to make a decision, the board will officially show a vote of support at the May 18 board meeting.

With the verbal support expressed by the board last week, administration will move forward with plans for the relocation.

Supt. Bret Miles said the process of evaluating this placement involved two parent meetings, four meetings with teachers directly involved and an additional opportunity for all teachers in the district to share insights via e-mail.

After initial meetings, Miles said there was a consensus among staff favoring structure of the sixth grade class to be a homeroom setting, more like fifth grade. At that point, the conversation then centered around point of location.

Miles said they found incredible conversation among parents and staff, but not a clear consensus for placement of sixth graders. What they did feel was they could be successful with sixth graders in either building.

After Miles and JR/SR High Principal Susan Ortner and Elementary Principal Kyle Stumpf evaluated all the input, they feel it is a strong recommendation to return the sixth grade classrooms to the elementary building.

This was led by the consensus that the classrooms should look more like elementary classes. Additional factors included: closer to lunchroom, available playground area, too much independence in secondary setting, students not included in all JH activities and more special education and reading support.

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Miles appreciated all those who took time to come to the table with their points of view. At the final meeting, people said they felt they were listened to, and that was significant.

Miles added it's a tribute to the board to direct administration to follow up on previous big decisions by evaluating their success.

Miles said cost consideration was eliminated from the criteria immediately as they already had a HS social studies teacher resignation for the coming year, and a JH science retirement causing an opening after next year.

Miles said the administrative team feels they're making the best decision they can at this point in time, with regard to returning the sixth grade classes to the elementary building.

The financial goal of the original sixth grade move two years ago was met. It was a different time, a different set of criteria, noted Miles.

Board members were appreciative of the input solicited and given on this topic. "Academic performance has to be paramount," said board member Kim Killin. "It sure seems like this is the right decision at this point," she added.

Miles noted the district must still evaluate the current approach to transition and work to institute a comprehensive and effective program for sixth grade students.

World language curriculum proposed

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World language curriculum for Spanish 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 was presented by district assessment coordinator Kimberlee Bennett at last week's meeting.

She noted Spanish teachers Yesenia Bencomo, Desiree Mosenteen and Stefan Betley also served on the study committee for the world language curriculum.

Textbooks for world language were also presented by Bennett for recommendation. These texts, as well as the curriculum, will be available at the school administration office for public review until the next board meeting on Tuesday, May 18.

The curriculum and texts will be on next week's board meeting agenda for approval.

Bennett noted digital rights is now a key concept for textbook purchase. In the text proposal, if the district purchases a text for each student in the class, it also purchases an online piece for the lifetime of the textbook.

Employment confirmed for 2010-11

Licensed teaching contract renewals for 2010-11 in Holyoke School District were approved for 16 probationary teachers and 29 non-probationary teachers.

Probationary teachers approved for the coming year are Stefan Betley, Heather Bieber, Ashley Clayton, Scott Dille, Gina Dorn, Kerri Gardner, Rebecca Helm, Mandy Krause, Shelby Lingbloom, Summer Maloney, Carla Mayfield, Troy Mayfield, Jenny McKenny, Kristie Pelle, Kari Sandquist and Kate Shoemaker.

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Non-probationary teachers whose contract renewals were accepted are Mary Austin, John Baumgartner, Yesenia Bencomo, Marcia Dalton, Lynette Harms, Nancy Kennedy, Claudia Koberstein, Natalie Krogmeier, Laura Loutensock, Chandra Parker, Susan Renquist, Lynn Schneider, Cathy Sullivan, Theresa Tharp.

Also Cindi Beavers, Kimberlee Bennett, Kyle Bules, Tanisha Bules, Nancy Dee, Kristina Ham, Lynette Hudiburgh, Andrea Kammer, Rhonda Mehring-Smith, Desiree Mosenteen, Angela Powell, Sandra Rahe, Martin Roth, Tracy Trumper and Patricia Wiebers.

Classified staff was approved for employment for 2010-11 as follows:

Teacher aides Tracey Cordova, Debra Drees, Jane Encinias, Andrea Hersfeldt, Tancy King, David Maldonado, Veronica Nuñez, Leticia Penzing, Christy Shafer and Nancy Pillard.

Custodians Brian Adams, Jessica Deering, Kathryn Jacoby, Guadalupe Montes-Alveraz and Sue Razo.

Food service staff Margaret Busch, Esther Figueroa, Diana Lauer, Maria Solis and Mary Wilkinson.

Secretaries Tammy Kroeger, Brenda Krueger, Tammie Timm, Joan Price, Sharon Murray and Kimberly Young.

Budget and finance director Sharon Thompson, district technology coordinator Perry Ingram, maintenance/repair person Stan Kreider, grounds supervisor Jerry Owens.

Transportation staff Robert Jacobs, Dottie DePriest, Mark Groshans, Gene Hinck, Dave Johnson, Scott Murray and Kimberly Young.

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Legislation proposed

Supt. Miles gave a legislative update at last week's school board meeting.

SB-191, the educator effectiveness bill, passed the Senate on a 21-14 vote and goes to the House Education Committee. Both Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB) and Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE) support this bill, noted Miles.

It is not without controversy, not a perfect law, but has all the right compromises, he added. Miles said it is the most controversial bill of the session.

After summarizing Proposition 101, Amendment 60 and Amendment 61 on the Nov. 2 Colorado ballot, Miles gained board directive for making a firm stand by the district.

Board president Dan Kafka and member Jeff Tharp will work with Miles to bring back some options for the board's consideration pertaining to the three ballot issues.

Proposition 101 is intended to drastically reduce a wide range of state and local taxes and fees in Colorado. However, it will result in a huge reduction to local government revenue.

Amendment 60 would restore TABOR tax limits, cut current mill levy rates in half by 2020, set expiration dates for tax rate and revenue increases and apply a 10-year limit on future property tax increases.

Amendment 61 would make sweeping changes in how state and local governments can use and issue debt.

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Other business

In other business at the May 4 meeting, the Re-1J board:

—approved Sarah Dille as long-term substitute for JH social studies teacher Kevin Asbury for the remainder of the school year.

—granted John Baumgartner’s request for use of the new gym for a June 1-3 basketball camp.

—approved first reading of the revised random drug testing policy.

—approved the 2010-11 JR/SR High student athletic/activities handbook.

—noted Supt. Miles recommends a \$3,000 board legal services line item to enter into a contract with CASB for Core Policy Manual use. A contract with CASB will be presented for approval May 18.