Several personnel decisions, including long-term substitutes for a maternity leave, JH wrestling coaches and head coach for a 7-12 football program, were made at the Feb. 10 meeting of the Re-1J Board of Education.

Maternity leave was approved from the first of April through the end of May for Yesenia Bencomo, ESL teacher at the elementary school.

To accommodate Bencomo's leave, Christy Shafer will serve as her long-term sub, and David Maldonado will be a long-term sub for elementary special education for the remainder of the 2008-09 year.

In a new-hire move, Leticia Penzing was approved as an elementary special education teacher aide for the remainder of the school year, for a position shared with Miriam Bencomo.

Junior high wrestling coaches were approved for 2008-09, including Aaron Mosenteen as assistant coach and Justin Helgoth and Chad Stroh as assistant volunteer coaches.

Initiating discussion on football coaching for 2009-10, Supt. Stephen Bohrer cited the board's Jan. 3 work session. At that time, the board proposed realignment of the football program to a grade 7-12 program with one head coach and five assistant coaching positions.

Rod Trumper submitted a letter, asking to be considered for the head position, with assistants to be named at a later time.

Supt. Bohrer recommended approval, noting this reflects the desire of the coaches involved and the board's directive from last month's work session.

Trumper was hired as head JH and HS football coach for 2009-10, and will have the prerogative of selecting the assistants.

Board member Linda Jelden said she hopes there will be consideration given to hiring current school staff to work within the program.

Board approves school
finance funding request

In a 5-2 vote, the local board approved a $500 funding request put forth by Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB) and Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE) for an ongoing school finance case.

Dan Kafka and Jon King voted against the action. Kafka said he believes school districts are woefully underfunded, but this lawsuit doesn't taste right to him. "It doesn't seem like the right approach," he added.

Jeff Tharp responded if the district stands to reap some of the benefit, he thinks it should take the initiative to help fund the case.

A letter from CASB executive director Ken DeLay and CASE executive director John Hefty explained that in 2005, a number of Colorado school districts, taxpayers, parents and students filed suit against the State of Colorado. They claimed the school funding system in Colorado is not constitutionally adequate.

The trial court dismissed the claims without permitting them to go forward to trial, and the Colo. Court of Appeals affirmed that dismissal.

Last September, the Colo. Supreme Court agreed to review the decision of the Court of Appeals in the Colo. School Finance Litigation, known as Lobato v. State of Colorado.

Two critical questions of jurisdiction are being reviewed. If affirmed, the first will improve the ability to obtain the quality of education needed to succeed. The second will confirm the power of local school districts to assure they have sufficient funding to provide the quality of education needed to serve the communities and fulfill constitutional obligations.

CASB and CASE requested support from every board of education in the state,

recommending each district commit a sum equal to 25 cents per pupil, with a minimum of $500.

Title I teachers report

Elementary Title I teachers Mary Austin and Cathy Sullivan gave a report on the after-school reading program at last week's board meeting.

Through the Colorado Read to Achieve grant, the district received numerous materials for the program. The local teachers indicated the stories include nonfiction ones, so students are getting some social studies and science content.

After-school reading program is Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 3:30-4:30 p.m. Snacks are provided, and all teachers have been trained in the curriculum.

Sixteen students were identified through testing as "below grade level," and an additional 13 were identified as "intensive," so are also being served in the program.

Of the 16, eight are up to their benchmark goal. Of the remaining eight, four have withdrawn, mostly due to transportation issues.

Sullivan and Austin emphasized this program encourages parents to work with kids on their homework, and that's where the most success is seen.

They reported the staff feels this program is crucial for students to master reading and academic success. The program prepares kids for testing. "Our goal is to create a lifelong love of reading," noted the two local teachers.

Board plays 'Assumptions'

Board members engaged in an activity called "Assumptions," which HS teacher Angie Powell and counselor Summer Maloney led. They learned the activity at a Response to Intervention staff development session which they recently attended.

Board members answered written questions by identifying the description as either School A, B, C or D as defined in the rules. School A achieved success based upon student ability; B, students who take advantage of the opportunity for learning are successful; C, low expectations for students; and D, will do "whatever it takes" to ensure students are successful.

Exchanging the responses so they didn't hold their own, board members lined up in School A, B, C or D as each question was read. Responses were interesting.

"This was probably the most useful staff development I've been to," said Powell.

Principal Ortner noted the JR/SR High staff participated in the activity at the Feb. 6 first-Friday meeting.

In further report, Ortner said Maloney wrote a successful grant application for taking post secondary and work force readiness assessments. The grant provides up to about $8 per test per student for such tests as Explore, PLAN, ACT and NWEA.

Other business

In other business Feb. 10, the Re-1J board:

—suggested board president Kendon Olofson see if CASB representative Bob Cito is available Feb. 18 or 25 to discuss a superintendent search with the board.

—heard from Dr. Bohrer that a good calendar proposal is being looked at. With Memorial Day being late (May 31) in 2010, there are more days to work with. He noted consideration for taking a first Monday instead of first Friday once or twice.

He said one proposal notes kids will be in class two more days than on this year's calendar, and the year will start with a four-day week instead of five. There seems to be some doable options, he added.

-—held a 17-minute executive session during the meeting for personnel reasons, including Supt. Bohrer and JR/SR High Principal Ortner in the session.

—discussed repealing Policy J-18 on tobacco use and abuse, as it’s already addressed in another policy.