With the recent discipline bill that removed zero tolerance policy requirements in the State of Colorado, Holyoke School District's Board of Education is taking a look at local school district policies.

Six policies involving a zero tolerance philosophy were reviewed by Supt. Bret Miles at the Sept. 18 meeting of the Board of Education. They will return to the Oct. 9 meeting for further discussion.

The Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB) has recommended removal of all language reference to zero tolerance, but pointed out the local board has some discretion as to whether they retain zero tolerance.

Miles recommended the CASB language as it allows the district more flexibility in choosing appropriate consequences.

For example, he cited a situation of a young girl who inadvertently has a knife in her lunch box to be used solely for lunch. With a zero tolerance policy, it's mandatory expulsion for her for bringing a knife to school.

Removing zero tolerance from school policy allows administration to use common sense in checking out such a scenario and to determine if there's a threat to safety.

Zero tolerance in sale of drugs even has its situations that are innocent—a young child exchanging his Ridalin for a toy, for instance. That's nowhere close to a teenager selling marijuana. Removing zero tolerance allows administration to look at the particulars surrounding the situation before making a determination on expulsion or suspension.

Board president Jeff Tharp said the policy reconsideration is basically mandatory versus nonmandatory and is a matter of having confidence in the administrative team to make those decisions.

Kris Camblin likes the idea of putting more common sense into such decisions regarding expulsion or suspension.

Linda Jelden said there's missed opportunity to investigate and get the whole story when a zero tolerance policy is used. Michelle Van Overbeke added that policies can sound good until an actual situation arises.

Dennis Herman pointed out that it's not a black and white world, there is gray all around.

Currently, the expulsion/suspension authority lies with the superintendent rather than the board. Miles recommends it remain with the superintendent, as the decision can be appealed to the board if the person is dissatisfied.

If the authority was with the board, the appeal recourse would be legal action. Not having a second opportunity to be heard is a disadvantage for citizens, said Miles.

It was a consensus of those present at last week's board meeting to go with the CASB suggestions and remove zero tolerance references.

However, since two board members were absent, it was agreed to bring the six policies in question back to the next meeting for further review before deciding how discipline will look in Holyoke with the changes in the law.

Those six policies involve code of conduct, drug and alcohol use by students, suspension/expulsion of students and grounds for suspension/expulsion.

Thirty-two policies were introduced for changes, with many of them involving a mere one-word change. These will return to the next meeting for approval on first reading.

Other policies which were previously introduced for review on Sept. 4 were approved on first reading last week.

District Accountability Advisory Committee members sought

Seven people were appointed to the 2012-13 District Accountability Advisory Committee (DAAC). Supt. Miles pointed out they're still wanting two more parents from K-6 and two from grades 7-12 to serve on the committee. Anyone interested should contact him or one of the principals.

Those who were appointed to the DAAC were D.J. Shafer, Jeannette Knutson, Julie Elliott, Pam Vieselmeyer, Susan Ortner, Summer Maloney and Kimberlee Bennett.

Security/internet upgrade complete

After Supt. Miles' construction update report, the board approved the certificate of completion for the upgrades to the security system and internet.

The project work was performed by Computers Etc. and its sub-contract, with the total project cost being $132,962.

With regard to the roof project in the construction, Miles said the gym rooftop unit has been

balanced and is running, but still needs some adjustments.

Gas valves for the high school science labs were to be installed last week. A final building inspection will occur soon, and a date for owners training is being set.

In other improvement areas, Miles noted the door hardware for the old gym restroom project was to arrive last week, missing light fixtures should be on site by mid-October and elementary toilets in the kindergarten classrooms and second-grade restrooms will be changed out.

Other business

In other business Sept. 18, the Re-1J board:

—changed its Oct. 2 meeting to Tuesday, Oct. 9 at 7 p.m. due to the conflict with the Young Americans program.

—acknowledged several gifts/donations. Rusty and Sandy Triplette and Aaron and Pam Worley donated sweet corn to the FFA for a fundraiser. The Lillis Fund made a donation to support students in need of financial assistance for school supplies or fees.

Additionally, PC Telcom donated high-quality hand radios for use at the elementary school. Principal Kyle Stumpf said PC Telcom personnel assisted in research of radios, as well as assistance with set-up.

—reviewed the timeline and process for the superintendent's evaluation and held a 40-minute executive session for an informal evaluation of the superintendent at the close of the meeting.

—heard a Challenge Day recap from JR/SR High Principal Susan Ortner from the Sept. 5-6 activity. She said the real work begins now, keeping the momentum from the event rolling forward to make a change in the culture rather than letting it be a one-day experience.

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