

School grading policy changes are reviewed

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Several proposed changes for 2013-14 to the Holyoke School District grading policy and Academic Opportunity Center were reviewed at the May 21 meeting of the Board of Education.

Two years ago a pilot program was created that required students to correct all assignments and to stay each day until they were complete. The Academic Opportunity Center was created for a support system for students who didn't meet the expectation on work the first time.

For the 2012-13 school year, the pilot program became policy, and the grading scale was adjusted to A, B, C and Incomplete.

For 2013-14, the primary proposed change notes that unit assessments will be given only one time at the JR/SR High. Students will not have the opportunity to correct tests.

There are some slight changes to eligibility for grades 7-12. These are part of the student handbook and will be communicated with students and families through the handbook.

Currently, the grading policy is for grades 4-12, but starting next school year, it will include third-graders. Due to the departmentalization of the elementary school, the third-grade classes will be using the A, B, C, I grading format rather than the standards-based report card in order to be consistent among the teachers who teach both grades.

Board members voiced support for the proposed grading policy changes, which will be on the June 11 meeting agenda for approval.

Elementary Principal Kyle Stump explained the departmentalization that is planned in grades 3-6 for next year. All eight teachers for those grades will teach reading, then each will become a core teacher for one subject.

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In the third- and fourth-grade departmentalization, John Baumgartner will teach math; Lynn Schneider, writing; Nicole Churchwell, science, spelling and handwriting; and Kimberlee Bennett, social studies and grammar.

In the fifth and sixth grades, Andrea Kammer will teach math to all students; Crystal Rigel, writing; Theresa Tharp, social studies, language and spelling; and Natalie Krogmeier, science.

Stumpf shared the advantages he sees in having staff members handling instruction in areas where their strengths lie.

2 new teachers hired

Josh Rahe was hired for the JR/SR High English position for 2013-14 and Cynthia Bahler for a kindergarten position.

Rahe, an HHS graduate, has 13 years experience teaching language arts, mostly at the junior high level. He taught most recently in Calhan and Byers and also has coaching experience in football and girls' basketball.

Bahler had six years teaching experience in the first grade before spending the last 13 years with the educational service unit as a behavior impaired classroom teacher, behavior consultant and a language resource teacher/speech language pathologist. She lives in Imperial, Neb., with her husband and children.

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Preliminary budget details explained

Superintendent Bret Miles explained the preliminary budget draft, which was based on budget parameters adopted earlier in May.

He said the 2013-14 budget is recommended to be built using a student count of 575.8, with a decrease of 10 pupils from the 2012-13 budget.

After detailed discussion, board members expressed support for using \$200,000 out of the reserve. However, they did ask Miles to prepare an additional scenario that reduces the amount of fund balance used as revenue by also reducing the capital projects.

This can be considered due to the large amount of work being done through the construction fund and the mill levy override money.

The preliminary budget includes additional kindergarten, first- and second-grade teachers to go to three sections in each grade level. It also brings back a second elementary special education teacher.

Also considered for addition are another ESL teacher, summer school, after-school reading program and mentoring program.

Transportation needs found Miles recommending the purchase of a 12-passenger van.

Miles' budget presentation included three strategic advantages of the district as identified by the standard of excellence team.

They include the best technology in northeast Colorado, the best place in northeast Colorado to

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learn English and the wide variety of opportunities for students.

Teacher evaluation instrument finalized

Miles presented the final draft of the teacher evaluation instrument recommended by the leadership team and endorsed by the district accountability committee.

The 24-page instrument is the state model evaluation system for teachers. It contains five teacher standards with a total of 27 elements. Elements are the specific descriptions of what is expected of teachers in the district.

The evaluation instrument will be weighted by element, making each element approximately 3.7 percent of the instrument.

All staff will receive an email with the draft policy exhibits in the coming weeks and will go through a full training in August.

Students present class project

Sophomores Jack Gorwitz and Destiny Lohman gave a presentation on their big buddies project for Karen Pieper's 21st Century Skills class.

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The program met the requirements of postsecondary workforce readiness, which was a focus of the class.

Gorwitz and Lohman detailed their involvement with first- and second-grade students, highlighting activities they coordinated for a big buddy program.

Their information was detailed and clear, and they received high marks for both the project, as well as their presentation to the board.

Other business

In other business at the May 21 meeting, the Re-1J board:

—rescheduled the next board meeting for Tuesday, June 11 at 8 p.m. instead of Tuesday, June 4.

—increased meal prices by 10 cents for the 2013-14 school year, as required to continue participation with the federal lunch program.

Breakfast prices for 2013-14 will be \$1.45; elementary lunch, \$1.95; and middle school and high school lunch, \$2.20.

—approved a \$250 donation to Safe2Tell.

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—held a 40-minute executive session at the close of the meeting for an informal superintendent evaluation conference.

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