

## Times They Are A-Changin'

Written by Bret Miles, superintendent

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You may not have noticed, but public education in our state is a very popular topic among legislators. So far in the General Assembly, over 40 bills have been introduced to change laws regarding public education.

This is not exactly a new thing. In fact, those of us in the education circles refer to three laws that have been passed over the last five years as “The Big Three.” These three laws have set forth a tidal wave of reform movements in our state.

In 2009, Senate Bill 212 was passed, often referred to as CAP4K (Colorado’s Achievement Plan for Kids). Most educators were excited about the passage of 212 and saw this work as the fundamental change our state needed, such as updated standards and new assessments. After years of writing rules and creating procedures to implement the law, we are just now feeling the effects.

Also in 2009, we received the Accountability Alignment Act, Senate Bill 163. This modified the existing laws about accrediting schools and school districts. This ended the A-B-C-D-F school report cards and brought us School View and Unified Improvement Plans (UIPs), which you may have read about in school board news stories where we approved our UIPs.

The last of the Big Three was passed in 2010, Senate Bill 191: Educator Effectiveness. This law changes how we evaluate teachers. The two biggest changes are the use of student test data as half of a teacher’s evaluation and the ability to take away tenure from an underperforming teacher.

As you can see, the Big Three have brought large-scale reform to our schools. If this were not enough, in this legislative session we are awaiting a school finance act that will dramatically change how schools are funded with a varied impact on schools across the state. Without question, public schools are juggling many new initiatives, rules, laws and expectations all at once. It is kind of like juggling the knife, the flaming torch, an egg and chainsaw all at once.

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The good news is that teachers in the Holyoke School District are embracing the changes. We have teachers stepping up as part of our shared leadership structure who are providing the classroom voice for implementation of the laws and policies. Even with our great enthusiasm and shared leadership structure, it is still change. Change is stressful and it takes time.

Over the next several weeks I will submit columns that focus on a different state-wide change each week and how it impacts us in Holyoke. We want you to be aware of the exciting changes coming our way. Of course, exciting is a great adjective with a range of meanings from thrilling, stimulating and moving, to anxious, frightening or stirring.

Regardless, we are living in exciting times in public education in our state. My hope is to keep you informed of the goals and the obstacles we face as a state and as a local school where it is our mission to graduate every student with the necessary knowledge, skill and character to find success in life.

*Miles is the superintendent of Holyoke Re-1J School District.*

Holyoke Enterprise February 21, 2013

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