

Re-1J pupil count even with prelim. budget

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Pupil counting for school funding resulted in a drop in actual number of students in Holyoke School District Re-1J.

However, using four-year averaging, the funded count student number looks to be 584. Because the district anticipated a drop, the preliminary budget was prepared with 586 students for the funded count, only two more than what the number now appears to be.

Superintendent Bret Miles reported the pupil count information at the Oct. 15 school board meeting, emphasizing these numbers are preliminary.

The actual number of students in the October count was 567, down 25.5 from a year ago. This represented a decrease of 37 students in grades K-6 and an increase of 11.5 in the JR/SR high.

Miles also reported on class sizes in the elementary school, noting the size decreased considerably in grades K-2 from last year due to adding a third section in each of those primary grades.

Average class size in kindergarten is 14.3 students, 16 in first grade and 14 in second grade.

With two sections in each of grades 3-6, the class sizes come in at 25 in third grade, 22 in fourth, 19.5 in fifth and 22 in sixth grade.

Additionally, there's flooding of extra adults for reading groups at the elementary school. Grades K, 1, 3 and 4 have four adults during reading; grades 2 and 5 have three; and sixth grade has two.

Junior high class size averages range from 17-19.5, with an average of 30 in music classes.

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High school class size averages in core class subjects range from 15.5-18.8, with an average of 11 in college classes and six in distance learning/AP classes.

Miles pointed out that the number of teacher preps in the JR/SR high stay at six to seven for most teachers.

When the final pupil count is completed, Miles said a report will be given with demographic data including free and reduced lunch population and race and ethnicity.

Looking at final adoption of the budget with regard to the student numbers, Miles said that minor adjustments are possible but unlikely.

Weighted grading scale procedure reviewed

With a goal of determining how Holyoke students can best compete for college acceptance and scholarships, the board held a work session following last week's meeting.

Originally touted as a discussion on whether a weighted grading scale could be a solution, the board talked about the possibility of finding a way to differentiate class rank based on rigor of classes taken.

Records show that in 1999 the district moved to a weighted grading scale in which college-level classes and other high-rigor classes such as trigonometry were weighted on a 5.0 scale rather than 4.0.

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An A grade in those classes would give a student a 5.0 on their GPA, while a B would give them a 4.0, a C a 3.0, etc.

Starting in 2007-08, the district returned to a 4.0 scale as the counselor said colleges were asking to convert the weighted scale grades back to a 4.0 scale anyway.

At that time, starting with the Class of 2009, students were all graded on a 4.0 scale, but one could only be eligible for valedictorian/salutatorian honors if he/she completed 10 credits with a C or better in college level or other rigor-level designated classes in core subject areas.

With some colleges looking at student rank, it was made clear that Holyoke's current system doesn't take into consideration the level of courses taken when ranking its students.

Rankings are based simply on the grades, regardless of the rigor of the classes taken.

New state graduation requirements could have an impact on how the Holyoke district proceeds, but those requirements will probably not be known until at least May, said Miles. That could make a difference as to when new class ranking guidelines are incorporated.

If something new is to be put in place for next year, the local board would like to do it by the first of March so when students register for classes they know what they're facing.

Some calculations will be done on recent graduating classes to determine what a 5.0 grading scale for high-rigor courses would have done to the class rankings.

Other business

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In other business at the Oct. 15 meeting, the school board:

—acknowledged the gift of a power shredder for the JR/SR high office from First Pioneer National Bank.

—approved a nonresident student application from senior Krystal Medina from Cheyenne South High School.

—appointed the following to the district accountability and advisory committee: Delphine Voigt, Josie Murray, Kimberlee Bennett, Kyle Stumpf, Michelle Klinzmann, Pam Vieselmeyer, Sharon Jones, Summer Maloney, Susan Ortner, Michelle Van Overbeke and Bret Miles.

—reviewed a first-quarter financial report, with Miles reporting there are no large unforeseen expenditures and revenue is coming in pretty much as expected.

—heard a report from the Oct. 11-12 CASB delegate assembly from board member Linda Jelden, who noted all new resolutions passed.

—held a 15-minute executive session at the close of the meeting with Superintendent Miles for his evaluation.

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