

## Standards-based report card trial reviewed

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

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A trial run of standards-based report cards in first and second grades inspired good conversation with parents.

The new report card approach requires much education for staff, students and parents. This was explained by first grade teacher Gina Dorn and second grade teacher Claudia Koberstein at the April 20 meeting of the Holyoke Board of Education.

For the third quarter, students and parents saw both standards-based and regular report cards in first and second grades. At mid-March parent-teacher conferences, a specific explanation was given for the standards-based grades of 4, 3, 2 and 1.

Koberstein said they have to get past thinking 4, 3, 2, 1 equates to A, B, C, D. It clearly does not. A grade of 3 on the standards-based card is like an A, she added. A 3 is a very good grade, and in fact, there won't be a lot of 4s.

Teachers revised report cards and rubrics numerous times in the process of defining grades. Koberstein said they discovered they weren't providing 4 materials. They're working on that.

A quick explanation for the performance rubric on the standards-based report says: 4, exceptional in grade level standards (exceeding grade-level expectations); 3, proficient in grade level standards; 2, approaching grade level standards; and 1, not meeting grade level standards.

Prior to parent-teacher conferences, teachers looked at all the data and talked through everything.

Dorn said the standards-based grades inspired a lot of good conversation with parents—more discussion than what a letter grade generates.

Koberstein said since conferences, they've seen a lot more parent involvement.

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Dorn also highlighted an area on the standards-based report that designates always, usually, sometimes or almost never for behaviors that support learning. These behaviors include cooperation, respect, organization, independence, responsibility and more.

One drawback to this transition in reporting grades is the computer system isn't set up for it. Supt. Bret Miles cited the need to move towards an electronic-generated report card. He added they'll be investigating data bases and options for this.

Another concern, as an example, is reporting grades for a first grader who is in second-grade reading. Elementary Principal Kyle Stumpf noted they recommend the second-grade teacher who is responsible for that first grader's reading will fill out a separate report card for that student's reading grade.

Dorn pointed out it will take some time to get through the grade card transition.

Koberstein added lots of districts are watching what Holyoke is doing with regard to this transition. "It's nice to be on the leading edge," she added.

## **Committees report**

During last week's school board meeting, members reported from district committees they're serving on, including budget and facilities, standard of excellence, superintendent advisory, leadership team and BOCES board.

Within the reports, it was noted mill levy override will be an active part of board discussion as they move towards a decision on whether to go for the override. A master plan update for the district can be found on the front page of the school website.

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CSAP recommendations will be reviewed by staff as a timetable for the 2010-11 testing is established.

Subject area committee work is ongoing, reported the leadership team committee. This year the group has talked about professional development opportunities for staff, and next year's big topic will be grading policies throughout the district.

From the BOCES board, it was reported a four-year contract was approved for executive director Tim Sanger. It was also noted there will be no BOCES assessment increase to member districts for the third year in a row.

Additionally, the BOCES board was scheduled to vote April 26 on a rebate to districts, which could amount to \$42,000 for Holyoke School Dist. The main concern for this approach is cash flow for BOCES.

### **Finances on target**

In a third quarter financial report, Supt. Miles noted the district is about where it expected to be at this point in the year, with no real surprises.

Outlining specifics for cash balance, revenue and expenditure status, Miles reported by the time the 2010-11 preliminary budget is passed, the district should have a good projection of the ending fund balance for 2009-10.

Expenditures are tracking as expected, and transfers are complete, said Miles. Transportation is running under budget, which is being evaluated as the new year's budget is built.

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Miles said they do plan to spend all the money in the capital projects line item. The master facility plan project will be accounted for, and the rest will get the district started with summer projects in June.

### Other business

In other business April 20, the Re-1J board:

—accepted the resignations of fifth grade teacher David Bloemker and elementary aide Summer Struckmeyer, both effective at the end of the current school year.

—voted for personnel matters, approving Karen Crocker as long-term substitute for JR/SR high English teacher Heather Bieber for the remainder of the school year; Dylan Daniel as volunteer HS baseball coach; and Type V substitute teaching authorization for Sara McMurrin.

—favored going with the Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB) Core Policy Manual. A specific recommendation, with costs involved, will return to the May 4 board meeting.

—granted admission for three foreign exchange students for 2010-11: Gabrielle Pascua and Beatrix Presich from Austria and Agata Borelli from Italy.

—approved second reading of the revised policies on absences/excuses and truancy, which will be in effect for the 2010-11 school year.

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—held a 30-minute executive session at the close of the meeting with Supt. Miles and JR/SR High Principal Susan Ortner to discuss two student issues.