

Survey leads to 3 school focus areas

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Three focus areas are being targeted by Holyoke School District's Standard of Excellence team as a result of a recent perception survey completed by staff, students and parents.

Team co-chair Andrea Kammer and parent representative Rena Schneller reported the survey highlights at the May 18 meeting of the Holyoke School Board.

Thirty survey statements found responders noting one of four choices: strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree. The final survey question involved an overall grade for the school, using the traditional A-F system.

Separate survey results were noted for Holyoke Elementary School and Holyoke JR/SR High.

Starting with a positive highlight, Kammer noted there was solid agreement in both schools for the statement, "There is strong emphasis on student achievement for all students."

Also receiving high numbers of agreement was, "Students believe they can learn."

Another strong point was parents' general agreement that the school does a good job of communicating student progress.

Kammer addressed the following three areas the Standard of Excellence team wants to focus on:

—Instruction is of the highest quality.

—Students are accepting of each other.

—Technology at the school is up-to-date and adequate for its purposes.

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While staff and students showed a clear concern for adequacy in technology, it was noted parents thought technology was adequate. This emphasized a potential lack of awareness.

While some concern was shown for instruction being of the highest quality, Kammer pointed out there's a possibility staff is considering lack of technology part of that quality instruction statement.

Numbers were high in disagreement with students being accepting of each other. Kammer said they're looking into some possible programs, such as the Challenge Day program which was coordinated by the local FCCLA chapter about five years ago.

Numbers and percentages of those completing the two surveys were part of the report given.

The Elementary School survey showed 114 of 135 students in grades 3-5 for an 84 percent return, 36 of 39 staff for 92 percent and 111 of 297 parents for 37 percent.

The JR/SR High survey showed 224 of 277 students for an 81 percent return, 30 of 32 staff for 94 percent and 75 of 277 parents for 27 percent.

Grant awarded from Morgridge Foundation

Supt. Bret Miles announced the district received a partial award of \$10,400 in a 21st Century Classrooms Collaboration Grant from the Morgridge Family Foundation.

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Two of the 18 teachers who expressed interest were funded. The district is working to take advantage of the grant and use some district funds to reach more of the 18 teachers in the first year.

Because of the grant award, the district is eligible to reapply in October, and he said they will plan to do so.

The district technology committee did the work, spearheaded by teacher Laura Loutensock and principal Kyle Stumpf.

Facility Master Plan proposal accepted

Holyoke School District will enter into a contract with the Neenan Company of Fort Collins for a Facility Master Plan, with the cost not to exceed \$15,000. Approval for the contract was given at last week's board meeting.

Supt. Miles explained engineers will go through the entire district, with recommendations that will become the master plan.

"This facility master plan will be a tool utilized by the district for years to come. It will give up-to-date information about the current condition of all of our facilities, help identify needs for repair or replacement and will allow us to plan ahead," added Miles.

He noted one of the biggest questions will be to determine the expected life left in the Holyoke Elementary School building, which was built in 1954. Miles emphasized the master facility plan is about planning for the future of the district, not about planning to build a school.

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“Facilities do wear out and every district is faced with tough decisions about reinvesting in current facilities or building new when the cost to renovate is a substantial percentage of new construction. Forward-thinking boards want this information so they are looking out 10-15 years. This allows the district to use its money wisely,” said Miles.

“With a good, long-term facility master plan, our district will be positioned well to receive grant funding for facilities, most notably the BEST Program which is administered through the Colorado Dept. of Education,” noted Miles.

Looking to find the right partner to build the facilities master plan, Miles said the budget and facilities committee of staff and community members received responses from 10 companies.

Using the criteria from the original request, the field was narrowed to four which were all invited to present their proposals.

After the presentations, the committee came to a consensus on the number one company, and two others were ok. After that discussion, sealed bids were opened, and Miles was pleased to note the number one choice (the Neenan Company) also had the low bid of \$15,000. The next lowest bid was \$35,000, plus travel costs.

Board president Dan Kafka said the process went well, and he was pleased with the open and candid discussion. Supt. Miles added the public engagement process is one of Neenan’s strongest suits.

Since the Neenan Company could start as soon as this week, the board went ahead with the vote for entering into a contract.

Other business

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In other business at the May 18 meeting, the Re-1J board:

—officially voted to ratify the administration’s decision to place the sixth grade in the elementary school beginning with the 2010-11 school year.

The board commended the administration on the sound process used to determine the best solution for location of sixth grade.

—hired Scott Dille and Sarah Dille as 2010 summer school instructors.

—accepted the resignation of first grade teacher Gina Dorn at the end of the current school year.

—approved the second and final reading of the revised random drug testing policy.

—accepted the revised 8-12 World Language curriculum and the Holt McDougal World Language, Avancemos 2010 Edition textbooks, with implementation for the 2010-11 school year.

—entered into an agreement with Lauer, Szabo & Associates, PC to perform the 2009-10 financial audit for the district.