

Supt. Bohrer resigns

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Dr. Stephen Bohrer resigned from his position as superintendent of Holyoke School District Re-1J, effective at the end of his current contract, June 30.

Board members held a special meeting Monday, Jan. 26 to vote on the superintendent's contract. Instead, they accepted Dr. Bohrer's resignation, which he submitted that day.

At the board's regular meeting Tuesday, Jan. 20, a 50-minute executive session was held for final stages of the superintendent evaluation process.

After accepting the resignation, the board directed board president Kendon Olofson to contact Bob Cito, who represents the Colorado Association of School Boards in assisting districts with superintendent searches.

This is Bohrer's sixth year as superintendent of the local district, having started in 2003-04.

In his written evaluation, the school board noted, "Overall, the board is concerned with his performance as Chief Executive Officer."

The evaluation noted the board feels the district is at a critical juncture and doesn't feel secure in the overall financial stability of the district. Despite a healthy reserve fund balance, the board has strong concerns regarding the ongoing deficit.

"Setting district priorities and ongoing community engagement with stakeholders should have a significant role for this position in order to restore confidence in the team's ability to manage district finances," the evaluation continued.

"The board believes Dr. Bohrer is an ethical person who acts in the best interest of the student body. He is a strong educational leader who has implemented changes and ideas that this board believes make a difference.

"Dr. Bohrer has a vision and passion for education of all our students. He is a strong advocate at the state and national level for the district. His efforts in curriculum leadership have been outstanding."

The evaluation noted Dr. Bohrer continues to be a strong advocate for improved student performance, and the board considers this to be one of his strongest skills.

Other strengths noted: he is a strong advocate in regard to protecting constitutional assurance of local control, was instrumental in forming a cooperative agreement with Phillips County Family Education Services, puts forth effort to attract quality personnel and seeks out professional development opportunities for staff.

In his letter of resignation, Dr. Bohrer said he made it clear when he interviewed for this position in April of 2003 that it was his desire to work here until his retirement.

He also said he works at the will of the board—the voice of the community—to lead the district to achieve its goals and fulfill its mission.

"I believe that I have contributed to those ambitious objectives, but now sense I no longer have the full support of the board. In my desire not to overstay my welcome, I reluctantly tender my resignation," said Bohrer.

While he served as superintendent, Bohrer emphasized the district has greatly improved student achievement, with the hard work of all stakeholders. He cited nine achievements of the district during his tenure, as follows:

—crafted a teacher-led, data-driven leadership team to align curriculum, improve instruction and assess achievement of students.

—closed a learning gap between Hispanic and white students by more than half the first two years he served as superintendent.

—unified the K-12 staff into a dynamic team that is data driven and focused on student success.

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- developed a perception of excellence by personnel at the Colorado Dept. of Education.
 - completed last school year with a reserve balance of \$1,741,000 and a deficit of only \$14,000.
 - enhanced the quality of the teaching and administrative staff in both schools.
 - opened an alternative school that returned numerous students to school that were otherwise dropouts.
 - led implementation of a distance-learning grant and helped write another one for BOCES; and supervised successful grants for Reading First, Read to Achieve, Perkins, Expelled/At-Risk and several others.
 - fashioned a support personnel salary schedule that rewards longevity, performance, training and attitude toward work.
- “It has been my profound pleasure to be superintendent of the Holyoke District,” said Dr. Bohrer in his letter. “I desire the continued best for the community and its students.”

Miller, Shaw resign

In other business dealing with personnel at the Jan. 20 meeting, the board accepted resignations from HS vocational agriculture teacher/FFA adviser Mike Miller and elementary special education teacher Annette Murphy-Shaw.

Miller’s resignation is for the end of his current 2008-09 contract. Shaw’s is effective May 26, with placement on administrative leave, with pay, until that time.

Mission statement approved

A District Mission Statement, as well as Code of Ethics for Educators in Holyoke, Statement of Quality Leadership and Statement of Integrity were approved by the local school board at last week’s meeting.

The mission of the Holyoke School District is to provide a positive, safe and stimulating learning environment by a dedicated and knowledgeable staff with high expectations of students, an innovative curriculum and a partnership with parents and the community that encourages students to become self-sufficient, highly motivated and independent critical thinkers who respect cultural differences, are adaptable to change, possess self-esteem and the necessary skills to succeed as productive citizens.

In the board’s Statement of Quality Leadership, in an effort to achieve the district’s adopted goals, the board cited the following:

- Engage staff and community patrons in the conversation about the future of Holyoke schools.
- Develop a plan to assure financial stability.
- Prioritize resources to continually improve student performance.
- Increase the board’s ability to lead the district, through the superintendent, through a self-evaluation process.
- Deepen the effectiveness of the board and superintendent long-term relationship.

Administrators report

In reports by administrators, it was noted Supt. Bohrer, JR/SR High Principal Susan Ortner and Elementary Principal Jennifer Kral were attending the Colorado Association of School Executives winter conference last week.

Additionally, district technology coordinator Perry Ingram and district director of budget and finance Sharon Thompson were attending sessions in their fields.

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Supt. Bohrer reported the Wray School District's board has contacted him about their interest in discussing a somewhat formal relation for their students to attend the Holyoke Alternative School next year. He also noted he's spoken with the Haxtun superintendent about potential shared programs.

Principal Kral told the board a meeting was scheduled this week with third grade parents to better inform them of the CSAP testing their children will be taking soon. She also noted the Los Padres/Las Madres program started Jan. 20 and will continue on Tuesday evenings through March 31.

Principal Ortner cited 70 JH students (59 percent of all JH students) and 92 HS students (61 percent) were named to either the Superintendent's or Principal's Honor Roll for the first semester.

On the other end of the scale, 14 percent of JH and 16 percent of HS students had at least one failing grade. Twenty of those 41 students failed more than one class.

Other business

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

—granted early graduation requests for Sara Hamaker, Dustin Wieland and Ashley Cose; and honored Hamaker and Wieland's requests to participate in the HS graduation ceremony May 10.

—allowed admission and transportation request for nonresident student Sergio Alarcon for the remainder of the school year.

—gave approval to the HS National Honor Society for use of the new gym for a dodgeball tournament Friday, April 17.

—approved application for Type V substitute teaching authorization for Ryan Oosthuysen.

—approved admission of foreign exchange student Severine Barras from Switzerland for the 2009-2010 school year.