

## Grading pilot moves toward school policy

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

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School policy regarding grading/assessment systems is on its way as the one-year grading pilot moves toward actual policy in Holyoke School District Re-1J.

Supt. Bret Miles reviewed a draft policy at the April 3 school board meeting.

Targeting the policy regulation, board members spent considerable time discussing the level of specificity. Included in the conversation was where the flexibility line should be for teachers and principals.

In the grade 4-12 grading scale regulation, it is noted all work that is late, incomplete or missing must be completed at a satisfactory level.

In this year of the grading pilot, students continued to work on any assignment until it achieved a 70 percent grade. Just recently, administrators report, a handful of students are putting no effort into subsequent assignment corrections.

Students are showing they need a different set of boundaries than they did last October when the grading pilot started or even in January.

Board members considered a regulation saying students will continue to work on any assignment until it is a 70 percent or until the teacher has determined there is no effort.

Communication was touted by board members as highly significant. Grading expectations need to be emphasized in handbooks as well as individually when a student fails to put forth effort on corrections.

It was acknowledged this grading pilot has been black and white, but with the new "lack of effort" obstacles, there could be some subjectivity involved.

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The grading policy and regulation will return to the district's leadership team who will continue to refine it and communicate directly with the rest of the staff.

Policy IKE, ensuring all students meet standards, also drew lengthy discussion from the Holyoke board as they addressed promotion and retention.

Input was shared on the merits of the principal and the parent having the final say on a retention issue.

Supt. Miles was asked to bring back information regarding the number of times retention options have arisen and how the ultimate decision was arrived at. Data and testimonial review will be considered at the next meeting before any policy decision is made.

It was a board meeting full of policy discussion last week. Approval was given on first reading for a policy and regulation on field trips and a policy on teaching about controversial/sensitive issues.

Second-reading approval was given for personnel policies on professional staff recruiting/hiring and support staff recruiting/hiring. Thirty-two other instruction policies were approved on second reading, as presented from the March 20 board meeting.

Holyoke Enterprise April 12, 2012