

School researches 1-to-1 iPad program

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

“To be continued” is the message for the Holyoke School District technology committee who is researching the implementation of a 1-to-1 iPad program in the district.

Such a program would put an iPad in the possession of each student in the school district.

The committee has worked on this since February and recently visited schools in Goodland, Kan., to observe a program in place. Members of the committee reported at a work session of the Holyoke Board of Education Tuesday, April 23.

Citing reasons they would like to go to a 1-to-1 program for students, the committee emphasized they don't want students to fall behind in technology like they were seven years ago.

However, they also acknowledged the lesson from 2010 when the district implemented change through Infinite Campus, Every Child a Writer and Promethean boards all at once.

For a technology committee meeting Monday, April 22, Superintendent Bret Miles organized his thoughts around four concepts: instruction, device, implementation and cost.

Miles couldn't say enough for the amount of research the committee has done on the topic so far. He noted they've been a shining example of what an advisory committee can do as they push the envelope for the district's future technology needs while thoroughly investigating the topic.

At last week's work session, he said he thinks they're over halfway toward a plan.

School board members also expressed excitement for the research being done and asked the committee to continue its work with investigation of issues and creation of a plan for the best

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scenario of implementing a 1-to-1 device program.

General consensus from a staff survey was positive, but Miles said he's concerned that over one-third of the staff didn't participate in the survey. While the survey is good work, he would like to start by getting that information to represent at least 90 percent of the staff.

Miles added there's additional work needing done in the four concept areas in order to properly evaluate the potential project and plan accordingly.

He would like the committee to analyze where the district is with its current implementation and use of Promethean boards, mobile labs and website.

Miles would also like to see the technology committee lead the district through a larger technology plan.

He pointed out the district used to have a district-wide tech plan, but it was discontinued after it was no longer required by the Colorado Department of Education.

Thinking about a large-scale project such as a 1-to-1 iPad initiative requires a look at it in a broader concept, according to Miles. He said a good tech plan would have the district evaluate instructional goals, professional development goals, efficiencies, infrastructure needs and budget impacts.

Miles said he's very pleased about how much has already been done and the amount of enthusiasm for innovation. He said he's impressed the technology committee has pushed the district to get to the point of requiring a forward-thinking tech plan.

He hopes the committee sees this as a large first step toward an ultimate goal of creating the optimum learning environment for Holyoke students.

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