

BEST grant to enhance security at local schools

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Office areas at Holyoke Elementary and Holyoke JR/SR High will be remodeled for better security as a result of the receipt of a security grant in the Building Excellent Schools Today program through the Colorado Department of Education.

Office reconstruction with the BEST grant award will be completed in the summer of 2014, according to Superintendent Bret Miles.

In his BEST grant application presentation, Miles noted the district has worked hard to improve the crisis response plan security procedures. Changes have included cameras, wearing ID badges, buzz-in entry during the day and implementation of the I Love You Guys protocols for emergency situations.

However, in spite of the new procedures, cameras and buzzers, the district still lacks direct-line-of-sight control at the high school and full visitor access control at the elementary school.

At the JR/SR high, the plan is to redo the wall surrounding the office and to put in a roll-top sort of counter so the office can still be locked. This will give better visibility to the commons area and the front door.

At the elementary school, the doorway where visitors currently walk into the office will become a wall with a counter and roll-top opener.

The second set of doors to the vestibule will have magnet-lock holds. Visitors will need to turn to the counter to get help with entry.

Miles said this will provide a few seconds of delay for intruders, and a few seconds can make a difference.

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The project is part of the district's overall facilities plan.

In August of 2010, the facilities master plan was completed, and a successful mill levy override election that fall allowed the district to complete the work in the master plan.

In 2011, BEST provided matching funds with the mill levy override to complete a much-needed boiler/fire alarm/electrical upgrade, along with a new roof on both schools.

In 2011, a security grant, as well as a technology grant, were also proposed to BEST but were unfunded. The technology grant work and much, but not all, of the work of the security grant have been completed.

This BEST grant award will assist with the Holyoke project that is not only part of the facility master plan but also an important part of the crisis response plan.

Total project cost is \$105,248. Miles said the BEST grant will provide 55 percent that the state pays, while the district is responsible for 45 percent.

He explained that every district has a different BEST grant funding level based on condition of facilities, ability to pay, bond capacity and more. Holyoke is on the side where the state pays more than half.

In his presentation to the BEST grant board, Miles said he was pleased to respond to their question about local funding. Leveraging the mill levy override funds has provided moneys for the security update.

In the BEST process, Miles noted that when using state funds, there are state expectations. There is a specific list of requirements. They have to use certain criteria to evaluate construction companies that want to do the work. This process takes a little more time.

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Miles said they will start advertising for this summer 2014 project this September and will probably finalize the design in January or February.

Miles said he's incredibly grateful to have this BEST grant. It's a minor drawback to have this extensive process to go through.

One of the Holyoke School District board goals in Destination 2016, the strategic plan, is to have the premier facilities of Northeast Colorado. "I'm very pleased with the progress we've made on those facility goals," said Miles.

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