

Random drug test program revisions now in the works

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Three recommendations will move forward in year two of Holyoke's JR/SR High random drug testing (RDT) program.

While in the middle of a third-party audit for the RDT process, Supt. Bret Miles told the Re-1J board at its Sept. 15 meeting that the district has also been doing an internal evaluation, as has Centennial Mental Health.

While waiting for the final report from Keith Research and Evaluation, Miles gave three recommendations of action which will be taken immediately to protect the integrity of the program.

First, the RDT committee will be reconvened to review the policy. Specifically, they will look at randomization processes, detail on types of documentation which should be kept and the need for oversight to provide the checks and balances necessary for this type of program.

Secondly, new procedures have been created to provide a clearer paper trail from number assigned to numbers generated by computer. It will also be clearer for matching names with numbers, and a results sheet for each test will be used for recording information. These procedures should be reviewed by the committee and added to the policy.

Miles' last recommendation is for a new contract to be developed with the RDT vendor, Centennial Mental Health. He said the biggest thing is the contract doesn't mention the board policy. The contract needs to clearly describe the vendor's obligation to follow district policy and have adequate protocols in place to conduct their work.

Miles said he's very appreciative of the audit process. He said Principal Susan Ortner, the district's drug program coordinator, has been very open to opening all that's been requested in the audit, and she's been reflective as the process is reviewed.

When the report from Keith Research and Evaluation is available, that information will be shared with the board and RDT committee. Miles emphasized it will be a very public process.

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The superintendent pointed out this is a new, innovative program, and it should come as no surprise that after a year of implementation and a third-party audit that procedures can be improved.

Asked about timeframes, Miles said he was to have a phone conference to go over the draft audit report with Dr. Keith Sept. 21.

Procedures in place now will go back through the RDT committee. Once a final report is made, with the contract piece included, Miles estimated the process to be final within a month.

Miles explained he hasn't found any reason to believe there's gross negligence or anyone at risk or that the program hasn't worked. "We just feel we can do it better."

Board member Dan Kafka noted appreciation for the pro-active approach to this, and added the board understood there would need to be a review after the first year.

Jeff Tharp pointed out a concern that was voiced a year ago for RDT was the level of confidentiality. He asked if that can still be retained with increased documentation. Miles said he feels it can, adding they'll need to find a balance between the desire for confidentiality and a need for oversight and trust.

In other JR/SR High reports, Principal Ortner said a staff committee is reviewing the attendance policy and will probably come to the board with a recommendation for change later in the school year.

Elementary School studying standards based report cards

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Discussion about a standards-based report card is something new Elementary School Principal Kyle Stumpf said he inherited when he started with the district this fall.

One was started for kindergarten and is reportedly going well, noted Stumpf.

After much review, timeline goals have been established for implementation of the new report card in grades 1-5. It involves much discussion this first semester, with transition and utilization of both report cards next semester, leading to full implementation for the 2010-11 school year.

Much conversation with staff, parents and board will take place between now and Dec. 15 regarding different styles of standards-based report cards. Similarities and differences between K-3 and 4-5 grade report cards will be outlined, and potential questions generated early. A parent night will be scheduled to obtain feedback.

For the third quarter of the 2009-10 school year, Stumpf said they'll look to use the current report card alongside a standards-based one. Asking parents for feedback, and then revamping the new report card, using both, side by side, will be practiced in the fourth quarter, as well.

Further evaluation with parent feedback and staff input will be addressed before a recommendation is brought to the board to start standards-based report cards next fall.

A couple of presentations will be made to the board by the report card committee this fall to explain the process.

It was noted Stumpf and technology coordinator Perry Ingram are working with EduStar to see what can be done so teachers won't be expected to do two sets of grades next semester.

In further report, Principal Stumpf noted a 20-minute recess has been added in the morning as kids get off the bus and before they go to class.

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Additionally, Stumpf said fifth graders are allowed to use the tennis courts to play tennis during recess.

Other business

In other business at the Sept. 15 meeting, the Re-1J board:

—adopted the guidelines for effective communication. Supt. Miles applauded the board for their work, citing the conversations to get to the guidelines was invaluable.

Dan Kafka said he was especially pleased with the section involving board/superintendent communication with the community.

—acknowledged gifts for scholarships from Holyoke Marketplace, Shirley Travis Memorial Scholarship and Tim and Larry Stroh Memorial Scholarship.

—accepted resignations from elementary teacher aide Laura Roll, effective Sept. 23 and from elementary custodian Edward Albrecht, effective Sept. 30.

—approved to make application for Type V substitute authorization for Jane Encinias.

—made the following committee appointments: Ashley Clayton, Rhonda Smith, Troy Mayfield and Bret Miles as hazardous material coordinators; Kyle Stumpf and Bret Miles to insurance committee; Erik Vieselmeyer, Mike Woodhead, Rick Haynes, Glen McCallum, Keith Sagehorn

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and Tim Ortner to ag science education committee; Sarah Heermann, Veronica Marroquin, Brian Gales and Gary Koch to business education committee.

Also Megan Colglazier to family and consumer sciences committee; and John Baumgartner, Sandy Rahe, Troy Mayfield, Sharon Murray, Perry Ingram, Tom Bennett, Jim Gribben, Steve Millage, Dennis Herman, Michelle Van Overbeke, Sharon Thompson, Jeff Tharp, Dan Kafka, Kyle Stumpf and Bret Miles to budget and facilities advisory committee.