Focusing on integrity of the selection process for the past year's random student drug testing, JR/SR High Principal Susan Ortner presented information on an audit process at the July 7 meeting of Holyoke Re-1J Board of Education.

Because this has been a very public policy, Supt. Bret Miles recommended the board consider the audit to show the procedure is meeting high standards. A decision will be on the Aug. 4 meeting agenda.

Ortner reported contacting three outside agencies about completing an audit for the random drug testing policy selection process that was initiated in 2008-09 for students in grades 7-12 participating in extra-curricular activities. Only one response was received—from Keith Research & Evaluation, LLC of Austin, Texas.

Ortner cited her visit with Patricia Keith, Ph.D., CEO of the company and said they're interested in performing an independent audit of the procedures used for selection of students for the random drug testing program this past school year.

The audit will involve Centennial Mental Health, as well as Principal Ortner, at a cost of $2,000. Supt. Miles said he feels the cost will fit in the budget, based on last year's program costs.

While the programs haven't been audited in Scottsbluff, Neb. nor one in New Jersey for which its principal is a key nationwide speaker, there is value in auditing Holyoke's procedure to protect its integrity.

Board member Laura Krogmeier said she feels it is worth the money to verify the legitimacy of the tests. Miles said the audit will verify if student numbers selected are reliable and viable and if they're an exact match as to those who were actually tested. "It lends credibility to our procedure," acknowledged Ortner.

Parent opposed to testing

Parent Gerald Brown spoke to the school board at the beginning of its meeting last week,

expressing his belief the district shouldn't be doing drug testing at all. "That's the parents' job, not the school's," he emphasized.

Additionally, Brown said he's not in total agreement with the district's bullying policy. By example, he noted if a child says he's being bullied, but nothing is done about it so he takes it into his own hands, he's punished.

New staff hired

After a seven-minute executive session for personnel matters relative to new staff, the Re-1J board hired a fifth grade teacher, custodian, three assistant cooks, ESL teacher aide and special ed teacher aide.

Kate Shoemaker of Grover was offered the fifth grade position for 2009-10. She earned her Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts degree with an emphasis in history from the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley in May. She completed her student teaching and literacy practicum in fourth grade at Dos Rios Elementary in Evans. She's also served as a private sixth grade math tutor and second grade literacy tutor.

Prior to employment considerations, the board accepted the resignation of fourth grade teacher Joyce Barkey, who has taken a principal position in Otis for 2009-10.

Others approved for employment for the 2009-10 school year are Olga Baeza, JR/SR High custodian; Tricia Coyne, Manuela Favela and Mary Wilkinson, assistant cooks; Veronica Nuñez, JR/SR High ESL teacher aide; and Debra Drees, JR/SR High special ed teacher aide.

Summer school finished

Principal Ortner and Elementary Principal Jennifer Kral reported on the June summer school session. Kral said 25 students completed the elementary session. Ortner added 11 junior high

students recovered 17 credits. Three JH students failed to achieve all they set out to do, so they will retake those courses. Eight high school students recovered 13 credits, completing all they set out to do, Ortner added.

Other business

In other business last week, the Re-1J board:

—approved the JR/SR High 2009-10 student athletic/activities handbook. The only major change was the addition of the random drug testing policy, which was just a supplement to last year's handbook.

—accepted two capital projects proposals. They include $7,384 for Jason Anderson of Imperial, Neb. to upgrade the fence at the district house; and $11,070 for Spelts Roofing of Haxtun to complete district roof repairs.