

August 24, 2004

Board to study recess for first quarter

Following nearly an hour of discussion by parents, staff, community members and the board of education, the BOE unanimously directed Superintendent Dr. Perry L. Perkins to implement a study of the impact of the lunch recess only schedule at Adams Elementary School during the first quarter and report back to the board his findings at the end of this time period.

Board member Sue Saia also asked that Dr. Perkins involve parents and students in the study and incorporate in the evaluation the nutritional, discipline and academic effects of the recess schedule. In the meantime, the lunch recess only schedule will continue for grades 2-5 at Adams. First graders will also receive a morning recess during the first quarter.

Saia, as well as other board members, said she would like to receive alternative suggestions as to how to structure the school day to give time for instruction and play. Although parents presented research about the benefits of recess, Saia said there are several studies that do indicate that limiting recess time does work.

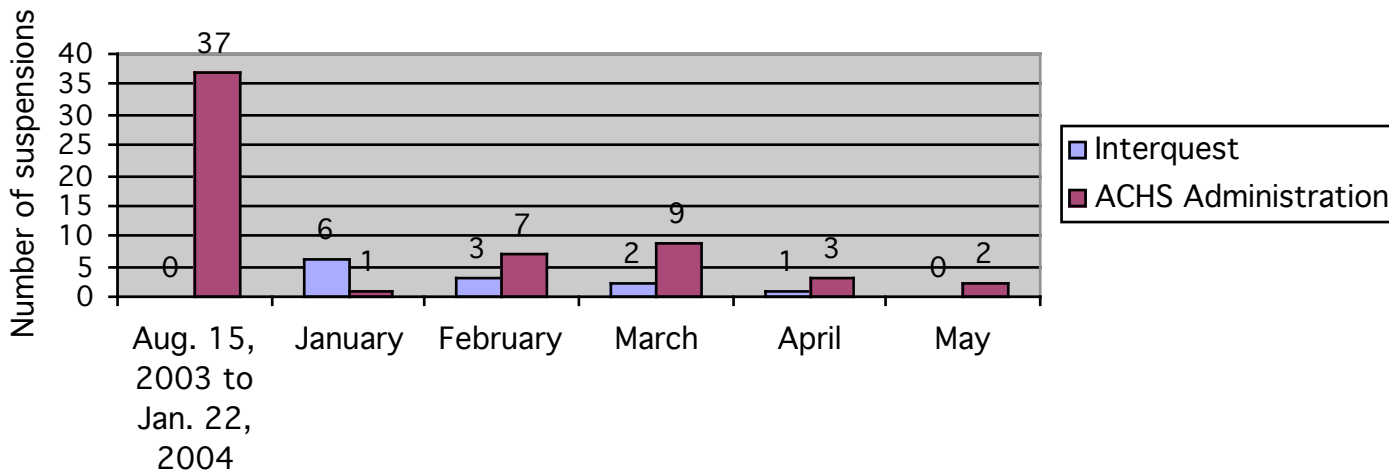
BOE member John Mars asked Dr. Perkins to bring a plan to the board at the next regular board meeting, which is Sept. 13.

High school reports smooth start to year

Arkansas City High School administration and teachers presented a report to the board last night about the Freshmen Academy and Interquest, the canine detection agency used from January to May of 2003 at ACHS.

Ben Smith, assistant principal at ACHS, presented two graphs to the board detailing the number of suspensions concerning illegal substances. From Aug. 15, 2003 to Jan. 22, 2004, the time before the Interquest program was implemented, there were 37 suspensions at ACHS for controlled or dangerous substances. By May of 2004, there were zero suspensions resulting from Interquest visits and two by ACHS administration.

ACHS 2003-2004 Interquest/Administrative Suspension Comparison



Smith said that this data shows that Interquest is successful.

“Interquest is having the deterrent effect we hoped for,” he said. “I feel it shows the deterrent effect is working.”

Board member Glenn Clarkson said he hopes Interquest is not the only answer to addressing drug problems at the high school. ACHS Principal Marci Shearon said it is not.

“Interquest is an intervention and diagnostic tool to detect where kids and which kids are having issues we need to be concerned about,” she said. “It is not the only answer. We [the district and other agencies] are working on a Student Assistance Program to offer support” to students in need. “We want their success.”

Shearon said the first week of classes went very well.

“We’ve had a wonderful beginning of the year,” she said. “Kids are excited to be here; teachers are excited to be here. It’s wonderful. We have had a phenomenal start to the year, and I appreciate so much the faculty and assistant principals at the high school. They are spectacular and have worked so incredibly hard to get us off to a great start.”

Tara Taylor, assistant high school principal and Freshmen Academy principal, said the Freshmen Orientation and Parent Night were successful. She said about 70 families participated in parent night, where they received the Freshmen Academy policies, tours and enjoyed ice cream. Taylor also discussed the first all-school pep rally, which was Friday, Aug. 20.

“Most clubs targeted freshmen and urged them to get involved, not necessarily in their club, but in any club,” Taylor said. “The band and choir performed, and thanks to our new sound system, everyone was able to hear. The danceline and cheerleaders performed also.”

Freshmen Academy teachers Rachael Hamre, Zoey Verhage and Tom Bartel told the board how excited they were about the academy and the new year. Hamre said she was impressed with students’ responses in their journals to the question of what their expectations were for high school.

“They said they wanted to graduate, get good grades and have fun,” she said.

Verhage said the support of veteran teachers has been very important for her as a first-year teacher.

“I have the best support group,” she said, referring to Bartel and English teacher Rags Smith, the two other teachers who make up her team of teachers. “I have a daughter in the Freshmen Academy, and I don’t hear any negative comments about it. The students like knowing they have this team of teachers. There is a lot of support and great mentors. We’re going to make these kids successful!”

Bartel said the administration and board were already aware of his excitement about the academy. He said the excitement of the Freshmen Academy has had a positive impact on the rest of the high school faculty.

“This is the best beginning to a year that we’ve had in a lot of years” at the high school, Bartel said. “We’re working our tails off to get these kids a good education.”

Board member Daren Reese said his daughter is a freshmen, and she is excited to come to school every day.

Schools receive federal Comprehensive School Reform grants

Staff at C-4 and Roosevelt Elementary Schools recently were excited to hear the good news that their schools had been awarded Comprehensive School Reform grants from the U.S. Department of Education for \$50,000 and \$75,000 respectively.

Faculty at Adams and Jefferson will receive \$65,000 in professional development from the Professional Development Institute of Mill Creek. The funding for this professional development is Literacy First. Adams and Jefferson received grants totaling more than \$1 million over three years. This is the second year in the grant cycle.

All elementary schools will receive professional development from Kendall Hunt, which supports the newly adopted elementary mathematics series, in the amount of \$32,000. Funding sources are Title I and Comprehensive School Reform grant. All elementary principals and academic coaches met with Kendall Hunt to provide input regarding how schools will be paired and grades configured to receive the ongoing professional development. Kindergarten and pre-k have separate training. This contract represents year one of a three-year professional development plan.

Board tables action regarding SFFF payment

Schools for Fair Funding, the 11-school district group representing the old category four enrollment districts, has won its district-level case against the state of Kansas regarding the per-pupil funding rates for schools. On Aug. 30, the Kansas Supreme Court will hear the case. The lower court ruled in favor of SFFF, declaring the state's school funding law unconstitutional. As a side note, the Federal case is still pending in Wichita; it is probably fair to assume the Federal Court awaits the State outcome before moving forward, according to Assistant Superintendent/Business Manager Dr. Ron Ballard.

Meanwhile, the legal costs for this case have continued. SFFF has bills totaling \$51,483 and an account balance of \$34,340. The organization has billed member districts again, based upon the enrollment of each district. USD 470's share for each billing period is \$17,118. Four school districts have not paid their membership dues for this year.

Dr. Ballard said it is anticipated that several school districts, including USD 470, will discuss with the organization the future of memberships and associated legal costs; particularly as the Supreme Court decision is handed down.

Several board members said they were uncomfortable giving more money to SFFF. Dr. Ballard said money out of this year's general budget had been set aside for SFFF, but the board voted to table the action until after Monday's hearing in Topeka.

In other business the board:

- Accepted resignations from Richard Soliday, high school counselor; Aleta Bruce, assistant teacher at Head Start; and Deaunna Hills, noon aide at Frances Willard.
- Approved the hiring of Rob Blevins, high school part-time social studies teacher; Joe Brown, high school (Freshman Academy) science teacher; Royce Gene Caldron, ACHS counselor; Shirley Berr, four-year-old aide at Jefferson; Judith Grant, library aide at Adams; Kathy Harris, library aide at C-4; Shandra Hatfield; Head Start; Megan Marmor, Head Start; Amy Milliman, Head Start; and Kay Widner, breakfast/lunch aide at IXL.
- Authorized the engineered design (and ultimate proposals for) a new, multiple zone unit HVAC system for Arkansas City Middle School. Final bids to be provided for consideration no later than Nov. 22. The zone

units run independent of each other; when one is down, the rest still operate. These units are much more energy and cost efficient than the current chiller unit, not including the “down time” benefit of running just the office/library or selected classrooms during summer months. Because the current chiller is down and beyond repair, a temporary unit has been brought in to ACHS and will maintain sufficient temperatures through the early fall. Ballard said the zone units would provide air conditioning to all areas of ACMS, including the currently un-air conditioned gym. Reese asked that an alternate bid be brought before the board that would include the cost of adding zone units to the areas of the high school that do not have AC.

- The board approved a resolution regarding federal funding for education to be sent to state officials Sen. Sam Brownback, Sen. Pat Roberts and Rep. Todd Tiahrt, urging them to appropriate more funds to special education and Title I. Reese said if the No Child Left Behind Act were fully funded, this could mean \$600,000 in additional funds for USD 470 alone.

The next regular meeting of the board will be Sept. 13, at 7 p.m., at Arkansas City High School. All meetings of the board are open to the public.