

Safe Schools plan, crisis team manual get thumbs up

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

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Dist. 20 board accepts recommendations for funerals in gym, memorials

School officials hope they don't have to pull out folders with protocol dealing with everything from tornadoes to intruders to the death of a student.

But administrators, teachers, staff and students will likely have to face a natural disaster, tragedy or another situation at some time.

Knowing what to do is important, according to Dudley Elementary principal Jim Widdifield who presided over Monday night's school board meeting. Superintendent Dr. Mike Teahon, who facilitates board meetings, was out of town.

Widdifield said the plan is updated each year and is especially handy for substitute teachers who can refer to tabs in the manual that lead to information clarifying each situation.

Members representing police, the fire department and emergency management recently met with school officials to update the manual.

Recommendations included:

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access to the American Lutheran and United Methodist churches for evacuation

the tracking of bus riders during activities, field trips and normal bus routes in case of an accident or other situation

update of the school security system to align with police department computer

review manual with school staff yearly

provide after-hour contact information for administration to police and fire departments

add lock boxes at each building entrance for after-hour access by emergency personnel

Widdifield said the first crisis team was formed in 1988 and the district's philosophy on memorials and funerals was established in 1996.

| MEMORIALS, FUNERALS IN GYM | |
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| Following the death of a student, staff or board member, the superintendent will try and maintain normalcy in the school routine. School will be in session unless there are unusual circumstances. | less necessary in terms of seating although alternatives are the American Lutheran Church (650-700 seats) and the Catholic Parish Center (450-500 seats). |
| Guidelines for memorials at the school include discouraging memorials that change school property, interfere with the school day, require use of public funds to maintain or suggest the retirement or discontinuation of school property. | Several reasons for not having a funeral at the school include lack of spirituality, intimacy and normalcy of student life. Students may feel pressured to attend such events at the school and some may notice the attention given to the deceased and attempt suicide. |
| The school board can limit the time a memorial remains in place. | Typically, district officials will not disperse school for a funeral and increase pressure to attend the funeral. |
| Memorial recommendations include donations to the school foundation for items, scholarships, furnishings or books. | More information on these policies is available in the superintendent's office or on the district website at www.gothenburg.k12.mo.us |
| While the Community Building is available for hosting funerals in special situations, the district discourages this un- | |

Crisis team leaders are Teahon and high school guidance counselor Jerry Wiggins who verify information, when a crisis occurs, and determine response.

Resources in the manual include guidelines for helping bereaved students, community resources, states of grief and the district's philosophy of memorials and funerals at a school gym (see box).

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In other action, the board tabled a decision whether to repair a portion of the Community Building gymnasium floor or replace the entire floor.

When the Community Building roof was replaced this summer, rain leaked into the building and damaged approximately 400 square feet of gym floor.

Estimates range from \$23,000 to \$25,000 for repairs, that the roofing company will pay, or from \$80,000 to \$90,000 plus architectural fees for gym floor replacement.

Insurance will pay for repairs and for about a third of the replacement project.

Athletic director Seth Ryker said he likes the replacement option because the new floor would be a more flexible, floating surface like the floor in the south gymnasium.

Ryker said heavy traffic on the older floor makes the floor slick. It's also like playing on concrete when compared to the south gym floor, he said.

On another matter, Ryker explained the school's dismissal policy when teams qualify for state tournaments.

Some of the criteria considered include the number of students, staff, coaches and others impacted, the number of students with parental permission wanting to attend the event, location and level of event (a qualifying first-round, on-the-road football game would likely not count), length of the event, typical crowd size and other events on the calendar at the same time.

Last May, school was dismissed for district track because of the number of students, teachers and staff involved.

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The same criteria was used a couple of years ago when classes were let out early for a football playoff game in Chadron.

“More often than not, we have school,” Ryker said.

In other business, the board:

learned that district job descriptions will be reviewed and revised.

heard that an east door and window replacement project in the Community Building is almost done and that five bus routes operate daily in addition to one pickup and drop off of a student with a disability.

were informed that recent parent-teacher conference attendance in the elementary was 94% and 74% in the junior-senior high.

discovered that several teachers are attending a fall analytical scoring workshop for experience on how the NeSA writing test is scored, to understand how to better prepare students and because schools have to send one rater for every 30 test papers sent.

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