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Motion to suspend competency-based grading fails 2-5

By RACHEL COLEMAN

• Leader & Times

Competency-based grading has not met the mark just yet, but the USD 480 Board of Education voted Monday to give the controversial system another nine weeks to better its performance.

“Let’s improve what we’re doing from this point going forward,” said board member Nick Hatcher. “Let’s take what we learned last semester and the first part of this one, and make it better.” Board members Chris Jewell, Matt Friederich and president Delvin Kinser also voiced support for the pilot program.

Discussion focused at first on how to iron out the glitches at Liberal High School, where the grading system was piloted by six teachers last year before being implemented in more than 60 percent of the school’s classes this fall.

Board members reluctant to switch systems

Chris Jewell: If we voted to end this, to suspend this program, we're gonna tear down the house tonight and say, "You gotta rebuild it by tomorrow." How are we going to do that? How many staff members are we going to have to go in and tell them how to regrade? OK, you are now doing this traditionally, with no framework. How are we going to do that?

Nick Hatcher: I don't think that we've given our staff adequate time to implement changes that have recently come to light. I don't think suspending the system is fair to teachers, to students, to parents that were told we were going to implement this through the semester. I would like to see this process fixed. There are huge merits for having a framework.

Matt Friederich: If you suspend it, you're stopping all processes, and I don't want to see that. If you're going to fix something, you have to have interaction, day to day, you have to have the good, the bad and the ugly. If you stop, you're not moving forward anymore. This has got to be a conversation every single board meeting until it's fixed.

Delvin Kinser: It's my understanding that the staff is working on this. As this is being tweaked, feedback is being collected, training is made available, we can see improvements. I would not be opposed, as a board, to get a review at the semester about how it's gone. How has it been improved. I think we'll a clearer picture. If we stop it midstream, it muddies it.

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