

By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

Starting with the Class of 2014, community service hours will be part of Chase County Schools' graduation requirements.

The new requirement came among five student handbook changes or additions for grades 7-12, approved on a 9-0 vote by the board of education at its June 11 meeting.

Mike Sorensen, 7-12 principal, addressed the board on the community service graduation requirement and other changes.

In order to graduate, students must earn 40 hours of community service. However, the hour requirement will be phased in over the next three years.

The senior class next year will be required to complete 10 hours, the juniors 20 hours and the sophomores, 30, by the time they graduate. This fall's freshmen will need to meet the 40-hour requirement.

As soon as the eighth grade year is completed, students can begin counting hours toward the 40-hour requirement.

Supt. Brad Schoeppey also noted students aren't restricted to completing 10 hours a year—if they do all 40 as a freshman, their graduation requirement is met.

"It's 40 (hours) by the time you graduate," he said.

Principal Sorensen said oversight of the program will be handled by him and the guidance counselor.

Also, there will be a tab added to the school's Infinite Campus site, which will list each student's community service hours as they are earned.

A form will be available for students to complete after doing a community service project, and will need to be signed by the sponsor of that activity or another adult for verification.

The forms will be submitted to Sorensen or Counselor Trent Herbert, and, if approved, it will be added to the student's hours.

Hours completed since the end of the 2012-13 school year will be counted toward students' totals.

Other parts of the handbook that have changes for the 2013-14 school year deal with eligibility for activities, the grade 7-8 "10th period," student dress and inclusion of a dating violence policy.

Eligibility for activities

This segment tightens up a student's grade requirements in order to take part in any activities outside the classroom, including athletics, field trips, dances, etc.

Starting this fall, students with D's and F's will be submitted by teachers each Monday, and will be placed on the Down List. Those with an F in any class will be ineligible for activities the next seven days, Tuesday to Tuesday. At the start of each quarter, there will be a two-week grace period before the weekly "one F" limit starts.

Previously, students who had two F's for two consecutive weeks were ineligible the following week for activities.

Sorensen said this change will eliminate the yellow activity slips. Students will still need to pass 20 credit hours each semester to remain eligible for activities, which is a Nebraska School Activities Association (NSAA) requirement.

Junior high 10th Period

This section is being eliminated from the handbook, Sorensen said, "because it wasn't working

for us.”

This program was instituted by a former principal for seventh and eighth graders who did not turn in daily homework. Students had to stay after school to complete the work or, if that didn't happen, come in the next morning before school. They received 10 and 20 percent grade reductions when the late homework was completed.

In the 10th Period program, aides were the ones supervising the students before and after school. Sorensen said teachers will be taking it upon themselves to make sure the students are getting their homework done on time and “holding them accountable” if not.

Student dress

The section on student dress was completely replaced, and makes it more clear on what can and cannot be worn to school, Sorensen said.

It specifies such things as the allowed length of dresses and shorts, as an example. It continues the previous handbook wording at CCS that allows no clothing promoting drugs, tobacco or alcohol.

This change replaces the entire previous section and actually was a policy Sorensen said he acquired at a school conference and was developed by school attorneys.

Dating violence

Earlier in the meeting the board gave final approval to a dating violence policy that, in its entirety, is being added to the 7-12 handbook.

The policy specifies what dating violence is: “a pattern of behavior where one person uses threats of or actually uses physical, sexual, verbal or emotional abuse to control his or her dating partner.”

It also states that CCS strives to “provide a physically safe and emotionally secure environment for all students and staff.”

Sorensen said the 2013-14 handbooks will be distributed to 7-12 students on the first day of classes this fall.

Other school board action

- Resignations from classroom aide Sharon Patch and bus driver Phyllis Mock were accepted on a 9-0 vote. Concerning other staffing, Supt. Schoeppey said there were 24 applications for the elementary teaching position of Gary Patch, who retired at the end of this year. He had another interview last week, and expected to make a recommendation to the board after it.

- New laptops for the 2013-14 school year have arrived, according to Supt. Schoeppey, as he pointed out the \$133,400 bill from Apple, Inc., in the financial report. Instead of replacing all four high school class computers every four years or so, the board plans to begin the process to provide new laptops to incoming freshmen each year, then possibly make them available to purchase when those students finish their senior year. High school teachers and the sophomore class will also be getting new laptops this fall.

- An update on maintenance issues at the school was given by Supt. Schoeppey, who said he is acquiring bids on improving the surface of the student (east) parking lot. He said he asked for bids on cement, asphalt or a process mixing oil into the current surface. Roof work is almost

finished, and painting was underway in the Shorthorn gym changing the green colors to orange. He also continues to acquire bids for changes to improve security including locks and cameras.

- At the conclusion of the meeting, board members met 40 minutes in closed session on evaluation of the superintendent. No action followed.