

Middle School Officials Present Pilot Program; Committee Praises Opening of Schools

Committee members applauded how smoothly the opening of school went after Irene.

By [Lauren Costa](#)



Dr. Lisi describes the new homework pilot policy at ASFMS (Credit [Lauren Costa](#))

ASFMS Grading and Homework Pilot Policy

Principal Dr. Michael Almeida and Assistant Principal Dr. Arthur Lisi presented a pilot program for grading and homework at the middle school level. The program consists of several steps including examining why students are failing, surveying teachers and counselors about their personal teaching philosophies and using RIDE's basic education plan to develop policies.

The standards-based grading policy identifies the definition and purpose of the work done and now uses a three-part grade reporting strategy; product, process and progress. Student work will now be able to reflect evidence of learning or lack thereof and teachers can communicate better with students and parents using commentary instead of simple letter grades.

The new homework policy stresses preparation, checking for understanding, practice and extension of learning.

"We expected push-back from this policy, but we didn't get any. Instead, we got thank you and good questions from teachers, explained Almeida. "We'll be looking for feedback throughout the year. We see it as a work in progress."

Student Medication Policy

The Committee approved the decision to slightly change the district's Student Welfare/Fire Aid and Medication Policy based on feedback from parents of secondary level students.

Originally, middle and high school students could be administered aspirin-free substances (like Acetaminophen) by the school nurse with a parent's permission up to three times a year. More than three times would require written orders from a licensed healthcare provider. The 'three times a year' policy has now been changed to 'frequent' use to prevent abuse, but still allow the school nurse to distribute at her discretion.

Volunteer BCI Check Process

After approving the [district's volunteer policy on June 28](#) and implementing it this week, Superintendent Michael Convery explained that volunteers do not have to spend as much as \$40 for their BCI. The Attorney General's office offers checks for only \$5 and all Coventry School District volunteers are urged to obtain one this way.

Convery also explained that not every volunteer needs a BCI, mainly those participating in field trips. He also said that exceptions can be authorized by the school principal or superintendent.

"There is a big difference between having a book fair in the library with a parent volunteer and a parent going on a field trip to the Boston Museum of Science with 10 kids," Convery said.

Post-Irene School Opening Report

The Committee unanimously agreed that the opening of school, despite the delay because of Tropical Storm Irene, was done very orderly and efficiently with very little down-time.

There were several bussing issues that have been straightened out, but the schools were clean, classrooms exceptionally decorated and there was classroom instruction immediately.

"The opening of schools in this district was beyond phenomenal," said Committee member Nancy Sprengelmeyer. "I saw so many skills being developed and kids everywhere I went were so engaged. Our kids are going to be prepared."

Superintendent Convery and Assistant Superintendent Jim Erinakes complimented Aramark Food Services for keeping the loss of food to a minimum during the storm. Of the \$45,000 that could have been lost, the district only lost \$697 worth of product, mostly milk that had expired.