

# South Hills

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## Record

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### Committee recommends changes

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though we are lowering our standards," Pry said.

The committee also recommended grading students in kindergarten through second grade on a three-tier grading system. The highest mark would be a "M," standing for "mastery," followed by a "P" for "proficient," with the lowest level being a "N," for "needs improvement."

Underneath the mark would be an indicator of each students' strengths and weaknesses.

"It's more about acquiring knowledge," Wilkinson said. "When a student gets a 'needs

improvement,' that's a little softer than getting an 'F.' It's about doing these things, not about pounding or beating the kids down with it."

Randal Lutz, assistant superintendent of elementary education, said a similar system is being used in the district's kindergarten classes and has been successful. Instead of stressing the grade, it stresses the students' level of understanding.

"I fully support the three tiers, but whether it's that or letter grades, the most important part is going to be the skill-base listing below," Lutz said. "It's going to let parents take a deeper look at the report card."

The new system would start students on a traditional letter-grading system in the third grade.

"They thought it would be a good place to make a divide," Wilkinson said. "Starting in the third grade would get them used to working with the 'A-B-C' scale."

Committee members also recommended eliminating paper interim report.

Wilkinson said the committee decided an electronic interim report could provide more accurate and individualized comments, and be sent via e-mail. The new system would allow parents to monitor students' grades online.

Board member Kevin Stiffey said the change could put families without Internet access at a disadvantage.

"We were going to send out a letter at the beginning of the year to everyone, asking them to respond and let us know their thoughts," Wilkinson said. "We want to get feedback."

Wilkinson said the committee has been working on these issues since October.

"We got everybody's input and perspective from the committee," Wilkinson said. "The committee was made up of about 30 people and these are the biggest issues they brought forward."

Wilkinson does not expect the board to make a decision on the committee's recommendations this month, but hopes to have one by next year.

## Grading scale at issue

By Brad Pedersen

Staff writer

The Baldwin-Whitehall grading committee recommended several changes to the school board, but it wants to keep the grading scale the same.

The committee, represented by John Wilkinson, assistant superintendent of secondary education, recommended the district maintain its seven-point grading system instead of using a 10-point system. With the current system, 93 to 100 percent is an "A," 83 to 92 percent is a "B," 70 to 82 percent is a "C," and 60 to 69 percent is a "D," and anything lower is a "F."

Wilkinson said he did not serve on the grading committee as a voting member.

"I would personally be in favor of grading on a 10-point scale," board member Martin Schmotzer said. "When you look at colleges, when they transfer grades over, the majority are using the 90 to 100 scale."

The council members said there are several advantages of going to a 10-point system, including increasing eligibility for academic scholarships based on grade point averages and eliminating self-esteem issues the system may present.

Board member George Pry said he was in favor of keeping the current grading scale.

"I don't want it to seem as

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