

June 3, 2008

Dear BMHS Student and Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

Beginning in August of 2008, BMHS will be operating under some new policies and procedures related to student use or possession of illegal substances.

The Eagle County Schools Board of Education approved these changes in May of 2008 in response to the combined study and efforts of the BMHS Parent Accountability Committee, the school community, and BMHS Administration.

The Board-approved changes build on previous efforts to ensure a safe and productive school environment in which students and staff can focus on academic learning and the extracurricular involvement that supports this learning. Beginning in the Spring of 2006, the BMHS Accountability Group assisted the school staff in sending a clear message that the use and/or promotion of illegal substances was negatively impacting student performance in the academic and extracurricular arenas.

Since that time, BMHS Staff and Administration have addressed this issue by implementing the following: (1) increased communication with students and parents, including a more open atmosphere for student reporting; (2) more effective identification of student use through an awareness of physical and behavioral symptoms; (3) the employment of random canine-led searches, as well as the use of breathalyzers at major events; (4) a strict adherence to consequences related to student and extracurricular participation, (5) increased supervision within the building and on campus, the latter including the employment of a parking lot supervisor; and (6) referrals to counseling services for students and families in need (voluntary).

Although these measures have helped create a safer school and a more productive learning environment there is still a need to prevent substance abuse and its negative influences. In order to prevent repeated offenses and to address the increased need for support in the form of prevention, assessment and counseling, the new policy incorporates four major changes.

First, a Student Assistance Coordinator position will be employed as a BMHS staff member for the purpose of overseeing the referral, assessment and counseling process for students who are at-risk, based on warning signs or substance abuse offenses. Second, students committing a first "In-School" offense (still defined as on school grounds, associated with a school event, or during school hours) will be referred to the SAC with the parents' cooperation. A second "In-School" offense committed anytime during the student's tenure at BMHS will result in a recommendation for expulsion from school. Third, student extracurricular participation in school athletics or activities will require consent to random drug testing (see below) during the season of participation.

This is working effectively for 4,100 other schools in the United States. Finally, positive incentives will be established for students who demonstrate negative drug test results along with zero instances of substance offenses during their high school career in the form of academic scholarship opportunities, certificates of recognition and/or letters of recommendation.

We believe that the additional support and resources, along with the consistent consequences, will ensure for the health and safety of all students. These policy changes will capitalize on the effects of peer pressure by providing a legitimate reason for students to refuse illegal substances. It will also encourage students who use drugs to participate in drug treatment programs as part of the referral and support process.

Please take the time to review the attached policies and procedures. If you have questions, we encourage you to address the BMHS Accountability at rowlandsmail@aol.com, Principal Brian Hester at bhester@eagleschools.net or Counselor Jeanne Hennessy at jhennessy@eagleschools.net

Sincerely,

Brian Hester
Principal
Battle Mountain High School
Battle Mountain High School Administration

Kimberly Rowland

Battle Mountain High School Accountability Committee President