

Board questions marijuana report

After disposing of official business, the Dover board of education again discussed reports of marijuana smoking by Dover High students.

Members expressed differing points of view on percentage estimates presented at the Aug. 18 meeting by a Dover teacher, Brad Swinderman.

Ed West and board president Isabel Moore, both of whom said they felt Swinderman had attended the session out of "genuine concern for the students," pointed out that the teacher had given the estimates only after he was asked to do so.

In discussing what he said was an educational and community problem, Swinderman estimated last month that 60 to 65 per cent of the Dover students used marijuana with some regularity and 70 to 75 per cent had tried it.

LaVerne King stated Monday night that he had discussed the matter with narcotics officials on the state level and he felt the figures were unsubstantiated.

Paul Quicksall, who was not present at the August meeting, said, "It is not fair to condemn six out of every 10 kids in our school."

WEST AND KING also criticized the report of the meeting published in the Aug. 19 Times-Reporter. "I object to the way it was played up in the newspaper," King said. "It hurt the community."

West said the story did not emphasize the fact that the discussion centered primarily on marijuana usage, as opposed to "hard drugs," and that it did not point out that the problem also exists in other schools.

When Quicksall stated that figures, such as those given last month, should be backed up by proof, West commented: "I am not about to quarrel about percentages. The point is, this is a reality. It's not different here from other schools, but it is something we have to face."

He also stated he was concerned about his own lack of knowledge on the subject and the board discussed the possibility of hearing speakers to provide more information.

Supt. Bill Kinneer said that drug abuse programs, from the elementary level through high school, did exist in the school system. "The question is," he asked, "how much can the schools do?"

PAUL KOVAL, curriculum director, pointed out that the school has a policy on handling problems which are evident in school. He said if a teacher has reason to believe that a student is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, the incident is reported to the office. The report is then looked into, he said, and the parent is informed if the situation warrants.

Koval also said he felt the publicity from last month's meeting had damaged the school's program. "Now we may have to backtrack and start over," he said. "Making this a public issue has not helped us fight the problem at all. We have rescued some in the past."

Kinneer reported that plans are underway to include drug and marijuana information at an October staff meeting, aimed at providing information on the problem, how to detect it and what procedures should be followed.