

Lewis-Palmer School District 38 District Accountability Advisory Committee, Nov. 27

Committee discusses election results, urges new vote in 2019

By Harriet Halbig

The District Accountability Advisory Committee (DAAC) of Lewis-Palmer D-38 discussed possible actions following the recent election, including a call for a new bond election in November 2019, and received in-depth information on the workings of the Gifted Education Leadership Team and the Assessments Department at its Nov. 27 meeting at Palmer Lake Elementary School.

The committee's discussion of a response to the November election defeat of the bond and mill levy override (MLO) issues began with Board of Education Liaison Tiffiney Upchurch's report. The bond was intended to fund the construction of a new elementary school and the conversion of Bear Creek Elementary back into a middle school, contribute to the construction of part of the campus of Monument Academy's new high school, and add security improvements to all campuses. The MLO would have funded security personnel.

Upchurch said that a candid conversation on the subject would occur at the board's Dec. 3 special meeting and that action could be taken at the board's Dec. 17 meeting. It is not possible to say what the next steps will be at this time, she said.

Upchurch explained the district's proposed use of the online survey instrument Thoughtexchange to solicit opinions from stakeholders, students, parents, and staff. The goal is to learn why people voted as they did.

Upchurch also stressed the need to honor teachers and students to show them that they are valued.

One of the issues the district faces is the location and number of preschools. The population of Kilmer Elementary is growing faster than anticipated. A D-38 Deliberates session was scheduled for Dec. 5 to discuss the choice between a centralized preschool and the current ones. Many decisions will have to be made by February, said Upchurch, because modular classrooms are not immediately available. Centralization of the preschools would result in freeing classrooms in several elementaries for the use of older students.

Assistant Superintendent Cheryl Wangeman commented that the district doesn't know how many years it might have to make do without a bond.

A representative from Lewis-Palmer Middle School, which is now at capacity, said that parents are unhappy about the prospect of modular

classrooms due to security concerns, and that some parents are considering moving their children to District 20. She encouraged the board to make decisions on modulars by January so that parents can decide whether to stay in the district or leave during the open enrollment period.

Karen Heater of Lewis-Palmer Elementary said that the Board of Education had not presented a united front during the run-up to the election, often voting 3 to 2 or 4 to 1 on motions involving the wording of the ballot initiative. She felt that more forceful leadership could have made a difference. She mentioned that there could be several new board members elected in 2019, further complicating the situation.

Tammie Oatney of Lewis-Palmer Middle School said that the mention and inclusion of the Monument Academy's (MA) new high school on the bond also caused confusion. She said that many empty-nesters in the community do not understand that MA is a separate entity and felt that the district would have a new school due to the MA construction plans.

Karin De Angelis of Lewis-Palmer Elementary said that district officials should talk with those of other districts who successfully passed funding initiatives this election.

DAAC Chair Deb Goth said that people had asked her to put a bond on next year's ballot, as the feeling was that the district should take advantage of its volunteer momentum and act now.

A motion was passed to strongly recommend that the Board of Educa-

tion should vote at its next meeting to put a question on the November 2019 ballot to address school capacity and long-term growth.

Gifted education and assessment presentation

Annette Bass, a teacher on special assignment to the Gifted Education Leadership Team (GELT), explained the process of identifying students who qualify for services and how they are monitored throughout their time at LP. She said the percentage of students who qualify for services is higher in this

district than in many others. GELT considers social and emotional characteristics as well as academic performance.

Communication about a student's performance is shared through facilitator meetings, identification review meetings, parent meetings, and surveys about students' Advanced Learning Plans.

Bass encouraged those interested to consult the district's website for details.

Michael Brom, a teacher on special assignment to Assessment and Accountability, explained the array of

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