

Lewis-Palmer D-38 District Accountability Advisory Committee, Nov. 12

Reports on Special Ed Advisory Committee, School Finance, and Legislative initiatives

By Harriet Halbig

The District Accountability Advisory Committee (DAAC) held its Nov. 12 meeting at Lewis-Palmer High School. A campus tour was offered by Principal Bridget O'Connor before the meeting.

Business during the meeting included reports on the Colorado Association of School Boards' (CASB) legislative initiatives, school finance, the Special Education Advisory Committee, and the Community Family Partnership initiative.

Principal Bridget O'Connor offered an introduction to her school and spoke of an emphasis on social and emotional wellness to reduce the stigma around mental health. This initiative began in August.

O'Connor also reported that programming in the school focuses on post-graduate life including Project Lead the Way with programs in engineering and biomedical fields and dual and concurrent enrollment options enabling students to earn college credit before graduation. Dual enrollment involves college-level courses taught on campus and concurrent enrollment involves students spending part of their day on college campuses.

Another option is to start offering associate degrees through work-based learning and internships.

The school offers a wide variety of extracurricular activities and athletic and arts activities.

Board of Education Liaison report

Board of Education liaison Tiffney Upchurch reported on recent actions by CASB involving their legislative agenda.

Each year CASB meets in October to arrive at a list of proposals to present to the legislature. This year there were 50 resolutions proposed of which 41 passed. One of these was proposed by D-38 and stated that the recent legislation regarding the teaching of human sexuality was unconstitutional as it robs districts of local control over their curricula. For information on the resolution, see the September issue of *Our Community News*.

Upchurch showed two brief videos on the subject of school financing. She said that the per-pupil revenue in 2019-20 will be \$8,069.

Upchurch commented that since the proposed bond issue on the November ballot failed, the board has decided to continue to have town hall meetings to ensure that the community understands the urgency of building another school. She said the need for a second middle school is especially urgent. Another goal of the board is to create a long-term strategic plan.

Special Education Advisory Committee update

Executive Director of Exceptional Student Services Rick Frampton reported on his department's ongoing efforts. The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) was formed to offer information and input regarding the practices of the district, advocacy for students receiving services, and an opportunity for parents and staff to meet and interact.

SEAC sponsors an annual questionnaire for parents. Twenty percent of parents responded to the questionnaire this year. It appears that the response increases if teach-

ers encourage parents to fill out the questionnaire. SEAC will sponsor a resource fair in January to inform parents of services available to students after graduation.

Frampton reported that 693 students receive services. He said the population is growing at a faster rate than the entire district due to the district's reputation.

Frampton also reported on the transitions program which serves students until the age of 21 and teaches life skills and also offers some community college classes. These students are funded like all others

in the district, but the general fund covers more than half of the expenses.

Community Family Partnership Report

Parent Liaison Michelle Nay reported on the Family-School-Community Partnership initiative.

The purpose of this partnership is to offer a welcoming and respectful relationship between families, schools, and the community. Families are informed and included when decisions are made regarding their students and are encouraged to communicate directly with teachers when necessary.

Nay distributed a document describing ways in which such relationships can be maintained. Nay also said that she hosts a group during the day which offers the same benefits as SEAC and is always willing to meet with parents should they request it.

DAAC meets six times a year on the second Tuesday of the month. Locations vary. The next meeting will be held at 7 p.m. on January 14 at Bear Creek Elementary School, 1330 Creekside Dr., Monument.

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Monument Academy School Board, Nov. 14

Board hears revised budget and first COO report

By Jackie Burhans

The Monument Academy (MA) School Board held a regular meeting on November 14 in an upstairs lab to accommodate the Thanksgiving program near the library. The board heard from the new Chief Operating Officer (COO) Christiana Herrera.

Revised Budget

Chief Financial Officer Marc Brocklehurst reported on the revised budget which was increased by 3.2 percent to \$8,232,453. More information on the budget can be found at monumentacademy.net/financial-transparency.

Revenue is down because the actual student count in October was lower than what it was estimated to be in the budget. The October count of 890.92 was down from 904.98. This was due to lower enrollment in 1st, 5th, and 6th

grades from the original budget. The per pupil revenue was increased to \$8,069.64 per the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) website. Capital construction funds were also down per the CDE website. Additional revenue was added in for the mill levy override funding shared with D-38. Kindergarten tuition was removed due to the change in state funding for full-day kindergarten.

Expenditures saw increases in D-38 administrative fees, an additional Gifted and Talented (GT) teacher, a new marketing specialist and marketing funds. Brocklehurst also said expenses decreased due to not replacing the French teacher or the Technology director and reducing the budget for iPad refresh and computer replacements. The Special Education (SPED) budget was lowered due to an accounting reclassification. General administration expenses decreased due to the gap in senior level staff.

COO Initial Report

Herrera noted she had two weeks on the job so far and was gratified at the warm welcome she has felt while using coffees and parent meetings to listen and learn. She has participated in meetings on budgeting, strategizing, and marketing. She said they need to confirm who MA is, why it is different, and why students should come to the MA high school.

Herrera took a tour of Liberty Common charter school in Fort Collins, a K-12 school that has two campuses for K-6 and 7-12 grades. They have been doing this for a few years and have worked out some of the kinks. She looked at the natural transition between elementary and secondary schools and how it looks in the classroom. She noted that high school kids survived being in uniforms and found ways to express themselves creatively

other than through clothes. She believes MA can handle expansion every two years responsibly.

She is planning additional meetings with the GT and SPED teams as well as Health Services.

Highlights

The following items were highlighted at the board meeting:

- The elementary school has 5.75 snow days left and middle school has 10.75 left after using 4 days. Since CDE now tracks contact time in hours, MA can adjust the hours by adding full days on Friday.
- Board member Chris Dole described the role of the School Accountability Advisory Committee (SAAC) as advisory rather than policy setting. The last SAAC meeting was on Oct. 14 and covered topics on revising the bi-annual survey process to improve participation and understanding student assessments.
- The secondary school construction is a little behind schedule due to snow. Additional tarps, tents, and heat have been put in place. The south end parking area has had a single layer of asphalt laid down, resulting in substantial savings.

The next meeting will be on Monday, Dec. 9 at the Monument Academy library at 1150 Village Ridge Point. The MA School Board usually meets at 6 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month. The board does not normally meet in December. Information on the MA School Board, including schedule, minutes, committee and finances can be found at www.monumentacademy.net/school-board.

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