

are settling down and everyone is getting used to the process. She said that having Zoom automatically load the class into Canvas has taken a huge headache out of the process. The board agreed to hold a special meeting on Oct. 15 to discuss this further.

At the special meeting held by Zoom on Oct. 15, Herrera started by reminding the board that they had

approved a plan including livestream so that kids who need to be at home would not miss out on their education. MA did not want to contract with an external firm for this. She said that the CDE requires a plan for distance learning as part of funding requirements. A total of 10% of the student population are distance learners in one of the learning options. Distance Learning Specialist Janyse Skalla reported that families have different levels of comfort with COVID-19 and that they are fluid and changing between options on a daily basis.

Elementary Educational Technology Coordinator Elizabeth Weber reported that every week it gets a little better. Children are very flexible and enjoy seeing their classmates and teachers. She hasn't heard a lot of negative feedback from parents and finds it comforting that, if and when MA has to quarantine, everyone will be ready because they've practiced it. Weber says that at this point 95% of staff are comfortable. Herrera agreed that, despite early issues, MA was getting into the groove. She said the only thing that remains is the need for more paraprofessionals to help but that the budget cuts prevented hiring more. Strop asked if the elementary team was comfortable continuing with this plan. Elementary Principal Charlie Richardson said that everyone has worked hard to get this right and that to take options away now would be a huge mistake.

For the secondary school, Seymour said it had been an easier switch because older kids have more experience with technology. She said that teachers choose to do synchronous because otherwise they would have to do a separate lesson plan and record-

ing. She said the biggest obstacle has been consistency of where to find things and what the front page of Canvas looks like. They have created a document explaining what to do if you are at home. A teacher came to discuss whether asynchronous might be better and Seymour suggested she ask her students. The students unanimously preferred to be live, which speaks to their socio-emotional needs being met.

Highlights

The following items were highlighted at the board meeting:

- Herrera said that MA has established a COVID-19 task force to assess how to handle positive and multi-symptom cases.
- MA is seeking an extension of its childcare license to offer before and after care at a comparable cost to other options, which have closed.
- St. Peter Catholic Church has offered MA the opportunity to purchase a school bus for \$4,000. Costs would include insurance and salary for an experienced bus driver. MA anticipates being able to break even by charging \$1.50 per day for a morning and afternoon shuttle.

The next meeting will be on Thursday, Nov. 12 at 6 p.m. The MA School Board usually meets at 6 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month. Meetings are held in-person and via Zoom, which will be streamed to the MA YouTube channel. For more information on how to join the meeting in person or virtually or to submit a public comment, see <https://bit.ly/ma-boe>.

Jackie Burhans can be reached at jackieburhans@ocn.me.

Lewis-Palmer District 38 District Accountability Advisory Committee, Oct. 13

Committee receives COVID-19 impact update, reviews bylaws and schedule

By Harriet Halbig

The Lewis-Palmer D38 District Accountability Advisory Committee (DAAC) reviewed the impact of the coronavirus on district procedures, updated its bylaws, and adopted its annual schedule at its Oct. 13 virtual meeting. All meetings during the 2020-21 school year will be held virtually.

Superintendent K. C. Somers said that staff and students were adapting to the new realities of having to wear masks (ages 11 and up) and maintaining social distancing during the school day. Special attention is being paid to social/emotional factors of the new situation.

Somers announced that a new COVID-19 dashboard can be found on the district website (lewis-palmer.org) under the COVID Resources page. The dashboard lists the number of active cases (including those who tested positive or are symptomatic) and the number of quarantined students and staff.

Somers briefly outlined the district's strategic plan and explained that subjects discussed by the Board of Education would be framed with reference to its five points. They are:

- Cultivate a safe, healthy, and welcoming school environment.
- Ensure high-quality instruction and relevant educational experiences for students.
- Deepen professional learning culture and shared commitment to continuous growth.
- Ensure effective asset management and efficient use of resources.
- Forge strong community relationships and foster effective communication with all stakeholders.

ter effective communication with all stakeholders.

Somers explained that the first goal includes not only physical security, but reaction to the pandemic and developing a holistic approach to health and wellness.

Under asset management, Somers said that the state of future use of the Grace Best Education Center is now under discussion.

The community relationship goal includes creating partnerships within the community and ensuring that the district's actions are clearly communicated to the community.

When asked about compensation for teachers, Somers said the district cannot fundraise to increase compensation but could perhaps reallocate funds from elsewhere in the budget. He acknowledged that Colorado is ranked 49th of the 50 states regarding teacher compensation. He feels it should be a priority to make the community aware of this and the limitations imposed by the current economy.

Board of Education Liaison Tiffney Upchurch also mentioned the strategic plan and said the board has received a quantity of feedback about it. Specific staff and board members were assigned to each goal and will report back to the board.

Regarding legislation, Upchurch reported that the Legislature's education and budget committees met in September. At this time, 11 issues involving education are under consideration.

Upchurch also showed a brief video about the Gallagher Amendment, which sets property tax rates for commercial and residential property. There was a ballot issue this year to repeal the amendment, as the rate of increase of residential property is growing so fast that the rate of taxation continues to fall to maintain the ratio of 45% residential to 55% commercial.

The committee reviewed its bylaws and voted to discontinue the Parent/Community Technology Committee because district administration is now handling it.

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