

Cooke resigned from the board due to moving his child to another school. Byrd has extensive experience in teaching for other districts and will be sworn in at the next board meeting. She noted that she was looking forward to bringing her expertise to the table as they work on curriculum decisions.

#### High school uniform policy versus dress code

The board facilitated a lengthy discussion of whether the high school should have a uniform or only a dress code. There was discussion of deciding based on a survey or whether they should just look at research to see which is best. Some parents were open to more latitude for older students, and some were adamantly in favor of a uniform all the way through high school.

Concerns were raised that some might not choose MA if required to wear a uniform, while others suggested some might not choose MA if there was not a uniform policy

through high school. Options were presented from full uniform to adding some choices for middle schoolers to having only a dress policy for high school students. No changes are anticipated for the elementary school dress code.

MA decided to send out a survey to current fifth- through eighth-grade parents, teachers, and staff with four options to select, pointing to the current dress policy. They tabled this decision until results are in.

#### Highlights

The following items were highlighted at the board meeting:

- The board announced that they would receive the Inez Lewis award from D38, recognizing tremendous growth in math as measured by Colorado Measure of Academic Success (CMAS). MA was recognized at the D38 Board of Education meeting on Jan. 21.
- Herrera mentioned that MA is working with D38 to see if the CDE can use

Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) scores to count for the John Irwin Schools of Excellence Award in lieu of CMAS, given MA's low participation rate.

- Herrera confirmed that, after considering many options, MA has con-

firmed its decision for sixth grade to be part of middle school and move to the new facility.

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The next meeting will be on Thursday, Feb. 13 in Lab 312 at 1150 Village Ridge Point. The MA School Board usually meets at 6 p.m. on the second

Thursday of each month. Information on the MA School Board, including schedule, minutes, committee and finances can be found at <http://www.monumentacademy.net/school-board>.

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#### Lewis-Palmer D38 District Accountability Advisory Committee, Jan. 14

## Committee receives reports on legislative activity, safety and security, and Bear Creek Elementary School

By Harriet Halbig

The Lewis-Palmer D38 District Accountability Advisory Committee (DAAC) discussed Bear Creek Elementary School (BCES), a preview of legislative proposals for 2020, and a report from Chief of Safety and Security Dennis Coates at its Jan.14 meeting.

BCES Principal Peggy Parsley conducted a tour of the facility before the meeting.

The school was originally constructed as Creekside Middle School in 2001. In 2010, following the closing of Grace Best Elementary, the middle school became Bear Creek Elementary and one middle school remained, Lewis-Palmer Middle School.

The current student population of BCES is 892, including 14 who have arrived since October. In addition to a four-classroom modular housing seven sections of preschool, BCES has a program for students with significant support needs, such as those accompanied by a nurse or requiring a wheelchair. Ray Kilmer Elementary is the only other district school with this program.

The school also features a Smartlab for students in

grades 3 to 6, where they work on collaborative projects and teachers act as facilitators.

The entire staff has also been trained to deal with trauma and continues to study two books each year on the subject. Examples of such trauma include death of a parent, a recent move, or a recent immigration from a dangerous situation. The school makes an effort to give a feeling of family to the population and holds classroom meetings each morning to ensure that students relate to one another and any social or emotional issues are noticed and addressed.

Among the challenges at the school are security, due to the amount of glass and open space. Frequent drills are held and students learn to remain calm. Parsley praised the PTO and parents for their suggestions and input on solutions to security issues.

Other challenges include the workload of the staff and traffic in the area. All rooms in the building are in use except for a weight room, which must be accessed through the gym.

Addressing the subject of last year's failed bond issue to build an additional elementary school, Parsley said there is a concern that the entire student body would not be accommodated in a building of the proposed size.

#### Legislative and board update

Board liaison Tiffney Upchurch reported on board activities and proposed legislation. She said the board had begun work on a strategic plan for the district and wishes to show appreciation for the dedication of those who promoted last year's bond issue. Superintendent K.C. Somers is giving a series of 10 collaborative community events at various locations and using various formats to maximize community participation (see ad on page 9 of this issue). At least one board member will be present at each. Somers will moderate each session.

Regarding legislation, such topics as safety, school choice, and preparing students for life after high school are being addressed. An interim committee on school finance is in its third year. Gov. Jared Polis also wishes to fund preschool, perhaps with taxes from vaping. Another option

would be a statewide mill levy.

Upchurch showed a video from the Colorado Department of Education on the subject of school funding.

#### Safety and Security update

Chief of Safety and Security Dennis Coates gave a presentation on the activities of his department.

Coates served as a School Resource Officer for nine years before embarking on his present job. He was originally a teacher before entering the El Paso County Sheriff's Office. As a result, he is familiar with the school environment. He has four staff members, all of whom have 20 years or more of law enforcement experience. He said that this experience has made it possible to recognize mental health issues and address them early.

Addressing the challenges of the department, Coates said that vaping and drugs remain a problem, adding that some garments allow a student to have a vaping device in a pocket where it can be accessed without a teacher noticing. His primary concern is that we don't know what is in the devices being used. He said that law enforcement dogs are no longer being trained to sniff marijuana because it is no longer the primary problem.

A second challenge is the prevalence of social media. Twitter is gaining popularity among students, and there now a way to create a fake Instagram account called Finstagram to send damaging messages. The department investigates all reports of bullying—there were 172 reports to Safe2Tell last year. The Safe2Tell program allows individuals to anonymously report any concerns about safety and security. Reports may be made by phone, email, or texting and will immediately be answered by representatives of the Sheriff's Office. Those involving D38 are answered by Coates himself.

There was a recent outbreak of fights that were videotaped and broadcast on social media. Those involved in the fights and the filmer were disciplined.

A new concern is the rate of growth in the district, especially near the schools. There is a concern about traffic.

There are now door alarms at the high schools so that stu-

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