

Lewis-Palmer D38 Board of Education, Feb. 22

Board discusses actions on Strategic Plan and No Place for Hate program, recognizes student achievements

By Harriet Halbig

The Lewis-Palmer D38 Board of Education heard detailed updates on progress regarding the Strategic Plan, many comments and a clarification of the No Place for Hate program at the middle school, and recognized many student achievements at its Feb. 22 meeting.

Strategic Plan reports

During Superintendent KC Somers' update and later in the meeting, detailed reports were offered regarding implementation of the district's Strategic Plan.

Priority 1 of the plan involves student safety, diverse learning environments, and a feeling of inclusiveness.

Executive Director of Student Services Rick Frampton reported on the use of Gaggle software to monitor student Google activity on district-owned devices. Since Oct. 1 there have been 338 alerts received. The most urgent involved suicide and self-harm. Also triggering alerts were the use

of profanity and insults. Alerts result in a text sent to the administration, which must respond within 5 minutes. Parents are contacted regarding questionable content. If a student repeatedly accesses pornography or other inappropriate content they can be locked out of the system. Gaggle is active when district-owned devices are used in student homes as well. Student cell phones are not monitored.

Chief of Safety and Security Dennis Coates reported on the district's use of the Safe2Tell program which allows students and parents to anonymously report concerns about bullying, suicide, and other concerns. The program has been in use since 2015.

Coates said the number of reported situations has fallen slightly due to recent emphasis on counseling for stress during the pandemic.

The program has changed slightly, allowing administrators to question the tipster and learn the age and school of the individual of concern. Most tipsters are students. If someone is bullied through the program, the source of the call can be traced.

Coates briefly outlined activity in discipline. There have been 80 suspensions. If a student is found to have a vaping device, they are suspended for three days. If they agree to undergo the Vape-Education program, the suspension is reduced to one day.

Frampton reported on the results of the Panorama survey about school environment. This survey was submitted to all students. General results indicated that younger students feel positive about their school environment. Secondary students feel safe and engaged. There is a need to improve teacher/student relationships at the high school level. The survey was administered before Thanksgiving break. For detailed results, see boarddocs on the district website lewispalmer.org, board of education, and look under the date of the meeting.

Priority 2 involves offering a high quality of instruction and relevant education experiences for all students.

Lewis-Palmer Middle School Principal Seann O'Connor spoke about the No Place for Hate program which has been the subject of controversy at board meetings.

O'Connor said the program supports social emotional wellness and character-based education concepts.

The district acknowledges that parents are the primary source of moral authority, and various district policies support character-building in the areas of inclusiveness and social awareness.

At the elementary level, such programs as Responsive Classroom include building relationships between students during class meetings, and Capturing Kids' Hearts is in use at the elementary level to promote self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship skills.

At the middle school level, No Place for Hate is in its third year. The program, developed by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), involves a voluntary

pledge by students that if they witness a serious incident of bullying or other intolerant behavior, they are obligated to report it to school authorities.

O'Connor stressed that the middle school is not obligated to report incidents to ADL. The autonomy of the school is respected. Students may elect to be trained in the use of the program and can opt into such activities as the question of the week or quotes of the week. No data is shared with ADL from the school, but we do share which activities we choose to use.

The program encourages students to go from being a victim to being a participant in change. No lessons are included in the curriculum.

The Path2Empathy program is also in use at the middle school level.

O'Connor also reported that the Gay/Straight Alliance is one of the clubs at the school as well as such groups as Youth for Christ and various others.

Assistant Superintendent Amber Whetstine reported on literacy and math assessments administered in the fall and mid-year. For details on the results, please see boarddocs.

Board Treasurer Ron Schwarz, attending by phone, asked whether our students' results can be compared with results nationwide. Whetstine responded that the results for the Measuring Academic Performance (MAP) tests in mathematics reflects national results and the district scores well.

Priority 3, which deepens professional learning culture, is being used by increasing the number of professional development days and meetings among staff, the mid-year compensation action approved at last month's meeting, and the hiring of a consultant to measure D38's compensation in comparison with comparable districts.

Priority 4, involving effective asset management and efficient use of resources, is being implemented through the selection of a new Financial Advisory Committee, which has met for the first time and created subcommittees to aid in its work.

Priority 5 involves outreach to the community. A series of Engage and Elevate meetings has been scheduled at various locations and various times in the district. A community survey has been planned to involve community members and elicit feedback.

New curricula adopted

The board approved new curricula for Spanish, French, and German and for health.

New administrator hired

The board approved the contract for Chris Coulter to begin as Executive Director of Operations and Development to replace Bob Foster.

Graduation requirements

The board approved policy IKF regarding graduation requirements. For details, please see boarddocs.

Recognitions

The board recognized Lewis-Palmer High School senior Rhianna Lingle for being selected as a string soloist in the Denver Young Adult Orchestra at its performance on May 8.

Steve Waldmann reported on the 15th annual district chess tournament held at Lewis-Palmer Elementary School. There was no tournament last year due to COVID restrictions. Eighty-five students participated. Waldmann thanked various Lewis-Palmer Elementary staff and members of the Key Club for their help.

Nine members of the Future Business Leaders of America placed in the top four and will go on to the state level. An additional three placed in the top 10.

Three students from Lewis-Palmer High School, Anna Icke, Davis Saunders, and Allison Sobers, were selected as finalists in the National Merit Scholarship competition.

Public comments

Several members of the public spoke in support of No Place for Hate.

Two parents of middle school students said the program is valuable to make all students feel

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