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state did not provide help. The bond for East Campus was a bad deal that expected interest rates to remain low and to be refinanced every five years, he said. McClelland noted that it would be better if both schools could be covered under one bond since elementary programs help offset the high school costs.

Employee Handbook and leave policy

At the Oct. 26 meeting, McClelland thanked the board for adding the draft handbook leave plan to the agenda, saying that with all the feedback, including meetings at each campus, MA was now proposing a grandfathering option that was better than the original plan. McClelland noted that some changes to the handbook were required for legal compliance and that, per the strategic plan, they were looking to improve the leave policies. She noted that the Employee Handbook is a living document that can be changed anytime. She said she had reviewed the new plan with the West Campus principals but hadn't shown it to the teachers yet pending board review.

Graham said the West Campus feedback asked why not wait until the next contract cycle. He agreed wholeheartedly that they should honor the contract and let teachers decide next year if they want to agree to these changes. McClelland and Director of People Operations Krista Pelley explained that the current handbook limits the payout to 20 days at \$50 per day for anyone separating, and the changes would give them full payout for all their accrued days.

Board Director Karen Hoida said it sounded like this was an incentive for people to leave. Pelley said the payout was unavailable for those who haven't served five years, so it also serves as a retention benefit. She said staff can continue to accrue days and, if they've been grandfathered, don't have to leave now to get the payout. Hoida said they can say they are grandfathered but it won't help if they've lost trust. Clinton said this wasn't well communicated and some teachers might feel their contract doesn't mean anything. She would love to see and attend another meeting with teachers to show their feedback was considered. Pelley said staff can continue to accrue days and, if they've been grandfathered, don't have to leave now to get the payout.

Graham said that he heard that some teachers still can't access the new SDS payroll system to see their hours and are being told the board has to approve something before they can see it. Pelley said she had given everyone a breakdown as of Aug. 1 but didn't let them access it directly due to the need to convert from hours into days. Graham said it wasn't right that teachers have to make an appointment to come and ask about their leave. He said from the teachers' perspective, something was proposed in September that they didn't see, and they felt something nefarious could be happening. When they don't have access to see their accrued leave, it is all unsettling, he said.

McClelland said that the system switchover was not operationally planned out as well as it could have been and was not rolled out effectively. Pelley said they would have access as of Monday to payroll information. Clinton said these changes probably started with good intentions to improve policies, but it feels like signed contracts can be changed anytime. She felt that required legal changes should be implemented,



Above: At its Oct. 5 meeting, board Director Craig Carle, right, spotlighted Science teacher Karl Brown for his excellence in teaching as well as his leadership in supporting other teachers by helping them set up the Canvas learning management system. *Photo by Jackie Burhans.*

but any improvements should be in the next contract. Graham said he would prefer to have a meeting during teachers' paid time, and he would attend. He asked that the required Employee Handbook changes be brought back for approval at the November meeting. The changes could exclude or include the leave policy changes depending on feedback from the teachers.

- Highlights**
- Board meeting highlights include:
- Board member Craig Carle spotlighted Karl Brown, eighth-grade science teacher, for stepping up as a leader for his grade level team and the school, providing excellent instruction and setting high expectations.
 - Graham reported that the recirculation road around the West Campus is complete.
 - Board member Emily Belisle reported that the curriculum committee discussed new math curricula and would send the three options to West Campus teachers to solicit feedback and then to the parents and community according to the new curriculum policies. The committee hopes to bring the new math curriculum to the board in December for approval and that it could be implemented in the next academic year.
 - Graham thanked the East Campus administration team for getting the modulars up and running with a certificate of occupancy, noting that this had been a long project.
 - The board unanimously approved the list of authorized signers on the raffle bank account.
 - The board unanimously approved the board calendar for 2023-24 to continue with the second Thursday of the month.

The MA School Board meets at 6:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month. The next regular board meeting will be on Thursday, Nov. 9, at 6:30 p.m. at the East Campus. See more information at [see https://bit.ly/ma-boe](https://bit.ly/ma-boe).

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

Lewis-Palmer D38 Board of Education, Oct. 23

Monument Academy annual report; enrollment and financial update

By Harriet Halbig

The Lewis-Palmer D38 Board of Education received the annual report of Monument Academy, approved membership of the Financial Transparency Committee, learned of new financial documents, and welcomed student representatives at its Oct. 23 meeting.

Monument Academy annual report

Executive Director Kim McClelland presented the annual report of Monument Academy (MA).

She thanked the board for the positive relationship between the charter school and the district and said that all leadership positions are currently filled. The organizational chart has been updated and the board is discussing its strategic plan.

MA board President Ryan Graham also thanked the board for its partnership.

Graham said new policies on curriculum are being formulated and there will be an election in the spring for two board members. He also said that in January the school will post a full-time position of executive director beginning in June 2024.

He cautioned against non-legal name changes for students.

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Christina Cotton

McClelland reported that MA is increasing its participation in sports and hopes to be admitted to the Colorado High School Athletic Association (CHSAA) soon. The school excels in track and field and has recently begun a girls' basketball program.

Academically the schools scored 47.5 points, requiring a performance plan. The schools both had low participation in assessments.

McClelland said that a future priority will be to educate parents about the value of participation in assessments to monitor student performance.

The schools will now have a quarterly dashboard to monitor academic progress and growth. The goal is to achieve 65% growth in grades K through 5, 60% in middle school, and 65% in high school.

On the East Campus, construction on the recirculation road has been completed, and efforts continue to purchase land for additional parking. An unpaved area adjacent to the school is now being used temporarily until purchase is possible.

McClelland said MA is re-examining its investments and developing a new format for financial statements. They are investigating tax credits for employee retention, restructuring a contract for copiers, and developing a new employee handbook.

On the West Campus, Graham reported, construction of the new roundabout on Knollwood should be completed by next summer. At that time, Knollwood will offer the only ingress and egress for the school. He thanked the neighboring church for allowing families to exit through its parking lot. Upon completion of the roundabout, a barrier will prevent use of the church lot. The barrier can be opened for access by emergency vehicles.

Financial Transparency Committee and financial planning

The board approved a list of members of the Financial Transparency Committee. The charge of the committee is to ensure that all reports and charts are understandable by the community. The committee will report to the Parent and Community Advisory Committee, which in turn will report to the board.

Chief Business Officer Brett Ridgway said enrollment is down by 34 students pending finalization of the October count. He said the minor decline in enrollment is prevalent across the state and is not sufficient to require altering the budget except on an in-