

lund regarding compliance enforcement for leases of district rental space and establishing a new district bank account at First Bank to keep the district accounts below the \$250,000 upper limit for deposit insurance.

Budgets will be based on planned fee increases

Wicklund said that he was preparing three draft 2013 budgets based on monthly increases of \$5, \$7, and \$10. He is waiting for firm figures that Tri-Lakes Fac-

ility Manager Bill Burks will be using in his 2013 facility budget for capital, chemical, and other operating costs driven by the new nutrient regulations.

The meeting adjourned at 8 p.m.

The next meeting will be held at 7 p.m. on Aug. 16 in the district conference room, 130 Second St. Meetings are normally held on the third Thursday of the month. Information: 481-4886 or the

website addresses noted above. *Jim Kendrick can be reached at jimkendrick@ocn.me.*

Direction 38 forum examines importance of teacher quality and assessment

By Kate Wetterer

“Teachers Matter,” a Direction 38! forum on July 23, focused on potential methods to recruit, vet, and maintain the highest caliber of teachers in today’s school system. This included explanations and critiques of Colorado Senate Bill 10-191 dealing with teacher assessments.

Direction 38! is a not-for-profit organization of parents, teachers, and others in School District 38. It is not affiliated with the school district.

This second installment of the 2012 Get Educated! Summer Series was well attended, with current and former teachers involving themselves in the discussion. The speakers were Marcus A. Winters, author of the book Teachers Matter; Bill Jaeger, former teacher and member of Stand for Children Colorado; and Mike Wetzel, director of public relations for the Colorado Education Association. Each gave a summary of their views on teacher assessment and the best ways to provide students with quality educators and then took questions from the audience.

Winters emphasized the vital need for capable teachers in a child’s education. He said this is complicated by the current variety of teacher quality in schools. Winters suggested that schools need to consider a teacher’s “output” rather than their “input” when conducting assessments. He supports ranking teachers through their progress in reaching students and conveying material effectively rather than through degrees and experience itself, regardless of quality.

Winters proposed using standardized testing scores in math and reading to examine the progress of students, thereby ranking the effectiveness of their teachers. Teachers are the most important factor of a child’s education that exists within the school’s control, Winters noted, and a couple less-than-satisfactory teachers in a row can seriously impede a student’s progress, perhaps crippling their education permanently.

Winters said master’s degrees do not necessarily guarantee notable output from teachers, and that having such a degree may be of little to no importance in the classroom. For this reason, he suggested school systems should assess which teachers deserve tenure and higher salaries based

on the progress of students in their classes. Winters believes teachers should receive benefits based on their abilities, to reward excellent work and encourage the development of outstanding teachers.

Winters was asked if the studies cited during his speech distinguished between types of master’s degrees. He said there was no differentiation. He said a master’s in one’s chosen teaching subject, or in classroom management and curriculum arrangement, could benefit a teacher more than a completely unrelated degree.

In response to a question about how one would measure relationships with students in order to adequately summarize a teacher’s impact on the classroom, Winters said effectiveness would be measured through an improvement in scores. If a teacher is helping kids improve, the progress would show in standardized testing.

Audience members also discussed the importance of teaching certification, some saying that the experience was invaluable and has helped them enormously in managing their classrooms and others saying it was a waste of time, jumping through mindless hoops instead of being given material to better themselves as educators.

Jaeger explained that the purpose of Stand for Children, Colorado is to help students graduate from high school prepared to enter a college or the workforce. Thus, he supports a plan to improve the performance of teachers who could be doing better in communicating/inciting

improvement in their students. Jaeger conceded that it could be difficult for teachers and principals to be assessed. He suggested that the same people would be involved in both evaluations.

Senate Bill 10-191 states that teachers may, rather than must, also be permitted to grade their principals, keeping the system accountable from top to bottom. There is no test that serves as an absolute guarantee, from Jaeger’s perspective, but monitoring growth may be more promising and could be effective as a new focus.

Wetzel raised the concern that charting students’ academic growth through Colorado’s changing standardized tests may prove difficult. More factors are changing than simply the teachers, which could limit the reliability of the research. Still, Wetzel registered support for plans to encourage remarkable teachers, noting that implementing exams before a person becomes a teacher might benefit a school system, making the career more competitive and therefore serving as a significant accomplishment. Where Winters suggested opening doors for all people interested in trying their hand at teaching, Wetzel advised making the process of certifying teachers more selective.

Wetzel also spoke about the need to provide teachers with benefits outside of their salaries and/or other rewards. Competing for pay increases would not be beneficial among teachers, he said, because it takes the combined efforts of several teachers to hone the skills of a student. Ideally, educators would band

together to improve a student’s skills and, therefore, rankings. Still, the process could prove difficult to balance, because, Wetzel noted, it is always important to make sure teachers are not simply training children to pass exams; there must be no loss of raw learning in favor of acing standardized tests.

Audience members also lamented the potential of neglecting other subjects, because the tests are inevitably limited. The possibility of students purposefully sabotaging teachers they are not fond of was also mentioned, and Wetzel noted that perhaps exams could come with actual stakes for the children instead of just the teachers being evaluated and having something to lose.

One attendee asked what would happen to teachers who

fall below a certain percentage in these rankings. The speakers assured the audience that such teachers would not be fired automatically, but would be given a chance to redeem themselves. They might be put back on probationary status if their scores are consistently poor. The goal of the entire process, as Winters stated early on, is to arrange the school system to benefit students, encouraging student potential and hopefully providing children the tools they need to succeed in today’s world.

Kate Wetterer can be reached at katewetterer@ocn.me.



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SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE TIMES

8:30 am: First Worship Service

10:00 am: Teaching & Community Time (aka Sunday School)

10:45 am: Second Worship Service

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