

Lewis-Palmer D-38 Board of Education, March 21

Board discusses budget progress, successes in district

By Harriet Halbig

Members of the Lewis-Palmer School District Board of Education discussed fiscal matters, plans for the coming school year, and successes among its students during the March 21 meeting.

Board Vice President Mark Pfoff and Secretary Robb Pike were absent and excused from the meeting.

Assistant Superintendent Cheryl Wangeman reported that the district budget is on track for this school year, with utility spending under control with the exception of water needed for playing fields. The number of students on free/reduced-price lunch continues to rise. She said that fundraising on the part of the various schools is very successful and that the resumption of homebuilding in the district will provide unanticipated cash in lieu of land next year. Enrollment also remains strong.

Later in the meeting, Wangeman reported that the Legislature is now considering funding plans for next year and that the district had expected an addition \$1.2 million, but that amount is now trending down.

Director of Assessment, Gifted Education and Technology Lori Benton presented a first reading of textbook and technology requirements to bring the district in line with the new state standards beginning in the 2013-14 school year. These requirements include materials for math in k-12, science, social studies, and language arts in 6-12, languages in grades 9-12, and writing in grades k-5. Social studies for grades k-5 will appear in 2013-14 as well.

Benton said that members of staff from various locations meet on a regular basis, review the changes in standards, and determine what areas that might be missing in the curriculum. Vertical alignment of curriculum is analyzed to ensure that all subject matter is covered and there is minimal repetition. Curriculum mapping is also used in the analysis.

Because the district's standards are higher than that of the state, Benton says that the analysis begins with the state standards and proceeds from there.

Benton said that the proposed purchases of technology, texts, and teacher support materials are included in the district's

2013 budget.

Home School Enrichment Academy update

Benton reported that the Home School Enrichment Academy was founded to support and extend the learning of home-schooled students by offering enrichment activities in such areas as art, music, and physical education.

The goal for the 2012-13 school year was an enrollment of 25. In March there were 53 students in the program, which offers its services each Thursday from 8:30 to 3:30. The growth in enrollment has necessitated the hiring of additional teachers and a part-time administrative aid. Participation on the second-grade level has enabled the academy to hire a paraprofessional to help that age group.

The academy offers three free field trips per year. Student families may also attend the field trips if they provide their own transportation.

In response to requests for foreign language instruction, the program is offering a world culture class, studying four different cultures a year through their arts, customs, and foods. It was determined that foreign language instruction would not be successful if offered once a week.

An advisory group meets monthly to examine and review the program.

Benton said a recent survey of parents' opinions found that 91 percent of those who responded were happy with the schedule and offerings of the academy. All families said that the curriculum meets their needs.

The goals for the coming year are to expand to coverage of grades k-7 and a population of 75 students.

The district will advertise its offerings in local newspapers and local businesses and hold open houses from March through August.

When asked whether the academy might expand its services to the high school level, Benton responded that high school homeschoolers might be more likely to prefer online programming.

Benton also reminded the board that, because the district receives partial funding for these

students, all programming is free of charge to those who participate.

Approval of new Internet contract

Benton presented a new contract agreement with Comcast to provide Internet services to the district. The contract will include five years of service at about \$95,500 per year. The board approved the contract.

Employee benefits package

Director of Personnel and Student Services Bob Foster presented his department's proposal for a benefits package for the coming school year.

He said that the cost of insurance is anticipated to rise 5 percent and that the district proposed to fund health, dental, vision, and life insurance for its employees. He said that few districts fully fund such insurance.

Online enrollment will be offered to staff members after they receive information about their options in April.

The committee that studied the benefits options included members from all district locations. Meetings will be held in the next few weeks to answer questions from the staff.

Open enrollment update

District Superintendent John Borman reported that the district anticipates welcoming 57 new students next year (as compared to 41 this year), 48 students from out of the district, and nine from Monument Academy into traditional schools.

He said that the number of students leaving the district will not be known until summer.

2013 Year of the Student Resolution

In support of an initiative by the group Greater Education Colorado, which actively supports better school funding, Palmer Ridge senior Eric Marter, Lewis-Palmer senior Brianna McEwen, and Lewis-Palmer junior Michaela Smith read a resolution emphasizing that students are the prime focus of the education system and that the state should do its best to support their achievement by offering sufficient funding to schools.

The 2013 Year of the Student Resolution will be presented to members of the state Legislature.

Board Treasurer John Mann



Above: Lewis-Palmer students and teachers gave a demonstration of a space mission. Front row, seated, left to right are Ryan Ainsley, Ryder Horrel, Patrick Kenny, Sydney Robenstein, and Katelyn McClelland. Back row, standing, left to right are Cameron Jones, fourth-grade teacher Jennifer Hayden, Lily Goudreau, Grant Drennan, Sophia Bains, Olivia Miller, and fourth-grade teacher Neva Nardone. *Photo by Harriet Halbig.*

commented that although he agreed with the essence of the resolution, he is concerned that the Legislature's current proposals on school funding would not benefit this district to as great an extent as others.

Borman commented that the resolution was intended to stress a focus on students when considering funding and to display the fact that our students are interested in participating in the community and legislative process.

Smith commented that she transferred into District 38 from Colorado Springs District 11 while in elementary school and appreciates the value of the education in this area. Marter and McEwen have served as members of the Monument Town Council during this year.

The board voted to approve the resolution.

The board voted to support National Volunteer Month and commented on the value of participation from many members of the community.

Borman reported in the Superintendent's Report that artist Nelson Tucker, who participated in the recent annual Scholastic Show at the Rocky Mountain School of Art and Design was one of 80 students chosen to have his work displayed in the Denver Art Museum through April 4.

Borman also reported that the Lewis-Palmer High School boys basketball team won the 4A state championship for the second year in a row despite injuries to several key players.

Fourth-grade teachers Jennifer Hayden and Neva Nardone and their students from Lewis-Palmer Elementary School gave a demonstration on a recent activity involving the Challenger Learning Center in Colorado Springs. The students of each class embarked on a mission into space, communicating with the Challenger Learning Center via Skype. Each student had a specialized role in the mission.

Nardone attended a National Space Foundation event five years ago and used that experience to develop this activity.

Community Relations Manager Robin Adair reported on progress in the district's communications plan and said that an event for 500 members of the community is planned for April 11. She said that the district had benefitted from a lot of free consultation in marketing and that local businesses are sponsoring the cost of the event.

The board approved a number of routine items such as minutes of previous meetings, hirings and retirements, lists of substitute personnel, ratification of closures due to weather, and other matters.

The Board of Education of Lewis-Palmer D-38 meets at 6 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month at the district's Learning Center, 146 Jefferson St., Monument. The next meeting will be held on April 18.

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District Accountability Advisory Committee, March 12

Committee reviews improvement plans, budget matters

By Harriet Halbig

The District Accountability Advisory Committee (DAAC) of the Lewis-Palmer School District reviewed Unified Improvement Plans from four district schools at its March 12 meeting at Monument Academy.

Drafts of the Colorado De-

partment of Education (CDE) document for each school were distributed to the membership, and the principals of each school explained their plans. The committee divided into two groups to receive the reports and reconvened to offer a summary.

Lewis-Palmer Elementary report

Principal Lois Skaggs of Lewis-Palmer Elementary School (LPES) reported that her school exceeds state requirements in academic achievement, growth, and growth gaps with the exception of math and writing for those

with disabilities and those on free/reduced-price lunch. LPES is not a Title 1 funded school and therefore does not receive additional funding to overcome weaknesses in achievement among at-risk students.

The school has been successful in its focus on reading

over recent years and now is turning attention to support in math, Skaggs said. The need for consistent vocabulary in math and for additional repetition for some students was mentioned. The Every Day Math (EDM) curriculum is sufficient for most students, and LPES has now added