

District Accountability Advisory Committee, Jan. 14

High schools present Unified Improvement Plans

By Harriet Halbig

Palmer Ridge High School Principal Gary Gabel and Lewis-Palmer High School Principal Sandi Brandl presented each school's School Performance Framework and Unified Improvement Plan to the District Accountability Advisory Committee for its approval Jan. 14 prior to submitting the documents to the state Department of Education.

The committee divided into two groups to hear the detailed descriptions and then reconvened for reporting of the results.

Palmer Ridge High School scores

Gabel reported that Palmer Ridge scored as "meets or exceeds" in the four categories tracked by the state. These are academic achievement (exceeds), academic growth (meets), academic growth gaps (meets), and postsecondary and workforce readiness (exceeds). The total score (of a possible 100 points) was 82.4 for the 2012-13 school year, a significant increase over the 2011-12 score of 72. Gabel said that he is particularly proud that the school met all goals in the growth gap category, which measures progress over a year's time for students in subgroups such as those with disabilities, those on free/reduced lunch, and minorities.

Gabel attributed the improvements in math and reading in the growth gap area to continuity of instructors and using assessments to determine appropriate classes for students. Reading was emphasized across the curriculum, as was writing. Writing is particularly stressed in ninth grade, and Gabel said that the English and social studies departments will collaborate on writing instruction for 10th-graders.

He said that the postsecondary score is based on the option of seven years to graduation, to include those who attend the Transitions program until the age of 21. These students have met the academic requirements but do not receive a diploma until they leave the program. The school has not yet been in existence for seven years. For this reason, the score in that aspect of the document should improve over the next two years.

Gabel said that the school's challenges are in the areas of reading for students with disabilities and reading and writing for students needing to catch up. In both cases students are approaching the targets set in previous documents.

When asked how progress is monitored among those

students failing to meet expectations, Gabel said that at the beginning of each semester, teachers are given a list of those whose progress is considered unsatisfactory or in need of catching up. Teachers are then aware of the students requiring extra attention and monitoring. If a student is getting a D or an F in a subject, an email is sent to the student's parents. There are four data points required each year to monitor the progress of these students.

Gabel said that he invited several graduates to describe how well prepared they felt when they continued to college. They told him that they valued being held accountable for their achievements, he said.

Lewis-Palmer High School scores

Lewis-Palmer High School scored "exceeds" in academic achievements, "meets" in academic growth, "approaching" in academic growth gaps, and "exceeds" in postsecondary and workforce readiness for a total of 82.8 points.

The school's improvement plan said that, although some targets in the growth gap area were not met, they improved over a year's time.

Priority performance challenges were those on free/reduced-price lunch, students with disabilities, and students needing to catch up in reading, all subgroups in math and writing for students with disabilities and students needing to catch up.

Causes were identified as students not being provided with consistent direct reading instruction and support in the classroom. Disadvantaged students were not provided with consistent direct math instruction and support and additional math support outside of the classroom. Focused writing support was not provided in the Learning Center.

The use of frequent assessments and analysis of data will be stressed in the effort to improve results.

When asked whether there is an online component to the district's instruction, Director of Assessment, Gifted Education and Technology Lori Benton said that there are supplemental materials online that can be tailored to the individual.

She also said that the fact that many future tests will be taken online may make a difference in scores.

DAAC gave provisional approval to each school's framework and improvement plan.

Superintendent search

Board of Education Liaison John Magerko said that the

search for a new superintendent is now underway and being administered by the Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB). The search is nationwide, and by late February the candidates will be reviewed and background checks administered.

Magerko also said that CASB holds a legislative conference in late February during which members may meet with legislators and members of the state Board of Education. A primary topic of discussion will be the state budget and potential changes in taxation.

Communications plan

Community Relations Manager Robin Adair spoke about the district's current initiatives. She pointed out that there is a communications advisory committee, consisting of district and community representatives and a member of the Board of Education. This committee sets goals and discusses the overall district communications plan. There is one large plan and several campaigns within it.

A goal is to convey a consistent message with the use a consistent brand, expand the use of media and the Internet, and evaluate the effectiveness of efforts and the opinions of target audiences.

Adair explained the open enrollment initiative for February and distributed a list of media outlets, postings, meetings, and other activities in support of the district. These include contacts with realtors, publication of information in relocation guides (military and civilian), and press conferences.

Under development is a mobile app that will be funded from outside sources and will contain such information as sports calendars, grades, assignments, and other information.

The District Accountability Advisory Committee of Lewis-Palmer School District 38 meets at 7 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month. Locations vary. The next meeting will be held on Feb. 11 at Lewis-Palmer Middle School, 1776 Woodmoor Drive, Monument.

Harriet Halbig may be reached at harriethalbig@ocn.me.

Special Education Advisory Committee, Jan. 15

Family, school, community partnering training offered

By Harriet Halbig

The Lewis-Palmer District 38 Special Education Advisory Committee was offered training on family, school, and community partnering in education at its Jan. 15 meeting. The meeting was moderated by Beth Schaffner of the PEAK Parent Center in Colorado Springs. Also participating were Dr. Cathy Lines, chair of the State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education, and Dr. Darcy Hutchins, Family Partnership director for the

Colorado Department of Education (CDE).

The PEAK Parent Center is Colorado's federally designated Parent Training and Information Center. It provides training to groups while also offering one-on-one assistance, conferences, and publications.

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Meet the Finalists!

A community reception for the final candidates for Lewis-Palmer School District Superintendent of Schools is planned for

Friday, March 7th 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
At the administration building at 146 Jefferson in Monument.

The public is welcome.



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