

Schaffner said that family involvement in education includes supporting homework, seeing that students arrive at school on time and ready to learn, and being aware of how students are progressing.

Director of Exceptional Student Services Mary Anne Fleury said that D-38 is the recipient of a grant involving the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), a new protocol that will replace Response to Intervention. At this time, MTSS is in use at Lewis-Palmer High School, Lewis-Palmer Middle School, and Palmer Lake Elementary.

This new program focuses on academics and behavior together, because a child who struggles academically often has behavior problems as well. The new approach is not to view what is "wrong" with children who struggle, but how general education classroom practices can be changed to help them succeed. If outside intervention or support is needed, it will be provided.

The goal of the CDE is to ensure that all children reach their highest potential. The goal of PEAK Parent Center is to equip families of children with disabilities with strategies to advocate effectively for their children in the school setting and beyond.

In an exercise, the participants concluded that respect is essential in relationships between parents and teachers, students and teachers, and special education and general education teachers. It is only through respect and cooperation that the goal of reaching maximum achievement can be reached.

Schaffner stressed that children spend 70 percent of their waking hours outside of school and this is what makes partnering so essential. Ensuring that homework is completed, monitoring TV and online time, and offer-

ing enriching after-school activities are among the responsibilities of parents. Schaffner explained an activity known as interactive homework to involve parents in the child's learning. Interactive homework could involve the child interviewing a parent or explaining what he or she learned that week.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (otherwise known as No Child Left Behind) defines parent involvement as integral to a child's learning and said that parents should be full partners in the education process.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 also stated that the role and responsibility of parents and participation of families of children with disabilities should be stressed.

The Response to Intervention law of 2007 required that parents of children with disabilities must be kept informed about the amount and nature of data collected about the student, strategies for increasing the child's rate of learning, and results of assessments of the child's progress.

The most recent legislation mentioned was the 2012 Colorado Read to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act in which parents play a central role in supporting a child's learning to read. The parent is encouraged to support the student's success at home, to work with the teacher, and to supplement the instruction the student receives at school. Parents are to receive ongoing, regular updates concerning the student's progress.

The shift in responsibility is away from school-created plans explained to parents to plans developed by the parents and the schools together. Homework is seen as a home-school link and communication tool. Ongoing two-way communication is stressed. Learning is focused more on outcomes than on compliance by the student in

the classroom.

The State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education was created by the Colorado General Assembly in 2009 to review best practices and recommend strategies to increase parent involvement, thus helping to raise the level of student achievement throughout the state.

With the new stress on accountability, parents must learn to understand the data collected to measure achievement. When asked whether the district has enough evidence to know whether the new system is working, Fleury said that much of the progress would be reflected in growth gap scores in school performance framework documents (See the article on the District Accountability Advisory Committee on page 17).

In addition to data developed in the school, it is important for families to share observations about behaviors in the home and any difficulties at home that may contribute to difficulties at school.

When asked how a parent can improve his or her communication with the school, Fleury suggested that the parent first speak to the teacher involved. Another option is to call Special Education Parent Liaison Michelle Nay, who will often mediate between parents and the district. Schaffner also suggested that, should the district not be able to offer the necessary programs or support, the parent should contact PEAK Parent.

The Special Education Advisory Committee meets at 6:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month in the district's Learning Center, 146 Jefferson St., Monument. The next meeting will be on Feb. 12.

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Northern El Paso County Coalition of Community Organizations, Jan. 11
HOAs advised to prepare for disasters

By Bernard Minetti

At the Jan. 11 meeting of the Northern El Paso County Coalition of Community Organizations (NEPCO), Pikes Peak National Bank President Robin Roberts presented a short seminar on actions to be taken by homeowners associations (HOAs) before and after a fire or flood.

The seminar used information from disasters such as the Waldo Canyon and Black Forest Fires and flooding in Manitou Springs and Cheyenne Canyon.

Roberts listed actions that can minimize the "unknowns" about disasters that HOAs face:

- Effective communications preparations are essential. This is accomplished by updating email and contact lists and keeping them current, ensuring that all homeowners are signed up for reverse 911 and that all elderly persons are signed up for 211. Websites should be kept up to date, and information should be updated through newsletter distribution and social media outlets.

- HOAs should keep all covenants updated and provide easy access to documents for homeowners by ensuring that there is a board of directors and an active architectural standards committee.
- Covenants should address what would happen if all or part of the community is destroyed. Will the community use one builder or several? What will be the architectural standards of the rebuilt community? Who will control the rebuilding process?
- Are common-area items such as the sprinkler system, curbs and gutters, and landscaping insured? Have homeowners been urged to consider insuring foundations? She noted that foundations could be damaged or weakened in such a way that replacement is required.
- Mitigation for floods and fires should be coordinated with a local fire agency. Ensure that important items are not stored in basements where they can be damaged by a flood or fire. Hold evacuation drills that involve the public safety and fire agencies. Hold disaster preparedness meetings.
- HOAs should bring homeowners together as soon as possible after a disaster. Ask for their help in coordinating and facilitating the recovery process. Let homeowners know if a special assessment is required to support the recovery process.
- As an HOA, recognize that a disaster can be the occasion for new opportunities such as new architectural designs, xeriscaping, rebuilding with new fire-resistant materials, and initiating flood mitigation procedures.
- Most important is to set up communication channels before a disaster strikes your community.

Recreational marijuana discussion avoided

Woodmoor Improvement Association board President and NEPCO member Jim Hale asked the NEPCO board and membership to discuss the effects on local property values should Palmer Lake allow recreational marijuana sales. NEPCO board President Dave Powell declined to allow the subject to be discussed, stating that it was a "political issue." Following the meeting, in a discussion with Hale, he stressed the urgency and the importance of a review of marijuana issue because it could pertain to property values in the Palmer Lake area.

Transportation Committee report

NEPCO Transportation Committee Chairperson Tom Vierzba said the Powers/I-25 Interchange would be complete within five years. He also noted that the high-speed rail system that is being designed would be on the same path as I-25.




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