

Beginning in 2014, all English language learners will be required to take the World Class International Development Assessment (WIDA) test at the beginning of each year or within 90 days of enrollment. New tests (TS Gold) will be required of kindergarten students and of preschool students whose attendance is funded by state or federal funds. These tests determine readiness to attend school.

Kindergarten through third grade students will be required to undergo an early literacy test known as Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) at the beginning of each school year and twice more each year. If a student fails to perform to standards, the test can be administered every 30 days until proficiency is reached.

A cognitive aptitude test is used in grades 3 through 6 to identify gifted students.

In addition to current testing in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics, new assessments of English language skills, social studies, and science will be added

at various grade levels.

At the junior level in high school, students are required to take the ACT.

In 2015 the present TCAP test will be replaced by the Partnership Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) test, which stresses critical thinking and problem solving. This test must be taken online.

The board discussed this rigorous course of action at length. Board Vice President John Mann expressed concern at the amount of time involved in administering and analyzing the assessments. He said that many of the new tests are required to satisfy state or federal standards that are less rigorous than those of D-38 and yet the local district is required to put forth the time and resources to administer them to maintain its accreditation.

Mann said that he is more concerned with determining where D-38 students stand in relation to students from other states and internationally rather than within Colorado.

Board Secretary Robb Pike commented that by administering such a wide variety of assessments, the district is in danger of entering a slippery slope toward teaching to the test in all subjects. He said that he feared that teacher and student creativity could suffer should this happen.

Board President Mark Pfoff was primarily concerned about the time involved in administering the required assessments. He said that the district is primarily focused on achievement and will do what is required to retain its high accreditation, but each year there are more unfunded mandates, including the new, burdensome system for assessing the performance of teachers and other district employees.

He said that each time the district complies with such unfunded mandates, more of its local control over priorities is stripped away, although state funding has not yet regained 2008 levels. He said that the board would prefer that the district's resources go toward benefiting the students rather than funding assessments.

Pfoff said that an indicator of the loss of local control is that parents who are dissatisfied with development are advised to contact their state legislator rather than the local board of education.

Board Treasurer John Magerko, who is the board's liaison to the Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB), said that CASB shares this concern with excessive testing. The organization has suggested easing into the increased requirements over a longer period.

Members of the group said that, when it was necessary to cut the budget, individual districts were required to make their own decisions about local priorities, but now that there is more funding they are told how to spend it.

**Excerpts from the resolution**

Some key parts of the resolution declared that the D-38 Board of Education:

- Expresses its opposition to state and federal mandates generally and, specifically, to those that attempt to measure educational achievement well below the standards that we have established, that our students have consistently achieved, and that we know will be necessary to compete in the 21st century.
- Does not support changing its proven successful



**Above:** Some winners of the Eighth Annual Lewis-Palmer Chess Tournament were introduced to the board. They are, from left, Jake Babbitt, Tyler Babbitt, Audrey Gulig, Danny Cook, coach Steve Waldmann, and Ben Carlander. Seventy-seven students participated in the tournament. Photo by Harriet Halbig.

curriculum or educational standards to align with Common Core State Standards and supports delaying and/or reconsidering the implementation of the PARCC assessment scheduled to start in 2015.

- Expresses its opposition to the overly burdensome implementation of SB 10-191, and having an evaluation process that has proven effective by years of high student achievement, affirmatively states that D-38 is in the best position to determine if changes are warranted and, if so, how to incorporate them.
- Is concerned about the long-term and ongoing erosion of local control by continual mandates from the state that fail to contribute to, and in some cases detract from, the quality of education for D-38 students and believes these intrusions by state and federal agencies disenfranchise our votes and infringe on the authority granted by the Colorado Constitution.

The entire resolution may be found on the district's website, lewispalmer.org.

Following the passage of the resolution, a letter from Pfoff to parents in the district confirmed that, because school boards are elected by the local community to incorporate local values into the educational process, the use of "one size fits all" government mandates are inappropriate.

Pfoff said that the resolution was passed in an attempt to initiate a dialog with state and other authorities and discuss the importance of local control.

Pfoff asked parents to support and encourage their children to do their best in these assessments and participate in all that are required. He said, "Continued outstanding performance on these tests is essential for our district to maintain our accreditation rating of Accredited with Distinction. This is the highest rating possible in the state of Colorado and it demonstrates our pursuit of excellence in the educational opportunities for our children."

**2014-15 employee benefits**

Director of Personnel and Student Services Bob Foster reported that the district will be able to maintain the same plans and deductibles for next year. The district will cover health, life, and dental care for employees.

The board passed a resolution to declare itself the exclusive chartering authority in the district.

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