

in the appropriate class.

Monument Academy has found it difficult to determine trends in growth gap performance due to the small number of students in each category.

In the area of growth gaps, the elementary free/reduced-price lunch population is "approaching" requirements for reading. The middle school free/reduced lunch group is "approaching." The elementary group does not meet expectations in math. At the middle school level, minority students and students with disabilities are "approaching." In writing, the students with disabilities are "approaching."

The school proposes to address the problems through additional teacher training in the areas of interpreting data and increased differentiation as a result of this analysis.

Superintendent search update

Interim Superintendent Ted Bauman reported that there have been 34 applicants for the position of superintendent. The Board of Education will screen the applications

for the following week, followed by an executive session meeting on Feb. 18.

Representatives of the Colorado Association of School Boards will then do background checks on the remaining candidates and report on these at a meeting on Feb. 25.

There will be a reception for the finalists on March 7 at the Learning Center and interviews will be held on March 8. Each candidate will be interviewed by the board and three additional panels.

A contract will be negotiated on March 10 and the new superintendent will be introduced at the school board meeting on March 20.

Security procedures

DAAC Chair Chris Amenson asked Bauman whether there were anticipated changes in the district's security procedures following an incident in which a handgun was found in a backpack at Lewis-Palmer High School the previous week.

Bauman said that the Sheriff's Office released an announcement of the incident to the media before the district was able to notify teachers and parents, causing great concern when students and their parents exchanged emails about the situation. The chosen response by the district was to declare a shelter-in-place situation, keeping all students in place. No injuries were reported.

Bauman also said that the district's Safety and Security Advisory Council continues to discuss security equipment and procedures.

The District Accountability Advisory Committee meets at 7 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month. Locations vary. The next meeting will be held on March 11 at Prairie Winds Elementary School, 7909 Kinds Deer Point East, Monument.

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Top Weather Events of 2013

By Bill Kappel

Snowy and cold February

Nearly 30 inches of snow accumulated during February. Unfortunately, this was the exception so far this winter, as snowfall was below normal during the other months.

Cold start to the year

Not only was snowfall well below normal for the 2013 winter, but temperatures were low, too. Monthly average temperatures were below normal every month from January through May, with the largest departures in March and April. In fact, we had several late season cold snaps,

with low temperatures reaching below zero as late as April 10.

Dry, warm June

Record warmth and several months of below normal precipitation in the spring conspired to produce extremely dry conditions that led to the devastating fire in Black Forest.

Wet end to summer

Rainfall was plentiful starting in July and continuing through late summer. This culminated with record rainfall and flooding along the Front Range during the first

two weeks of September. This included a new 24-hour state rainfall record, when 11.85 inches accumulated from midnight to midnight Sept. 12.

Record December cold snap

After a quiet fall, record cold moved in just before the official start to winter. Temperatures plummeted well below zero starting on Dec. 4 and didn't reach back above freezing until the afternoon of the 10th. Snowfall totals during this cold period were not excessive, but the length of cold without a break was unusual for this area. ■

February Weather Wrap

By Bill Kappel

Temperatures and precipitation were right about normal for February, but the way we ended up there was anything but normal. We experienced wild temperature swings from sub-zero cold to windy, warm, and dry.

Cold and snowy conditions were in control in the first few days of February. A quick-moving storm accumulated 4 to 6 inches of snow on the 1st day of the month as temperatures remained 10 to 20 degrees cooler than normal. Skies cleared out briefly during the evening of the 1st through the morning of the 2nd and allowed temperatures to rapidly cool to below-zero levels. Plenty of sunshine the next day made for a beautiful Colorado blue sky with the fresh snow cover.

High temperatures were briefly able to reach above freezing during the early afternoon hours of the 3rd, but that was the last time for the rest of the week that we reached above freezing, as several surges of arctic air and light snow moved into the region.

Temperatures were unusually cold for an extended period during the cold arctic outbreak. This included temperatures remaining below zero from the evening of the 4th through the mid-morning of the 6th. Low temperatures fell into the 20s below zero on the morning of the 5th and 6th, pretty cold even for us. Fresh snowfall accumulated 4 to 6 inches on the 4th, continuing to bring much needed moisture to the region.

The arctic air mass began to retreat on the 7th, pulling back to the lower elevation like the tide pulling away from a beach. In this unusual situation, we were a good 10 to 20 degrees warmer than surrounding areas like Colorado Springs and Denver. The warmth continued over the weekend as we reached into the 40s while lower elevations, mainly below 7,000 feet, were stuck in the fog and in the 20s.

After a cold and snowy start to February, a significant pattern change occurred starting in the second week of the month. This allowed the storm track from the Pacific to affect the region. It brought with it mild air

and strong downsloping winds. Several rounds of Pacific moisture carried by a strong jet stream moved through the region. This moist, westerly flow was very beneficial to our mountains with several feet of snow accumulating in parts of the high country.

However, the strong westerly flow resulted in downslope winds for us. When the air descends from the Continental Divide and down the Front Range foothills, it dries out and warms up, leaving us windy and dry. This allowed temperatures to warm to above normal levels through most of the period, with plenty of high- and mid-level mountain wave clouds.

When the pattern set up just right, strong and gusty winds developed, battering areas along and west of I-25 with 70 to 80 mph winds. Of course, the dry, desiccating winds also helped to quickly melt the extensive snowpack we had developed during the first week of the month, adding moisture to the soil but leaving us in need of a couple wet spring snowstorms as we head into March and April.

The last week and a half was mainly dry and mild, with gusty winds again felt on many days. The week started off with high temperatures reaching well into the 50s from the 16th through the 19th. These temperatures were 10 to 15 degrees warmer than normal for this time of the year. A brief break in the mild, windy weather came through with a strong arctic front during the evening of the 20th. Strong winds accompanied this push of cold air and snow quickly filled in. A quick burst of 3 to 6 inches accumulated that evening and early morning, leading to a messy commute.

However, the stronger mid-February sunshine made for a quick warm-up the next afternoon as temperatures returned to normal levels, with low- to mid-40s on the 21st and 22nd. This helped to melt much of the snow over the weekend. Highs stayed above normal on the 24th and 25th, reaching the mid-50s as gusty westerly winds kept the cold air mass just to our east and north.

By late morning on the 25th, the cold air rushed back

in, bringing a drastic drop in temperatures along with fog and flurries through the morning of the 26th. Sunshine returned for the afternoon of the 26th, with temperatures reaching the mid-40s. The weather remained uneventful for us through the end of the month, with seasonal temperatures on the 27th and 28th, and gusty winds at times, especially on the 28th.

A look ahead

March is known for a wide range of weather conditions in the region. We can see 70° temperatures one afternoon and blizzard conditions the next. Many of us remember the blizzard of March 2003 when we received 30 to 50 inches of snowfall that shut down the region. However, snow that does fall begins to melt quickly this time of the year, providing beneficial moisture for our plants and limited inconvenience for us.

February 2014 Weather Statistics

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|---------------------------------|---|
| Average High | 39.1° (-0.2°) |
| 100-year return frequency value | max 51.9° min 32.8° |
| Average Low | 12.6° (-0.8°) |
| 100-year return frequency value | max 21.9° min 3.7° |
| Highest Temperature | 56° on the 18th |
| Lowest Temperature | -23° on the 5th |
| Monthly Precipitation | 0.54" |
| | (-0.19", 22% below normal) |
| 100-year return frequency value | max 2.10" min 0.02" |
| Monthly Snowfall | 13.9" |
| | (+0.4", 1% above normal) |
| Season to Date Snow | 50.9" |
| | (-19.3", 23% below normal) |
| | (the snow season is from July 1 to June 30) |
| Season to Date Precip. | 14.88" |
| | (+2.23", 15% above normal) |
| | (the precip season is from July 1 to June 30) |
| Heating Degree Days | 1069 (-17) |
| Cooling Degree Days | 0 |

Bill Kappel is a meteorologist and Tri-Lakes resident. He can be reached at billkappel@ocn.me.

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Letters to Our Community

Guidelines for letters to the editor are on page 27.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in Letters to Our Community should not be interpreted as the view of OCN even if the letter writer is an OCN volunteer.

Ready, Set, Test

I am often asked about the state assessments and why we test our kids. These assessments, along with other school,

district, and national measures, help us make decisions about instruction and curriculum, set rigorous and relevant goals for students, and ensure we help students learn. After all, students are our business; and our bottom line is their success, in school and beyond.

The Colorado State Summative Assessment season is upon us. Students are currently participating in the