

District Accountability Advisory Committee, Dec. 9

Unified Improvement Plans help shape teaching strategies

By Harriet Halbig

The Lewis-Palmer D-38 District Accountability Committee (DAAC) discussed the Unified Improvement Plans (UIPs) for Palmer Ridge and Lewis-Palmer High Schools at its Dec. 9 meeting.

The UIP is a document generated by the Colorado Department of Education and includes results from assessments from the previous school year. Principals

then use these data as a basis for determining weaknesses in their programs and planning instructional strategies for the coming year.

Lewis-Palmer High School Principal Sandi Brandl reported good progress from the previous school year in the area of growth gaps. In the previous school year, the school had been rated as “approaching” in this category, while in 2013-14, the school was rated as “meets.” In all other areas, including academic achievement, academic growth, and postsecondary and workforce readiness, the school was rated as “exceeds,” scoring 100 percent in academic achievement and postsecondary and workforce readiness.

The areas in which improvement is needed are reading and math for students with disabilities. In her narrative in the document, Brandl said that students with disabilities were not provided with consistent direct reading instruction and support in learning centers, which are small group resource and support classes. Students with disabilities were also not provided with sufficient support in math.

The proposed strategy is to offer whole staff development in close reading and reading strategies and procure classroom resources for reading instruction. In the area of math, curriculum will be analyzed. Some online resources will be used in addition to traditional curricu-

lum. In both reading and math, students with disabilities will be tested several times during the year to monitor progress. Brandl said that one challenge with growth gaps is that a student must achieve proficiency by sophomore year, according to the requirements of the state.

Brandl explained the recent changes in reading requirements in that students are now required to read informational texts and analyze them rather than reading fiction. Texts are becoming more challenging as well. Questions in books are directly related to texts. In math, Brandl said that an emphasis is on more variety in instructional materials and an attempt to instill confidence before moving on to more challenging material.

Brandl reported that this is the third consecutive year for Lewis-Palmer High School to be named a James Irwin School of Excellence. She also said that in past years the school generally had eight to 10 target areas for improvement, and this year it had only two.

The Palmer Ridge UIP also revealed weaknesses in Academic Growth Gaps. Although all groups (free/reduced lunch eligible, minorities, students with disabilities, English learners, and students needing to catch up) were rated as “meets” or “exceeds” in reading, students with disabilities were rated as “approaching” in math and “does not meet” with regard to

postsecondary readiness.

Despite these ratings, students met targets in many categories. Students with disabilities were the only group not meeting or exceeding all targets. It is proposed to add direct instruction in reading and math to help these students to reach all targets.

Teachers are given a list of students who are not proficient or advanced so that they may intervene at the student level as necessary.

Students with disabilities are not meeting graduation requirements because they are taking advantage of the Transitions Program, which allows them to receive services until age 21, Brandl said. Palmer Ridge, as a young school, has not yet established a sixth- or seventh-year graduation rate.

Overall academic achievement and academic growth were rated as 100 percent at Palmer Ridge, with Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness at 95 percent.

About Palmer Ridge

Palmer Ridge High School Principal Gary Gabel gave a brief introduction to his school, which was opened in 2008. During its first year the school housed only freshman and sophomore classes. Gabel said that 2015 will be the first year in which Palmer Ridge graduates will have graduated from college. Palmer Ridge has been doing surveys of students two years after graduation to determine whether they felt prepared for the challenges of postsecondary education.

Among the responses they have received is a desire by students to be held accountable for completing assignments completely and on time. Students also have said that taking advanced placement courses was good preparation. Gabel said that the next round of surveys will be videotaped so that present students can see graduates answering the questions.

Gable said that Palmer Ridge offers a variety of extracurricular activities and that students excel in music and theater activities as well as athletic endeavors. In the past years there have been multiple

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SW of Hwy 83 & County Line Road/
Palmer Divide Ave., east of Kings Deer

CLASS SCHEDULE

Jan. 29, 2015 • 6 pm - 10 pm
6 - 7:30 pm • Intro & Disaster Preparedness
7:30 - 8 pm • Domestic Animals in Disasters
8 - 9 pm • Terrorism
9 - 10 pm • Disaster Psychology

Jan. 30, 2015 • 6 pm - 10 pm
6 - 10 pm • Medical

Jan. 31, 2015 • 8 am - 4 pm
8 - 9:30 am • Search & Rescue
9:30 - 11:30 am • Fire Safety
11:30 am - 12:30 pm • Live Fire Practical (including Fire Extinguisher Training)
12:30 - 1 pm • Brown Bag Lunch
1 - 3:30 pm • Tabletop Disaster Exercise
3:30 - 4 pm • Q&A and Certificates




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