

Lewis-Palmer D-38 District Accountability Advisory Committee, Feb. 9

DAAC hears reports on superintendent's contract, curriculum, gifted and special education

By Harriet Halbig

The District 38 District Accountability and Advisory Committee (DAAC) received reports on a number of subjects including the superintendent's contract, curriculum and gifted and special education at its Feb. 9 meeting at Lewis-Palmer Middle School.

Board of Education update

In response to public inquiries, Board Liaison John Magerko explained the way in which compensation for the superintendent in her new contract was determined. Some community members questioned the amount of increase over the previous contract period. Magerko said that Superintendent Karen Brofft, when hired, accepted a lower compensation as the equivalent of the probationary period used for teachers.

Due to her superior performance, she received a significant increase upon renewal of her contract last year and this year was approved for a three-year contract.

Public objection arose due to the fact that the last three-year contract was signed with a superintendent whose contract was bought out after a short tenure. Magerko assured the committee that this will not happen again, due to a clause that would limit payout to no more than six months' salary or the remainder of the individual's term, whichever is shorter. Brofft also pays the same amount as other district employees for health benefits.

The amount of compensation was determined after consultation with neighboring districts and Magerko pointed out that Brofft's new compensation is equal to that requested by another candidate at the time she was hired.

Regarding academic standards, Magerko said that some still object to the use of Common Core in curriculum, but he said the district can make them work and otherwise would have to revise curriculum extensively. The state will begin to review its standards in July. Beginning in March, the state will seek input from districts.

Curriculum update

Director of Curriculum and Professional Development Sheila Beving reported that the district is exercising local control over its curriculum. Teachers write their own lesson plans and formulate assessments in keeping with state standards.

During the fall, the department reviewed fourth- to eighth-grade science curriculum and looked at resources available. In late February, a shorter list of resources would be considered.

During the winter, the department will listen to the opinions of focus groups regarding priorities and monitor teacher activity.

Other areas to review include social studies for sixth and seventh grades and civics textbooks. The kindergarten report card is also under review.

During the spring, kindergarten through third-grade science will be examined, plus eighth-grade math.

During the summer, technological competencies for students and teachers will be examined and training materials for staff will be developed.

Special education report

Special Education Parent Liaison Michelle Nay reported on activities of the Special Education Advisory Committee, which serves as a forum for parents, teachers, and community members. The group meets five times a year and is state mandated.

The group often hosts guest speakers and offers explanations and demonstrations of resources available in the community and in the schools and on how parents can advocate for their students within the system.

Gifted education update

Director of Assessment and Gifted Education Lori Benton reported on activities of the Gifted Education Leadership Team (GELT) following a recent audit of its activities.

Benton said that the activities of the team are largely grant funded.

Explaining the gifted identification process, Benton said that the staff must offer a body of evidence supporting a student's selection. This evidence includes observation of certain behaviors in addition to assessment results. A new area of concentration is development of processes to identify students gifted in the arts.

The team begins in the third grade to screen students and trains staff on identification of gifted behaviors.

In answer to a question, Benton said that younger students who are identified as gifted may undergo further observation. In some cases, such students may be in classes above their grade level in their areas of strength.

Benton also pointed out that there are students who may be receiving special education services and are also gifted in some areas. Among these students and English Language Learners the identification process may be more challenging.

Although active identification does not continue into high school, Benton emphasized that students are offered the opportunity to access outside resources in their area

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