

Monument Academy School Board, March 9

Board approves administration reorganization; discusses hiring new principal

By Jackie Burhans

The Monument Academy (MA) School Board met on March 9 to reorganize the school's operational structure, discuss hiring a new principal, and report on other activities. Board members Scott Saunders and Patrick Hall were absent.

Reorganization of operational structure

Executive Director Don Griffin presented a recommendation for reorganizing the operational structure of the current school and putting in place an initial structure for the development of the proposed high school. Griffin noted that the reorganization is needed due to the growth of MA and has the goal of giving employees more access to management, preserving the current K-8 program, protecting the MA philosophy, and preparing for the proposed high school.

Monument Academy has over 1,000 students of whom 60 have special needs, 75 are on Response to Intervention programs (RTIs), and about 25 are on Individual Education Plans (IEPs). The principal currently has 65 "direct reports," meaning that 65 employees report directly to her.

Griffin said the new operational model will have several deans. This is a model that has been proven at other charter schools. He noted that this new model does not affect the Board of Directors which, by charter and statute, has fiduciary oversight as well as responsibility for strategic planning. However, the board's scope will increase to cover the high school even if they are operated as two different schools. Griffin also noted that MA will also need to hire a principal, however the role will change to be a mentor and overseer for the deans, help get the high school application approved, and get the high school operational in the time frame set by the board. The principal will write the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP), have a seat on the School Accountability Advisory Committee (SAAC), and be in charge of the high school curriculum.

There will be a dean of the elementary school, dean of the middle school, and dean of Student Services. The elementary school dean will be responsible for K-5 teachers, paraprofessionals, and staff, including hiring, evaluations, and discipline. The middle school dean will be responsible for grades 6-8. The dean of Student Services will be responsible for any special services such as Extended Student Services (ESS), RTI, or any sort of educational plan. The staff and operations associated with those students will report to the dean. They will be responsible

for the day-to-day operations, including parent meetings, district interactions, and staff evaluations. Preschool is a private entity not under the charter of K-8 so will report directly to the principal.

The next level is the director level, which will not see a lot of changes except in scope. The director of Educational Technology is responsible to help get technology into the classrooms and directly reports to the principal. The director of Instruction and Evaluation will also report to the principal.

The board unanimously approved the recommendation on reorganization.

Principal Richard to leave MA

Principal Lis Richard is leaving Monument Academy to become superintendent of Creede, Colo., School District 2. Creede is in Mineral County in southwestern Colorado. Richard will be on the MA payroll through June 30 and starts in her new position on July 1.

The initial phase of the search to hire a new principal

is under way. The job has been posted on the MA website and the Charter League of Schools website. The plan is to gather applications and complete the screening process by late April. The goal is to get the new principal in place before Richard leaves so they can spend time together.

Other highlights

- Director Griffin, Principal Richard, and Director of Finance Nancy Tive met with Lewis-Palmer District 38 Superintendent Karen Brofft and Assistant Superintendent Cheryl Wangerman to discuss MA's decision to go forward with the high school application and certain procedural aspects of recent student discipline meetings.
- Tive reported that MA spent \$574,214 in February 2017 compared to \$510,584 the previous year. This was \$12,000 more than budgeted. The net loss was \$5,354 compared to a net income of \$27,585 the previous year.



Above (L to R): Monument Academy Executive Director Don Griffin and departing Principal Lis Richard. Photo by Jackie Burhans.

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