

Special Education Advisory Committee, Oct. 3

Director gives overview

By Harriet Halbig

Mary Anne Fleury, School District 38's director of Exceptional Student Services, offered a broad overview of the district's programs at the committee's Oct. 3 meeting.

Fleury said that former Superintendent Ray Blanch tried to define the mission of special education by consulting the District Accountability Advisory Committee, the various Building Advisory Committees, the Board of Education, parents, teachers, and the community to determine what the goals of the program should be. At that time, a three-year plan was created, which would end with the 2013-14 year.

The state of Colorado's education system is locally controlled, meaning that each district determines its own values and solutions.

Fleury serves on a statewide committee called Special Education Reinvented. The group was formed to improve performance by special education students, only 25 percent of whom are proficient in reading and other skills. She said the group will start anew to create an innovative program.

Some of the group's goals are to make Individual Education Plans (IEPs) more cognizant of a student's strengths, changing teacher training methods to make inclusiveness in the general education classroom more of a priority, and creating individual learning plans for the entire student population. At present, special education students, English Language Learners and Gifted Education students have individual plans.

New survey developed

Fleury said that a new survey will soon be sent to parents of special education students, teachers,

and administrators asking them what they believe the focus of the district's program should be.

The Transitions program for those ages 18 to 21 with active IEPs was originally developed for students with severe disabilities. At present, it serves students with a spectrum of abilities. Some attend college and then return to the program for help with homework. Others are involved with vocational training. Students leave the program at the end of the semester in which they turn 21. Colorado Department of Education representatives have praised the effectiveness of this program.

Fleury explained the various support centers within the district, such as the Significant Support Needs Center at the middle school and the Dual Diagnosis Program at Prairie Winds Elementary, which works with students on the autism spectrum who are high in cognitive function but have emotional disabilities.

She also explained the work of the district's child find coordinator, who evaluates children under 3 to determine whether they qualify for inclusion in special education at the preschool level.

Fleury supervises the specialists such as the occupational and physical therapists and the alternative physical education specialist. All teachers and paraprofessionals report to their principals. Fleury reports to Superintendent John Borman.

Fleury may move teachers from one location to another based on caseloads. She has developed a new system to evaluate caseloads based on the amount of time devoted to each student on a weekly basis. She is reviewing the caseloads for the coming year.

There are monthly meetings of the teacher leadership team, which offers training in areas including behavioral support, technological assistance, crisis prevention intervention, and training of paraprofessionals.

A parent at the meeting said she would welcome the opportunity to attend training on crisis prevention. Fleury said such training might be made available to parents at some time, perhaps offered by one of the district's psychologists.

Classroom inclusiveness

There was a brief discussion of the goal of inclusiveness in the general education classroom for students with disabilities.

Fleury said that she and Director of Assessment, Gifted Education and Technology Lori Benton plan to discuss inclusiveness with teachers in the near future. She said that with the



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