

Lewis-Palmer D-38 Special Education Advisory Council, May 8

Superintendent, council look for ways to improve transitions

By Harriet Halbig

Lewis-Palmer District 38 Superintendent John Borman attended the May 8 meeting of the Special Education Advisory Council to discuss a document regarding the transition process between grades, schools, and semesters. The council agreed that the Special Education Department should develop a checklist of things that parents are entitled to request to enhance the transition process.

Transition was the focus of the council during the 2012-13 school year. The group consists of Director of Exceptional Student Services Mary Ann Fleury, Special Education Parent Liaison Michelle Nay, special and general education teachers, and parents of students in the special education program.

The discussion was facilitated by the council's chairman, Suzanne Faber.

A primary concern of the group was lack of consistency in transition practices from one school to another. Some parents reported excellent results, while others were frustrated when schools refused their requests for such things as knowing the name of next year's teacher or taking a trial ride on a school bus in the

spring before middle school.

Faber said that it should be reasonable to expect best practices to be shared among the schools.

Fleury said that this issue had been discussed with special education staff, and a method of sharing this information was being sought. In the past, a special education leadership team met monthly. Because special education teachers are tied to their schools, it was difficult to ensure attendance. In the coming year the leadership team will consist of the department's psychologists, who are better able to have the time to meet.

The psychologists attend the first IEP (individualized learning plan) meeting for each student and for each triennial meeting. In this way it is certain that they are aware of the needs of students, their progress, and the accommodations they require.

Back-to-school issues

The council discussed back-to-

school practices. It is helpful for some students to know who their teacher will be the following year, although the teacher could change because staff is re-evaluated from one year to the next. Some students also wish to meet their new teacher and see their new classroom or school, and learn such things as how to use a locker and change classes. Other students need to avoid stress by beginning earlier or later than their peers. (Fleury said that this

is now an option.) Some students may prefer to have a paraprofessional (para) with them at orientation.

Fleury and Nay emphasized that all students do not have an IEP meeting in the spring, and therefore it is not feasible to provide the name of the teacher for the following year to everyone. General education students often do not have this information.




The council said that it is critical to help parents under-

stand the level of achievement of their student, to determine the best way to communicate with teachers, and to receive a list of books the student will be using. In some cases, parents like to have copies of textbooks and future assignments at home so that the student can feel better prepared in class.

Parents stressed that it is important for teachers to read each student's IEP before school starts. In some cases parents pro-

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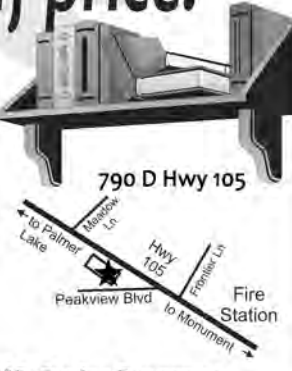
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