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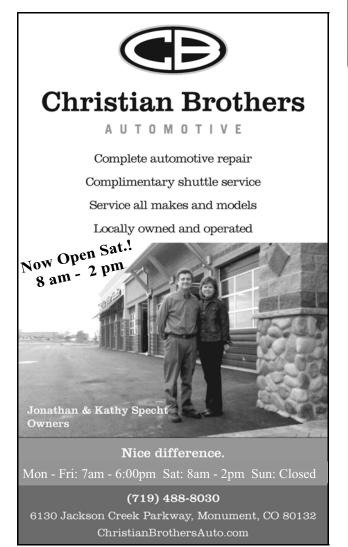
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At each of its future meetings, the committee will hear presentations by school principals regarding last year's scores and plans to improve them through a form known as the Universal Improvement Plan (UIP). The committee will divide into groups to hear the presentations and then report back to the committee as a whole.

Benton said that one of the challenges of assessing a high performing population is to grow each student over the course of the year despite the fact that D-38 students begin near the top of the range of scores.

Benton said that the district achieved its highest score during the past year because the framework enables teachers to identify individuals who are struggling in a given subject and concentrate their attention on small groups in this way while retaining high standards throughout the student body.

## A new reading challenge

A new challenge in the coming school year is the requirement that students be assessed for their reading ability in grades K-3. Those in pre-kindergarten who are state funded must also be assessed at the beginning of the year.

These assessments are required by the Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act passed by the state Legislature in 2012. An initial assessment must be made at the end of the 2012-13 school year.

The assessments can be very time consuming and time is being included in the school calendar on the first Friday after the beginning of school in August to enable teachers to plan the tests, Benton said. Substitutes will be employed to free the primary staff for this function.

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The assessment must utilize a state-approved test. Those found lacking in reading skills must undergo intervention and be reassessed in 30 days following the initial assessment. All will be tested at the beginning and middle of each school year, Benton said.

Funding will be provided on a per-pupil basis for those requiring full-day kindergarten, summer school literacy programs, or tutoring services.

Also included in the UIP for each school will be academic achievement, academic growth gaps, graduation rates, and post-secondary and workforce readiness.

Benton stressed that a responsibility of DAAC is to carefully consider and understand each UIP before it is submitted to the state Department of Education. Members must ensure that plans of action are complete and clearly stated and that goals are realistic.

Benton said that the state requires that the effort focus on adult behavior—teachers and parents and their efforts on behalf of academic success.

## School calendar

Director of Personnel and Student Services Bob Foster offered the first reading of the 2013-14 school calendar. He said that it had been presented to principals previous to the meeting. The start and end dates of the year will be about the same as this year. There will be 163 days of elementary instruction, 167 for middle school and 169 for high school. The starting and ending times of the school day will remain the same. The first Friday of school is a teacher workday to plan required assessments.

Foster reminded the committee that the district's graduation date has to be planned around the timing of the Air Force Academy graduation.

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The District Accountability Advisory Committee meets at 7 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month. Locations vary. The next meeting will be on Jan. 14 at the district's Learning Center, 146 Jefferson St. in Monument.

Harriet Halbig may be reached at harriethalbig@ocn.me.



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