

Lewis-Palmer D-38 Board of Education, Dec. 17

# Board continues discussion of academic standards, reviews curriculum and technology

By Harriet Halbig

The Board of Education of the Lewis-Palmer D-38 School District continued its discussion of academic standards, recognized school achievements, and received updates on technology, curriculum, and assessments at its Dec. 17 meeting.

### Academic standards discussion

During the November meeting, the board instructed Superintendent Karen Brofft to determine the cost and capability to revise the district's academic standards to omit reference to Common Core. The options

were to simply omit the wording and follow state standards, to create a new district set of standards with the participation of teachers and community members which exceeded the requirements of Common Core, or to wait to implement changes because the Colorado Department of Education will begin to review its standards in 2016 as part of a regular cycle.

Brofft reported that she and other members of the administration spent 20 hours analyzing the question of whether and how to alter academic standards in response to objections to Common Core. She reminded the board that Common Core only addresses English language arts and math.

Brofft referred to the history of the question, pointing out that in 2009 the state created its own workplace readiness program as part of competing for Race to the Top funding. If the district were to create its own standards, they must meet or exceed the state standards, but the district cannot eliminate any of them, she said.

Teachers use the standards to plan lessons and select materials and spent many hours restructuring their curriculum to incorporate the requirements of Common Core.

Brofft said that to remove offensive standards and replace them with the district's would be difficult. Deciding which elements are offensive would be challenging.

The option of creating standards with a committee of parents and teachers would

offer additional challenges. It would be necessary to train the citizens and parents involved to understand current standards which the district needs to meet or excel. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for special education students would also need to be altered to align with the new standards.

Brofft said that this would probably be a three-year process and may require a Request for Proposals if the district wished to consider basing its new standards on those of another state. She estimated that the cost of such a process would exceed \$1 million and reminded the board that the Colorado state standards could change at any time.

Board President Mark Pfoff commented that the district's performance data is strong under the current standards and therefore is not an incentive to make changes.

Director Sarah Sampayo said that she would like to determine what the specific objections are to Common Core, asking if there is a way to explain it to the public. She recommended the formation of a committee of volunteers to address concerns.

Brofft said that the district would still need to balance the cost. Having a dialogue is a good idea, but teachers did a tremendous amount of work to make the current standards fit with the district's students. She said that we must also consider the work that would not be done while addressing this issue.

Brofft said that of the teachers surveyed, 80 percent are satisfied with the current standards and 60 percent did not wish to create new ones.

Recent federal legislation known as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) also will change the approach to standards, as it requires states to implement accountability systems by the 2017-18 school year and prohibits the use of funding to encourage changes at the state or district level. A positive aspect of this law is that it allows more local control over curriculum and standards.

After additional discussion, board Secretary Matthew Clawson asked Brofft's opinion on the recommended course of action.

Brofft said that she thinks the district should wait because it could spend a great deal of time and funding on an action that may need to be reversed.

Clawson asked whether there would be significant changes were a Republican to be elected president in 2016. Brofft re-

plied that a new president would select the new secretary of education but changes happen slowly, as No Child Left Behind remained in force throughout the Obama administration although it was proposed by George W. Bush.

Responding to the suggestion of forming a new public committee, Vice President Sherri Hawkins pointed out that the district already has Building Accountability Advisory Committees and the District Accountability Advisory Committee to serve as a conduit for citizen concerns.

Pfoff and Treasurer John Magerko agreed that this mechanism is already in place and would serve the desired purpose.

No formal action was taken.

### Superintendent update

Brofft commented that the recent legislator visit was valuable and that she was able to meet with Rep. Alec Garnett on the subject of data privacy. He was interested to learn that the district vets all apps used by the district.

Brofft reported that the official count of special education students is reported in December and that the district met all indicators.

She is working with focus groups regarding graduation requirements by looking at five years of data.

Assistant Superintendent Cheryl Wangeman recognized Fleet Manager Ted Kruger, saying that the new buses have arrived. She also said that district officials consult bus drivers when determining whether to delay or close schools. On occasion, parents have been called to bring their children to an alternate bus stop due to lack of plowing.

Wangeman also said that she suggested putting high school media students in touch with the No Methadone in Monument group in an effort to expand their visibility in the community.

### Financial audit review

Shawn Sonnkalb of CliftonLarsonAllen LLP addressed the board regarding the recently completed audit of the district's books.

Sonnkalb thanked Wangeman and her staff for their cooperation. He found no misstatements in the audit and the district received an award for the quality of its work.

Only two points were brought up in the report. The first is that there has been a change in debt disclosure regarding the

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