

Further information regarding LPSD's Long Term Planning – February 16, 2017

Western Demographics president Shannon Bingham presented at the LPSD community open house on Monday, February 13. According to Bingham, a demographer with an extensive education in community forecasting and planning and over 25 years of forecasting experience, Lewis-Palmer School District can expect approximately 1,360 additional students over the next eight years. His analysis indicates 680 of these students will be added at the elementary level, 181 students at the middle level, and 499 students at the high school level. Bingham analyzed 10 years of enrollment data for all schools within the district including Monument Academy, as well as information from El Paso County's population databases and information from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs. He discussed growth plans with the area's major developers and studied local and regional markets and economic conditions.

To determine next steps, a committee of individuals representing all schools and areas of the district has been formed. Committee members include an LPSD Board Member, a Monument Academy board member, teachers, parents, community members, and principals. As possibilities are being considered, Monument Academy's plans as well as alternative educational opportunities, such as on-line learning, come into play.

Some stakeholders wondered how Monument Academy figures into this work. Currently Monument Academy operates as a K-8 school. It is at capacity. Monument Academy's Board of Education is considering the possibility of adding a high school in the next few years. This will factor into the Long-Range Facilities Planning Committee's work.

Monument Academy, like most charter schools, does not have an attendance boundary. It draws students from across the district and from other districts. Other schools in the district also draw students from areas outside of their attendance boundaries. Monument Academy's enrollment is based primarily on a first-come, first served basis. Other LPSD schools are positioned so that students moving into or living in their attendance boundary have a seat in their local school should they desire it. To ensure this, many schools have limited open enrollment as they near capacity.

The State of Colorado is a "School Choice State" by statute. This means that schools and districts must allow students to enroll in schools that are not their assigned school if space exists. Currently, the district's outflow of students attending neighboring district's schools, such as schools in Academy District 20, matches the inflow of students. The majority of students coming into LPSD schools from out of district come from Academy District 20 and Douglas County School District. Likewise, Academy District 20 receives the largest number of our students who choose to attend school outside of LPSD. Parents' work location, charter school offerings, and specific program offerings are major factors for parents as they select schools for their students.

Lewis-Palmer High School Principal Sandi Brandl summed it up nicely, "As a school community, LPSD has a long history of providing our students with high quality preparation for post-secondary, workforce, and civic success. In order to continue this work, all LPSD students must have access to quality staff and a safe, learning-conducive environment. Having a long range plan is essential to providing these opportunities for our students."

The next long term planning update will feature an overview of the committee's work.