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By RACHEL COLEMAN

• Leader & Times

It's never too early to think ahead — at least, that's the reasoning behind several agenda items to be addressed at tonight's USD 480 school board meeting. The board will take a look ahead to next year, with the presentation of the 2014-15 calendar and a proposal for a new enrollment system that will shift much of the process to digital, rather than paper, forms.

Director of technology Neha Patel will present bids to the board for the high-tech enrollment system. Designed to interact smoothly with the PowerSchool system currently in use to give parents constant access to their children's grades, the online enrollment software will allow families to complete many of the enrollment steps at home,

before the actual enrollment day. The system, Patel noted, could speed the process for everyone involved, cut down on long lines, and allow families with more than one child to enroll to get a head start on the process.

With only one bid submitted by the company Infosnap, the estimated cost would be \$28,500.

Other new ideas have found their way to the night's list of business. The board will hear about three new AP (Advanced Placement) courses that may be introduced at Liberal High School pending approval.

One of them, AP English Literature and Composition, would be adopted in place of the current AP English Language and Composition class. That course, taught at the 11th-grade level, “is experiencing a decrease in numbers and test score productivity results,” the proposal noted. “Replacing it ... is an attempt to increase enrollment in advanced English classes ... and will add rigorous reading requirements to Honors courses.”

Two new art classes will also be submitted for board approval.

As the district braces for its annual batch of teacher turnover, administrators are preparing to seek out new employees. Among the staff travel requests that will come before the board are the following recruiting trips:

- Minnesota Recruiting Fair in Minneapolis, Minn., attended by Jill Stout and Sheri King;

- New Mexico Recruiting Fairs in Las Cruces and Albuquerque, attended by Paul Larkin and Shiloh Vincent;

- West Texas A & M Recruiting Fair in Canyon, Texas, attended by Shawna Evans and Traci Mettlen;

- University of Nebraska Recruiting Fairs in Lincoln and Kearney, Neb., attended by Renae Hickert and Neha Patel;

- University of Wyoming Teacher Fair in Laramie, Wyo., attended by Lana Evans and Dedre Schneider.

In her report to the board, deputy superintendent of schools Renae Hickert submitted a flow chart describing the current guidelines for competency based grading at Liberal High School

“ The LHS School Improvement Team (SIT) developed this one page document as guideline for staff, based on the four essential questions of professional learning communities,” Hickert reported, noting that “Utilizing the guidelines is not required this semester.”

Representatives from the LHS leadership team will present an update to the board in May.

Other agenda items include discussion of future facility needs and the upcoming bond issue, reports from the directors of business and auxiliary services and extension of the contract for superintendent of schools Paul Larkin through the 2015-16 school year.

The USD 480 board of education will meet at 6:30 p.m. at the Education Service Center, 624 N. Grant Ave.

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