



Colorado State Board of Education

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS
BEFORE THE
COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION COMMISSION
DENVER, COLORADO
April 9, 2015, Part 4

BE IT REMEMBERED THAT on April 9, 2015, the
above-entitled meeting was conducted at the Colorado
Department of Education, before the following Board
Members:

Marcia Neal (R), Chairman
Angelika Schroeder (D), Vice Chairman
Valentina (Val) Flores (D)
Jane Goff (D)
Pam Mazanec (R)
Steve Durham (R)
Debora Scheffel (R)



1 MADAM CHAIR: The commissioner will get you
2 started,

3 MR. HAMMOND: Thank you all very much for
4 coming today. If we could have those in the audience
5 please --

6 MADAM CHAIR: Quiet down.

7 MR. HAMMOND: I appreciate that, Thank you.
8 Dr. Alyssa Whitehead-Bust, I appreciate you coming today,
9 and I will turn it over to you. And if you could introduce
10 your panel that's here with you. And as we've heard from
11 the other presentations, this is an informal kind of
12 discussion. We are talking about you're doing, and then
13 the Board of course, will ask questions, and (inaudible).
14 So thank you.

15 MS. WHITEHEAD-BUST: Thank you for having
16 us. We are excited to be here to share a little bit about
17 our performance and accountability work. As Commissioner
18 Hammond said, I am Alyssa Whitehead-Bust, I'm the Chief
19 Academic and Innovation Officer in Denver Public Schools,
20 and I'm joined by some school and systems leaders. I will
21 let you all introduce yourselves.

22 MR. GUYER: Hi, my name is Grant Guyer, I'm
23 the Executive Director of Accountability Research and
24 Evaluation at DPS.

25 MR. CALLAHAN: Hi, I'm Clark Callahan, I'm



1 the principal at Colorado High School.

2 MS. LOFARO: Hello, I'm Jamie Lafaro, and
3 I'm the principal at PREP 6-12.

4 MR. JOHNSON: I'm Randy Johnson, I'm the
5 Instructional Superintendent that works with PREP.

6 MS. WHITEHEAD-BUST: Madam Chair, and
7 members of the Board, we are excited to spend a few minutes
8 sharing with you the important work that we are doing in
9 Denver Public Schools related to performance and
10 accountability management. We are going to spend about ten
11 minutes at the big picture level, talking about the work
12 that we do within Denver, and then we'll hand it over to
13 our school leaders, and to Randy to talk very specifically
14 about two schools -- Colorado High School Charter School,
15 and PREP Academy, that we know you will be having deeper
16 conversations about in months to come.

17 MR. HAMMOND: Alyssa, who is the gentleman
18 (inaudible)?

19 MS. WHITEHEAD-BUST: Would you like to
20 introduce yourself? Thank you. As if he wasn't there.

21 MR. JOSEPH: My name is Oscar Joseph,
22 affectionately called "Dr. J.," the School Improvement
23 Partner for the Intensive Pathway Network of 16 schools.
24 So you'll get to hear a little bit about what we do from
25 Randy Johnson.



1 MR. HAMMOND: Didn't mean to interrupt,
2 sorry.

3 MS. WHITEHEAD-BUST: No, I appreciate you --

4 MR. HAMMOND: (Inaudible).

5 MS. WHITEHEAD-BUST: -- letting Dr. J.
6 introduce himself.

7 MR. HAMMOND: Thank you.

8 MS. WHITEHEAD-BUST: So just really want to
9 begin by grounding our conversation in why we believe
10 deeply in having a performance and accountability system
11 within Denver Public Schools, and we're going to talk about
12 the principles or values that guide that system. And then
13 a few specific examples of tools and conversations that we
14 have specifically related to student and school
15 improvement, using the principles and the frameworks that
16 we've set up around performance and accountability.

17 The very highest level, as I'm sure you've
18 heard from others today, to us, the core purpose of our
19 performance and accountability systems, is to ensure that
20 we are continuously improving student outcome. So we look
21 at performance and accountability not as an event, not as
22 the release of our school performance framework, as an
23 example, but as a set of inter-related systems that allow
24 us to drive continuous improvement first and most
25 importantly for individual students, the classroom level,



1 at the school level. And then, at the end of the day, at
2 the systems level, so that we as a very specific example,
3 seek to continue to improve the performance and
4 accountability system we are about to talk about with you
5 this afternoon.

6 Our performance and accountability work is
7 grounded in the Denver Plan 2020. Our School Board adopted
8 last summer a new strategic vision that outlines a set of
9 ambitious goals for Denver to achieve between now and 2020
10 that is very grounded in an equity and excellence agenda.
11 Very specifically we are seeking to ensure that 80 percent
12 of students have access to a high quality seat in their
13 neighborhood.

14 We right now are able to provide 61 percent
15 of our students access to a high quality seat, but that's
16 not always in their own neighborhood. And so this is a
17 fairly radical departure from where we've been in the
18 system, and it is very explicitly a mission-driven goal to
19 close opportunity and achievement gaps. Because when we
20 look neighborhood by neighborhood, what we are able to see
21 in Denver Public Schools is that our more affluent
22 neighborhoods are able to offer a higher percentage of high
23 quality seats to their students. Southeast Denver, as an
24 example, 100 percent of schools are already blue or green;
25 meaning high quality in our minds. Whereas in Northwest



1 Denver, as another example, only 38 percent of students
2 have access to a high quality seat in their own
3 neighborhood. So the accountability and performance
4 management systems we'll talk about today are very much
5 intended to be a key lever to help change that reality for
6 our students.

7 When we think about how we're going to
8 achieve the Denver Plan 2020, we really start thinking
9 first from the student level, and then working our way
10 backwards from students, to teachers, to schools, up to our
11 networks; networks such as what Randy oversees, and then
12 overall our central support systems. And we are asking
13 ourselves questions around, what are the right data sets to
14 collect at each level of the organization for each of these
15 really important constituencies, how do we use the data
16 once it's collected to drive for performance improvements,
17 as well as accountability decisions?

18 Our Board has recently adopted a set of
19 guiding principles that create an umbrella over all of our
20 performance and accountability work, and we're not going to
21 spend enormous time on each of these individually, but just
22 really wanted to highlight the fact that the Board and
23 senior leadership team as well as school leaders are
24 thinking about performance and accountability from a
25 values-based perspective.



1 First and foremost, really trying to drive
2 for alignment across the system, ensuring that the data
3 we're collecting in classrooms on a daily basis, as an
4 example, ultimately allows us to know whether or not we're
5 on track or off track to meeting those ambitious Denver
6 plan 2020 goals that we're talking about. We believe
7 deeply in ensuring that we are public and transparent with
8 our data, to ensure that parents and guardians and
9 community members are able to help us asses our progress
10 towards excellence for kids, schools, and our community.
11 Very importantly, we'll talk specifically about what this
12 looks like in individual schools.

13 We believe deeply in the opportunity to
14 leverage continuous improvement for kids, for teachers, for
15 school leaders, for networks of schools, and for ourselves
16 overall. At the end of the day, we want to make sure we
17 have performance and accountability systems that are
18 rigorous, but that are also focused on growth, so that we
19 are able to ensure that the system is evolving, and it is
20 not set up to be a "gotcha."

21 We also believe deeply, as we know folks
22 across the state do, in looking at multiple measures, and
23 ensuring that we set up a system that is not purely numeric
24 or formulaic, but allows for human interaction and human
25 judgement. So we know a teacher knows more about his or



1 her students than we might be able to collect in a single
2 source piece of data. Principal, similarly, knows more
3 about his or her teachers than we'll be able to collect in
4 a single piece of data, and we know more about our schools.
5 We'll talk a little bit in a moment about the ways in which
6 we try to collect qualitative data about our schools to
7 supplement the quantitative data we are able to gather.

8 At the cornerstone of our work is our school
9 performance framework. And I say it's a cornerstone,
10 because it becomes a pinnacle way that we can assess our
11 alignment, be publicly transparent, and then launch very
12 deep conversations with schools, classroom teachers, and
13 ourselves, around the continuous improvement that we all
14 need to do. We use our school performance framework in a
15 variety of ways: The diagnostic and management tool, we
16 use it as I said, through public release, to ensure we're
17 being transparent.

18 It is as an example, highly featured in our
19 school choice work, as families are making decisions about
20 what school they might want to select for their children.
21 It is a place where we are communicating. We are also
22 looking at the school performance framework from the lens
23 of ensuring that we can make decisions based on data about
24 schools, as well as about our own improvement.

25 Important to the opportunity to think about



1 performance and accountability systems, not just as a
2 single moment or event, but instead as a process, we have
3 developed in Denver what we call the "tiered support
4 framework", that looks at the data from the school
5 performance framework, but also looks at a more robust set
6 of data on an annual basis to help us ensure that we are
7 providing the right supports and interventions to schools
8 to support their continued improvement.

9 We won't go over all of the datasets that we
10 look at, but in essence, we look at the school performance
11 framework data, in addition to qualitative data that we
12 collect through deep dive school and classroom reviews, as
13 well as some of the data sets that we know are generally
14 leading indicators of success, be that attendance data,
15 school culture data, teacher turnover, leader turnover
16 data; those kinds of datasets, to tier all of our schools
17 so that we know that we are providing the right levels of
18 support.

19 A school that ends up in our universal
20 supports, generally is being provided the supports that you
21 would expect a district to provide all of its schools:
22 Professional learning, feedback and observation data, those
23 kinds of things. But we then know that some of our schools
24 need more intensive supports. They might need the
25 opportunity to have more regular feedback and observations.



1 They might need the opportunity to have external supports,
2 or external organizations provide very unique, deep dive
3 resources for particular schools.

4 Right now we have about 50 schools that we
5 have tiered to provide those more strategic and intensive
6 levels of support. We are district of 190. Over the past
7 number of years, as we have used performance and
8 accountability systems to make tough decisions at the very
9 top end of this pyramid; we have ultimately made decisions
10 in Denver to close 20 schools, about half of them being
11 charters, half of them being district-run schools. So when
12 we find that our persistent and more intensive supports are
13 still not creating the gains that we need for students,
14 then in our context, we exercise turnaround and/or closure
15 strategies to ensure that we are able to deliver for
16 students what they deserve from us.

17 In the past, we have had opportunity to
18 speak about five particular schools of concern that have
19 been on the CDE clock, and you'll note that we only have
20 two represented here today. And before I turn it over to
21 them, I just wanted to provide a little bit of context as
22 to the "why" of that. Of this set of five schools, two
23 have closed, or will close. Escuela and West High School
24 will not exist as Denver Public Schools past the '15-'16
25 school year. Trevista Middle School will also close at the



1 end of this school year, and it's elementary school has
2 made significant gains, which is why we see ourselves today
3 representing two schools -- Colorado High School Charter
4 School, and PREP High School, both of which are alternative
5 education campuses.

6 And so before I turn it over to Randy to dig
7 deep into PREP, I just wanted to make sure that you all had
8 a reminder of the definition of an alternative education
9 campus. It's a school that is serving either a special
10 needs or at-risk population of 95 percent. And there are
11 very specific criteria that define eligibility for an
12 alternative education campus that then have those schools
13 measured under a different school performance framework.
14 And with that, I will turn it over to Randy.

15 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Before we start
16 (inaudible), can you remind us what West High School
17 (inaudible)?

18 MS. WHITEHEAD-BUST: Yes, absolutely. There
19 are three schools currently running in the West campus that
20 will continue in the future: West Leadership Academy, a 6-
21 12 program; West Generations, also a 6-12 program at full
22 buildout, and West Career Academy, which is a Pathways
23 school.

24 MADAM CHAIR: Thank you, Jane, which reminds
25 me of the same question, because when you say we are going



1 to "close" these schools, you don't mean physically close
2 empty schools, you just mean sections of schools that are
3 not operating as you would have hoped them to be?

4 MS. WHITEHEAD-BUST: So the building -- West
5 High School as a building, remains open and actively
6 serving students. West High School as we knew it, with a
7 specific CDE number, principal, budget, program design,
8 will not exist in the future. Instead, students are being
9 served in those three schools that I just referenced.

10 MADAM CHAIR: Kind of redistribute -- yes.
11 Yes, Pam?

12 MS. MAZANEC: So you said you have closed
13 about 20 schools, half them about -- approximately,
14 charter, half traditional brick and mortar. What do you
15 know about the performance of those students who left those
16 schools and went to other schools? Have they improved?
17 Has it --?

18 MS. WHITEHEAD-BUST: So typically those
19 students have the opportunity to continue to be served in
20 the same building under a different school design, so much
21 like we just described with West. So in most cases, the
22 students still have that opportunity, and we'd be happy to
23 send specific data about the results from those 20 school
24 closures. We are able to say with confidence that the vast
25 majority of new schools out-perform the schools that they



1 are replacing. That is not however ubiquitous. We have
2 had some instances where we have opened a new school in a
3 closed school building, and have still continued to
4 struggle to get the performance that we need. But the
5 majority have outperformed the schools that we've closed.
6 And we'd like --

7 MADAM CHAIR: I'm sorry, that was probably
8 my fault. At this point, just asking questions just for
9 specific answers, and then wait until they all finish, and
10 then we can begin to question them about the programs. I'm
11 sorry.

12 MS. MAZANEC: I'm sorry, I didn't know. I
13 thought that's where we were. I'm sorry.

14 MADAM CHAIR: You thought you missed
15 something. Go ahead, please. Randy is it?

16 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, thank you. Thank you.
17 Good afternoon. My name is Randy Johnson. As mentioned, I
18 am the Instructional Superintendent that supports PREP
19 Academy, and I do want to thank you for the opportunity
20 that we're able to present before you right now in
21 preparation for the state review panel later this month.

22 As Alyssa noted, PREP Academy is an
23 Alternative Ed campus in Denver Public Schools. It serves
24 a very important, and very specific role for us in Denver
25 Public Schools. And it's part of our larger district



1 strategy on how we're serving our most at-risk students,
2 both academically and behaviorally.

3 Prior to introducing my colleague, the
4 principal, Ms. Jamie Lofaro, and us actually going deeper
5 into the strategies at PREP Academy, I do want to call to
6 your attention a couple of reference items that you've
7 obviously will have an opportunity after we're done, to
8 review and for further questions, but did place some
9 evidence points for you first to talk about the network
10 structure, because we believe the network structure is
11 important to the strategy we have for the growth and
12 improvement of PREP Academy.

13 You will have in front of you a blue folder
14 that you can look at later. It includes that methodology,
15 or the strategy we use for determining supports the
16 students need, and the schools that are best designed for
17 those supports. It also includes reference material about
18 what's expected of a leader in a Pathways School. The
19 network of schools is actually city-wide, and it is
20 designed, and it follows this methodology in order to serve
21 students who are off-track. And that's off-track from
22 their targeted graduation, and then we use behavioral
23 factors. In addition, you see reference material about the
24 performance of all of the schools that are in the network
25 that PREP is in. And then I would call to your attention,



1 as we speak later here, that also includes a reference to
2 the fact this is a network that we believe we have a strong
3 strategy with. A strong strategy now in place with PREP,
4 and that we have had 92 percent of our schools in that
5 network with growth, including PREP.

6 And then finally, from this slide, I do want
7 to reference, as we begin on PREP, is that you'll notice
8 that PREP Academy is actually an acronym -- it's the
9 Positive Refocus Education Program, and it became an
10 Academy, meaning that we move from a program, to offering a
11 full school opportunity four years ago. And that
12 correlated with our hiring of the new principal, Ms.
13 Lofaro.

14 MS. LAFARO: So I too want to thank you for
15 the opportunity to come and represent my school. And I
16 will tell you, even though I'm the face of my school, very
17 few of the faces that we serve look like mine. Prior to me
18 being there, Emerson Street School was opened in 1996 as
19 the district's option for expelled students. Then in 1999,
20 PREP Center was opened, that was a school that the purpose
21 was in lieu of expulsion, for students with behavior
22 issues, they would go to PREP Center. That serves students
23 from grade six through nine. In 2010-2011, also prior to
24 my hire there, the two schools, the two programs, were
25 housed under one roof with two separate principals, and



1 there were also two additional programs that were in the
2 school.

3 When I was hired in 2011, then it became my
4 charge to unify the schools, have a 6-12 school with
5 continuous enrollment, potentially, and award diplomas. So
6 that's some background on the schools. Then as far as the
7 students that I'm happy to serve, they still -- it's the
8 same population at those schools that those programs served
9 before. Very, very high risk populations. We are the only
10 school that accepts the district's expelled students,
11 although many students either stay on Choice, or come on
12 Choice, and I'm proud to say that at this point, about 85
13 percent of our students have either stayed, or come in on
14 Choice, so they are very, very happy, the families, with
15 the work that we are doing with them.

16 Contrary to the slide that is up there, our
17 district SPF says that we fall about 95 percent free and
18 reduced -- the slide says that we are at 80 percent. And
19 having been there for four years, I can tell you, I think
20 two kids that have paid 40 cents for lunch in my four years
21 there. We are over 90 percent students of color.
22 Currently we have 11 percent English language learners, 12
23 percent special ed, which are both low for us at this
24 point.

25 And I just want to give you a snapshot of



1 what we get every day at PREP. This was an email that I
2 got yesterday at 4:16 from my very dedicated social worker.
3 I was in the middle of a work session with Randy. Two boys
4 from a group home. One eighth grader is transferring from
5 another group home in the far northeast, the other's mother
6 actually brought him to Denver from California, and
7 abandoned him in Denver. He is so-to-speak "trapped" here,
8 as he cannot return to California without a home or
9 relative placement. So he was placed with a family
10 acquaintance in another town, and there was a sexual
11 offense. Both boys will need a safety plan. This is a
12 pretty regular occurrence at PREP, but it's something that
13 we are well equipped to meet the charge for serving those
14 students. Thank you.

15 MR. JOHNSON: Good. In addition there, a
16 data point I wanted to make sure we mention, is that we
17 move from program to school. When we were still a program,
18 we were running 89 percent mobility rate at PREP, and we
19 have had reduction. Our most recent numbers show us 55.2
20 percent, and as we're building a school, a supportive
21 school, and building on that population, we continue to
22 reduce.

23 Among our successes with PREP Academy, I
24 want to call out again, we've had three consistent years of
25 growth on the SPF. It's not where we want to be. It's



1 clearly not where we're pleased with, but we feel that we
2 are starting to accelerate growth. We've had average grade
3 level growth with MAPs; MAP testing is very important to
4 us, especially with still remaining a highly mobile
5 population that would allow a better chance to monitor the
6 progress of students. As well as the testing has
7 developmental levels that help us as well. Our students
8 come often with gaps in their education. We've had
9 increase in completion rates. Over the past three years
10 we've had consistent drop-out rate decrease, truancy rates
11 have decreased, and our attendance rates continue to
12 increase. Again, those are successes that we want to call
13 out. Obviously we are looking and planning that we are
14 accelerating that growth.

15 In addition, our challenges. You know, the
16 root causes that are behind some of our performance
17 challenges that you see listed on the slide, come directly
18 from the Unified Improvement Plan that of course the staff
19 worked on, and that calls out a need for intensive services
20 for habitually truant students who fall below 60 percent,
21 that need to identify high leverage communication
22 strategies to engage the parents and community. A root
23 cause is an increase of teacher mobility, which results in
24 repeated entry level professional development from year to
25 year. And our lack of a school-wide intervention plan



1 designed to improve student achievement in the areas of
2 reading math, and writing.

3 MS. LOFARO: And so I just want to touch a
4 minute on some of our improvement strategies. And the UIP
5 did say that we lack a school-wide intervention program.
6 It's not that we lack one, I'm just not very satisfied with
7 the one that we currently use. We will transition next
8 year to a double block for students who need those
9 services, and we will get away from the computerized
10 reading intervention program that we are currently using.
11 Some of our interventionists are piloting something new
12 with ingenuity; that is directly tied to MAPs testing, and
13 I can tell you at mid-year with the MAPs, we -- in the six
14 categories, we have already beaten our performance from
15 last year, and currently we have three of the six
16 indicators, and we've been the state targets on those, or
17 met them. So happy with that.

18 As far as the attendance improvement plan,
19 we have 24 students who fall in the 60 to 80 percent
20 attendance rate. They have all been assigned an attendance
21 buddy. Fourteen of those 24 have an increase of five
22 percent or more since January.

23 We created a Pathway for Parent, and
24 community engagement. Obviously we host things at school,
25 but we do home visits four times a year that are



1 formalized, and then many more that are informal. And we
2 just started to do things at regional sites, particularly
3 in the far northeast and the southwest, because we were
4 located in central Denver, and such high populations live
5 in those two communities.

6 Implementing a school-wide behavior program.
7 We implemented the Discovery model in 2012-2013, after my
8 first year there. Discovery is a six week, six hour a day
9 intensive character skill building program. We get kids
10 from every high school, every middle school, every K-8, and
11 every 6-12 in Denver. They were coming with their own
12 separate school cultures, beliefs on what it meant to be a
13 student, and my first year, I realized pretty quickly that
14 we needed something to ground them on what it meant to be a
15 student at PREP. And that intensive allows them to
16 practice role play, and get ready to use skills that they
17 will need to be in the mainstream to communicate with their
18 families, in the workplace. I mean, the skills that they
19 learn there are pretty universal and can be used anywhere.

20 Last thing, around the turnaround
21 partnership, Dr. J is my guy. He's our turnaround partner
22 there. I meet with him at least two times monthly, and
23 then touch base with him quite a few more times during each
24 month.

25 MR. JOHNSON: I do want to mention quickly,



1 as we spoke about the network strategy that supports PREP,
2 what you see on this slide is taken directly from some of
3 the reference documents that are in your blue folder. It's
4 part of the strategic plan. There is a standards
5 implementation plan specific to this network of schools,
6 and PREP, as well as you'll see on the far right of that
7 slide, are our expectations of each leader in each school.
8 It includes expectations of all schools that maintain
9 lesson plans, and the progress monitoring, data walls, UIP
10 trackers, et cetera.

11 And then finally, as we come to the close of
12 this section here, just want to touch base that in response
13 to the six question as we have prepared, we will leave a
14 copy of this for the Board, but wanted to be able to come
15 before you and show you the -- what we have already put
16 together as far as our evidence for the six questions that
17 are referenced up here. Six key questions that will be
18 asked by the State Review Panel. We are very confident
19 that we have successes within what we've done, and that we
20 are continuing to show progress.

21 MR. CALLAHAN: Good afternoon and thank
22 you for the opportunity to talk with you. This time two
23 years ago, I was researching Colorado High School Charter
24 as part of my application process as the school's next
25 principal. And I realized this school was in trouble. I



1 was attracted to the mission of the school to serve
2 students who had dropped out, or been kicked out of other
3 schools, where 85 percent of the students receive a free or
4 reduced lunch, and 97 percent of the students have at least
5 one risk in -- one indicator that classifies them as "at
6 risk."

7 But I knew that the results had to change.
8 In the late spring of 2013, I was hired as the principal,
9 and charged with four targets by the Colorado High School
10 Charter Board, and Denver Public Schools. We needed to
11 increase the number of students who hit their growth
12 targets on MAPs from below 55 percent, to above 60 percent.
13 We needed to lower our drop-out rate from above percent, to
14 below 15 percent. We needed to increase our attendance
15 rate from below 82 percent, to above 86 percent, and ensure
16 that all of our graduating seniors had at least once
17 acceptance letter to a post-secondary opportunity of their
18 choice.

19 As we tracked our data points throughout the
20 2014-'15 school year, we felt good about our progress.
21 When our goal was to hit 60 percent of student achieving
22 their expected growth rate, over 80 percent did. When our
23 goal was decrease our drop-out rate from above 17 percent
24 to below 15 percent, we lowered it to below 10 percent.
25 Our goal was to increase our attendance rate from 82



1 percent to 86 percent. And at the end of the year,
2 Infinite Campus had us down at 86.22 percent. But after a
3 data scrub, we fell seven tenths of a point to 85.5
4 percent. Every one of our graduating seniors was accepted
5 to at least one post-secondary opportunity, and one was
6 accepted to CU, and one to UNC.

7 How did we do it? At the beginning of last
8 year, we sat there with our school community, and we
9 identified the areas that the school was underperforming
10 in. First, there were no real wrap-around services for
11 students who had extraordinary obstacles to overcome
12 outside of school. There was a very antiquated teacher
13 evaluation system, where teachers only received feedback
14 once a year, and it was at the end of the year. And there
15 was low morale because of the lack of feedback, and the
16 school's lackluster performance.

17 Some of the solutions we created: We
18 revamped our teacher evaluation system using a modified
19 Charlotte Danielson approach. Now teachers receive weekly
20 feedback from our instructional coach and literacy
21 specialists, and they received four -- excuse me, they
22 received three formal evaluations throughout the year. We
23 also partnered with Colorado Youth for a Change, and hired
24 student advocates so that every single one of our students
25 had an adult that works to help them overcome barriers both



1 inside and outside of the classroom. And we attribute this
2 to the increase in our attendance rate and the lowering of
3 our dropout rate. We also instituted a pay for performance
4 system that allows our staff to earn up to five percent of
5 their base salary, based on very specific student
6 achievement indicators.

7 Despite all of this, six months ago, I
8 opened up our SPF and my heart sank. We had hit all four
9 of our indicators, but we had only moved from red to
10 orange. Our SPF is based on three years of data, and our
11 one year of positive data was not able to outweigh the
12 three years of lackluster performance. However, if you
13 look at the 2014/'15 year in isolation, our SPF rating
14 would have been a green. We are proud of the work that
15 we've done, but we're far from satisfied.

16 This year, we've added a concurrent
17 enrollment specialist that's increased our -- increased the
18 number of students who have successfully completed a
19 concurrent enrollment class from two to 37. We noticed an
20 increase in our ELL population, and added an ELD class,
21 taught by our literacy specialist and instructional coach,
22 to ensure their success. As a result, we've found that 80
23 percent met their expected growth on their mid-year MAPs
24 assessment. We've doubled the amount of time that students
25 are spending in math and English, using mill levy money.



1 As a result, our mid-year MAP state is trending four to
2 five percent higher than it was at the same time last year.

3 As you make your decision about the next
4 steps for Colorado High School Charter, I encourage you to
5 consider the following: In 2013, the Board made the
6 decision to change school leaders. Our SPF ratings since
7 that change would be a green. We don't make excuses for
8 our performance based on the students we serve, and we are
9 on track to hit our goal of being a green school by the
10 2017 SPF. We encourage any and all of you to come see the
11 awesome work that our students and parents and staff are
12 doing on a day-to-day basis, and finally we ask that you
13 give us just a little more time to show you how a school
14 moves from a red to a green school by 2017. Thank you.

15 MADAM CHAIR: Clark, where are you located?

16 MR. CALLAHAN: Off of Colfax on Osage, right
17 across from Lincoln Park.

18 MADAM CHAIR: Okay, (inaudible), thank you.
19 Go ahead.

20 MR. GUYER: Okay, so based on much of the
21 information that's been shared today, our recommended
22 actions as a district for each of these schools are as
23 follows: We feel that based on PREP's program and the way
24 they are trending, they would really benefit from
25 Innovation status, to allow more flexibility around the



1 length of school year, and the length of day that would be
2 able to help them address more of the needs that their
3 students have.

4 We also feel for Colorado High School, that,
5 as Clark mentioned, they are absolutely headed in the right
6 direction, and as a district, we're still having more short
7 term renewal contracts in place to monitor that performance
8 more closely. But as you said, they are headed in the
9 right direction, and we feel like given another year or two
10 worth of time, you'll see the performance turnaround from
11 an overall SPF rating perspective. So those are our
12 recommendations for the Board.

13 MS. WHITEHEAD-BUST: Thank you for your
14 opportunity to present, and we're looking forward to
15 answering whatever questions you may have.

16 MADAM CHAIR: It's a big overwhelming, quite
17 frankly, I don't know how you all do it. Any questions?
18 Angelika?

19 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: (Inaudible).

20 MADAM CHAIR: Deb?

21 MS. SCHEFFEL: Thank you. I have a question
22 for -- it's really just clarification -- isn't the goal to
23 get the kids -- they are in these two schools, Colorado
24 High School and PREP, right? And then is it the goal that
25 they then cycle back into a different school? No? Sort



1 of? No? So this is their permanent home, and it's not --
2 it's not like you have like, I don't know -- expediential
3 support for them, and the goal is to gradually -- gradually
4 release some of that support, and infuse them into a
5 different school? No? They stay there? This is their
6 home school?

7 MS. LOFARO: So our -- Clark, do you want to
8 (inaudible)?

9 MR. CALLAHAN: Go ahead.

10 MS. LOFARO: So under state law, school --
11 kids that are expelled have the right to go to their home
12 school at the end of their expulsion.

13 MS. SCHEFFEL: Right.

14 MS. LOFARO: Far more times than not, we're
15 encouraging -- excuse me -- encouraging them to stay with
16 us, because they seem to thrive in a small environment, and
17 they also seem to thrive after going through our discovery
18 model. I can tell you, we are at 117 right now, but we
19 have served 150 kids this year. Some of them have gone
20 back to their home schools, because their expulsions have
21 been --

22 MS. SCHEFFEL: Okay, thank you.

23 MR. CALLAHAN: Slightly different motive of
24 entry for Colorado High School Charter. Students choose to
25 come to us after having not found success somewhere else,



1 and our goal is to keep them at Colorado High School. We
2 find that they too often respond better to the smaller,
3 more supportive school environment.

4 MS. SCHEFFEL: Good, thank you.

5 MADAM CHAIR: Jane?

6 MS. GOFF: Thank you. Have there been -- is
7 it time -- oh yeah, probably -- any experience with either
8 the former or the current GED, and success rates? And
9 where are people with that, and is that something that you
10 -- I think you probably track it when kids take it, and
11 then they --

12 MR. JOHNSON: We do with -- with PREP
13 Academy, we actually are preparing the kids for a DPS
14 diploma. So we are not tracking specific to PREP with the
15 GED completion rates, but we clearly as a district have
16 been tracking, because we do have a large number of
17 students that are clearly 20 years old, almost 21, who have
18 large deficits of their education as well. So we could get
19 you those numbers if you would like.

20 MS. GOFF: It's not an urgent request, I
21 know you have a lot to do. I'm just curious about it,
22 statewide, but particularly with some of our -- especially
23 our AECs, where the situation, the circumstance, the
24 context, might be -- is unique. So if their -- what those
25 opportunities are for -- (inaudible)



1 MS. LOFARO: I received notice that we have
2 a 19 year old with 40 credits who was expelled. When we
3 bring his family in to counsel with them, tomorrow we will
4 have the district GED specialist with us. We will provide
5 him the opportunity to go through some of that curriculum
6 until his expulsion is over, and then hopefully he will
7 take advantage of that. I will also tell you when school -
8 - kids come in on School of Choice, we do look at their
9 transcripts. If they are very, very far and we can't help
10 them, they meet with my school counselor, even though they
11 are not a PREP student, and we hook them up with some GED
12 services.

13 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: (Inaudible).

14 MR. CALLAHAN: Very similar model for us;
15 our goal is to help students get a diploma.

16 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: First priority.

17 MR. CALLAHAN: Right. And if a student,
18 you know, comes to us and, you know, is in that 19-20, you
19 know, age range, and has very low credits, then we can
20 refer them to some other resources.

21 MS. WHITEHEAD-BUST: And real quickly, this
22 is just statistics --

23 MADAM CHAIR: (Inaudible) was going to
24 answer your question.

25 MR. JOSEPH: Yeah, I just wanted to just add



1 that another piece specifically to the Pathway Network, the
2 reality is that we have a lot of different pathways, and
3 hence the -- the concept. So we have a GED Plus program.
4 And so we have like, a GED Center, is what we created
5 within our network of schools. So we have places where
6 students can actually go that are regionally located that
7 focus specifically around the GED needs. So I thought that
8 was a unique component of the work that we do.

9 MS. GOFF: And it's probably in here, but
10 can you briefly just tell me, what's the -- what's the
11 general -- the gender percentage -- the gender balance?

12 MS. LOFARO: Predominantly male. I can tell
13 you right now, 13 of my 14 special ed students, IEPs are
14 male. That runs pretty consistent throughout the school.

15 MR. CALLAHAN: Ours is around 55 percent
16 male, 45 percent --

17 MS. GOFF: Same. Yeah. Okay, thanks.

18 MADAM CHAIR: Angelika?

19 MS. SCHROEDER: Thank you, all of you, for
20 coming. Could you remind what are the -- what's necessary
21 to convert to a School of Innovation? Has some percentage
22 of -- I just don't remember the specifics, and more
23 importantly, has that discussion occurred already?

24 MS. WHITEHEAD-BUST: So statute requires a
25 majority for conversion to an Innovation plan, and a super



1 majority for any waivers from the collective bargaining
2 agreement. So 60 percent for any waivers from the
3 collective bargaining agreement, and our -- and our
4 experience in Denver, all of our Innovation schools have
5 sought some degree of waiver from the collective bargaining
6 agreement. So in our case, all of our schools have met
7 that 60 percent or higher.

8 MS. SCHROEDER: And have you had that
9 discussion at your school?

10 MS. LOFARO: Yes, I have. I reiterated it
11 again yesterday.

12 MS. SCHROEDER: And what was the -- was
13 there a vote or --

14 MS. LOFARO: No vote. But the biggest
15 concern is about union membership, so -- I -- I asked for
16 some assistance from Human Resources to come in and
17 actually speak to my staff on what that would look like,
18 because I'm not an expert in that area.

19 MS. SCHROEDER: You don't -- you don't lose
20 Association membership, do you? It's just that -- that --

21 MS. LOFARO: I'm not 100 percent versed in
22 that, and that's why I need to -- a district expert to --

23 MS. SCHROEDER: Okay, fair.

24 MS. LOFARO: -- (Inaudible)

25 (Overlapping)



1 MS. SCHROEDER: Fair enough. So it's not
2 that I don't like you all, but I'm looking at this chart,
3 and I don't necessarily want to see it next year, again, so
4 I tend to look at the district-wide data, because you've
5 got your four on down.

6 So -- I don't mean that disrespectfully, but
7 I think the efforts need to be what you're doing, plus
8 looking at where you're going to go next year. Your
9 attendance rate is improving overall, but it's not very
10 good, when I compare to some other -- to a lot of other
11 districts. Do you have programs in place -- is it only in
12 your alternative programs that you have attendance -- it
13 says they are 9 percent, they are pulling it down? Or do
14 you have that as a problem across -- across your district?

15 MS. WHITEHEAD-BUST: I would say
16 universally, we are proud of the progress that we are
17 making across multiple measures; attendance, behavior,
18 academic outcomes, and would fully agree with you that
19 we're looking forward to even more accelerated improvement
20 in all of those areas. Specific to attendance, there are
21 most certainly programs in place at all of our schools, and
22 we have a wide range of attendance success, both within our
23 AECs and in our large comprehensive high schools.

24 It's a data set that we monitor very, very
25 frequently to work with principals, to ensure that they are



1 putting in place the right sets of incentives,
2 communication plans, creating the school environment both
3 from a culture perspective, and from an academic
4 perspective, that entice kids to want to be in school. So
5 there are a whole variety of strategies that are underway
6 both in our alternative education high schools, as well as
7 in our traditional high schools.

8 MS. SCHROEDER: And I honestly don't just
9 mean high schools. Attendance problems start in
10 kindergarten. So I'm hoping that that's where you -- you
11 also have some real significant efforts, and that the
12 numbers are much, much better. Because we don't -- we
13 don't -- the information we have doesn't break it down.

14 MS. WHITEHEAD-BUST: Our attendance rates
15 are certainly weakest in the high school system.

16 MS. SCHROEDER: Okay. Okay. And then the
17 other thing that worried me when I was looking at, was your
18 mobility rate, which is actually going up instead of down.
19 What's happening?

20 MR. GUYER: Are you speaking specific to
21 PREP?

22 MS. SCHROEDER: No, I'm speaking --

23 MR. GUYER: I didn't know if you were as a
24 district --

25 MS. SCHROEDER: -- to the district-wide. If



1 I read that correctly, your mobility rate is actually
2 increasing rather than decreasing.

3 MR. GUYER: To be honest, I think part of
4 that is attributed to the Choice program in the district,
5 and kids moving from one school to another.

6 MS. SCHROEDER: Oh, that goes to -- that's
7 part of the measure?

8 MR. GUYER: Yeah, typically mobility is
9 being --

10 MS. SCHROEDER: Oh, so sorry.

11 MR. GUYER: -- in the same school from one
12 year to next.

13 MS. SCHROEDER: I thought you were talk -- I
14 thought it was out of the district.

15 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: It's also an extensive
16 district. They are growing.

17 MS. SCHROEDER: They are all -- they are all
18 extensive. Almost all extensive. Okay, so that attributes
19 largely, and that does not need to be a negative factor at
20 all.

21 MR. GUYER: Right.

22 MS. WHITEHEAD-BUST: We are overall as a
23 district growing, both because we are increasing student
24 population, and because we are retaining far more students
25 within Denver Public Schools. We are attracting students



1 who had historically gone out of district either to private
2 or other public options. To Grant's point, mobility is an
3 in-district indicator, and is largely because we have
4 empowered families to make choices about what school is
5 best for his or her children.

6 MS. SCHROEDER: So finally, I want to
7 encourage you to work on the northeast section, because
8 that's where my grandkids are. I've got one in elementary,
9 and he's just going to be catching up with you guys. So --

10 MS. WHITEHEAD-BUST: We're working on it.

11 MS. SCHROEDER: Best wishes. Truly, best
12 wishes. Thank you.

13 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: (Inaudible).

14 MS. SCHROEDER: Okay.

15 MADAM CHAIR: Anyone else? Well, I thank
16 you for coming, and you really have -- until August, you
17 have big challenges. And seem to be, you know, within the
18 means of (inaudible) as well as you're able to do, I would
19 -- I would love to stop by some day and visit one of these
20 schools. I'm sure it would be -- that's why I ask. If you
21 just drop in, will there be somebody to show you around or
22 will you be a trouble?

23 MR. JOSEPH: Absolutely, any time.

24 MADAM CHAIR: No, I really appreciate it.

25 Yes, Pam?



1 MS. MAZANEC: Sorry. Now -- now that it's
2 the proper time to, I do -- I would like to see that school
3 closure data, and what you know about what happened to
4 those students.

5 MS. WHITEHEAD-BUST: Be happy to send that
6 to you.

7 MS. MAZANEC: Thank you.

8 MS. WHITEHEAD-BUST: You're welcome.

9 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: (Inaudible).

10 MADAM CHAIR: Anyone else?

11 MS. WHITEHEAD-BUST: Thank You.

12 MADAM CHAIR: Commissioner?

13 MR. HAMMOND: No. Just thank you all for
14 coming, and I appreciate everyone, so thank you very much.

15 MS. WHITEHEAD-BUST: You're very welcome,
16 thank you for having us.

17 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Thank you very much.

18 MR. HAMMOND: Nice to meet you, Dr. J.

19 MR. JOSEPH: Nice to meet you all.

20 MADAM CHAIR: Thank you for coming.

21 (Meeting adjourned)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Kimberly C. McCright, Certified Vendor and Notary, do hereby certify that the above-mentioned matter occurred as hereinbefore set out.

I FURTHER CERTIFY THAT the proceedings of such were reported by me or under my supervision, later reduced to typewritten form under my supervision and control and that the foregoing pages are a full, true and correct transcription of the original notes.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and seal this 22nd day of January, 2019.

/s/ Kimberly C. McCright
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Certified Vendor and Notary Public

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