



COLORADO
Department of Education

Office of the Commissioner
201 East Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203-1799

August 31, 2023

Dear President Lovato,

Commerce City has a beautiful and diverse community that deserves strong public school options. The students of Commerce City are smart and capable and, as Commissioner, their success will be my success.

I have received and reviewed the August 11, 2023 Final Report of the Adams 14 Reorganization Committee. The Committee recommends that reorganization is not a viable option for any of the districts involved. The Committee requests that the Commissioner accept its report in lieu of a formal plan of reorganization. For the reasons stated below, I accept the Committee's recommendation and there will be no further expectations for the reorganization process to continue.

Background on Creation of the Committee

On May 24, 2022, the State Board of Education entered an [order](#) directing the creation of a reorganization committee that would include Adams 14 School District, Mapleton School District, Adams 12 Five Star Schools, and Brighton School District 27J. The State Board's order includes a long history of what led to this decision.

The Process for Reorganization

Under Colorado state law, there is a specific process for districts to consider re-drawing their boundaries - either through consolidation with other districts, annexation of certain areas into other districts, or dissolution of a district. A review of the steps that must occur before any district boundaries are redrawn can be found [here](#).

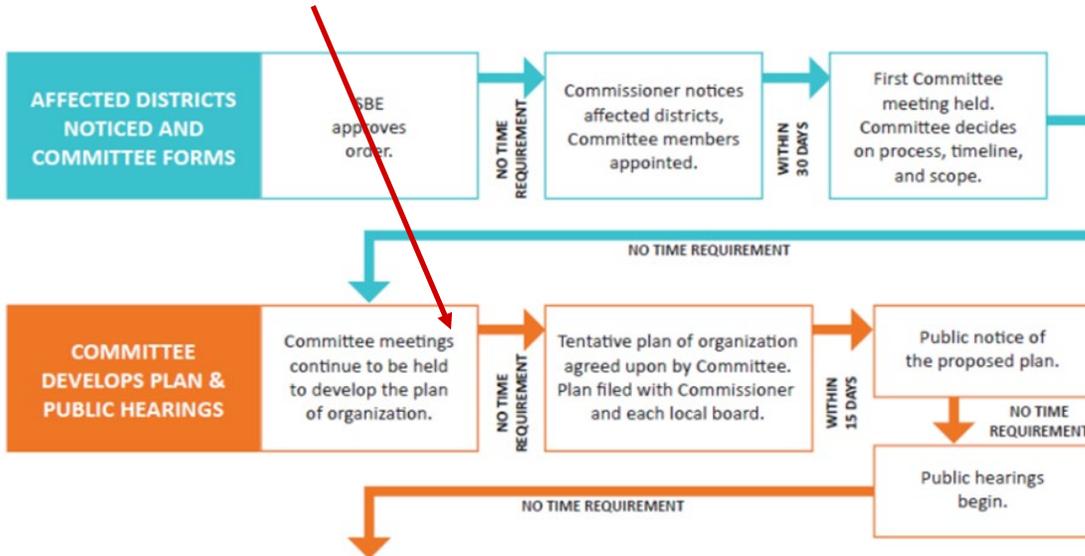
We find ourselves in a unique situation. The path of reorganization contemplates the creation of a "plan" to redraw boundaries. Here, the Committee has recommended that redrawing boundaries is not feasible and that they should not continue forward to create a "tentative plan."





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We are approximately here on the [steps](#) for reorganization.



The committee seeks authorization to end the process before community hearings because there are no new boundaries to present to the community.

Evaluation of the Request from the Committee to End the Reorganization Process

Under section [22-30-114](#), C.R.S., a tentative plan for reorganization must include a list of specific components. The Committee included many of these components in their report. However, the report submitted by the Committee is not a tentative plan for reorganization because it does not propose moving forward with any boundary changes. Thus, I will not review the report for whether it met all the components of section 22-30-114. Instead, I have considered whether to accept the Committee’s recommendation to end the reorganization process before the creation of a tentative plan.

I will accept the recommendation of the Committee to end the reorganization process. Under current state law, there can be no reorganization when the surrounding districts are unwilling to redraw their boundaries. This process includes a number of checks.

- First, the Committee - made up of the districts potentially involved in reorganization - must agree to move forward. This could occur in a number of ways - where two districts agree to consolidate into one district or where surrounding districts annex





certain parts of Adams 14 into their own district. For example, Adams 14 and Adams 12 could have agreed to consolidate into one district to increase equity across the two communities with different levels of resources. Or, Mapleton and Adams 14 could have agreed to consolidate in order to address mutual challenges of declining enrollment. Or, all of the surrounding districts could have annexed a portion of Adams 14 into their boundaries and Adams 14 would have dissolved.

- Next, if there were mutual willingness between the districts, the voters in the affected districts must agree with the proposal of the Committee to redraw boundaries. As the Committee noted, holding elections is expensive and should not be considered unless there is general support for potential consolidation.
- Finally, if there would be any changes to the mill levy taxes for residents of Adams 14, they would need to also vote in the election to increase their taxes to the same level of the school district that they would be joining.

Here, the surrounding districts were not willing to take on any portion of Adams 14. It was also extremely unlikely that the community of Adams 14 would be willing to increase their tax burden because families are already stretched too thin. These simple facts make reorganization not feasible. It would not be in the best interest of any of the districts involved to spend further resources or time on this matter if there is no foundational interest from the surrounding districts.

With this decision, the Committee has no further obligations under the School District Reorganization Act or the State Board order. We thank all the members of the Committee for their time and efforts to consider this important question on whether reorganization would be feasible to support the students and families of Adams County.

Next Steps for Adams 14

When the State Board ordered the reorganization process to begin, it turned the conversation over to the local communities. Now that the surrounding districts have completed this process and the Commissioner has accepted the Committee's recommendation, no further action is required by the State Board on the question of reorganization.

However, I want to reiterate that the state remains committed to supporting Adams 14 in its turnaround efforts. Adams 14 will continue under the State Board's [2018 order](#), as modified by the [2022 order](#). This requires the district to contract with the organization TNTP as a partial manager to support the district's plan for academic improvement. Adams 14 has been engaging with the TNTP organization since fall 2022 and has seen some positive gains during





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that time. The state is currently providing \$850,000 per year to support this contract with TNTP.

Unfortunately, the State Board was notified this week that Adams 14 is non-renewing their contract with TNTP and TNTP's work has been stopped in the district. This comes as a surprise. Turnaround work requires consistency to achieve the greatest gains for schools, staff, and students. I encourage Adams 14 to consider renegotiating the TNTP contract at a level of funding provided by the state. The state will commit to reviewing whether additional resources can be provided this year to ensure that there is no break in support for the district. Stability at this time is critical. Without a contract for a partial manager, Adams 14 is out of compliance with the State Board's 2022 order and will need to submit a request for modification of that order.

Conclusion

We are grateful to close this chapter on reorganization. However, we must work through these new challenges related to the district's partial manager. Whatever comes next, we look forward to continuing to work in partnership with you. *¡Sí se puede!*

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Susana Córdova".

Commissioner Susana Córdova

