



Colorado State Board of Education

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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS  
BEFORE THE  
COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION COMMISSION  
DENVER, COLORADO  
May 14, 2014, Part 3

BE IT REMEMBERED THAT on May 14, 2014, the  
above-entitled meeting was conducted at the Colorado  
Department of Education, before the following Board Members:

Paul Lundeen (R), Chairman  
Marcia Neal (R), Vice Chairman  
Elaine Gantz Berman (D)  
Jane Goff (D)  
Pam Mazanec (R)  
Debora Scheffel (R)  
Angelika Schroeder (D)



1                   CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: -- to order. The next  
2 item on the agenda is actually a previous item on the  
3 agenda. Budget. Mr. Commissioner.

4                   MR. HAMMOND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. What we  
5 have before you is our budget decision items as we done --  
6 as we did last year. But one of the things -- and we  
7 totally agree with you -- last year, it's always awkward  
8 when we are submitting to the Governor's office our budget  
9 requests at the same time we're submitting to you. So  
10 this is way in advance. We're presenting it to you today  
11 just for your information, and answer questions. The  
12 appropriate staff are here to do that.

13                   And Jeff Blanford, our chief financial  
14 officer, will also guide you through the process that we  
15 went through, the process that's required of us as we go  
16 through this process with the Governor's office. And  
17 ultimately, JBC, as you're fully aware, that culminates in  
18 December. So we want to review with you at the next  
19 meeting. We'll ask your consideration of approval, but  
20 understand this is a process, and we have no idea if it  
21 will even get through the Governor's office. But as you  
22 know, you're a unique agency, in many ways more than one.

23                   (Chuckling)

24                   MR. HAMMOND: You are.

25                   MS. NEAL: Yeah.



1 MR. HAMMOND: Yes, you are. But you're  
2 allowed to appeal anything directly to the legislature, if  
3 not approved by the Governor's office, if you support it.  
4 So we're going to start that in advance.

5 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Absolutely. And my  
6 comment, and I appreciate it very much. We, in my  
7 experience, had kind of an intricate process over the last  
8 several budget cycles where we're moving this more and  
9 more into the domain where the Board actually is aware of  
10 what's going on before it's a fait accompli. And I  
11 appreciate very much your effort to do that, so.

12 MR. HAMMOND: Than you, sir. Jeff?

13 MR. BLANFORD: Mr. Chair. While I regret to  
14 say --

15 MR. HAMMOND: Oh, hit your microphone. Oh.

16 MR. BLANFORD: -- Board Member Gantz-Berman -  
17 -

18 (Chuckling)

19 MR. BLANFORD: You mentioned a respite  
20 between the legislative session and the next cycle.

21 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: It's over.

22 MR. BLANFORD: But I'm about to end it right  
23 now.

24 (Chuckling)

25 MR. BLANFORD: The budget process begins anew



1 today.

2 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Amen.

3 MR. BLANFORD: And as the Commissioner and  
4 The Chairman had mentioned in the past, we've put these  
5 items in front of you in August, which has been somewhat  
6 awkward, because they'd already been given to the  
7 Governor's office. So it kind of had a feel of a foregone  
8 conclusion or something like that. At least we'd already  
9 let the horse out of the barn, as well as once we submit  
10 them to the Governor's office, they're considered  
11 confidential work product. So it was always a bit touchy  
12 to ask them to let us put them in front of you. So I  
13 think doing this in May and June is going to be a lot  
14 better actually.

15 To give you an overview of the process that  
16 you're about to go through again, change requests are  
17 additions to our base budget. We have a base budget that  
18 we request each year. There are some adjustments, but  
19 they tend to be mechanical. Things like salary increases  
20 that legislature appropriates, things like that. So these  
21 change requests are really what we're trying to add or  
22 incorporate into our budget.

23 Those are due to OSPB in July and August. If  
24 they approve them, we will incorporate those into our  
25 budget request, which goes to the legislature November



1 1st. As you may recall, we then have a JBC hearing in  
2 December where they ask us not only about anything in our  
3 budget, but anything that comes to mind, both from the  
4 committee, and they take questions from other legislators.  
5 And then all of that culminates in the figure-setting  
6 hearing in late February or early March, and that's when  
7 they actually set our long bill. There are sometimes  
8 changes. In fact, there are inevitably changes for  
9 special bills and supplemental bills, but the long bill is  
10 where most of our budget is always going to be.

11 With that, if you want to turn to your  
12 handout here, you'll notice first off, it's quite a bit  
13 shorter than the one you saw last year. We had about 11  
14 items last year, and this year, we only have 5. I've  
15 spoken with the Charter School Institute and Colorado  
16 School for the Deaf and the Blind. Currently, they do not  
17 have any items, but they are talking to their boards this  
18 month as well. We will put anything that they've come up  
19 with in front of you next month if that's the case. But  
20 as it stands now, I don't believe they have any requests.

21 The first two items perennially are total  
22 program and categoricals. We have to submit these by  
23 statute to make adjustments to the student counts, things  
24 like that. So those are always our first two items.

25 The next one is the Department's main



1 priority this year. It's field implementation. Not that  
2 all of them aren't important, by the way.

3 (Chuckling)

4 MR. BLANFORD: But this is our top priority.  
5 Field implementation support for educator effectiveness.  
6 Currently, we're funding the implementation of educator  
7 effectiveness with some federal and state funds. We got a  
8 one-time appropriation from the State that will conclude  
9 next June 2015. And the Race to the Top Grant will  
10 conclude in December of 2015. So this request is to  
11 provide ongoing funding. Now that the program is  
12 implemented, it's at a significantly reduced cost from  
13 what we're currently spending. The FTE goes down by five.  
14 It goes from 15.5 to 10.5. And then I just ran some quick  
15 numbers. If you would like some more detail, we can get  
16 that to you. But currently, we're spending on average  
17 about \$4 million for the implementation per year between  
18 both sources of funds. And as you can see in your  
19 handout, that will go down to \$963,000 in 15-16, and then  
20 it will go up a little bit to \$1.6 million in the  
21 following year, largely because of the exploration of Race  
22 to the Top in the middle of the year. So we get six  
23 months of additional funding for that.

24 There are three key components to this  
25 request. The first and the largest is educator



1 evaluation. That entails six FTE training and travel for  
2 staff to support districts in the primarily the model  
3 educator evaluation system. And there are licensing fees  
4 associated with that system. And I believe there may be  
5 another system that Jill may talk about, but there's some  
6 licensing associated with software as well.

7 The next piece is educator instructional  
8 support, which is really to help districts implement and  
9 improve their implementation of the Colorado standards.  
10 And that would be to FTE, and it's essentially the staff  
11 time and associated operating costs with that.

12 And then the last piece of it is 2.5 FTE for  
13 the field -- or for the communications office, field  
14 communication and outreach. And this has been a huge part  
15 of the success or the implementation of the educator  
16 effectiveness program, getting everybody on the same page,  
17 keeping them there. So this is going to be an ongoing  
18 effort as well.

19 The next item is funding for the State Review  
20 Panel. As you may recall, we had a decision item in 12-13  
21 to fund Senate Bill 06-09163, which is accountability and  
22 improvement. And during the implementation of the program  
23 this year, this is the first year we had an appropriation,  
24 we've discovered it's not quite the funding -- we received  
25 is not quite enough. So we're asking for an additional



1       \$250,000. Where we're lacking is an external vendor to  
2       coordinate with the State Review Panel. Independence is  
3       really what we're looking for there, sort of an entity  
4       outside of the Department to manage and provide some  
5       objectivity in the process. Cover the additional costs of  
6       travel and other things associated with on-site reviews.  
7       And then enhance the unified improvement planning online  
8       system, which is the district and school frameworks that  
9       each district submits for their area.

10                   The last thing is more of a procedural or  
11       it's -- I don't know if it's a requirement, but the State  
12       Auditor's Office made a recommendation around the BEST  
13       Program. They did an audit and released it this year.  
14       And one of their biggest findings and recommendations was  
15       that the BEST Board, with the assistance of the Division  
16       of Capital Construction, should identify and prioritize  
17       the critical public school capital construction needs in  
18       the state. And yes, I did have to read that one.

19       (Chuckles)

20                   The objective is to reclassify and make sure  
21       that the highest-need projects are at the top of that  
22       list. I think there was some question about that during  
23       the audit. The estimate of that cost is going to be about  
24       \$2.7 million to enhance and update the database that they  
25       use to track these projects. In addition to that, there



1 may be some ongoing costs. We don't know about that yet.  
2 The BEST Board is meeting with the Legislative Audit  
3 Committee June 3rd, I believe, to discuss exactly what  
4 everything looks like. So if there are management or  
5 other costs, we'll put those in front of you in June as  
6 well. The bulk of the cost is going to be \$2.7 million.

7 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Go ahead.

8 MS. NEAL: So basically, that's an oversight  
9 of the BEST Board, of their decisions? Is that what this  
10 is to check, the BEST Board's decisions?

11 MR. BLANFORD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am  
12 certainly not saying that, Madam Vice Chair.

13 MS. NEAL: Oh, why not? (Chuckles)

14 MR. BLANFORD: (Chuckles) I'm in no position  
15 to comment on that. I think it was more a matter of the  
16 Auditor's Office called into question whether the  
17 prioritization was appropriate according to the statute.  
18 Whether it was or not, I couldn't say.

19 MS. NEAL: And I (chuckles) -- and Leanne's  
20 going to help with that. I understand that. I just -- it  
21 seems like quite a large amount of money, which is based -  
22 - it seems to be basically an oversight.

23 MS. EMM: So on the \$2.7, so there were the  
24 two recommendations through the audit. And one of them  
25 was to look at how the priority assessment that was done



1 five years ago could be updated so that it could be better  
2 used to identify the health and safety issues. Currently,  
3 the priority assessment does not generate a 1 through 100  
4 list of item -- of schools that you would say this school  
5 is the absolute top priority in the state in order to go  
6 and fix it. And that is not how the criteria is put  
7 together.

8 So in order to get to a closer alignment with  
9 that expectation from the audit, we would need to go in  
10 and redo that. Not -- I don't want to say redo. We would  
11 need to go in and do some modifications to the databases  
12 that are collecting that information in order to add some  
13 criteria, maybe streamline it a little bit here and there,  
14 so that we can start generating better listings that  
15 address more health and safety-related issues. So the 2.7  
16 is a one-time cost in order to redo or reclassify the  
17 priority assessments so that then that can be used year  
18 after year to get to what they were looking for.

19 MS. NEAL: And thank you. I understand. Are  
20 they -- but are they looking for perfection? I mean, I  
21 know there were some questions about the way they assess,  
22 you know, use the money. And I understand that, but it  
23 just does seem like that's a lot of money to seek  
24 perfection. And are we guaranteed that they're going to  
25 reach that perfection? Just because we spent \$2.7



1 million. (Chuckles) And after that, I promise I'll shut  
2 up.

3 MS. EMM: Thank you.

4 MS. NEAL: He should finish his.

5 MS. EMM: Oh. I think anytime that you are  
6 doing an assessment that could bring in some subjectivity,  
7 you're never going to have perfection. And I think that  
8 some of the -- some of when you're going in and looking at  
9 a building, maybe you and I would look at a wall two  
10 different ways.

11 MS. NEAL: Yes.

12 MS. EMM: Even though we're trained to do it  
13 this the same, we might come up with two different  
14 answers. So I don't think we'll ever achieve perfection.  
15 But we are doing what we said we would do through the  
16 recommendations of the audit.

17 MS. NEAL: Okay, thank you for that. I just  
18 -- it's a question I think we need to continue to pursue  
19 as we move forward. Thank you both.

20 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Dr. Schroeder?

21 MS. SCHROEDER: I thought part of this was  
22 just doing an updating with a common view. So I'm  
23 assuming that you're going to be hiring an outside vendor  
24 to go through -- actually to evaluate. And this is what  
25 school districts do all the time when they go for a bond



1 also, is to identify the needs and then prioritize the  
2 needs.

3 MS. EMM: Okay. Thank you.

4 MS. SCHROEDER: Does that sound right?

5 MS. EMM: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There are  
6 two components to this budget request. And one is the  
7 actual redo and the reclassification of the current  
8 priority assessment in order to get to more of the  
9 listings that they were -- that the auditors were  
10 recommending. So that's one piece.

11 MS. SCHROEDER: So they're changing their  
12 priorities.

13 MS. EMM: No, not necessarily changing  
14 priorities, but obtaining more information in order to get  
15 to more of the health and safety-related issues. Because  
16 right now in the priority assessment, you cannot take the  
17 data and say, these are absolutely the top-highest  
18 priorities for health and safety-related issues.

19 MS. SCHROEDER: Okay.

20 MS. EMM: We can't do that. We can kind of  
21 get there, but not in the fashion that the auditors wanted  
22 to get there.

23 The second piece of that, of the  
24 recommendations, is how do we keep the assessments  
25 current? So right now, the priority assessment is five



1 years old. And even though we do obtain updates  
2 periodically, when people are going for BEST grants,  
3 that's the other component is, how do we keep that? How  
4 do we keep that assessment updated? And there was --  
5 there's one way to do it would be just to do what we did  
6 in the past and spend \$12 million and go out and redo the  
7 full assessment statewide. We thought that that might not  
8 be the BEST use of \$12 million. And with the BEST Staff  
9 and the BEST Board kind of looked at all kinds of  
10 different alternatives, and determined that maybe the  
11 better way to do that would be could we eventually bring  
12 that in-house and provide those -- the technical  
13 assistance to districts in order to keep those -- keep the  
14 assessments updated on a periodic basis? And determine  
15 what is an appropriate refresh rate so that we don't have  
16 stale data that sits there for five years, and then we  
17 have to find another \$12 million. Is there a way that we  
18 can do it on an annual basis and keep that -- keep those  
19 assessments updated in some kind of percentage basis? You  
20 know, can we do 30 percent a year? Can we do 20 percent a  
21 year? It will take staff in order to do that.

22 But that is -- that's kind of the current  
23 BEST thinking, that we would like to be able to go out to  
24 the small districts that don't have the ability to do  
25 these assessments, get training in order to do that, and



1 then provide that assistance to the District so that we  
2 can keep the assessments updated on a more periodic basis.

3 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Angelika?

4 MS. SCHROEDER: Do we have a process that  
5 requires districts to help staff update when they spend  
6 either -- either spend cap reserves or bond money to make  
7 some of the improvements that were identified in the last  
8 five years?

9 MR. BLANFORD: No.

10 MS. SCHROEDER: Do we have that kind of an  
11 updating system automatically? Or do we have to add that  
12 to the information process?

13 MS. EMM: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That would  
14 be part of the update process that the -- and one of the  
15 visions would be that for some large districts, a Denver,  
16 a JeffCo, a Boulder. They currently all do their  
17 assessments in-house. They've got databases that keep  
18 these things up-to-date.

19 And what we would also be anticipating doing  
20 is upgrading our systems so that we can take those  
21 automatic feeds from the large districts and be able to  
22 populate those and keep the large districts up-to-date.  
23 But then we still have all of these buildings out in the -  
24 -

25 MS. NEAL: The wild lands.



1 (Chuckling)

2 MS. EMM: -- in the hinterlands that also  
3 need those updates, and they don't have the staff. They  
4 don't have the systems in place in order to do that. So  
5 that's kind of our best thinking. No pun intended there.

6 (Chuckling)

7 And that's kind of the BEST Board has also  
8 been thinking about how we could go down that path in  
9 order to keep those assessments updated.

10 The process that we're looking at currently  
11 is we -- the BEST Board is slated to go in front of the  
12 Legislative Audit Committee on June 3rd. And since any  
13 kind of change to the priority assessment database or  
14 keeping it updated would potentially take either  
15 legislation or money, we want to approach them and tell  
16 them about, you know, this is what we've studied. This is  
17 what we would like to go forward. And they may say, go  
18 pound sand. And they don't support either of that.

19 And at that point, then we have met the  
20 requirements of the audit. We've looked at it. We've  
21 brought it back to them, and it's their decision in order  
22 to direct how we need to go.

23 However, we would also -- we also wanted to  
24 bring it forward to you all as far as how, you know, the  
25 BEST Board was kind of looking at that recommendation.



1 MS. NEAL: I have an additional question.

2 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Oh, sure. GO ahead and  
3 follow up.

4 MS. NEAL: I would just be -- because  
5 (indiscernible) conversation (indiscernible).

6 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Tony, you're next.

7 MS. NEAL: When you say they requested, I  
8 mean, who is it that requested? Who asked for this?

9 MS. EMM: Sorry, the BEST staff and BEST  
10 Board are bringing forward this budget item as to how we  
11 could meet the requirements that were laid out in the  
12 audit findings.

13 MS. NEAL: And I just have a question. I  
14 assume they never considered taking it out of the money  
15 that they take out of the budget every year.

16 MS. EMM: We would expect that this would  
17 come from the BEST Fund.

18 MS. NEAL: It would come from the BEST in --  
19 oh, so it -- that might be a good solution. We'll hear  
20 more about it as you go along. But thank you for that.  
21 Yep.

22 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Excellent. Dr. Scheffel.

23 MS. SCHEFFEL: Thank you. I just had a  
24 question. This might be premature, but maybe moving  
25 forward in the budget process, I really appreciate being



1 able to be on the front end of it and talk about it while  
2 it's still just in the initial stages.

3 But there's -- what I would lack and maybe  
4 like I said, this premature is context. So when you say,  
5 well, if we do it every five years, it's \$12 million.  
6 This is a request for \$2.7 million. And is that a one-  
7 time basis, is what you said? And then it creates a  
8 database and the mechanism for gathering data in all the  
9 districts and all the schools over some period of time?  
10 So the -- to make the argument for this money, which is  
11 the bulk of what CDE is asking for, what's the context?  
12 What's the return on investment? What's the -- what are  
13 benchmarks that would contextualize why 7 -- \$2.7 million  
14 is necessary, which isn't part of this Q&A.

15 So that would be helpful, at least to me, if  
16 I'm -- if people ask about it and say, well, why are they  
17 asking for that? I don't have a context for saying, well,  
18 actually, the Parson's Commercial Technology Group put in  
19 a bid, and they were the most competitive bid, and there's  
20 -- their estimate was \$2.7 million. And this is much more  
21 cost effective than \$12 million every whatever. You know?  
22 And those metrics could help -- be very helpful.

23 MS. EMM: Thank you. And we have actually  
24 done that.

25 MS. SCHEFFEL: (Indiscernible). Great.



1 MS. EMM: The BEST staff did work with  
2 Parsons. That was part of the audit findings and process,  
3 that the BEST staff would reach out to Parsons to find out  
4 what it would take to upgrade and revise and adjust the  
5 database in order to collect and measure different  
6 criteria and adjustment criteria that's currently being  
7 used. And that was the estimate that we received from  
8 Parsons, but again, we would anticipate that any kind of  
9 item like this, we would actually have to go out for an  
10 RFP process in order to obtain the best services at the  
11 best price.

12 MS. SCHEFFEL: Great, thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Angelika?

14 MS. SCHROEDER: I'm ready to get away from  
15 BEST.

16 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Yep.

17 MR. BLANFORD: Yeah, we're done.

18 MS. SCHROEDER: So I'd like to --

19 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: It's for the best.

20 MS. SCHROEDER: Jeff, I'd just like a little  
21 more background, and maybe Keith will have to help with  
22 this on the State Review Panel. Remind me who's on that  
23 panel. Why we do want to have an external vendor. The  
24 issue of independence?

25 MR. BLANFORD: Mr. Chair.



1 MS. SCHROEDER: Just paint that picture a  
2 little bit for me, please.

3 MR. BLANFORD: Sure. So as we've moved  
4 through the progression of implementing Senate Bill 163,  
5 and as we've had districts coming to you over the last few  
6 months, you know, talking about where they're at in their  
7 progress, we've been working with the -- our CDE reviews  
8 that we do of UIPs and the diagnostic reviews that we do  
9 as schools and districts. And the way that we've  
10 interpreted the State Review Panel is really an  
11 independent group that advises you outside of the  
12 Department. That advises the Commissioner, advises the  
13 State Board as to whether the school's making enough  
14 progress. Whether the district's making enough progress.  
15 That would be seen as independent. It hasn't been  
16 operated that way within the Department's current  
17 resources.

18 This is the first year that we're starting  
19 that. We've piloted some of those reviews from external  
20 agency, but essentially the Department was managing, over  
21 the last couple of years, the State Review Panel,  
22 selecting the members, putting them together, hosting the  
23 trainings, going out, and facilitating the visits. That's  
24 all been internal. We really feel, as the clock  
25 progresses, and you start to get to a situation where



1 you're going to have schools and districts in front of  
2 you, that having independent information of the Department  
3 would be beneficial to the State Board.

4 So really, this is a question -- I think for  
5 you, this ask is really about support for you. Do you  
6 want schools and districts to have on-site visits by an  
7 independent agency that gives you feedback before you're  
8 making decisions about those schools and districts outside  
9 of what the Department will provide? Because if that's  
10 the case, if we're going to do annual reviews of all the  
11 schools and districts on the clock, that stretches beyond  
12 the capacity of what we initially targeted as the dollar  
13 amount for a very strategic targeted reviews at certain  
14 times.

15 So as a school, for example, gets into year  
16 five, we'll set up a review, and we'll set up an onsite  
17 review. We have funds to do some of those strategic  
18 interventions as strategic reviews at the site level and  
19 at the district level. But if we want to have  
20 comprehensive reviews of all the schools and to have them  
21 done on site, that's the reason for this request.

22 So it's really about your, as a State Board,  
23 your tolerance, your desire, as you start to deal more and  
24 more with these issues of schools and districts coming  
25 before you. How valuable is that kind of independent



1 support for you and making decisions? And is going  
2 physically to the school, doing site visits, taking that  
3 information, is that an important part of that process for  
4 you? And if it is, that's the rationale for coming in and  
5 asking for this additional money.

6 If you are okay with the risk model of, you  
7 know, do a few, be strategic about it. But understand  
8 that we're not going to get to every single school as  
9 they've moved towards the end of the clock, then I think  
10 under current resources, we might be able to accomplish  
11 that. Does that help paint the picture?

12 MS. SCHROEDER: It does help, but just a  
13 couple more things, and then I'll give my feelings about  
14 it. Compare this to the CD Audits that we used to have,  
15 please.

16 MR. BLANFORD: Mr. Chair?

17 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: The what?

18 MS. SCHROEDER: What's the -- it's an  
19 acronym. I'm guilty.

20 MR. BLANFORD: Comprehensive audit. It's the  
21 district. They're basically a comprehensive assessment of  
22 district. What's the last letter, Trish? She would know.

23 (Chuckling)

24 MS. TRISH: District improvement.

25 MR. BLANFORD: District improvement. And



1 then I think there's school --

2 (Chuckling)

3 MR. BLANFORD: There's a school acronym as  
4 well. Very similar. There's a set of benchmarks and  
5 standards that we use for schools and districts when we do  
6 reviews. We would submitted our -- we would set out an  
7 RFP. We've been piloting this work with an independent  
8 group called School Works this year. They've gone out and  
9 done some of these reviews, diagnostic reviews, with  
10 schools.

11 But we would go about setting an RFP process  
12 in place in the fall, and we would allow for people to bid  
13 on this work. And again, we would have the benchmarks of  
14 school performance and district performance, and then they  
15 would match their reviews, the diagnostic views, against  
16 those benchmarks. And they would provide a report. And  
17 they would submit that report. And that would be part of  
18 the evidence from this independent group, and along with  
19 the staff recommendations that come from our reviews that  
20 we do as a team.

21 MS. SCHROEDER: Thank you. So I think my --  
22 just initial observation about this is that, from what  
23 I've heard from some districts, they have been very, very  
24 grateful for the help that they've received from CDE  
25 staff. And it seems to me it will be very problematic to



1 continue to be open to the recommendations that come from  
2 our staff, and the partnering, and the help. And then at  
3 the same time, know as a district and as a school, that  
4 those same people are actually going to be deciding what  
5 should be the consequence at the end of the -- in other  
6 words, that they should also be doing the evaluation at  
7 the exact same time.

8 So the piece that you're adding, which is an  
9 independent view, is probably critical in order to  
10 continue that partnership-relationship that staff has  
11 built with some of the districts that have been getting  
12 help. And so I do support the notion of having an  
13 outsider come in and actually do a review independent of  
14 what you all have done working with some of the schools  
15 and working with some of the districts.

16 And I think that's what you're trying to get  
17 to. But it will just get a lot -- awfully convoluted to  
18 try to be the judge at the very end. At the same time  
19 that you're also part of the partnership that you've been  
20 building with the schools.

21 MR. BLANFORD: Mr. Chair?

22 MS. SCHROEDER: That's kind of how I see it,  
23 and I don't know if that's the same way you see it.

24 MR. BLANFORD: I would -- Mr. Chair, I would  
25 just add that I think that's a really good way to phrase



1 it. As we progress along the path of the districts and  
2 schools getting towards the end of the clock, the ability  
3 -- your ability to have additional information, besides  
4 what the Department can provide, I think, will be very  
5 helpful.

6 It's been -- I think watching these  
7 opportunities for districts to communicate with you has  
8 been very helpful for us to see the questions that you're  
9 asking, the dialogue that's going on. And I think the  
10 more information that you have to make decisions that are  
11 going to be really tough decisions about schools and  
12 districts, the more informed you are, the better you'll  
13 feel about the decisions that you make.

14 And so again, that's the reason why we really  
15 debated this and tried to figure out if this was the right  
16 approach, and we talked with the Commissioner and our  
17 executive team quite a bit. But at the end of the day,  
18 this is really about your -- this is an ask for you. And  
19 if you feel like it's something that you need, then that's  
20 why we wanted to put it in front of you.

21 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: I'll come to you in a  
22 second, Pam. Dr. Scheffel had her hand up.

23 MS. SCHEFFEL: I guess I'd like us to think  
24 about some other models that could allow us to get  
25 additional information. Like in higher ed, we use peer



1 review. And so this is a different model where you're  
2 hiring an entity to come in and do what's thought to be an  
3 independent, unbiased review, but I guess I think we could  
4 think beyond that and actually think of a different way of  
5 doing it that would be more cost-effective myself. That  
6 would be my opinion.

7 MR. BLANFORD: Mr. Chair?

8 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Dr. (indiscernible)?

9 MR. BLANFORD: I might add that -- just to  
10 add to Dr. Scheffel's point that the State Review Panel is  
11 comprised of individuals that are outlined in statute that  
12 reflect peers, that reflect, you know, other  
13 professionals. And so teachers, administrators, but also  
14 people outside of education. And so there's a listing of  
15 the individuals that make up the State Review Panel. And  
16 our ability to help, you know, put that together has been  
17 the way that we've done it the past two or three years.

18 Our hope is that -- and our expectations of  
19 an RFP process would be that they'd still -- whoever we  
20 would contract with would still have to follow the State  
21 Review Panel guidelines and statute in the people that  
22 they select, so that you would have that piece.

23 The part that gets expensive about these --  
24 and again, this is what I wanted to talk about today -- is  
25 site visits. Whenever you're paying professionals and



1 other people to travel and even if give any type of  
2 honorarium, just to go -- and you can see some of the  
3 locations that we're having to send people to all over the  
4 state require overnight travel.

5 So those things are what complicate and get  
6 expensive. Paper reviews absolutely can be done for a lot  
7 less. But that's one of the things we wanted to talk to  
8 you about today is how comfortable are you about making  
9 decisions based solely on paper reviews, and are physical  
10 site visits an important part of information for you as  
11 you make decisions about schools and districts?

12 So I agree with you. I think that having  
13 different point of views come to the table and provide  
14 that information in your feedback is helpful, and that's  
15 how the State Review Panel is comprised.

16 MS. SCHEFFEL: So what is the \$250,000 then?  
17 For travel costs for the Review Panel that's already in  
18 place, or that will be convened? Or --

19 MR. BLANFORD: Mr. Chair? So the -- part of  
20 the breakout of the \$250 -- \$150 is for the State Review  
21 Panel in addition to some funding that we already  
22 received. The other \$100,000 is for enhancements to the  
23 you online UIP system that we use that would connect those  
24 reviews and connect the UIP system so that we have it all  
25 centralized in one place.



1                   So, yes, I would say to that question. A big  
2 part of that is site visits. And also the frequency. Do  
3 you go every year to every school and look at the progress  
4 that they're making from year-to-year when they're on the  
5 clock? So there's over 200 schools right now on the  
6 accountability clock. So that's the heavy lift and the  
7 heavy costs. And do you do that for districts as well?  
8 Do you go to every single district that's on the clock?  
9 And do you go every year?

10                   And so that -- do you want the history of  
11 year-to-year progress when you're making a decision at the  
12 end of the clock to show that they've made progress from  
13 year-to-year? Do you want to be able to see what people  
14 say about the climate, the context, and the results? And  
15 be able to reflect on that period over a period of time?  
16 Is that important to you when you're making decisions at  
17 the end of the clock?

18                   And again, if it is, right now what we have  
19 to set up as a model based on limited resources that  
20 allows us to do targeted. We're going to try to go at the  
21 very beginning when somebody comes on the clock. And  
22 really we're waiting almost to the very end now to do  
23 another review. And so those are our opportunities with  
24 the current resources to do that. If we want to have more  
25 frequency and have onsite reviews, that's the additional



1 cost.

2 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Pam?

3 MS. MAZANEC: Thank you. Who appoints the  
4 State Review Panel?

5 MR. BLANFORD: Mr. Chair? The State Board  
6 approves the list.

7 MS. MAZANEC: Where do we get the list from?

8 MR. BLANFORD: We submit it each year. I  
9 think generally in November, December time, sometimes  
10 January. It depends on the cycle, but it's -- it usually  
11 comes before the State Board every year as annual process.

12 MS. MAZANEC: So CDE staff provide us a list  
13 to choose from?

14 MR. BLANFORD: Mr. Chair? It's a list that  
15 you approve. It's not a list that --

16 MS. MAZANEC: So we don't get to choose  
17 actually.

18 MR. BLANFORD: Mr. Chair? Yeah, it's not --  
19 there hasn't been a process of like -- we have to a hard  
20 time actually staffing it that we can't get enough. We  
21 can't get enough people usually to fully implement a State  
22 Review Panel. But what we do get every year, we take to  
23 the State Board.

24 MS. MAZANEC: Okay, so (chuckles) it lends us  
25 credibility. It lends us more -- another voice, but we



1 actually don't have much say in who's on it. Is there --  
2 are -- do we have any options around that? I mean, can  
3 individuals, State -- yeah.

4 MS. NEAL: (Indiscernible).

5 MS. MAZANEC: Yeah. Can individuals, State  
6 Board Members?

7 MS. NEAL: We could dig up some for you, too.

8 MS. MAZANEC: Yeah. (Chuckles) Well, I'm  
9 just wondering what the requirements are to sit on the  
10 Panel.

11 MR. BLANFORD: Mr. Chair? Yeah, there's some  
12 expectations about -- laid out statute about the makeup of  
13 the State Review Panel. Happy to share those with you.

14 MS. MAZANEC: I would love to see that, yeah.

15 MR. BLANFORD: We could definitely get that  
16 to the State Board. And, you know, your ability to look  
17 at that list, look at the individuals and their  
18 backgrounds, and if they follow the makeup that's required  
19 statute. And if you see issues there, I'm sure, you know,  
20 you could certainly always pull those pieces and have  
21 discussions about them. They don't necessarily have to go  
22 through with approval. I think ultimately, you decide on  
23 whether you want those individuals to be approved.

24 But again, we've had a struggle again,  
25 because we have not been providing resources in the past,



1 to even provide a stipend or pay for travel for these  
2 individuals. You cannot -- you can imagine that it's a  
3 very difficult thing for people to commit to, to give  
4 their time and energy to this endeavor, but then also not  
5 have any reflection of the expense that's involved. And  
6 so what we've started to do this year in a small way,  
7 based on the prior ask, is to just at least give some  
8 reimbursement if there is travel involved, for travel and  
9 a small honorarium that's involved for the people that  
10 make up the committee if they do the work.

11 MS. MAZANEC: So \$150,000 is for the travel,  
12 and the other \$100,000 is for stipends and putting this --

13 MR. HAMMOND: Putting the two systems  
14 together.

15 MS. MAZANEC: Getting the data together is in  
16 one --

17 MR. BLANFORD: I've got the statue. Okay.  
18 Mr. Chair? The \$150,000 that we're asking -- looking at  
19 for this piece would be to enhance the State Review  
20 Panel's ability to pay for travel, pay for annual, more  
21 frequent reviews. The other \$100,000 that's a part of  
22 this is to connect those reviews to the unified  
23 improvement point process. Yep.

24 MS. MAZANEC: That's what I meant. Sorry.

25 MR. BLANFORD: That's right.



1 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Angelika?

2 MS. SCHROEDER: So I actually worry a little  
3 bit about what's going to happen in year five for some of  
4 these schools, having been on a school board where it was  
5 necessary to close schools. If that's one of the options  
6 that's presented to us for any 1 of 200, or 200 of 200  
7 schools, I believe we need to be very prepared. I believe  
8 we need to have all the data we can in order to make the  
9 case one way or the other. And I think the recommendation  
10 from a really strong State Review Panel, one that has  
11 clear guidelines, will help us make that decision. I  
12 would be very -- I will be very worried if I have to make  
13 some of those kinds of decisions, because they do involve  
14 kids and teachers and school cultures and community  
15 cultures. So I don't think this -- I don't know that we  
16 recognize how severe this can become if we have a school  
17 come before us, where things really are not working for  
18 kids, and we have to make that decision. I will feel a  
19 whole lot better with as much independent information that  
20 I can get. That's just sort of my position on this,  
21 because I can remember how awfully hard this is.

22 MR. HAMMOND: Mr. Chair?

23 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Please.

24 MR. HAMMOND: I think one of the, you know,  
25 obviously when we go through the process, one thing that



1 hits them automatically is the loss of accreditation, and  
2 the impact that has on students at various levels. And  
3 that's -- that unfortunately affects the kids. And that's  
4 a pretty serious step that happens automatically.

5 And so that's just something I think you're  
6 very astute in the decisions that start occurring, and  
7 then how you react to those, and what recommendations you  
8 make, we think it's just very serious you have all the  
9 data available to you that you can. And that's why we're  
10 willing to put out there even an independent process  
11 outside of us, so we can -- you could have the benefit of  
12 having different opinions if necessary.

13 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Jane?

14 MS. GOFF: There may not have been time yet.  
15 Is there any relation you see between this discussion and  
16 the one we've been having and the new piece of legislation  
17 that deals with whether it's leadership development for  
18 schools that are in a turnaround or priority situation?  
19 That's a different -- that leadership development is  
20 different than making a decision about the outcome of  
21 school community.

22 But I just wonder, in the interest of  
23 avoiding inconsistencies or conflicts or contradictions,  
24 that's the main thing between our policies and what's  
25 going on at the statehouse.



1 MR. BLANFORD: Mr. Chair?

2 MS. GOFF: Thank you.

3 MR. BLANFORD: Yeah, I think to your question  
4 or your comment that -- back to Dr. Schroeder's point,  
5 that by keeping the Department in a position of support  
6 with our reviews, our work that we do with schools, and  
7 our leadership programs, and, you know, all the different  
8 kinds of ways that we lend a hand to schools and  
9 districts, that moves forward in the way that we've  
10 envisioned. Having this at other end-of-piece that's  
11 independent of that allows us, I think, to keep those  
12 relationships, to keep that piece moving forward in a way.

13 And I think this piece is hard for schools  
14 and districts, because having somebody independent come in  
15 and do these types of evaluations is -- when it's somebody  
16 they trust and somebody that's built a relationship with  
17 them, it's a lot easier to go into a school and give some  
18 critical feedback. This is being set up in a way that is  
19 not that, and again, we've been trying to really be clear  
20 with schools and districts that the State Review Panel is  
21 not really for you. It's the State Review Panel is for  
22 the State Board and for the Commissioner to help make  
23 decisions about the end of the five-year clock.

24 That work that we do at the Department with  
25 our team is your support. And we're trying to really



1 separate these, and where this -- again, where this came  
2 up is we think it's really important to separate them,  
3 because they've been somewhat confused. And I think  
4 people have been thinking that they're one and the same,  
5 and they're not.

6 And the statute we really landed on, as we've  
7 gone through and tried to line up statute and bring you  
8 the charts that we brought, that the State Review Panel  
9 was really set up and envisioned, I think, as additional  
10 support for the State Board and for the Commissioner to  
11 make some really tough decisions. And so I think it comes  
12 back to that piece that this helped keep those two things  
13 up.

14 MS. GOFF: Thanks.

15 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Marcia, any questions?

16 MS. NEAL: No, (chuckles) it's just -- the  
17 second chair was -- has been very quiet.

18 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Okay, does that finish  
19 this presentation?

20 MR. BLANFORD: Yes, sir, Mr. Chair. Unless  
21 you --

22 MR. HAMMOND: Unless you have any other  
23 questions.

24 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Ms. Holly, Dr. Blanford,  
25 thank you very much.



1 MS. NEAL: Thank you.

2 MR. BLANFORD: Yeah, we'll bring this back to  
3 the next meeting.

4 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Yes.

5 MR. HAMMOND: Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: That goes in the working  
7 on it file.

8 MS. SCHROEDER: (Indiscernible).

9 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: The next item on the  
10 agenda is the online and blended learning education  
11 recognition. Mr. Commissioner.

12 MR. HAMMOND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll  
13 turn this over to Ms. Rebecca Holmes to lead us out in  
14 this discussion and recognize this most honored  
15 individual.

16 MS. HOLMES: Excellent.

17 MR. HAMMOND: Thank you.

18 MS. HOLMES: Thank you. Commissioner, Mr.  
19 Chair, Members of the Board, you'll recall that at last  
20 month's meeting, we had our annual honoring out of the  
21 Division of Innovation Choice and Engagement, and the  
22 Office of Online and Blended Learning of our annual award  
23 winners.

24 We have a second teacher who's being honored  
25 this year, and we're lucky enough that by being on the



1 western slopes, she didn't have to travel to be with us,  
2 which even as a virtual teacher, I think that's a nice  
3 convenience.

4 (Chuckling)

5 MS. HOLMES: As you know, I think many of you  
6 have shared that through these awards, you've learned a  
7 great deal about the traits and the characteristics of  
8 online teachers, principals, and counselors. And you know  
9 that these educators are honored each year for their  
10 positive impact on student performance based on a rubric  
11 around academic growth, and principals and superintendents  
12 recognizing their unique commitment to their students.

13 To select the awardees, as is true every  
14 year, the selection committee does use a rubric, rather,  
15 (chuckles) informed by the standards for quality online  
16 schools and online teaching. And so I'm excited this year  
17 to introduce you to Karla Durmas.

18 Karla is the Outstanding Online and Blended  
19 Teacher of the Year, and she's been a founding teacher.  
20 So she's been an online and blended teacher since the  
21 beginning of operations at Grand River Virtual Academy.  
22 During those three years, her peers report that she's been  
23 a really integral part of building the vision and the  
24 culture of the school. She's committed to using data to  
25 personalize her learning methods to meet the needs of



1 every one of her students. As evidence of that, in -- on  
2 the STAR math assessment. Traditionally, her students  
3 have made eight months of growth in just four months'  
4 time. So certainly pleased to have her here today.

5 So Karla, we'd ask you to say a few words  
6 about your work at Grand River Virtual Academy.

7 (Applause)

8 MS. DURMAS: I hear -- let me make sure this  
9 is on. You said --

10 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: You're not online.

11 MS. DURMAS: Is that better?

12 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: There. Now, you're  
13 online.

14 MS. DURMAS: There we go.

15 (Chuckling)

16 MS. NEAL: Online.

17 MS. DURMAS: Thank you very much. I am  
18 appreciate the honor bestowed on me today. To start with,  
19 as with any honor, I want to thank those of -- those that  
20 helped me get where I am today.

21 Obviously, my family is a big piece.  
22 Traditional teachers never put in 40 hours a week, and  
23 online teachers are no different. So my family puts up  
24 with some of those extra things done outside of contract  
25 hours.



1                   Also, my principal this year is Sharon  
2 College at Grand River Virtual Academy. And as you're  
3 well aware, principals really do provide that leadership,  
4 that guidance, and that support all the way through. And  
5 that's no different for us.

6                   Today too is also the director of our  
7 academic options for our district, and he actually was one  
8 of them that went to bat originally and said our district  
9 really needs this. We have children that we're losing  
10 from our district, because they just don't succeed well in  
11 a traditional classroom. And so he was one of the  
12 founders of starting Grand River Virtual Academy and  
13 making it a possibility. So to thank him.

14                  And then our school district is just awesome  
15 at supporting all the academic options. And the State of  
16 Colorado really supports not just everything fitting in  
17 one box. Really looking at all children and how do we  
18 meet all children's needs the best we can. And so just to  
19 thank you to start with, for all those people that allowed  
20 me to be the teacher that I can be.

21                  Part of the application process was to  
22 highlight a child, and it was exciting to have so many to  
23 choose from. The one child I did pick in the application  
24 process, when they came and interviewed at our school, she  
25 actually, on that STAR math assessment was scoring in the



1 intensive range, which is the lowest category, the  
2 greatest risk.

3 Over the course of this year, she has moved  
4 from intensive -- and this is the area of reading for her,  
5 but she went from intensive into targeted. She went from  
6 targeted into on watch. And we just completed our spring,  
7 and she is now at or above grade level.

8 So for that one individual child, a huge  
9 difference was made in her ability to read, which we know  
10 affects every other part of her education. And so having  
11 that online option for that family really made a  
12 difference.

13 Grand River Virtual Academy is designed with  
14 an actual building. And so our staff is on site for part  
15 of our hours that we work. And so our children and our  
16 families can come to us for face-to-face support, in  
17 addition to the learning that they're doing in that home  
18 environment.

19 We do the field trips. We do a lot of those  
20 other community and social building activities as well.  
21 But I think one of the big pieces of our success is having  
22 that concrete building where they can come, and they feel  
23 connected, and they can receive that direct instruction.

24 The way I designed my program, I also provide  
25 direct instruction online. And so that virtual piece is a



1 tool that I use as well, not just the children in their  
2 daily work.

3 Any questions for me?

4 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: That's a great question.  
5 Do we have any questions?

6 (Chuckling)

7 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: We don't appear to have  
8 questions, but we have congratulations.

9 MS. DURMAS: Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: And thanks to you for the  
11 work you've done on behalf of students and the leadership  
12 you demonstrate among your peers and teachers. Thank you  
13 very much. Congratulations.

14 MS. NEAL: Now awards.

15 (Applause)

16 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Now, normally, we'd have  
17 people come forward, and we'd take a picture in front of  
18 the seal of the state of Colorado.

19 MS. DURMAS: (Chuckles)

20 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: We don't have the seal,  
21 but we have awards if you -- your representative is Marcia  
22 Neal, and the Commissioner want to come to the corner  
23 here, I guess, or the end of the table.

24 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: No, no.

25 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Well, maybe -- can we get



1 a picture of the beautiful mountains in the background?

2 That would be even better than the seal.

3 (Pause)

4 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Again, Ms. Durmas, thank  
5 you, and congratulations.

6 (Applause)

7 (Pause)

8 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: The next item on the  
9 agenda is request from Delta County 50-J to approve it as  
10 a District of Innovation on behalf of North Fork  
11 Montessori at Crawford. We welcome the representatives  
12 from Delta County 50-J. Mr. Commissioner, is staff  
13 prepared to find an overview

14 MR. HAMMOND: They are, and Rebecca, if you  
15 go ahead and take it up.

16 MS. HOLMES: Absolutely. Thank you, Mr.  
17 Chair. So you'll recall, it's been a few months since you  
18 all have addressed this duty. But you'll recall that you  
19 do approve the applications of districts who wants to take  
20 on innovation status on behalf of a school that will then  
21 be a formal School of innovation. So that's what we'll be  
22 addressing today.

23 I have with me a superintendent from Delta,  
24 Karen Gibson.

25 MS. GIBSON: Yes.



1 MS. HOLMES: Who will take over and give you  
2 more detail about the plan.

3 But as summary, essentially this would create  
4 the North Fork Montessori at Crawford. This is to take on  
5 the fact that there's been an existing elementary school  
6 in Delta, Crawford Elementary, that has seen declining  
7 enrollment. And at the same time, a Montessori option  
8 that has not had enough space in terms of its facility.  
9 The District has brought many parties together over the  
10 course of nearly the last year in order to come up with an  
11 innovation application that would create North Fork  
12 Montessori at Crawford.

13 I'll let them share with you the details of  
14 the goals of their innovation school. But the mission of  
15 the school would be to nurture each child's natural desire  
16 to learn and patent their passion for discovery. The  
17 school would stress innovative problem-solving and  
18 encourage lifelong learning. And what you'll hear is a  
19 strong focus on the arts, foreign language, and the school  
20 culture.

21 The school that's proposed will bring both  
22 leaders together, and the current principal of Crawford  
23 and the current director of North Fork Community  
24 Montessori will co-lead the school and be equally  
25 accountable to the Delta Board of Education.



1                   The teachers will be trained in the  
2                   Montessori curriculum and will hold valid Colorado  
3                   teaching licenses. And staffing and materials will have a  
4                   level of autonomy that the innovation status is intended  
5                   to grant the school.

6                   So with that, I will turn things over to  
7                   Karen, who will lead you through the details of that  
8                   (indiscernible).

9                   CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: And I'll just interject.  
10                  You say normally, I would say welcome, but I guess I'm  
11                  going to say thank you for welcoming us to your neck of  
12                  the woods.

13                  (Chuckling)

14                  MS. GIBSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, I'm  
15                  Karen Gibson, Superintendent of Delta County Schools and  
16                  with me is Ms. Delaine Hudson. She's our alternative  
17                  education coordinator in our school district. And Bill  
18                  Eyler, who is an -- well, currently administrator at our  
19                  Montessori. But moving to our school of innovation as  
20                  administrator.

21                  Well, I do have to say thank you for coming  
22                  to the western slope of Colorado, and here in Grand  
23                  Junction, we were sure happy you were here and not driving  
24                  over the hills for the meeting. But this is truly a  
25                  celebration for Delta County School District.



1                   This has been a bumpy school year for us.  
2           This year, we lost 107 students, but over the last 4 years  
3           -- no. Over the last 5 years, we have lost 410 students.  
4           Our mining population is decreasing, and the economy was  
5           slow to come into Delta County, and it's slow to leave  
6           Delta County.

7                   So with that, and I kind of -- I call it the  
8           perfect storm. Our per-person funding is some of the  
9           lowest in the state. We get a little over \$6300 a  
10          student. We have 1100 miles in our school district.  
11          We're right at 5000 students and 21 school buildings.  
12          We're very spread out. We're very rural. We have many  
13          challenges.

14                   And so we started thinking how can we meet  
15          the demands that are out there with our children, are many  
16          buildings, and our financial gaps that we have?

17                   And so we put our heads together, and we  
18          thought what if we opened our arms in our school district  
19          and worked with our contract schools to brought them into  
20          our school district?

21                   And that's the idea that came together of  
22          having their Northport Montessori School become one of our  
23          schools as a School of Innovation in our school district.

24                   Both our Crawford Elementary and the North  
25          Fork Montessori are very outstanding schools. They're



1 both schools of distinction in our school district, and  
2 Delaine will be talking about their growth and so forth in  
3 just a little bit.

4 But that was the idea of bringing these two  
5 schools together. Both of them had right at 60 students,  
6 and to run a school of 60, it's not very efficient. So  
7 how can we combine those and bring communities together,  
8 bring students together?

9 Also, it was very important to keep the  
10 school in a community. In Delta County, we have five  
11 different communities. I don't know if you're familiar  
12 with Delta County, but we have Delta, Hotchkiss,  
13 Cedaredge, Paonia, and Crawford, so five separate  
14 communities with a lot of pride, and a lot of loyalty. So  
15 how could we keep a school in a community? And this is a  
16 way to do that as well.

17 And so with our financial hardships, this was  
18 just a nice way to meet the needs of students, meet the  
19 needs of the District to help us out financially, and also  
20 to meet the needs of our students. I'm going to turn it  
21 over to the Delaine right now.

22 MS. HUDSON: Thank you, and I just want to  
23 say thank you for allowing us to be here to present. It  
24 has been quite the journey. As Karen alluded, about a  
25 year ago, we came up with this vision. I was at a meeting



1 with Kelly Rosensweet last fall and said, hey. We kind of  
2 have this idea of merging these two schools together into  
3 an innovative -- into an Innovation School, and can you  
4 help me? And of course, she said yes. And so began the  
5 journey in true, you know, so began the journey.

6 So in the fall, we met with the Board  
7 Education and said, you know, Crawford has lost more  
8 students. We got down to a point of -- to be about 52  
9 students, and Montessori is struggling with the space that  
10 they have. And here's kind of a sketch that if we brought  
11 these two schools together, what we might be able to do.  
12 And they said, great, but we need a lot more information,  
13 as you can imagine. (Chuckles)

14 So we set out in October, and we had a  
15 community meeting in Crawford. And we presented the pros  
16 and cons of what this would do. And we met quite a bit of  
17 resistance at that first meeting. The, you know, the  
18 communities weren't quite so sure about each other. But  
19 at the end of that meeting, we had set up where parents  
20 from Crawford could visit the Montessori School, where  
21 parents from Montessori could visit the Crawford School,  
22 where they could see that the instructional methods that  
23 were being used were not so very different.

24 In Crawford, because of the size of the  
25 school, we had multi-age, multi-grade classrooms. In



1 Montessori, that is the model, (chuckles) multi-age,  
2 multi-grade classrooms. So as they began to see that they  
3 weren't so different, it began to feel a little bit more  
4 comfortable.

5 We had a second community meeting at -- this  
6 time in Hotchkiss by the Montessori School, but the  
7 Montessori School wasn't big enough. So we had it at the  
8 high school, which is just across the street. And during  
9 this meeting, we began to get that feel that we were on  
10 the right path. That these groups could come together.

11 We did surveys. We surveyed the parents of  
12 both schools. If we combine these two schools together,  
13 would you send your kids there? You know, because that's  
14 the bottom line. You have to have students to have a  
15 school. And not resoundingly, but we had good, good  
16 feedback from that. So we continued on.

17 In December, the School Board said okay,  
18 let's go for it. So they tasked me with the job of  
19 writing this plan, and of course, I could never have done  
20 that by myself. I needed a team, and we put together  
21 quite the team. We had both principals. Doug Egging  
22 couldn't be here today. He's the current principal of  
23 Crawford Elementary. But we had both principals.

24 We had accountability members from both  
25 schools. We had board members from the Montessori



1       Governing Board, because as a contract school, they  
2       operated much like a charter school with their own  
3       governing board. We had Kurt Klay, who's an assistant  
4       superintendent, and in charge of district accountability.  
5       So we wanted to get all those bases covered that were --  
6       and we had teachers -- that were -- that are outlined in  
7       the statute.

8                       We worked together diligently over about five  
9       weeks in in writing this plan, and we met together five  
10      times. But we actually met together on a daily basis as  
11      we created a virtual document, a Google Doc, in which we -  
12      - the authors of it, and there were three of us that  
13      really did most of the writing -- Mr. Eyler, myself, and  
14      one of the team members, but everybody had viewing rights  
15      and could, you know, when they saw something they didn't  
16      like, they could call us. They could write a comment in  
17      or whatever. So it was truly a very collaborative process  
18      as we went through that.

19                      Once we had the plan written, we got the  
20      votes from the two different schools. Are you in favor?  
21      I think the law says you have to have 50 percent. We had  
22      much greater than that. I think in both schools, we had  
23      one dissenting person, one dissenting staff member in each  
24      school.

25                      So that was the process, the innovations.



1 When Kelly Rosensweet, when she and I were working, she  
2 said she would like for me to present to you those  
3 innovations, that you would like to know a little more  
4 about those. So here we go.

5 I think the biggest one -- well, they're all  
6 big. Montessori curriculum has been around for a long,  
7 long time. It's usually been, as you know, in charter  
8 schools or in private schools. And so we've had the  
9 tradition of a Montessori School in Delta County for --

10 MR. EYLER: 14.

11 MS. HUDSON: -- 14 years. And it's been, as  
12 Karen said, a very high-achieving school. Under Bill's  
13 leadership, they have worked very hard to align with state  
14 standards and have embraced the standards and making sure  
15 that their students are meeting those standards. And so  
16 having that curriculum in a public elementary school is, I  
17 think, in and of itself, an innovation. When I was  
18 thinking about it as we started the journey, because I've  
19 been involved with the Montessori School as the  
20 coordinator of alternative education, I thought, well, I  
21 don't know that this is all that innovative. You know, I  
22 was like, we're doing just great things. We're doing  
23 great things that we're supposed to be doing.

24 But then as we really started thinking about  
25 it, yes, it is innovative, and yes, we are taking this out



1 to a greater -- to more students. And we're not limiting  
2 the -- we're not saying oh, sorry. We have a waiting  
3 list. You can't come. We're saying we want everyone that  
4 wants to be in this Montessori School in Crawford to come.  
5 So we have open enrollment.

6 We had a group of parents who, a big reason  
7 that their students attended the Montessori School, was  
8 because they -- we teach Spanish, and it's beginning in  
9 preschool. That doesn't happen in very many schools. I  
10 know there are some public schools out there that are able  
11 to do that, but not very many. We felt strongly that we  
12 could do that. So as a team, we -- we've put together a  
13 way to do that, to keep that Spanish in preschool, to keep  
14 that strong arts focus, to have certified teachers  
15 teaching that to the students of all ages in the school.

16 One of our toughest challenges, and yet it is  
17 an innovation, is to blend the two cultures. And, you  
18 know, western Colorado has lots of subcultures in  
19 different communities, and Delta County is no different.  
20 And in Crawford, we have a very old time -- I guess I  
21 would say very old-time community that if we were -- kind  
22 of a cowboy ranching community. And then there's Joe  
23 Cocker too, but --

24 (Laughter)

25 MS. HUDSON: But we have this history that



1 goes deep, deep into the roots of ranching and cattle and  
2 that whole culture.

3 And then we have in Hotchkiss -- we've --  
4 Bill and his team have created this culture of Montessori  
5 that sometimes in our -- and wrongly, but sometimes in our  
6 community is seen as elitist, because oh, your kids go to  
7 the Montessori School. So we have these two cultures that  
8 are very, very different that we're trying to blend, and I  
9 just -- if I could just have a moment where I could have  
10 just videod and showed you a clip of one meeting where  
11 we're talking about the instructional strategies and how  
12 great it's going to be. And a very strong parent from  
13 Crawford said we're in. We buy in totally. We're buying  
14 into all of this. But we've been the Crawford Cubs for a  
15 long time.

16 (Chuckling)

17 MS. HUDSON: And we've been black and orange.  
18 Can we keep that? And it, you know, and it was just  
19 beautiful the way that whole conversation evolved, because  
20 that history is so important.

21 And one of the families from that area  
22 actually is supporting us in a big way in terms of our  
23 early childhood education, and with it -- with a very  
24 large grant for Crawford, Colorado. I believe it's a  
25 \$25,000 grant.



1                   So we've got the buy in. The last innovation  
2                   that I want to talk just briefly about is that the way  
3                   that this school has worked so effectively is that each  
4                   classroom, the early childhood classroom, which is their  
5                   three-year-olds through kindergarten; our lower  
6                   elementary, first through third; and our upper elementary,  
7                   fourth through sixth all have certified Montessori  
8                   teachers in the classroom, but they also have an aide, a  
9                   paraprofessional. Well, that doesn't quite fit within our  
10                  district staffing ratios. And so we were able to work  
11                  with the leadership team at the district level and say  
12                  okay, we have to get around this differently, because that  
13                  was one thing that the parents were not going to give up.  
14                  There like, it works. We're keeping it. Or we're -- our  
15                  deal is off.

16                  And so what we came up with finally was we  
17                  looked at all of our schools and determined that about 70  
18                  percent of the PPR goes to staffing and materials at each  
19                  school. So we then began the talk of okay, if we gave you  
20                  X percent, you can create your own pay scale, and you can  
21                  staff the building appropriately with that.

22                  And so that's our budget innovation, is that  
23                  it's not totally on a contract. The District is still  
24                  going to provide all of the other services to the school  
25                  the same as they do to the 13 other schools in the



1 district, but they will have autonomy over how they staff  
2 that building. They won't have more money, but they'll  
3 have autonomy, so -- and they can make it work. And they  
4 can make it work beautifully.

5 So my last piece is on achievement. Like  
6 you've heard, you know, two great schools, both schools of  
7 distinction. Both schools have earned the Governor's  
8 award. Both schools have done great things.

9 I looked at the goals that were written, and  
10 we have goals of an 80 percent achievement in all areas.  
11 And then I looked at actual scores of the two schools.  
12 Currently over the last five years, the two schools -- I'm  
13 just going to use reading. I'm not going to go into all  
14 of them, but I'll just use reading. Reading at the third-  
15 grade level has been 85 percent proficient and advanced  
16 over the last five years. And sixth grade reading, over  
17 the last five years, has been 91 percent proficient and  
18 advanced. And yet, we have a goal of 80 percent.

19 So we talked about this for year one, but 92  
20 percent for year three. So we're not staying at 80  
21 percent as that goal. But we talked about we're going to  
22 be taking students in from homeschool. We have quite a  
23 number of homeschool students on the -- on our  
24 registration list. We're blending two very different  
25 cultures. You know, we're we've got students coming in



1 from our traditional schools. We just -- we want to make  
2 sure that we have a high goal, which is above what is  
3 currently state average, but also realistic. But Mr.  
4 Eyler said today when we had lunch. I want to get back.  
5 I want that John Irwin Award. (Chuckles) I want that  
6 Governor's Award. I mean, that's important to the school.

7 So with that, we are open to any questions  
8 you might have.

9 MS. GIBSON: Bill, did you have anything?

10 (Talking over)

11 MR. EYLER: Hi, I'm Bill Eyler. I don't  
12 really have anything to add. I think what you've said is  
13 wonderful. And it's a great opportunity to come speak in  
14 front of you. And if you have any questions about our  
15 program, more than willing to answer.

16 MS. NEAL: And because I'm familiar with the  
17 territory, I -- which school? Which physical school? Are  
18 you going to be in Crawford or --

19 MR. EYLER: We'll be in Crawford.

20 MS. NEAL: And what was the Crawford  
21 Elementary, that's where you'll be.

22 MR. EYLER: Yes.

23 MS. NEAL: Okay.

24 MR. EYLER: Yes.

25 MS. NEAL: Then that's such a beautiful



1 setting. That's a wonderful place.

2 MR. EYLER: It's a beautiful setting.

3 MR. MORTON: Do you have transportation if  
4 they come from --

5 MS. GIBSON: Yes.

6 MR. EYLER: Yes.

7 MS. NEAL: You'll be able to get them.

8 MS. GIBSON: We're going to work with our  
9 transportation and make that work. And I'm going to tell  
10 you what I'm very proud of is our two administrators from  
11 the traditional school and the Montessori. They broke  
12 down the walls and agreed to work together, and their  
13 staffs -- the staff members followed that and our  
14 community members. Like Delaine said, it was a big thing  
15 to combine a Montessori and our traditional school. And  
16 so --

17 MS. HUDSON: And I think one of the things I  
18 didn't mention, but I think actually Rebecca might have.  
19 I don't quite remember. But also having those -- those  
20 staff members will be dually certified. So they will be  
21 certified in -- as Colorado teachers but also as  
22 Montessori teachers, and that's a huge commitment on their  
23 part. But we are committed to that. We need it -- well,  
24 as a public school, innovation schools don't get that  
25 waiver. So we have to be committed to that.



1 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Other questions? Elaine?

2 MS. GANTZ-BERMAN: I'm on now. I just really  
3 want to commend you, because what you've done is what we  
4 talk about, that we wish happened more throughout the  
5 state of Colorado with small school populations, and you  
6 did it completely on your own with any -- without any kind  
7 of carrot or stick. You had your own stick, which was  
8 that you had small school populations, and you wanted to  
9 serve best the needs of the students. And we can only  
10 imagine how difficult it was for the staffs to come  
11 together, the administrators to come together. To the  
12 parent -- for the parents to accept this, and so forth.

13 So, I mean, I think often about the rural  
14 areas of Colorado, and the very small schools, and what we  
15 could be doing to encourage localities to do more of what  
16 you're doing.

17 So I think my question for you, in addition  
18 to the compliments, is if you were in our position, is  
19 there anything more we could be doing to encourage other  
20 districts and schools to do what you've just done?

21 MS. HUDSON: You know, when I got onto the  
22 website and looked at all of the current innovation  
23 schools, I wasn't -- I didn't find anyone where encouraged  
24 -- it encourages looking outside of the box by the name.  
25 But so many of the schools were turnaround schools or



1 schools and academic trouble. And I don't know if somehow  
2 there could be that, you know, if we can be the leader in  
3 that not being the reason for an innovation school, you  
4 know, not a way out, but a way up.

5 MS. GANTZ-BERMAN: So in other words --  
6 that's a great idea. So in other words, have a -- create  
7 kind of a cadre or an opportunity for small school  
8 districts to get innovation status by -- you have to be  
9 very careful about the words. If you use the word merger,  
10 consolidation, then eh.

11 MS. GIBSON: That scares people. (Chuckles)

12 MS. GANTZ-BERMAN: Yeah.

13 MS. HUDSON: And in our case --

14 MS. GANTZ-BERMAN: But I hear what you're  
15 saying, and I know -- I see Rebecca trying to write down  
16 your great ideas.

17 MS. HUDSON: And I think in our case, you  
18 know, it was our community of Crawford has struggled for  
19 many years. This wasn't year one. I mean, we as a budget  
20 taskforce --

21 MS. GIBSON: It was population and --

22 MS. HUDSON: Through our budget taskforce  
23 over the last five years, the -- can we keep Crawford open  
24 has been the big question. And so, you know, it wasn't  
25 something that -- I think they saw very clearly when we



1 dropped to 52 students that wow, how can we even begin to  
2 stay open? The PPR was way more than what -- to keep the  
3 school open was more than what each student brought in.

4 MS. GIBSON: Yeah.

5 MS. HUDSON: Karen, do you have any ideas?

6 MS. GIBSON: Well, I really like what Delaine  
7 said. It's not a way out. It's a way up. We may patent  
8 that quote. But, you know, I guess it's just taking down  
9 the boundaries as well. With five different communities,  
10 everyone has, you know, their stakes or their boundaries,  
11 and I think most school districts do. So how do we, you  
12 know, dissolve those so we can work together?

13 I also see that from school district to  
14 school district. How can school districts work better  
15 together as well? Because we're all trying to do the same  
16 thing. And you know, we'd get farther, and we'd go faster  
17 if we work together.

18 MS. GANTZ-BERMAN: And I just lastly want to  
19 say that I've been to Crawford. I've been to a Joe Cocker  
20 concert at the fairgrounds.

21 (Laughter)

22 MS. GANTZ-BERMAN: Were the fairgrounds in  
23 Hotchkiss? Is that where they are?

24 MS. GIBSON: Yes.

25 MR. EYLER: Yes.



1 MS. GANTZ-BERMAN: It was a memorable  
2 evening. So it's a beautiful, beautiful area.

3 (Chuckling)

4 MS. NEAL: Before I make the motion here,  
5 related to what Elaine said, and I was thinking about this  
6 as you were talking, because as I've traveled around rural  
7 schools in western Colorado, I was comparing. And we all  
8 know rural schools are very protective of their schools,  
9 and you better not talk (chuckles) about anything else.  
10 But the different -- down in southern Colorado, around  
11 Alamosa, we have, you know, there are like, eight schools  
12 there, but there are eight school districts. And here you  
13 have this one school district with these multiple  
14 communities. I don't know what to -- but in this case, it  
15 seems like that drove you more so, because you were all  
16 one school district, whereas they get very fiercely  
17 protective, as they should, of their district. It's just  
18 an interesting dynamic what the difference was. But I too  
19 really congratulate. Does anybody else have --

20 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Other question, comments?

21 MS. NEAL: Go ahead.

22 MS. SCHROEDER: Congratulations on your  
23 efforts. I think it's wonderful. I'm just curious  
24 whether there were -- or will be significant costs, just  
25 by virtue of the Montessori criteria for size. I'm



1 assuming you have all the manipulators and resources  
2 already that you just going to move.

3 MR. EYLER: Well, yes, there -- we're going  
4 to move the existing stuff that we have, and we have been  
5 able to purchase some other materials through some grant  
6 money we've received.

7 MS. SCHROEDER: Okay.

8 MR. EYLER: We're going to be doing a lot of  
9 fundraising to be able to train teachers and to send  
10 teachers to Montessori training, and also to purchase more  
11 of the manipulatives. So it's really going to be a three-  
12 to-five year process to fill out the classrooms.

13 MS. SCHROEDER: And are your classrooms  
14 adequate size? By, I mean, I think there's an awful lot  
15 of criteria in the Montessori model that you have to meet.  
16 So you've already got some of that.

17 MR. EYLER: Yes. Some of that.

18 MS. SCHROEDER: Do you have an estimate of  
19 what you think is the total cost?

20 MR. EYLER: It to -- ugh. Probably about  
21 \$95,000 total.

22 MS. SCHROEDER: Okay.

23 MR. EYLER: Something like that.

24 MS. SCHROEDER: Okay.

25 MR. EYLER: For three-to-five years.



1 MS. SCHROEDER: Best wishes to all of you.

2 MS. HUDSON: Thank you.

3 MS. GIBSON: And I just want to add, when you  
4 brought up facilities and room, by our Montessori moving  
5 to the Crawford Elementary, they now will have a gym.  
6 They will now have a cafeteria. They will have things  
7 they haven't had before, so.

8 MS. SCHROEDER: That's great.

9 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: And they'll still be the  
10 Cubs.

11 ALL: And they'll still be the Cubs.

12 (Laughter)

13 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Go Cubs!

14 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Go Little Bears.

15 MS. GIBSON: You know, I was once told -- and  
16 I just have to add this. The hardest thing to kill is a  
17 mascot. And they are so right.

18 MS. HUDSON: Oh, yeah, that's right. That's  
19 right.

20 (Laughter)

21 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: That's right.

22 MS. GOFF: Thank you. I'm interested in that  
23 conversation going further, but we are today. I want to  
24 thank you and congratulate you in how much I appreciate  
25 the -- I hope this is not a dead horse -- beating a dead



1 horse today.

2 But early second language learning is  
3 learning as early as possible, it's so key. And I know  
4 you are ready to look at that, that as kids progress  
5 through age groups, grade levels, whatever, what kind of  
6 an impact that has. I'm not sure we've had a chance yet  
7 to take a breath and really look at the impact that has  
8 second and third language skill, how it just impacts  
9 overall literacy building, and not to mention the obvious,  
10 of the cultural ties that are created. So thank you for  
11 that. And congratulations. Have fun.

12 MS. HUDSON: Thank you. Yes.

13 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: If there are no further  
14 questions, an order -- a motion is an order.

15 MS. NEAL: Mr. Chair, I moved to approve  
16 Delta County's 50-J's request to be designated a District  
17 of Innovation on behalf of Northport Montessori and at  
18 Crawford.

19 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Second? Multiple seconds.  
20 Is there any objection? No objection.

21 Well then, in the immortal words of Joe  
22 Cocker, this is so beautiful.

23 (Laughter)

24 (Applause)

25 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Eh, very good!



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UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Good job!

CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: The next item is a break.

We'll come back when the sun sets.

(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 30th day of May, 2019.

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