



Colorado State Board of Education

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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