



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

Colorado State Board of Education

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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS  
BEFORE THE  
COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION COMMISSION  
DENVER, COLORADO  
June 12, 2014, Part 1

BE IT REMEMBERED THAT on June 12, 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: State board will come  
2 back to order. Staff, please call the roll.

3                   MS. MARKEL: Elaine Gantz Berman.

4                   MS. BERMAN: Here.

5                   MS. MARKEL: Jane Goff.

6                   MS. GOFF: Here.

7                   MS. MARKEL: Paul Lundeen.

8                   CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Good morning.

9                   MS. MARKEL: Pam Mazanec.

10                  MS. MAZANEC: Here.

11                  MS. MARKEL: Marcia Neal.

12                  MS. NEAL: Here.

13                  MS. MARKEL: Dr. Scheffel.

14                  MS. SCHEFFEL: Here.

15                  MS. MARKEL: Dr. Schroeder.

16                  MS. SCHROEDER: Here.

17                  CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: So, at this time we  
18 continue with our series of conversations with school  
19 districts that may be returning to this board in a more  
20 formal capacity in the future, and the purpose of these  
21 conversations are, in fact, to be less formal. More, in  
22 fact, a dialogue and opportunity for us to understand  
23 some of the subtleties, the nuances, and get to know the  
24 context of some of the issues that the districts are  
25 dealing with. So, having said that, I will welcome the



1 folks from Sheridan School District, and turn it over to  
2 the commissioner.

3 COMM. HAMMOND: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.  
4 And, Dr. Cluff (ph), welcome, along with your staff. And  
5 I understand your president, Mr. Carter, is on his way.

6 MR. CLUFF: He's really close.

7 COMM. HAMMOND: Okay.

8 MS. NEAL: He's stuck in traffic.

9 COMM. HAMMOND: As the chairman said, these  
10 are very informal and it's a great opportunity for --  
11 even though we've talked to the board before, this is in  
12 a different setting to really know what's happening in  
13 your districts, where you're at, and, again, it's a very  
14 informal kind of back and forth discussion. But, for the  
15 first, I think, 20 minutes, I think that was the time  
16 allotted, please feel free to say what you want. Okay?

17 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Absolutely, thank you.

18 MR. CLUFF: Thank you. We really appreciate  
19 the opportunity to come and just have a -- hopefully a  
20 great dialogue with the board about what's happening in  
21 Sheridan. And we love the opportunity to show our  
22 district.

23 So, I'd like to just start by introducing  
24 the board of education. Ron is the president, and he  
25 will be here shortly. He is here, but he's parking. And



1 we have Bernie, Bernadette Saleh, who is our Vice  
2 President, Sally Daigle, our Secretary, and our newest  
3 member, just a couple of months on the board is Melissa  
4 Sylvia (ph), and we're very glad to have her as our  
5 treasure.

6 Interestingly, we haven't had a full board  
7 in Sheridan since 2006. We've had as few as three  
8 members. We -- the board is wonderful and very, very  
9 supportive, but we have yet to be able to full -- fill a  
10 full complement of board members. Which is what --

11 MS. NEAL: Do you now have four?

12 MR. CLUFF: We now have four, up from three,  
13 which is really good, because when you have three, if one  
14 is gone the meeting we pretty much have to cancel,  
15 because we don't have a quorum.

16 But they have just been absolutely  
17 supportive. With me at the table is Jackie Web, who is  
18 the Executive Director of learning services, but she has  
19 just been named our deputy superintendent starting July  
20 1st, so it's going to be kind of a combination of two  
21 positions, because I will be retiring and going on a  
22 limited contract starting July 1st, but I have signed a  
23 contract with the Board of Education through 2017 to stay  
24 on as the superintendent. So, I was asked by the board  
25 and agreed to do that.



1                   So, we want to be fairly informal today, and  
2                   what we have is I'd just like to talk a little bit about  
3                   our -- what's going on in our district to give you a  
4                   little bit of a history and a little bit of the flavor of  
5                   the district. We decided instead we would put pictures  
6                   behind, so that you can see our -- some of our programs.  
7                   There are pictures of our new school going up, which we  
8                   are absolutely so excited about, and a chance to see a  
9                   flavor of what it's like in Sheridan and get to see our  
10                  beautiful kids, which we're so very proud of.

11                  So, Ron is going to have a portion, so just  
12                  as soon as he gets in I'm going to switch over and have  
13                  him, and if he repeats things I'll have to apologize, but  
14                  I'm just going to go ahead and start. So -- go ahead,  
15                  please.

16                  MS. NEAL: Can I ask a question?

17                  MR. CLUFF: Sure.

18                  MS. NEAL: How many students do you have in  
19                  Sheridan?

20                  MR. CLUFF: 1650 students.

21                  MS. NEAL: Thank you.

22                  MR. CLUFF: So, we are the metro area's  
23                  smallest district. And I know we didn't give you a lot  
24                  of context, because I've already been up here before, but  
25                  let me just kind of frame some things. We're the second



1 highest free and reduced, according to the financial  
2 statistics in the state, second only to Center.

3 The per capita income in our community is  
4 \$14,775, which has dropped by 9 percent since 2009, so  
5 we've seen a dramatic, pretty dramatic, decrease in the  
6 per capita income.

7 We estimate any time in our district between  
8 15 and 19 percent of our children are homeless. And one  
9 of my most alarming statistics is that one time I know  
10 that one in four of my kindergarten students at Sheridan  
11 was homeless. So, we see a greater rate of homelessness  
12 with our -- with our younger -- our younger children.  
13 But we make no excuses. We believe that our Sheridan  
14 kids have to be competitive with their neighbors, and  
15 that's the bar. And we have some very, very competitive  
16 neighbors that achieve very well, so although we are  
17 working very, very hard to break the cycle of poverty.  
18 You'll hear that throughout some of our presentation,  
19 breaking that cycle of poverty and offering post-  
20 secondary options for all our students. And we are  
21 gaining. That's going to be our message today. We are  
22 definitely gaining.

23 So I've been with the district since 2008,  
24 and a little bit of the flavor; when I was hired it was  
25 narrowed down to two candidates, and the board president,



1 who I have great, great respect for and had a very good  
2 handle on what was happening in the district, her name  
3 was Dorine Christian (ph), said to the other candidate,  
4 said, "We want you to be our superintendent," and turned  
5 to be and said, "But we need you."

6 So, it was an interesting offer. I think it  
7 said a lot about -- a lot about the story of what was  
8 going on. I think one of the things that you'll hear  
9 when Ron speaks is that the board -- the board recognized  
10 -- Bernie was on the board at that time, a board member.  
11 The board recognized that we were in a hole, and that we  
12 really needed to dig out of it. The facility showed it,  
13 the community was beginning to -- beginning to start to  
14 see it, but fairly complacent. The staff was fairly  
15 complacent, and scores were really indicating it, and so  
16 were some of the practices, and we knew that we had to  
17 take it on.

18 So, what we did in 2008, and I think it was  
19 -- so one of the things I'd like to say is we were  
20 turnaround when turn around wasn't cool, and that would  
21 have been 2008. We were just coining, you know, when  
22 Jacky and I were at the department in 2000 to 2000 and --  
23 or 2004 to 2008. We had just started to use the word  
24 "turnaround" for everything. We had turnaround grants,  
25 we had turnaround at the state, we had turnaround -- we



1 couldn't keep track of all the turnarounds, but we were  
2 definitely a turnaround districts, and we knew it. We  
3 knew it, and I think Bernie and Ron will both attest at  
4 that time that they knew it, and they knew it was time to  
5 roll up our sleeves and get busy.

6 So, Ron, can I just -- I've done the  
7 introductions and just talked a little bit, but if you  
8 will -- want to share?

9 RON: (indiscernible) the board here?

10 MR. CLUFF: I introduced the board.

11 RON: Very good. Thank you, board members,  
12 we appreciate the time and appreciate your interest in  
13 our district. Thank you for the time that you're giving  
14 us here today.

15 I'll be starting with a discussion talking  
16 about the time our real reform started. I've been a  
17 board member for the past 13 years and had served the  
18 last 5 as president. Our real reform started in 2007  
19 when we hired our interim superintendent, Rosco Davidson,  
20 to come in and help us make a different while we did a  
21 superintendent search.

22 He was extremely honest and forthright that  
23 the district was faced with a host of challenges.  
24 Despite what we might believe, there would be years of  
25 hard work and very tough decisions ahead for this board,





1 and the district. Our demographics had changed  
2 considerably in the district for the past -- over the  
3 past 10 years, and our practices had not kept up  
4 (indiscernible) the change.

5 Dr. Davidson did not sit still, but rather  
6 began to put things in order, reinforcing that this was  
7 just the beginning of the work ahead. We were a bit  
8 stunned, because we had often been assured by prior  
9 administrators that systems were in order.

10 Dr. Davidson set us on a course of  
11 addressing our reality; one of low achievement, dismal  
12 behavior, and neglected facilities. In 2008, after twice  
13 opening the superintendent search, we hired Michael  
14 Cluff. We knew we needed a change agent and later with  
15 the courage to take on our problems.

16 As we started to take a deep look almost  
17 every system lacked effectiveness and efficiency, and we  
18 knew our students were paying the price. As a board, we  
19 have stood shoulder to shoulder with Michael for the past  
20 six years with one goal in mind, providing the very best  
21 education possible for our students who share it. We  
22 have a ways to go, but as I look back I'm so proud of  
23 what this board had the courage to stand tall.

24 We're here to tell our story of reform, but  
25 I want to fast forward to today. As a board of



1 education, we were faced with the possibility of Michael  
2 retiring and leaving the district at the end of the 2014-  
3 '15 school year. Since Michael has hired all but two  
4 leaders, both promoted from the ranks, we knew this  
5 retirement could translate into a direction change.

6 After some discussions we signed Michael on  
7 for an additional three-year contract and I'm proud to  
8 have (indiscernible) Jackie Webb (ph) as our Deputy  
9 Superintendent. As a board we've weathered some tough  
10 challenges. Turning over 80 percent of our staff and 90  
11 percent of our leadership was a huge challenge for any  
12 Board of Education. Although we knew it was the right  
13 thing to do.

14 There were times that it was hard to stay  
15 the course, but we have and will. We are now starting to  
16 enjoy the fruits of our time and labor, to share in the  
17 school district has improved tremendously, and I speak  
18 for the entire board when I say we will never start  
19 working to improve.

20 We recognize just how far we have come for  
21 the student in the Sheridan community, and I thank you  
22 for your time. I'd now like to turn it back over to  
23 Michael Cluff.

24 MR. CLUFF: Well thank you. Thank you, Ron.  
25 You know, it's a little understated when we talk about



1 standing shoulder to shoulder in some other tough times  
2 when we came in. To have a community that was not that  
3 disappointed with what was going on, but you know that  
4 situation. You know it's very -- it's very difficult and  
5 very challenging.

6 But what we did in 2008 to start out, was we  
7 started with a series of audits. Many different audits  
8 of the systems, because although Jackie and I, after  
9 being there a few weeks, we knew we could tell what was  
10 going on, but we knew we needed to bring in the  
11 credibility of people that had some names and titles to  
12 really take a deep look at things. I mean, many, many  
13 different systems.

14 One of my favorite stories, it's a little  
15 sad, in fact, that we hired the transportation director  
16 from Estes Park to come in and take a look. And they  
17 were very simple, to be very quickly done, but look the  
18 best you can over a couple of days and give us a sense of  
19 what's going on.

20 So, he calls me on my cell, and I answer,  
21 and I said, "Well, how's it going?" And he says, "Well,  
22 it's going pretty well," but he said, "I need to let you  
23 know, we just have eight kids on the bus, we just passed  
24 the boat store for the fourth time, and we haven't  
25 dropped anybody off."



1                   So, what that as telling us, is that it was  
2                   the most important thing was to make sure that we banked  
3                   a lot of hours. One of our highest paid employees at that  
4                   time was a bus driver, and so we knew that, you know, that  
5                   it -- just a lot of problems in the system, systemically.  
6                   The one good thing that we did have, is because 15 years  
7                   ago the district couldn't make payroll, the one system  
8                   that was really fixed was finance.

9                   And we became definitely a district of  
10                  thrift, so that was a real benefit to us to have some  
11                  available cash on hand to put some things into place.  
12                  But we looked at those systems, we took a lot of the  
13                  recommendations, and we move forward. And we knew one of  
14                  the things, keep in mind, I think in our last  
15                  presentation we talked about Sheridan is the fastest  
16                  demographic change of any city in Colorado.

17                  So, we had a staff that was used to teaching  
18                  a population that didn't look like the staff, or the  
19                  children, that were now starting to show up to the  
20                  school. And it was not uncommon for teachers to come and  
21                  confess to me that I used to be a great teacher until  
22                  those kids showed up. And it broke my heart, but it was  
23                  -- it was -- it was the sentiment, and they were  
24                  absolutely speaking their heart, but it was a dangerous,  
25                  a dangerous speaking of the heart. And we knew that we



1 had to make some changes.

2 One of the best things that happened was the  
3 absolute support of the board knowing that we needed  
4 desperately to make some staffing changes. And that's  
5 very, very, very hard in a community. Personnel  
6 decisions on a Board of Education, a local board of  
7 education, are very hard, and some of these people had  
8 been with the districts for a long time. And we knew  
9 that -- we knew we had to do that, and we started in  
10 early and the board set 300,000 into a fund totally to  
11 help and support in helping us entice higher-quality, but  
12 also to move along some teachers that maybe could be in a  
13 BETTER FIT. In a district that looked like the Sheridan  
14 of the past.

15 Also, very quickly, one of the things that  
16 the board dealt with is the old Sheridan versus the new  
17 Sheridan. We had a community lamenting the loss of 108-  
18 piece band that won state awards and state championship  
19 football teams. We had a population that that wasn't  
20 where their interests lie, and that was one of the things  
21 that was very, very visible as the quality really and the  
22 instruction was not as visible, but the same thing was  
23 happening throughout the district, so we really had to  
24 take that on.

25 We put in 90 days plans and we adopted a



1 mantra, a mission and a vision, and that is that we must  
2 begin to look at post-secondary options for all students,  
3 and I don't care if you're starting in the early  
4 childhood center, if you're at the elementary schools, or  
5 you're teaching a senior in high school. Our kids need  
6 and deserve post-secondary options, whether it's the  
7 military trade school, those options are going to open up  
8 the world, and that has been something that we have  
9 brought forward, and we're going to do it through the  
10 improvement of instruction.

11 So, just really quickly, I'm going to ask  
12 Jacky to pass -- we have very, very few handouts, or --  
13 oh, you already have them? So, this is -- this has --  
14 this has bene the plan. You're going to hear a lot about  
15 the plan, and this is the plan that we really move  
16 forward.

17 And you can see it's about instruction, it's  
18 about high-quality literate engagement. It's about a  
19 culture of feedback, and it's about a culture of data.  
20 We're going to end our presentation today with a video  
21 where we've just asked -- we've just brought teachers,  
22 administrators, students in, just to talk a little bit  
23 about Sheridan. We thought it really gave a flavor, but  
24 you're going to see this referenced over and over again  
25 in the plan, so this has been the plan for six years. It



1 started with 90-day plans.

2 90-day plans were brought forth by the  
3 military, that, you know, it's great to plan for three  
4 years, but when you're really -- when you've taken a  
5 house down to the studs, 90 days is about all you can see  
6 out. And we took 90 days at a time, we went back, and we  
7 revisited, and truly, in 2008, as the superintendent of  
8 the Sheridan District, and I know the board that was with  
9 me at that time felt that way, was like peeling back an  
10 onion.

11 It was one story after another of one  
12 problem begetting another problem and so it was -- it was  
13 very challenging.

14 And then, in the end of 2008, 2009, one of  
15 the most challenging things for the board, and I want to  
16 talk about the meeting just a little bit, but we removed  
17 most of our principals at that time. We knew wonderful  
18 people, but we knew that we needed instructionally  
19 focused principles that had a real idea about how to move  
20 instruction forward very quickly. And that is when the  
21 community really took off and almost revolted against  
22 both the board and me. We had 150 members, which is  
23 absolutely unheard of in our community, at the board  
24 meeting. We had to eventually call for some backup from  
25 the police department, and it was raucous and out of



1 control, and everyone was very, very, very upset, and  
2 could not understand this decision.

3 And I -- it's one of the most interesting  
4 moments I've ever had in education when a woman was  
5 wanting to be heard, but she wouldn't fill out the form,  
6 and wanting to be heard, and really why the police had to  
7 be called was because of that ruckus.

8 And the story -- the story bears out. So,  
9 by this time, everybody's wanting to hear what she's got  
10 to say. So, Jacky did a great job of calming her down  
11 say, "All you've got to do is fill out the paper and  
12 they'll hear you, but Dorine's not going to let you speak  
13 if you don't fill out the paper.

14 So, they finally filled out the paper and  
15 the lace finally went silent, because they wanted to hear  
16 what this lady had to say, and it's -- her story was  
17 this, she said, "My son, I went to his third-grade  
18 conference and I looked at his report card and he has all  
19 A's and B's. And they told me how nice my son was, and  
20 what a joy he was to have int eh class. And I got some  
21 reports that I couldn't understand. And I went to the  
22 fourth grade and the same thing. He had all A's and B's,  
23 and I heard, 'Wow, your son is such a nice boy. It is  
24 such a joy to have him in class.'" And she said, "This  
25 time, the copies were so smeared if I could have





1 understood what was on, I didn't know what was on it.  
2 And I went to the fifth grade, and I got to thinking."  
3 And she said, "You know, I borrowed \$4700 from my mother-  
4 in-law. I don't have \$4700, and I have no idea how I'm  
5 going to take it -- get it ever paid back, but I took my  
6 son to Sylvan, and he can't read."

7                   And it was the telling moment for our  
8 district. Absolutely everybody just stopped, and I  
9 thought, you know, "Here's the moment where we move our  
10 reform efforts forward." And everybody looks to me and  
11 looks to the present of the board and I said,  
12 "Unfortunately, ma'am, your story is repeating itself  
13 hundreds of times. And that's why we're here tonight."  
14 And the whole tenor changed at that moment from "Cluff's  
15 got to be fired." to, "Come on, let's do this. We're  
16 trusting you."

17                   When you work in a high level of poverty,  
18 the families are so absolutely trusting. They really  
19 believe that you will do the right thing every, single  
20 time. And they trust that. We get virtually no  
21 complaints, almost no complaints, of our educational  
22 system, because that is the trust. And sometimes that  
23 trust is very warranted, and sometimes, you know, a  
24 little push is something that is really needed. And that  
25 is one of the things you're going to hear in our video,



1 is that the level of understanding of our parents has  
2 really, really increased.

3 So, just kind of moving through, we looked  
4 at culture and really fixing the culture. We fixed up  
5 the facilities. That's one of the things that I said is,  
6 "We need to look good. We need to look good from the  
7 street. Our kids deserve clean facilities." We hired  
8 just an amazing director of facilities transportation and  
9 maintenance and just over-the-top, excellent in terms of  
10 getting our facilities up.

11 We instilled a sense and, you know, I want  
12 to thank the board, and I really want to thank CDE,  
13 because we were the first district to go to the UVA  
14 leadership, and that just taught us so much, but the one  
15 thing it taught us, and we knew this all along, but when  
16 you see it in practice it's unbelievable. When we went  
17 to our UVA training, we were there with four-star  
18 generals from across the country. We were int here with  
19 the Chinese ambassador team. I mean, this is beyond  
20 anything that we've ever had the ability to be a part of.  
21 Just really, really high-level executive training, but  
22 what we looked -- and the Dartan (ph) motto is  
23 "Excellence in everything." And so, we adopted that in  
24 our district that, you know, the best that we can, what's  
25 the best way that we can really put our foot forward?



1                   And so, we have really, really worked very  
2 hard at that excellence. We've also worked really hard  
3 at the instruction. One thing that Ron said, we have  
4 turned over approximately 80 percent of our staff, but we  
5 only have two remaining leaders in our district that were  
6 here in 2008, and both of those districts have been --  
7 both of those leaders have been promoted from within the  
8 system.

9                   But it's really what we -- what we have  
10 worked on. We're -- and what we learned at UVA was about  
11 Paul Bambrick Model, and I think you've probably heard  
12 something about it, but we are a data-rich district, and  
13 we used that district data and we use that individual  
14 student data to really move instruction forward. We use  
15 a system of pre and post-test, we use three-week cycles,  
16 we can -- when the gap is this large it becomes  
17 overwhelming for children, their parents, and their  
18 teachers. But if you can look at this much, and you can  
19 begin to take learning and look at in -- excuse me --  
20 incrementally, that really makes a great different for  
21 our children. And I think that's one of the things we  
22 attribute our growth in scores.

23                   I'm going to ask Jacky to talk a little bit  
24 more about scores, because I could -- I could really go  
25 on and on, but I definitely want to leave time for you to



1 ask the board. Or -- we have a lot of our leadership is  
2 here with us, and so we would really like to leave some  
3 time, but we also want to -- I've asked Jacky to kind of  
4 highlight some of our data, and look at different ways  
5 that we can show our trajectory is definitely up. We  
6 definitely have some areas where we need to work, and we  
7 have some focus on those areas, so we'll talk about  
8 those, but I would like to start with the data.

9 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Thank you. And thank  
10 you for allowing me to be here. I'm really excited, the  
11 -- I just want to touch upon, very briefly before I go to  
12 the data, talking about the plan that's in front of you,  
13 this is actually a visual of the UIP.

14 The State of Colorado has really let -- led  
15 the planning efforts, and it's really a tremendous  
16 approach in being very, very focused in what you're going  
17 to be doing in terms of moving your data.

18 And so, I want to point back to that this is  
19 the focus plan that we've went with, and we've refined it  
20 each year as we've went. And if there's questions later  
21 that you wanted to ask me about this, I would -- I'd love  
22 to talk more about it. But I do know that we're limited  
23 on time.

24 Want to go to the data points, and I really  
25 thought about this. I've been involved with data for a



1 long time, but honestly, sometimes it can just get  
2 confusing, it can get muddled, because you'll just put up  
3 so many numbers. So, I really tried to keep this just as  
4 simple as I possibly could.

5 So, if I can direct your attention to the  
6 slide that's on the wall, that was on the wall, this is a  
7 representation of where the schools have fallen over the  
8 last -- since 2008 in terms of accreditation. The first  
9 one that you see on the far left is Sheridan Elementary  
10 School. The scoring starts at third grade, and so that's  
11 the Fort Logan 3 through 5 portions of the school  
12 district.

13 This school was -- the -- I was in the  
14 lowest 0.5 percent of elementary schools in the entire  
15 State of Colorado. They were turnaround. The school was  
16 absolutely a disaster. And upon bringing in the  
17 leadership of Barb Johnson, you can see that -- how that  
18 data is changed. They went up in one year from being  
19 accredited as a turnaround school to being accredited as  
20 a school on improvement.

21 When you take a look at the performance  
22 framework there's actually 20 different areas in which  
23 you score, and of those 20 every, single one of those  
24 data points is up. So, really excited to see that,  
25 especially when we know what third grade literacy and how



1 that impacts students for their future. As a matter of  
2 fact, probably our most exciting data point is that many  
3 of you may have seen the news release that Fort Logan had  
4 went up substantially this year up to 65 percent  
5 proficient and advanced.

6 One of the things that's notable of that  
7 score is that over half of those students are second  
8 language learners. The state average for third graders  
9 that are second-language learners, is a 50 percent. The  
10 second language learners in Sheridan were 61. We  
11 exceeded the state average by 11 percent with that data  
12 point. Some really exciting things going on there.

13 At the middle school there's 22 indicators,  
14 and the reason for the difference is that they have a few  
15 more of the subgroups that were counted, so of 22 they're  
16 up 15. They've moved up -- they were a priority  
17 improvement school as well, and they have also moved up  
18 into improvement and continue to improve.

19 The high school. We've not -- we've not  
20 changed in terms of the priority improvement at that  
21 school, so what are the data points that are positive  
22 there? We've seen ACT increase. We've seen the dropout  
23 rate go from 4.6 all the way down to a 0.9. Soar  
24 Academy, which is our alternative school, hitting  
25 performance last year as a first-year program. We're



1 really proud of the data and the things that are showing,  
2 but I wouldn't be honest if I sat here and I told you  
3 that we had arrived. We haven't. Our biggest challenges  
4 are in the areas of math across the district. Other  
5 areas that are impacted are achievement. The scores are  
6 moving up but they're not meeting state average yet.  
7 That's a piece that we're looking at with our plan this  
8 year, to move up the rigor.

9           So those are the data points that we -- that  
10 are the general data points. Here was another piece,  
11 because I think when Michael was talking about the reform  
12 of the teachers, the staff surveyed -- we've bravely put  
13 this out each year, and that first year that it came back  
14 was not very positive.

15           The January survey that we sent out, 90  
16 percent of the staff indicated that the district is  
17 headed in the right direction and doing the right things  
18 for students. It's an exciting time.

19           The local data that we have right now is  
20 showing an indication that the district will move on its  
21 own to improvement this fall.

22           So, with that said, I'm going to turn it  
23 back over to Michael. We really thought, who would be  
24 the best people that you could hear from? And they're  
25 the people that I'm most proud of in the district right



1 now, and that's the principals and the teachers that do  
2 the work every, single day, and are committed to  
3 students. So, we have a very brief video so that you can  
4 see from folks that are involved every day in the  
5 education of what's going on in Sheridan. So, Michael.

6 MR. CLUFF: So, if we could go ahead and  
7 queue up the video and I also want to thank Elaine, you  
8 know, for your service. Been a wonderful representative  
9 for us as a state board member and has been in our  
10 district and we really appreciate it. And Chairman  
11 Lundeen. I just greatly appreciated you taking your  
12 morning and spending some time in our district. I think  
13 it really helps. You know, one, I just enjoyed our  
14 visit. But, two, I think it's really good for you to get  
15 to see what we're doing, and I appreciate that very much.  
16 So.

17 (Video playing)

18 So, just so you know that we just selected  
19 different people from the district, and we just filmed  
20 them and just let them talk. And kind of the message of  
21 consistency, you know, I think really rang true.

22 It's just a different place, and I think the  
23 other message that I hope comes through in that video is  
24 what a wonderful group of people I get to work with every  
25 day. So that's, you know, it is just really a -- really





1 a joy. We are very, very focused on the data. We are  
2 focused in improving. And when we have a problem, we take  
3 it on.

4 I also want to just mention one other thing,  
5 I think you saw some pictures of our new Fort Loga, North  
6 Gate going up that's just real exciting. Just a real  
7 show from the community.

8 In 2011 it failed 61:39, dismally. Turned  
9 around the next year and it passed 51:39 by the exact,  
10 same measure, which I think is just very telling of our  
11 community. So, imagine a community that has a per capita  
12 of 14,775 voting for a bond issue to support a new  
13 school, along with the best money.

14 So, it's really exciting times, and we just  
15 believe in Sheridan that the sky is the limit. So, thank  
16 you.

17 MS. NEAL: Thank you. Thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Excellent. Questions.  
19 Angelika?

20 MS. SCHROEDER: So, I have a lot of them, so  
21 I'll try to restrain myself.

22 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Yeah, we're short on time  
23 here.

24 MS. SCHROEDER: I know.

25 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: So, if we could go one



1 apiece and then we'll come back around for a second  
2 round, perhaps?

3 MS. SCHROEDER: Wow, viscous.

4 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Sorry.

5 MS. SCHROEDER: Your homeless population.

6 Are there shelters inside your community, or do these  
7 kids live outside of Sheridan at night?

8 MR. CLUFF: Mostly I think -- the board  
9 might be able to answer this also, but I -- most of them  
10 are outside the community. One of the things that we  
11 have experience lately is single fathers, and it is an  
12 absolute challenge.

13 I know that this year we had one of our  
14 honors middle school student who was with a single  
15 father. There are almost no opportunities for a single  
16 male with a family. If you are a mother with children  
17 there's lots of shelters around, and so I know that that  
18 family was living in their car. So, we have all sorts of  
19 homelessness. Most of our homelessness is doubling up.

20 MS. SCHROEDER: So, when I looked in your  
21 statistics and noticed that there's a lot -- there's a  
22 lot of churn. A lot of kids are coming and going. Very  
23 high turnover.

24 MR. CLUFF: Absolutely.

25 MS. SCHROEDER: But I wondered if there's a



1 way to work in your community with those shelters to help  
2 with the school support for those kids so that they don't  
3 feel as ignored.

4 MR. CLUFF: We do have -- I think Angelika  
5 is right. We -- it is an area we need to do a little bit  
6 better job, but we do have a lot of supports, and one  
7 thing is, believe it or not, most of our children don't  
8 even know. I mean, it's --

9 MS. SCHROEDER: It's what they know.

10 MR. CLUFF: Yeah. It's not like having one  
11 or two. It's what they know.

12 MS. SCHROEDER: Right.

13 MR. CLUFF: It's what the group knows, that,  
14 you know, Johnny's living here for a while and then he's  
15 living here for a while, and then he's living in the  
16 motel over, you know, on Broadway. And it is what they  
17 know.

18 One of the things we do struggle with, and I  
19 think it's something for the board to consider; our  
20 ninth-grade class has -- is 40 percent different than it  
21 was as 8th graders. Now that's the highest, but it's  
22 never below 25. So this group of teachers -- you got to  
23 commend them.

24 When you're looking at data you're not  
25 always looking at the same kids. I mean, those kids are



1 very different to us. And we take all, and we work and  
2 we look at building from where they are. And that's  
3 what's so good about the data with our -- with our  
4 children that move so much, because the teachers are  
5 really good about getting in quickly and assessing where  
6 the -- where the students are and where they need the  
7 most help.

8 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: One of the things, too,  
9 that we really didn't have time to address is the many  
10 community partnerships that we've had to build to make --  
11 to be successful. And I'll just briefly talk about a  
12 practice that they've put in at Alice Terry. We have our  
13 data team meetings, but now we've even put in one that's  
14 called a wrap-around PLC, and that's to really address  
15 some of the more emotional needs and those types of  
16 things, so that we keep that conversation separate from  
17 the achievement conversation.

18 MS. SCHROEDER: Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Elaine. And we'll try  
20 and make a second round and give people an opportunity.

21 MR. CLUFF: A PLC is a professional learning  
22 community. Thanks. We love acronyms as educators. We  
23 love it.

24 MS. BERMAN: Do you want to rotate?

25 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Yeah. Yeah.



1 MS. BERMAN: I had questions about your high  
2 school data and your high school growth data, and I  
3 understand that you may not be comparing apples to apples  
4 and the kids might be changing. Oh, I'm sorry. But can  
5 you talk to us a little bit about what strategies you're  
6 implementing specifically in the high school, because it  
7 looks like the growth data is going in the wrong  
8 direction.

9 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Absolutely. What we  
10 are -- we're putting a lot of resources next year into  
11 that, Elaine. We've just completed a diagnostic review  
12 that was provided by the state in January to really come  
13 in and identify the needed changes. One of the biggest  
14 things that we face there is a little over a 50 percent  
15 novice staff. And so, to be supporting the training of  
16 these teachers, in a couple of weeks we're actually going  
17 to be taking a team to be trained in Abbot Strategies to  
18 really bring up a -- to really accelerate the  
19 professional development to support these teachers for  
20 the growth. Because we do recognize that that is our  
21 most needed building for supports.

22 So, couple of things there, the one thing,  
23 to increase those high-yield instructional strategies,  
24 and the second piece is to be bringing in training to  
25 support second-language learners around sheltered



1 instruction.

2 We'll also have the same supports that we do  
3 across the district, but those are two areas that we're  
4 going to be even putting more energy and more resource  
5 into this next year.

6 MR. CLUFF: And, Elaine, if I might add,  
7 this is also a partnership for CDE. We received a grant  
8 for a diagnostic review to come in and really do a deep  
9 dive into the high school and help us look. And, again,  
10 we make no excuses, but the data is what the data is.

11 One of the impacts of a low drop-out rate  
12 with a high free and reduced, is we are keeping kids in  
13 school that ordinarily would have opted out. And so,  
14 those -- many of those kids are overage, under credit,  
15 and there's a huge gap of working very hard to catch them  
16 up.

17 The culture of the high school is amazing,  
18 so we do have that solidly in place, but the growth of  
19 the high school has not taken off, but the other thing  
20 that we're seeing, is the high school is also kind of,  
21 you know, for that instructionally, they are still  
22 serving the students that have gone through the system  
23 that Barb Johnson talked about, where students were  
24 exiting buildings totally unprepared. And that's really  
25 the high school. Whereas in the elementary schools we



1 had this much of a gap to catch up. By the time they're  
2 in high school the gaps were like this. And we're not  
3 narrowing the gap enough.

4 So, the strategies, you know, I'm confident  
5 that they're going to work. I think Avid is a great  
6 choice for us.

7 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Jane.

8 MS. GOFF: Thank you. Thank you all for  
9 coming again. Nice to see you.

10 You talk a lot about data, the four-letter  
11 word in some circles these days.

12 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Absolutely.

13 MS. GOFF: I guess I'd be interested in  
14 knowing, first of all, that they -- the persuasiveness of  
15 being able to use data and talk with others about why  
16 it's a good idea to look at it, and it can be very  
17 helpful. Is that primarily with your teaching staff,  
18 your instructional staff, or --? I guess my question  
19 would be has that been out in the parent community as  
20 well, and what are some tips and techniques you might be  
21 able to share with other communities who are -- who could  
22 be doing that in a very productive way?

23 MR. CLUFF: That's a great question.

24 Because I know data can be a four-letter word. In our  
25 community it is -- it is very much embraced, and I think



1 one of the reasons is because our parents really, again,  
2 talking about the story of the parent in the group,  
3 really felt like we weren't always being very honest with  
4 them. And so, they have really embraced the data.

5 One of the things that I think we have done,  
6 especially in some of our schools a little better than  
7 others, is we had data sessions whereas each parent will  
8 come in with a folder and their child's data will be in  
9 there. There will be just a sample put up there, so we  
10 teach parents what they can do with the data and how that  
11 data can really help them assess what their children are,  
12 where they can help us, and really, one of the things,  
13 and this is a very tough things, but it's about honesty.

14 And it is very hard sometimes for classroom  
15 teachers to be very honest about children that are not  
16 doing well. It is a little bit in a doctor's office like  
17 getting very bad news. The same thing should be  
18 happening in a parent-teacher conference. And so, our  
19 parents are beginning to ask for the data. Our children  
20 are beginning -- the Barb Johnson, unbelievable  
21 principal. Just, she was the one that ended the session.  
22 She said she had the neatest thing happen.

23 Two days before the end of school she had  
24 six third graders come in and say, "Mrs. Johnson, I need  
25 my data. I need to know where my reading levels are, and





1 so do my friends." She said, "Kids, come on in."

2 You know, so we've just have a culture that  
3 just embraces wanting to know, and I -- wanting to know  
4 so we can do something about it. And, as a parent, I  
5 want to know. And that's where we are really finding it.

6 Some of the issues around, you know, the  
7 security and knowing too much; it just hasn't come up in  
8 our community, because the data scene is so valuable.  
9 Great question.

10 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Dr. Scheffel.

11 MS. SCHEFFEL: I really just want to thank  
12 you for your leadership and your dedicated, relentless  
13 effort. I know how hard this work is, and with your  
14 turnover rates and all the challenges you're facing,  
15 you're taking it on, you're facing it, you're embracing  
16 it, you're owning it, and I really appreciate the work.

17 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Thank you.

18 MR. CLUFF: Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Marcia, and then I'll  
20 come to you, Pam.

21 MS. NEAL: And I would agree with Dr.  
22 Scheffel. I'll -- and mine is not so much a question as  
23 a comment, and its enduring theme of mine, when you raise  
24 the expectations, in the past, sometimes that meant to  
25 the teachers just raise the grades. I remember, you



1 know, to have to do a failing list and then they come in  
2 and ask you what you did.

3 But by tying it to the data, I think  
4 probably that's what made that -- made that work for you.  
5 And it's easy. In the past, teachers have had a tendency  
6 to, you know, give good grades. Okay, what did my kid  
7 get? He got a B. Oh, what does it, you know, what does  
8 that mean? And I really appreciate the work you've done.  
9 Because that means something to, you know, or I certainly  
10 is beginning to mean something to the students when they  
11 ask for their data. Instead of what grade did I get.  
12 So, I appreciate that.

13 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Thank you.

14 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Can I?

15 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Sure.

16 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: I actually started on  
17 the board right after the big turn around at the school  
18 board meeting where there was 150 people. I was elected  
19 soon after that. I've had children in the district for  
20 22 years. I moved in as a single mom. I raised all of  
21 my children. I've graduated all of them from Sheridan  
22 High School, my youngest is a junior.

23 And the data, when I started, my oldest son  
24 is 27 years old, and he was -- started kindergarten. The  
25 data that they're talking about not only -- all of the



1 sudden we've got all this data, and what was all this  
2 data? And your kids are coming home, "Mom, my data is  
3 this." And, "Mom, my scores are this." And then -- and  
4 parents start asking, "Well, what is this? What --?"  
5 And then, they've -- we've had meetings where they  
6 actually break down -- this is what the data is, this is  
7 what it means, and I'm talking about to the minute  
8 details of what my scores are in algebra, what I'm  
9 missing, this is what I need to know, this is what I do  
10 know. I mean, and these are children that we -- because  
11 in my household we watch a lot of kids, and I have a  
12 third grader there who knows what he needs to work on for  
13 reading. Who knows what he needs to work on for math.

14 There's a soon-to-be fifth grader, and she  
15 did the highest reading CBQM score for her class, and  
16 came home with a certificate, "And this is what this  
17 means. This is what grade level. I am reading  
18 (indiscernible). I am reading on a ninth-grade level.  
19 Ninth grade! Can you believe that! I'm just going to be  
20 in the fifth grade!"

21 And I'm like, "You know what? I do believe  
22 that." The data is spelled out not only to the children,  
23 but to the parents and to the community. We've had  
24 meetings with the community leaders, with the mayor, the  
25 city council, everybody in the community knows that we're



1 talking about data, knows what data is, and knows exactly  
2 how important it is. The other thing that is -- that has  
3 been different in the last few years is the college.

4 Every, single kid at graduation is -- has a  
5 plan. I remember in 2006, when my son graduated, they  
6 announced their names, and there was only a few that were  
7 being announced that were going to go to this college, or  
8 to that college. My son, they announced that he was  
9 joining the Marines, but about 60 percent of them, they  
10 just announce their name.

11 When we're announcing names, we are  
12 announcing their names and what college they're going to,  
13 and what scholarships they've gotten. The two that were  
14 speaking, or the children, all of those children, were  
15 offered scholarships. The young man that spoke, that's  
16 going to CU Aerospace Engineering Program, he's received  
17 \$28,000 for his first year in pre aerospace engineering,  
18 and he went to Sheridan.

19 I mean, these are the differences that I've  
20 seen. I have seen not only my own children, but the  
21 entire community's children. I have children constantly  
22 coming up to me, speaking to me, "Hey, miss, how are  
23 you?" "Hey, miss, did you hear I'm going to college?"  
24 In 2006 you didn't get that. You were lucky to have a  
25 high school student speak to you as an adult. They will



1 stop you on the street. "Hey, did you hear I got a job?"  
2 "Hey, did you hear that I'm transferring from Arapaho to  
3 CU Denver?" That's the difference in this community, and  
4 the difference that this data has made.

5 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Pam, have a question?

6 MS. MAZANEC: Thank you. I just wanted to  
7 echo what Dr. Scheffel said, and I was wondering about  
8 your turnover rates. I see that they're still greater  
9 than the state average, but are you -- are you seeing  
10 your --

11 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Oh, it's not on.

12 MS. MAZANEC: Sorry about that. I'm  
13 wondering, is that getting better?

14 MR. CLUFF: The turnover rate for staff?

15 MS. MAZANEC: Your staff turnover rate.

16 MR. CLUFF: Yes. It is getting better. And  
17 it can be both a plus and a minus, but we are really to  
18 the point that we need to level off. One of the reasons  
19 we have a wonderful professional development program.  
20 You know, the leaders were able to get in and to work  
21 with our staff are absolutely incredible and all that  
22 professional development walks out the door. So that's a  
23 negative.

24 So, I will say, too, we hold a high  
25 standard. Our kids don't deserve a good teacher, they've



1 got to have a great teacher. And we have teachers that  
2 we do not renew that are successful in a different  
3 environment, because we hold a very high bar, and so that  
4 increases the turnover. But the rate right now, my  
5 personal goal for my key performance indicators, is below  
6 an 18 percent in the district. So we're getting -- we're  
7 going to make that this year, and I think that's much  
8 better in line with where we need that, but we don't  
9 always see staff turnover as entirely negative.

10 MS. MAZANEC: Okay.

11 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Thank you.

12 MS. MAZANEC: Well, thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: And we're essentially out  
14 of time. I'm going to, however, use the prerogative of  
15 the chair and actually ask a question. But before I do  
16 that, I want to thank you for the work that you do. I  
17 would echo Deb's comments that this relentless pursuit of  
18 excellence is key. Thanks for the work that you do.

19 And I'd like to acknowledge some of the  
20 familiar faces I see in the room from when I had the  
21 opportunity to come out to the district. So, describe,  
22 if you would, principally in just physical terms the  
23 geography of the district. How you're bounded, how your  
24 surrounded size, physically, of the district.

25 MR. CLUFF: Sure. Again, 1650 students.



1 Dartmouth, on the north, so we boarder the Denver School  
2 District on our north boundary. Basically Lowell (ph),  
3 again, Denver, on the East, and some Jefferson County --  
4 I'm sorry, on our west Boundary, our south boundary is  
5 Littleton, and then our east boundary is Englewood.

6 We're two and a half miles by two miles, and  
7 we're landlocked, so we have about 400 students who exit  
8 our district who choice out of Sheridan. We have about  
9 400 that choice in. Most of our kids that choice in,  
10 most of our students, choice in from Denver, and many of  
11 our students go to Jefferson County and to Littleton,  
12 predominately from the south side of our district.

13 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Excellent. Well, thank  
14 you again for coming in.

15 MR. CLUFF: Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: We look forward to  
17 continuing the dialogue. Mr. Commissioner, any final  
18 comments as we wrap up? And then we'll be inviting the  
19 folks from Julesburg to come to the table next.

20 COMM. HAMMOND: Great. Thank you, Mr.  
21 Chair. Thank you very much, Michael and Mr. Carter.

22 MR. CLUFF: Thank you.

23 COMM. HAMMOND: So, that's all the questions  
24 I have.

25 CHAIRMAN LUNDEEN: Thank you. And the board



1 members want to take a minute, we'll take a minute to  
2 reset the room here.

3 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Thank you.

4 (Proceedings concluded)

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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 25th day of May, 2019.

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

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