

LETTER FROM SUPERINTENDENT GDOWSKI ON STAFF CHANGES

1/18/17

Dear Colleagues,

I hope this message finds you rested following our recent holiday celebrations and energized to build off of our positive fall semester, including the District's elevation to Performance status and our passage of the 3D bond measure.

I'm writing to share with you steps we're taking to ensure strong performance in our business services support functions, fulfillment of the commitments we made to our community in the 3D bond package, and continued improvement in our academic standing among Colorado school districts.

Business Services Reorganization; Chief Operating Officer Hiring Process

As you may recall, we transferred supervisory responsibilities for the Purchasing and Warehouse functions in November from Business Services to Finance. Earlier this month we moved the Print Shop and our Records team from Business Services to IT. These moves are intended to reduce the breadth of the Chief Operating Officer role so that the position focuses on core support functions essential to our District's success, including Facilities (construction, maintenance, custodial, community use, energy/sustainability and environmental compliance); Security; Nutrition Services; BASE; Transportation; and Enrollment Planning/Choice Enrollment Administration. We will hold interviews for the COO position on February 1, with selection of the successful candidate to occur shortly thereafter.

The restructuring of the COO position will allow the successful candidate to invest more time in the construction work that is starting to gear up following 3D's passage, but standing alone these changes in duties are insufficient to deliver on our bond promises in a manner necessary to maintain our community's confidence and support.

Complexity of Implementing \$350 Million Bond

This \$350 million bond package is a different animal than past bonds approved by our community. The size of the package, and the 87 projects it entails, dwarfs past bond projects. It requires, given the 12 years following our last successful bond package, accelerated project completion so that we can address the most critical overcrowding, programming, and deferred maintenance needs that have accumulated over the past decade in our system. (We issued the first \$285 million in bonds in December, and by law we need to invest 85 percent of those funds in the next three years in completed projects. The pace of delivery will be fast and furious.)

It also requires that we do business much differently than we have in the past. Maintaining the trust and confidence of our community requires that we take steps in the bond implementation stage similar to those implemented during the development and communication of the bond package, including more detailed planning and communication regarding project progress and deliverables; greater transparency regarding our expenditure of bond funds, including acknowledgement to our community when we outperform our plan -- and when we underperform as well; engagement of parents, staff members, neighboring homeowners and municipal officials in the design of buildings, including traffic and neighborhood impacts, so that we maximize positive benefits and minimize unintended and adverse consequences of these changes; and coordination between construction, IT, and Learning Services staff so that design and construction plans allow us to deliver these projects in an efficient and coordinated manner. Those of you closest to our first two 3D projects -- the new Anthem P-8 school and the STEM Lab rebuild -- have seen this new approach to bond implementation in action as we've worked with staff, parents, community members, and elected officials to make project decisions that we believe are better and stronger because of the diverse stakeholder participation along the way.

These bond implementation efforts will become more demanding as the work accelerates this spring, and it will require the constant attention of a leader that can pull our internal work groups from Business Services, IT, Learning Services, Communications, Finance and Legal together to seek consensus on complex matters when possible and to make decisions to move us forward when consensus cannot be achieved. The work will also require coordination in regard to various programming efforts. These include input from diverse stakeholders, including our staff and our business community, about unmet needs in our Career and Technical Education (CTE) continuum and how best to design and program Bollman and our next CTE facility; development of concrete partnerships between the North Park developer, the City and County of Broomfield, local philanthropists, and other providers of public services as we take steps to move the dream of a P-12 campus in

North Park to life; thoughtful implementation of our Early Childhood Education expansion to more than 20 additional classrooms, including implementation that better integrates preschool services with other programming within our elementary schools and expands access to families with modest economic resources; and securing, for the long term, a reliable fiber network that allows us to provide internet support for teaching, learning, and daily operations at costs that minimize the burden on our general fund.

I have been, and will continue to be, actively involved in these decisions, but given other responsibilities of this role I cannot be engaged in all of the work of bond delivery on a daily basis as it requires. In the months ahead I expect that greater amounts of my time will be required to address critical state legislation, including efforts to minimize further reductions in K-12 funding that are currently forecasted because of a statewide reduction in the residential real estate tax rate; development of an action plan, with the City of Thornton and other community agencies, to engage students in the southwest Thornton and Federal Heights area in positive after school and summer activities; development of a budget plan for 2017-18 that will once again be gravely under-resourced even if we're able to stave off further increases to the negative factor; transitioning the District from a complicated and costly arrangement for liability insurance and workers compensation coverage to a simpler and less costly arrangement; and implementation of revised Board of Education policies, including those related to student outcomes beyond test scores and ones that address family and community engagement.

Role and Appointment of Deputy Superintendent

Given these extensive and significant needs of the District, I have developed a job description for the position of Deputy Superintendent which will be posted soon on the District website. More than half of this position will be devoted to bond implementation as I've described in this message. The Deputy Superintendent will also be responsible for support of our District Accountability Committee, which provides recommendations to the board of education as required by law concerning our annual Unified Improvement Plan, charter school applications, and our annual budget, as well as the Long Range Planning Advisory Committee which will report to the board twice a year regarding delivery of bond projects. Finally, the Deputy Superintendent will take a lead role in other important District projects that are likely to arise as we move into next school year, including more detailed study regarding potential changes to start times for our schools and development of possible mill levy override packages for the 2018 election.

There is no need to look beyond our existing staff to find the leader equipped to perform the responsibilities of the Deputy Superintendent position. **Tracy Dorland has been a strong and effective leader as our Chief Academic Officer over the past 3 1/2 years, and I am pleased to appoint her as our Deputy Superintendent effective immediately.**

Please note that the Deputy Superintendent position will NOT result in new expense to the General Fund, which is the funding source for operating schools, compensating staff, and providing support services. The salary for the position will be paid in part by the salary and benefits savings that will be realized by not replacing Dawn Barnard's position, as Sue Parker will assume most of these duties while continuing to provide support to our Legal Department. The remainder of Tracy's salary and benefits will be paid from bond funds that have been allocated for project management and bond administration purposes.

Plan to Support Continued Academic Growth; Appointment of Chief Academic Officer

While it is critical that we deliver on our bond commitments in order to continue to receive the trust of our community, the core work of the District, and its focus, will always be on effective teaching and learning throughout our diverse schools. We've been fortunate to celebrate together a number of accomplishments in that arena over the past several years, including continued improvement in our graduation rates; reduction in our drop out rates; academic growth which has exceeded state averages, and in disciplines such as math that has led the pack of large Colorado school districts; movement of 7 of our 8 schools from priority improvement status to improvement or performance status at the conclusion of last school year; and elevation of the District as a whole to Accredited with Performance Plan status for the first time.

It is important that we stay the course with the work that has been ongoing in Learning Services the past several years focused on better supporting teachers and schools so that we continue to build on the progress I've just described. **Priscilla Straughn has been a key contributor to our strategy and implementation in improving the support provided throughout our system to our teachers and our schools, and I am pleased to appoint her as our Chief Academic Officer effective immediately.**

Priscilla's elevation to Chief Academic Officer leaves a void in the Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction position. This position will be posted in the coming weeks and we will share more information about the interview process to identify the right leader to continue our progress in this role.

In closing, it's important for all to know that adding the Deputy Superintendent position was not a decision hastily made or one that I took lightly. I've taken pride in reducing the size of the Superintendent's Office during my tenure, including reduction of our budget by more than 50 percent from where it stood as I began my work in the role, as I believe it is important to model efficiency and hard work in this position and to conserve as many resources as we can for use in schools and classrooms. I am mindful, however, of the significant adverse consequences that we'll face if we fail to deliver our bond commitments because we've invested too little in the coordinated implementation of those projects. I am confident in Tracy and her ability to help us produce outstanding results in this important area, and I hope you'll join me in welcoming her and Priscilla into these new roles.

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