

November 9, 2021

CLOSING STATEMENT...

As I finish my eight years on the board, I need to review all the positive activities which have taken place as it is so easy to forget where we were and where we are.

I have had a long career in education serving as a teacher, reading consultant, assistant elementary principal for five schools, a middle school principal of 1100 students, a superintendent in a rural district and also in a suburban district, and taught graduate courses as a visiting professor at five different universities. After receiving the honor of being named one of the top 100 Administrators in America by the American Association of School Administrators, I decided to retire and started my own business as a superintendent search consultant and assisted boards of education throughout the country as a consultant in various areas.

My husband and I bought our Colorado property in 1999 and it wasn't long after that I became interested in what was going on in the Custer County Schools. A friend of mine and I started attending board meetings and I soon became known as someone the board did not want to see at the board meetings as I would question some of the board actions and would not receive answers to my simple questions. After many of my concerns were considered unimportant, especially in the area of the budget, questionable spending of certain funds, and the lack of any strategic planning, I decided to become a part of the solution instead of the problem and ran for a position on the board.

After being elected and installed as a board member in November 2013, the first thing I asked to have instituted was to say the Pledge of Allegiance at the beginning of each board meeting. That request was granted in January, 2014, and is now a permanent item on our board agenda. I also questioned the \$70,000 plus dollars we were spending out of general fund to SCBOCES. Because of my concern in that area, the board decided I should represent our district on the SCBOCES Board.

The areas which have seen many changes over the past eight years are as follows:

BUDGET: The general fund balance in the year ending in 2013 was \$168,652. The district would need to borrow funds midyear each year until taxes were collected.

After reviewing and setting new goals and direction, especially during Superintendent Mark Payler's tenure, we were able to increase our fund balance to a point where we no longer needed to borrow funds and our general fund balance at the end of fiscal year 2020 was \$1,156,446. The general recommendation is that a school district should have a minimum of three months of revenue at all times in order to meet our obligations. The following activities assisted us in reaching our budget goals: In 2014 we established a budget committee comprised of two board members, two committee members, two employees, superintendent, and business manager which would meet at specific times to review the entire budget. Two board members, different members each month, were assigned to meet with the superintendent and business manager to review the bills and budget prior to the each board meeting and recommend approval of invoices and budget at the board meeting. Employee salaries have increased and the board approved the guarantee of a step increase each year.

STRATEGIC PLAN: The last strategic plan the board attempted was in 1999. In April, 2014, the board agreed to start the process of strategic planning. A community member who had extensive experience in this area volunteered to start the process. Community members, board members, and employees were involved and the strategic plan was completed in June and adopted by the board in August of 2014. The plan has been paramount in guiding us for the last seven years and is revised and updated each year with input from the community, employees, board members and others, and is then formally adopted by the board.

CURRICULUM: Textbooks and curriculum were outdated. In 2014 a plan of review and adoption was developed and to this date our entire curriculum in all areas, K-12, has been revised and updated. Technology has been greatly upgraded with new hardware and programs and promethean boards have been donated by the community. Three pathways to graduation were recommended by the administration and adopted by the board—Vocational, General, and Higher Education. Student achievement has been and continues to be a top priority. The administration has implemented plans which have shown improvement and has prioritized areas still needing improvement.

BEST GRANT AND BOND ISSUE: Our buildings were in dire need of repair. Superintendent Mark Payler suggested that the board apply for a BEST GRANT. The board approved the application and we were one of the first districts to

receive the grant with the requirement that the community also approve a tax rate increase for a portion of the building needs. Our community overwhelmingly approved the needed bond issue. We instituted a bond oversight committee comprised of community members, two board members, the superintendent and the business manager which met at specific times to review and approve all change orders and invoices during the construction. Our buildings and infrastructure are now up to date, thanks to Superintendent Mike McFalls for bringing the project to completion under budget and on time.

BOARD POLICIES: Many of our board policies were out of compliance and in need of being updated. The board approved employing the service of CASB to keep our policies updated and inform the board of those needing approval.

SAFE SCHOOLS: A Prevention and Response Crisis Plan is now in place along with installation of video cameras, school entry options and a full time School Resource Officer is now employed.

EMPLOYEE HOUSING: Superintendent Mark Payler suggested that we turn the former pre-school into teacher housing and incorporate the building and trades class into performing much of the work along with the teacher and community volunteer supervision. The building was completed with two units available the fall of 2017 and remaining two units in 2018.

FOOD SERVICE: The food service program was receiving a transfer of \$60,000+ from general fund each year. Many changes have taken place after re-evaluating past practices and now the transfer is in the area of \$20,000. The food service program should be self-sufficient.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS AND EMPLOYEE EVALUATIONS: Superintendent Payler updated, and in some cases, developed job descriptions for all employees. All positions now have an evaluation procedure and all employees receive a yearly evaluation.

SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATION: In 2015 the board adopted a superintendent evaluation procedure which includes an evaluation to be held four times a year with the superintendent in attendance—once each quarter—3 times informal and one time formal. The formal evaluation is a written document, prepared by the board president, approved by the board, and is published to all employees and the general public.

STUDENT INPUT: The board requested to have a student report at each board meeting which has been very beneficial. The students have input into the decision making process such as to close campus during the lunch hour and on issues such as cell phone use.

GRANTS AND FEDERAL FUNDS: Several grants have been acquired over the past two years along with current federal funds, such as the ESSER funds. Superintendent McFalls has sought input from the employees, community, students and the board regarding the expenditure of those funds. Current plans and procedures for expenditure of these funds have been adopted by the board.

HONORS RECEIVED: Custer County C-1 was named one of the top 18 schools in Colorado rated as distinguished by the CMAS test in 2019. Our Board of Education was named the Colorado All State Board of the Year in 2016.

BOARD ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY: The Board of Education does NOT run the school. The board adopts policy and the superintendent implements the policies and makes recommendations to the board regarding the decisions it makes. We are always reminded about every decision we make--as it states on the back of our nameplates—IS IT GOOD FOR KIDS? As board members, we must always remember that the community owns the school and board members are the caretakers of the community's investment and are responsible to the people we serve. In the past six years, this board has not violated our policies and has always followed our Robert's Rules of Order. I am proud to say that in the last two years this board is the best board I have ever worked with. We haven't always agreed on every issue but always voted for what we felt was best for our students.

As Doreen, Pat, and I conclude our board positions, we are proud to leave the new board with a clean slate. We are not aware of any critical issues which must be dealt with other than the lack of qualified candidates to fill certain positions.

Many people have asked me what I am going to do with all my spare time. Rest assured that I am not going to leave the field of education. I recently turned my company, TD and Associates, over to a retired superintendent in the State of Michigan who has already employed other superintendents to continue superintendent searches and serve as consultants to boards of education and administrators. I will be working with them as a consultant. I also have two

books in the beginning stages—one entitled “Don’t Turn Back—Take the Detour” which is the story of my career, and the other is “Bully in the Boardroom” which includes the experiences I have had in working with boards as a superintendent, observing board actions as a citizen, working with boards as a consultant, and that of being a board member, myself.

I would like to thank this great community for the honor of serving on your Board of Education for the past eight years.

Dr. Terre Davis