

Delta County School District 50-J

Board of Education

STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

Mission Statement

All schools within the system must focus available resources to maximize the options students recognize, have the skills to achieve, and have the courage to choose.

“If you can’t see it, you can’t be it; if you can’t do it, seeing won’t be enough; if you don’t have the courage to try, the options you see and may be able to achieve don’t matter.”

The accomplishment of this vision requires high learning expectations for all students; programs that expand rather than limit learning opportunities; focus on the future rather than the past; commitment to use the “tools of our time to enhance learning opportunities in all programs; an honest and continuing effort to be critical in a way which allows us to celebrate successful practices and gracefully abandon those which are not.”

Forward

This document presents in summary the unanimously agreed upon philosophy of the Board of Education. The philosophy is reviewed yearly at the Board’s annual winter work session. It is the intent of the Board that this philosophy will serve as a statement of what the Board believes about a series of topics and issues that are fundamental to the successful operation of Delta County School District 50J. The major purpose of the work is to set the direction and tone of the district as it moves into the future. The Board expects that all employees will be familiar with this philosophy and use it as a guide in their work on behalf of students and citizens. The philosophy will be a key factor in the Board’s assessment of the effectiveness of district leadership. There will be an ongoing process of discussion with the Board, staff, students, and members of the community as the philosophy of the Board is implemented. As operational responses...programs and projects...are developed, there will be a comprehensive effort to communicate progress to all segments of the district’s population.

Table of Contents

Desire to Learn.....	1
Budget and Finance.....	2
Student Learning Experiences.....	2
District Goals.....	2
Student Assessment.....	2
Special Education.....	3
Student Activities.....	3
Personnel.....	3
Staff Evaluation.....	3
Community Comment.....	4
Area Vocational Center.....	4

Desire to Learn

One dream of the Board of Education is that we will discover and act upon “what makes students want to learn.” It is the belief of the Board that the following provide direction:

- Increase the value students, parents and members of the community have for learning.
- Have high, clear and consistent expectations for learning which are communicated to students, parents, employees and the community.
- Recognize that students are people who need nurturing and care beyond scholastic advancement.
- Carefully consider the content applicability of student learning experiences.
- Emphasize physical environment as a positive impact on students’ motivation to learn.
- Investigate and consider alternative educational experiences to meet the needs of all the students.
- Recognize that students prosper more as active participants in learning.
- Members of the educational community encouraging students through personal example and assistance to take responsibility for their own learning.

Budget and Finance

It is the philosophy of the Board of Education that finding ways to “finance our dreams” for children is the number one fiscal challenge faced by this district. It is the expectation of the Board that every employee will have a vision that, if realized, will cause children to prosper. Each employee should be able to:

- List in order of priority and specifically define the goals they have for children.
- Present practical/operational data on the resources that would be required to realize those goals.
- Present clear arguments that describe “why or how” children will benefit.

The Board clearly recognizes the importance of salary and benefits, staff development, and continued facility maintenance and construction as vital to the success of this district. The Board challenges the administration and staff to:

- Prepare budgets that respond aggressively to salary, benefits and development needs of all employees.
- With the understanding that the district is virtually at capacity, prepare short- and long-term facility construction plans including property acquisition and financing.

Student Learning Experiences

It is the philosophy of the Board of Education that the learning experiences provided to students by the organization should be structured to assure that:

- There is an application component in virtually all learning activities requiring product/performance.
- Learning experiences are integrated whenever possible...theme and problem based; inter-disciplinary.
- Competent skills are acquired against set standards along a sequenced continuum in:
 - ◊ Reading, writing, speaking, listening, math, science, technology, geography, foreign language, and history.
 - ◊ Critical thinking, problem solving, and the ability to develop and present well reasoned arguments.
 - ◊ Personal and inter-personal characteristics of employability, positive social interaction, and responsible decision making.
- That state standards, adopted by the Board, are used as guidelines.
- That students have opportunities to use alternate forms of expression like music, art, dance, and theater.
- That all experiences demonstrate genuine respect for students and support the value of learning.
- That learning experiences are developed, implemented, and assessed in a community of schools K-12 format.
- Students learn best in a safe school environment, free from threat, harassment, and intimidation.

In planning the future, the Board challenges the staff and administration to consider and make recommendations for implementation of concepts and practices like:

- Year-around-school, extended calendar, extended staff contract.
- Alternative ways of scheduling student/staff time; grouping

students within/across grade levels.

- Foreign language study as part of the core curriculum starting in elementary school.
- District extension of “range of service” to include three year-olds to adults; home-based centers for infants; parents as teachers.
- Community service learning, telecommunications, and post secondary opportunities for students.

The test for implementation of these or any of the many other concepts and practices that may be considered must always be judged against the answer to the question, “How will this cause children to prosper?”

Four District Goals

- Students read with understanding and choose reading as a means of access to information and a source of enjoyment and pleasure.
- Students write, speak, and use other forms of expression in ways that convey meaning and elicit feeling and emotion.
- Students understand the internal and external relationships of theoretical, human, and physical systems.
- Students understand how important it is in their personal and professional lives, within the structure of their own values, to act with courage, honesty, and integrity.

Student Assessment

It is the philosophy of the Board of Education that the primary purpose of student assessment is to assure student success. Generally, student success is defined as the number of options realistically within the grasp of a student when they leave our district for any reason. More specifically, the Board believes that students can be judged to be successful if:

- They are eager to learn, e.g. exhibit a value for learning.
- They can demonstrate that they know “how” to use the tools of learning in formal classroom, practical application, and independent learning settings.
- They can demonstrate, through application, basic problem solving and employability skills.
- They demonstrate, through behavior, such values as self-discipline, self-esteem, decision making, and respect for others.
- They choose some form of “service learning.”

An objective of the Board of Education is that students will become more actively involved and increasingly responsible for the assessment of their own learning progress and will participate actively in curricular and schedule adjustments indicated by the results of that assessment.

Consistent with this philosophy, the staff and administration are challenged by the Board to design and implement a program of student assessment that produces accurate, current, and reliable information that measures to what degree “student success” is being accomplished, as well as information that can be used to adjust the instructional program, student schedules, allocation of staff and other resources to improve the rate and range of “student success.” In addition, the Board recognizes the responsibility of the district to collect and present student performance information necessary to assure accountability to students, parents, and citizens of the district, as well as

information required under the law, by certain state and federal agencies and by institutions of higher learning. The district supports the use of state accreditation and assessments (CSAP) for a measurement of growth district wide.

Special Education

It is the philosophy of the Board of Education that Special Education programs and services should be an integrated part of the overall district effort to cause students to be successful. Consistent with this philosophy, it is the expectation of the Board that Special Education resources be utilized, whenever possible, in ways that may benefit all children without diminishing the level of quality of support for children with special needs. The Board challenges the staff and administration to:

- Provide leadership in developing educational options for three and four year-olds, birth to three year-olds, and parents.
- Develop a plan that assures good quality facilities for Special Education programs.
- Expand the effective use of technology for students with special needs.
- Consider the cost/benefit potential of increasing the number of health professionals on staff.
- Consider the cost/benefit potential of adding elementary counselors to the staff.
- Carefully monitor the financial impact of special programs on the district.
- Carefully monitor the instructional/staff impact of special programs on the overall program.

The Board recognizes that the key to success is having a staff of people who understand the challenges faced by children with special needs; a staff that has the skill, the patience, and the energy necessary to respond effectively to those challenges; a staff that can genuinely celebrate with students and their parents what may seem to others “small victories.” It is the expectation of the Board that the administration will find, employ, and support these special people.

Student Activities

It is the philosophy of the Board of Education that students, faculty and the community be encouraged to recognize the value of all types of extracurricular activities and interscholastic competition in relation to the total school program. The Board believes that the current program offers, at every level, ample opportunities for student participation. The Board challenges the staff and administration to:

- Seek ways to constantly improve the quality of the experience students have in competitive activities.
- Demonstrate that care and common sense are being used to minimize negative impacts on the academic program, financial status of the district, and staff workload and supervisory responsibility.
- Communicate clearly to students and their parents the goals of the activities program at each level.
- Model those behaviors that demonstrate “class” during intense competitive situations.
- Motivate through teaching and positive encouragement.
- Expect good sportsmanship and ethical behavior from students, staff, and community at all times.

- Build strong, positive student, parent, coach/sponsor, school, and community partnerships.

One of the most complex issues in the competitive activities program is that of participation versus playing to win. The Board recognizes that, as the level of competition increases, the number of students who can successfully compete decreases. The Board challenges the staff and administration to consider ways of making “participation” activities available to the greatest number of students possible while maintaining a high level of competition.

Personnel

It is the philosophy of the Board of Education that after students, teachers are the most important resource this district possesses. To that end, the Board expects the administration to, “find, employ, and support those teachers who are most likely to cause children to prosper.” In matters of employment, the Board challenges the administration to:

- Formalize and publish Personnel Employment Procedures.
- Provide assurances that all candidates receive fair and thoughtful consideration.
- Explore options that may increase the opportunity for local students’ return to the district as teachers.
- Communicate performance standards to staff and develop a formal induction program for new employees.

The Board’s most important responsibility is to be an unwavering advocate for students. Sadly, from time to time, it is necessary to recognize that employee performance standards are not being met. “What to do when it’s not working” is the most complex personnel question this district must answer. The Board expects that there will be, on behalf of students, significant change in a positive direction. The Board challenges the administration to:

- Present clear data on how we know, “It’s not working.”
- Be sure that everything possible is being done to maximize the employees’ opportunity to succeed.
- Document efforts to help employees to succeed.
- Present in writing specific expectations for performance and time lines for achievement to the employee.
- Be sure that the employee knows what consequences may occur “when it’s not working.”

In the final analysis, the Board expects the administration to take whatever action is necessary to be sure students prosper.

Staff Evaluation

It is the philosophy of the Board of Education that every employee should, “be more effective in their work on behalf of students every year.” Consistent with this philosophy, the Board expects the primary purpose of the staff evaluation program to be growth. The Board is convinced that substantive, lasting growth is not likely to occur unless the individual employee is largely responsible for that growth. This expectation for growth applies to all employees. The Board challenges the staff and administration to:

- Continue to refine the “indicators of performance” currently being used.

- Develop additional “indicators of performance” for all assignments.
- Communicate levels of performance expectation to all employees.
- Include staff and community members in an ongoing review of the staff evaluation process.
- Research, visit, and review programs of staff evaluation that are exemplary at causing staff growth.
- Use systematic evaluation of classified employees to foster growth and improve performance.
- Seek ways to have a strong staff evaluation/growth program which most efficiently utilizes the available resources.

The Board expects that the Superintendent will continue to model evaluation/growth programs for principals that may provide clues to the successful accomplishment of the organization’s staff evaluation/growth goals. To that end, principals will work in a system called “engaged conversation.” The major components of that system are:

- Principals will engage, in a continuing conversation, people who can help them be more effective.
- The central topic of the conversation must be some major theme of effective principal performance.
- At least twice a year the principal must “present” to the superintendent arguments of improved performance.

Permanent teachers who are interested may be invited to participate in a similar process called staff-lead evaluation.

Community Comment

It is the philosophy of the Board of Education that opportunities for thoughtful community input are vital to the successful accomplishment of the district’s goals. The Board recognizes the value of community members as a productive resource as data is developed concerning the many complex issues that must be resolved in a modern public school system. The Board values individual comment and invites, on a continuing basis, members of the community to participate in the public information portion of each regular Board meeting and work session. The Accountability process in the State of Colorado is well organized and required by law in all districts. The Board expects participation in the District Accountability process to be the primary means for community involvement. It is the position of the Board that district and building level Accountability groups, as well as any other groups that may be formed by the Board, will work in the following manner:

- The purpose of group work is to develop options that may be considered by the Board and administration.
- The subject, charge, or problem on which the group will work will be specifically defined at the outset, and the work of the group will be coordinated with appropriate staff.
- All groups will present through District Accountability the options they develop.
- The Board and administration will review and analyze the options presented.
- When a decision is made, the Board and administration will present arguments as to “why” to the group.

In an effort to make the “flow” through District Accountability work effectively, the membership of that committee will be developed so that it forms an interlocking directorate with

building level committees, the business/education partnership initiative, and any other group that may have been, or will be formed by the Board for the purpose of development options.

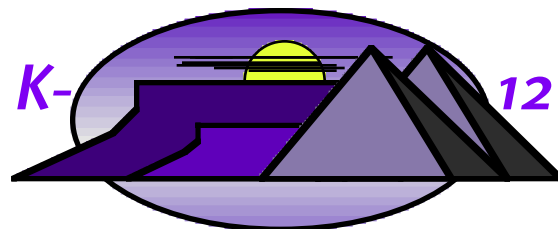
The District will endeavor to consistently communicate true and accurate information to the public. Central administration, school administrators, and staff shall also attempt to foster a relationship with the community such that parents, students, and citizens feel free to have open, honest, and clear communication with District representatives to address concerns and problems, as well as new ideas and positive feedback.

Area Vocational Center

It is the philosophy of the Board of Education that the Delta/Montrose Area Vocational Technical Center should be a regional operation that is the focal point of extended educational opportunity, relevant vocational training, and economic development. It is the expectation of the Board that the center will present quality programs designed to provide learning opportunities at “industry standard” levels. The Board challenges the staff and administration to:

- Operate the center as a “for profit” institution.
- Develop a program format flexible enough to respond to the changing job market and community needs.
- Upgrade the facility to support flexible, “industry standard” learning opportunities.
- Communicate effectively throughout the region the opportunities that are available at the center.
- Maintain, update and expand where possible the “core” vocational programs at the center.
- Negotiate agreements with other institutions that extend educational growth paths to the degree level.
- Make effective use of community input concerning the center’s programming and performance.
- Assure that money used to develop and operate the center comes from funds generated by the center.
- Increase the number and types of “adult and continuing education” opportunities at the school.
- Model the use of available technology in all phases of the day-to-day operation of the center.

The summary statement from the Board of Education in reference to the Delta/Montrose Area Vocational Technical Center is, “deliver the future.”



“Delivering the Future... Today”

Regular Board of Education meetings are held on the 3rd Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. For more information on board activities, please call 874-4438.