



Buffalo School District RE-4J
315 Lee Street
Merino, Colorado 80741
970-522-7424

Monday, October 15, 2018

**Board of
Directors**

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Dear Commissioner Anthes,

The Buffalo School District received an accreditation rating of “Accredited with an improvement Plan- Low Participation”. There is a great deal of confusion around the rating as our last three year of accreditation are as follows- 2015/2016: Accredited- Performance Plan- Low Participation; 2016/2017: Accredited- Performance Plan- Low Participation; and the one year for 2017/2018 would have been: Accredited- Distinguished- Low Participation. However, because the rules changed two years ago, and we had a few more students test last year than the previous years, our three year rating had more data points so that is what we were assigned- Accredited- Improvement Plan- Low Participation. I am sure you can understand the difficulty in explaining that to the Merino community.

We would like this to serve as our request for reconsideration. We are requesting that our elementary be changed from Needs Improvement to simply accredited and because we only have one elementary in the district, we are requesting that the district be changed as well to Accredited – Performance Plan- Low Participation. We do not believe that the students that took the state assessment in the elementary are indicative of the student body as a whole.

As you are aware, our district has had a great deal of parents opt their children out of state testing. This past year, we had a few more test than normal. I had served on Commissioner Hammond’s sub-committee for Senate Bill 163 for 4 years. My biggest concern was stated then and will be state once again. The system that has been created does not account for small “N” size districts. And, even though there is a consideration for 3 years of data, it is still too small an “N” size to determine accurate accreditation labels. Furthermore, our district percentage was 55.7% where the cut point for a Performance rating is 56%- .3% lower than Performance.

We believe that our rating of Needs Improvement does not describe our district. The opposite is also true, if we would have been assigned the one year rating of Distinguished, it too would not have been a good label for our district. We believe we are a district that should be accredited with a performance plan and we will use the K-2 Aimsweb Plus (2016-2018) and Aimsweb (2015/2016) Reading and Math data to make our point.

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We made a switch from Aimsweb to Aimsweb Plus after the 2015/2016 school year. I will include the Aimsweb data as part of the submission, however, we do not have disaggregated data for sub groups- only whole classes.

2017/2018 Data trends with Aimsweb Plus Reading show that in K-2 the average mean fall composite score had only 2nd grade starting on grade level. The mean spring composite score had all K-2 grades at or above grade level with the school growth percentile for K- 85, 1-75, and 2-85, when expected growth is 50.

In math, we see the same trend. 2nd grade the only grade that started with a mean composite score at or above grade level for the fall and all three at or above grade level in the spring. The school growth percentile for K- 85, 1-75, and 2-70 with the expectation being 50%.

ELL Students for 2017/2018

We had one student in this category. This student started out below grade level, ended on grade level. However, his/her growth percentile did not meet expectation- 45%. It was the same situation in Math, however, his/her growth percentile in math was more than expected at 55%. It would be difficult to get reliable data on ELL students in Merino as there were only 4 in the entire elementary last year.

FRL Student for 2017/2018

Again, the N sizes are small. However, we do see that while we saw that each of the grade levels composite fall scores in reading were all below grade level and that their composite scores in reading were also below grade level (with the exception of 2nd grade), their growth percentiles were positive. K-52.78, 1-67.5, and 2- 59.28 all above the expected 50%.

In math- Once again the same. All their composite fall and spring scores were below grade level we did have two grade levels meet or exceed their growth percentiles. K-51.67, 1- 50, and 2- 33.57.

Minority Students for 2017/2018

We only have a total of 4 minority students in K-2. So again, "N" size is an issue. In reading their composite fall scores were below grade level with the exception of 2nd grade. The spring scores indicate that both 1st and 2nd grades either met or exceeded grade level expectations in achievement. The growth percentiles were as follows: K- 45, 1- 45, 2- 95.

In math- Kindergarten and 1st grades started the year and finished the year below grade level. 2nd grade level started and finished the year at or above grade level. However, in math we had only Kindergarten not meet their growth percentile at 35 with 1st at 55, and 2nd at 75

IEP Students for 2017/2018

We had 3 students in k-2 on an IEP in 2017/2018. Again, "N" size is an issue. In reading and in math all three students did not perform well. Not one started on grade level, finished on grade level nor met the growth expectations.

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2016/2017 Data is much the same. In reading fall composite scores were below in K and 2nd. However by the end of the year all three grades were at or above grade level. The growth percentiles were as follows: K- 85, 1- 5 (this is the year our only first grade teacher was out on maternity leave for the second semester and we had a substitute), and 2- 65.

In math all started below grade level average in the fall and were at or above grade level. The growth percentages were K-95, 1- 85, and 2- 65.

2016/2017 ELL students- We only had two students in ELL this year. They both started below grade level and finished below grade level. However, one had a growth percentile of 65 and the other 45.

In math both started below grade level and one finished above grade level. The other below grade level. Their growth percentiles were 95% and 35% respectively.

2016/2017 FRL Students- The fall composite scores for reading for students qualifying for FRL had K and 2 below grade level with 1st above. The spring had K and 1 at or above grade level with 2nd remaining below. Their growth percentiles showed that the following K- 87.86, 1- 17.86, and 2- 53.57.

In math all three grade levels started below grade. In the spring K and 2nd had achieved grade level expectations while 1st had not. However, the growth percentiles that all three grade levels met or exceeded expectations with the following percentiles: K- 92.14, 1- 59.29, 2- 56.43.

2016/2017 Minority students. Only 6 students in grades K-2. In reading, K and 2nd started and finished below grade level expectations with 1st starting and finishing at or above grade level expectations. The growth in both K and 2 was good with K- 65 and 2- 52.5 and 1st- 5.

In math only K started below grade level. All three ended at or above grade level. All three had good growth. K-95, 1- 75, and 2- 57.5.

2016/2017 IEP Students. Only 3 student represent this category and in only 1st and 2nd grades. In reading all started below and finished below. The 1st grade growth percentile was 5 while the 2nd grade growth percentile exceeded expectations with 65.

In math it is exactly the same as reading.

When breaking down the 2 years of consistent data this is what we find:

Each category has different numbers of available data due to small "N" sizes. So, for the aggregated whole, for the two years, there are 12 points of data for fall composite, spring composite, and growth percentile. We only have 3 ELL students so there are only 6 points of data available and so on. I looked at it from where they started (below or above grade level), where they finished (below or above grade level) and how much they grew in the year.

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All Students: 12 points of data (or grade levels) available:

Fall Composite	Spring Composite	Average Growth Percentile
3 grades at or above grade level	12 grades at or above grade level	11 grades met or exceeded

ELL Students- 3 students over the course of 2 years with 6 possible points of data (or grade levels)

Fall Composite	Spring Composite	Average Growth Percentile
0 grades at or above grade level	2 grades at or above grade level	3 grades met or exceeded

FRL Students- All 12 points of data available

Fall Composite	Spring Composite	Average Growth Percentile
1 grade at or above grade level	5 grades at or above grade level	10 grades met or exceeded

Minority Students- All 12 points of data available. Total of 10 students

Fall Composite	Spring Composite	Average Growth Percentile
5 grades at or above grade level	7 grades at or above grade level	8 grades met or exceeded

IEP Students- 8 points of data available. Total of 6 Students

Fall Composite	Spring Composite	Average Growth Percentile
0 grades at or above grade level	0 grades at or above grade level	2 grades met or exceeded

When looking at achievement of all you can see that all students over the course of the two years perform as expected or better than expected. When disaggregating, it is hard to tell due to low "N" counts. The only one that has any significant numbers would be FRL and when looking at growth data, when 10 out of 12 data points either meet or exceed in growth that is fairly significant. The rest of the data is hard to draw any conclusions.

2015/2016 Aimsweb data-

We only have aggregated data from 2015/2016. Every category was at or above grade level expectations and growth in every grade was at or above expectations. K-2 all had growth at 65% when expected was 50%. This data only represents reading.

We have also included Measures of Academic Progress (MAPS Testing) for the same time periods. We have found that in the three year period, out of the 21 assessment that were given (Reading, Language, and Math) that only 5 were below grade level at the end of the year with 16 meeting or exceeding expectations.

What we have done in the Buffalo School District-

Five years ago we had the opportunity to be in on the ground level of creating a new way to accredit small school districts and hold them accountable. We created the Student Centered Accountability Program. Our core values are 1. Accountability are designed to emphasize the every student and the whole child; 2.

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Accountability means continuous improvement; and 3. Accountability increases with local stakeholder investment.

With that being said, over the past three years, we have had two peer reviews from S-CAP districts. From those, as a staff, we identified four priorities- Instructional Strategies, Engagement, Collaboration and Wellness. We have addressed those in the following ways-

1. We signed a three year contract with Corwin Press to deliver our staff the Visible Learning In-Service. It is based on the work of John Hattie. We are identifying instructional strategies that have lower than a .4 effect size- reducing their use and identifying those that have a .4 effect size or higher in order to maximize the number of high impact instructional strategies and minimize the use of less effective instructional strategies.
2. We identified that we did not have written curriculum in our district. As a result of the walkthrough last year, we were able to add six staff development days onto our district calendar. We hired a curriculum person to come and work with our staff- partnered with CU Denver and Julie O'Brien. The board of education is committed to getting this work done regardless of cost and time.
3. We have identified that wellness also includes mental wellness and is not simply physical wellness. We have seen a rise in the number of students coming to us with mental health issues. We decided to spend money we did not have and hire a mental health specialist to deal with students, faculty, and parents that may need some assistance in this area.

We have a great deal of things going on in this district. We realize that we are not a district of distinction-YET. But, we also know we do not deserve the label of Needs Improvement. Our Aimsweb data for K-2 indicates that we have some areas we need to work on, but for the most part, we are a district and school that is on course. We also know that because of the small "N" size that many of our disaggregated areas are lower because one student may count in multiple areas and when you have an "N" size of 3 where two of them are also on an IEP and FRL it is very difficult to overcome those numbers.

The Buffalo School District RE4J and the Merino Elementary respectfully request that our ratings be changed to Accredited- Performance Plan- Low Participation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Rob Sanders
Superintendent

Michael Murphy
Board President

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