



# Sheridan School District No. 2

*Teach It. Learn It. Demonstrate It.*

Sheridan School District 2  
Position Statement – Accreditation Appeal  
February 13, 2014

Sheridan School District 2 is a district that has made great strides over the past years. The Colorado Department of Education, the press and even the US Department of Education have recognized those accomplishments based upon turnaround efforts. Outcomes for students have significantly improved and more and more Sheridan students are on their way to a brighter future given our approach to post-secondary and work-force readiness. The District is requesting the State Board of Education's support in helping realize the dream for the students and community of Sheridan by changing the accreditation rating from "Priority Improvement" to "Improvement".

As the legislative declaration stated (C.R.S. 22-7-102), Colorado's accreditation and school accountability process was designed to "expand the life opportunities and options of the students of this state" and to "provide local school boards and local schools assistance in helping their patrons to determine the relative value of their school program."

## **GRADUATION AND DROPOUT RATES**

The state's rating of Sheridan School District 2 as "Accredited with Priority Improvement Plan" is based upon a technical application of the district's graduation rate. The rating is not an accurate portrayal of the district's success and the ongoing pursuit of further education for all students.

This appeal asks for a common-sense understanding of graduation data and consideration of the success of students in post-secondary options which utilizes current year data as verified in the CDE End of Year Report. The district is imploring the State Board of Education to look at the data with a different lens—one that trumpets success for students and does not penalize a small district for successful, longstanding programs that afford students a solid foundation for post-secondary and work-force readiness.

As a result of the technical application, the published graduation rate for Sheridan in the 2012-2013 school year is artificially low—and misleading. An examination of the full story shows that Sheridan School District 2 has expanded the "life opportunities" for these students, who are from one of the state's most impoverished urban districts. The examination also shows that Sheridan School District 2 is yielding a graduation rate that exceeds the state average.

A rating of "Priority Improvement Plan" suggests district efforts should be focused on improving the graduation rate or lowering the dropout rate when, in fact, the district should serve as a model for both. In fact, if we turn to the most recent data available, it is easy to see that Sheridan continues to lead on these issues, not lag.

### **ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION CAMPUS EXCLUSION**

This appeal also asks that the Colorado State Board of Education consider how it has allowed exclusions for Alternative Education Campuses in other cases and appeals—and apply the same approach to Sheridan School District 2.

The finances of a school district as they relate to accreditation, should not be considered. The funding of Sheridan School District 2 is approved in a separate process that is authorized by the Joint Budget Committee, the Colorado General Assembly and the governor. The district allocations are implemented and managed by the Colorado Department of Education under a process that is disconnected from accreditation (unless the lack of financial controls prompt an accreditation-related warning).

Sheridan's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Program is a longstanding initiative that has widened horizons for students and continues to provide opportunities that many students would otherwise not enjoy or even aspire to achieve. It directly supports the State of Colorado's declared intent to establish such concurrent enrollment programs in order to create "pathways between high schools and institutions of higher education" in order to fulfill the Colorado promise of doubling the number of postsecondary degrees earned by Coloradans and reducing by half the number of students who drop out of high schools in the state." (H.B. 09-1319).

The Colorado State Board of Education is encouraged to look at the accomplishments of these students and their success in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Program and recognize the program as providing the precise service and opportunity the legislature requested—and doing it well. As a result, the State Board of Education is strongly encouraged to adjust the accreditation rating from "Priority Improvement" to "Improvement." The adjustment will provide all stakeholders with a more accurate picture of the "relative value" of the quality of Sheridan School District 2.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Clough", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Michael Clough  
Superintendent  
Sheridan School District 2

**Michael Clough,  
Superintendent**

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