

TO: Members of the Colorado State Board of Education
Commissioner Robert K. Hammond
Tony Dyl, Senior Assistant Attorney General

FROM: Marcia Neal, Chairwoman
Colorado State Board of Education

DATE: June 11, 2015

SUBJECT: Resignation

It is with great regret that I submit my resignation from the Colorado State Board of Education – 3rd Congressional District as a Republican.

I will always look back on my first six years on the board, under the leadership of Bob Schaeffer and subsequently, Paul Lundeen, with great pleasure. We had some fierce disagreements and discussions, but we always treated one another with respect and enjoyed each other's company. Under the leadership of Commissioner Robert Hammond, we shared a commitment of support for individual schools and districts.

No more! Sadly, our current board has become dysfunctional. Past protocols were very effective with regard to communicating and the sharing of information. Those protocols are now largely ignored by several board members. And what have we accomplished in the past five months? We've caused significant confusion in the field by indicating that we could grant them waivers from the state's assessment system...only to find out through a formal Attorney General's opinion that the board had no legal authority to take such action. The board's subsequent refusal to rescind that motion took about three more months which just extended the confusion in districts and schools across the state.

Also, the board spent hours debating the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, only to find that we had very limited authority over the survey.

As for impacting students and families directly, for two months the board then refused to set cut scores for the high school Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) science and social studies tests. The board finally set strict conditions on cut scores it approved just for science. However, no students will find out how they did on the state's high school social studies test because the board refused to adopt any cut scores on those exams. Our decisions make it very difficult to determine how high school students performed overall in science and we'll have no information on social studies.

As for our state department of education, we are losing top quality staff now. We've recently had a surprising number of resignations and notices of retirement. One has to wonder how much of the board's seemingly destructive behavior has contributed to this exodus.

I have been told that some people are pleased with our actions (or inactions). While I remain opposed to the intrusion of the federal government in our schools, I don't think many people are aware of the negative results that can occur if we do not comply with federal law. Colorado now stands a good

chance of finding out.

Remember “A Nation At Risk”? Thirty years old, it forecast that the U.S. would be consistently outperformed by foreign nations. Actions by the federal government and by our current “local control” crowd almost guarantee it. Don't we have better things to do than squabble with both the far left and the far right who share the same goals of no standards, no accountability, and no teacher quality efforts?

While under better circumstances, I would like to stay on the board to work toward common goals and mutually agreed upon aspirations for improving learning for all students. In fact, I don't hear any board discussions about the benefits of our work in supporting student learning – making students better prepared for the world they'll encounter after graduation. We don't talk about how we're improving their education to truly make them fully prepared for college or a career of their choice. If we're not working for these things, what are we doing to meet our responsibilities for preparing our students for success?

Unfortunately, I do not see that the current board is interested in working together and reaching consensus. In addition, my health has suffered in the past few months. Due to significant injuries I sustained in February, I have found it more and more difficult to fully participate in board activities. For all of these reasons, I believe the time has come to pass this task on to someone with more energy and tenacity to devote to the very important responsibilities we have to the students of this state.

I sincerely hope my replacement will be someone who is committed to strong Republican education ideals including: high expectations, quality academic Colorado standards and assessments, along with quality choice options for all students. Returning to thorough social studies instruction with high expectations would be good for students, too.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve Colorado's school children as a member, Vice Chair, and Chair of the Colorado State Board of Education. It has been an honor and a privilege. I urge all interested Coloradans to work to ensure a strong replacement for my vacancy. We all must work diligently to ensure all Colorado students have the world's finest education. We can't afford to leave that obligation to chance.

My official date of departure will be July 31, 2015. My replacement will be named by a vacancy committee established by the Republican Party. I anticipate this will occur in early August.

Thank you for all your support and friendship,

Marcia Neal, Chairwoman
Colorado State Board of Education