



ABOUT THE CANDIDATES



2016 CANDIDATE SURVEYS DISTRICT 6



REBECCA MCCLELLAN

My commitment to our public schools is longstanding. While a Centennial City Councilwoman from 2006 to 2014, I served as a Council Liaison to public schools and worked with state legislators to develop and pass measures to improve school funding. Before that, I served on the Executive Board of the Cherry Creek Community Legislative Network. Jim and I have volunteered for our public schools for many years. Last year I served as an Executive Officer for the West Middle School PTCO. If elected, I will be the only member of the State Board who is a parent of a current public school student. I am grateful for the positive experience my children have had in public school, and I want every child to have access to high quality public education.

DEBORA SCHEFFEL

I started my career as a teacher and have worked in education for three decades, teaching, teaching teachers and now running an education school. I also have 7 nieces and nephews and so for me public education is very personal. I am invested in both making sure every student has access to a great public education and that teachers in classrooms have the tools and flexibility needed to teach their students. Over the past six years on the State Board of Education, I have worked to push back on federal intrusion, reduce the testing burden and increase protection of student and staff data. I have worked with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to ensure teachers are supported, and parents are empowered to make great choices for their students. We have also provided more flexibility for local districts while increasing accountability for the billions of dollars spent on public education. I know instructional excellence is critical to academic achievement and that students have different needs. The diversity in Congressional District 6 mirrors that in our state. We have students who speak dozens of languages, and come from a wide variety of backgrounds and attend many different schools. As a State Board of Education we must make sure the choices each community desires for its students are of high quality and available. I approach each decision not as a politician seeking the approval of politicians, but as a teacher passionate about making sure students have great experiences.



PART 1: THE STATE OF COLORADO EDUCATION

What is your vision for Colorado Education?

Rebecca McClellan: I believe all students should have access to high quality public education, regardless of their zip code. Our funding challenges leave our local districts with difficult choices. I'd like to see our schools better funded so we can make progress toward closing the achievement gap. School psychologists, social workers, guidance counselors, and robust programs in the arts and sports are just some of the important resources our public schools should have. Recruiting and retaining highly trained and talented teachers and other professionals is difficult when funds are insufficient. While no state board member can magically make funds appear, one can pledge to avoid making the situation worse through decisions that create new burdens for local districts. Respect for the perspective of local stakeholders and for the challenges faced by local districts must be reflected in the decisions made by the state board.

Debora Scheffel: I envision every student regardless of background, engaged and excited to attend school, learning everything he/she needs each year to be prepared for success in the next year and in life. I envision teachers having the flexibility, tools and resources to meet the needs of their students. I envision parents working with schools to be sure the needs of their children are met and guiding the education of their children. I envision safe schools where students, staff, parents and the community feel comfortable and confident because great things happen each day. I envision engaged economically strong communities because public schools are creating opportunities for their students and teaching the skills that prepare students to live independently. I see companies hiring employees that help them provide great products and services to their customers and new entrepreneurial ventures starting because students have learned what they need to be successful. I envision well paid and highly respected teachers, administrators and education support staff working hard to meet the needs of students. I envision an education system that is accountable for the resources used and making investments in programs that deliver results. I envision all community members coming together to make sure our public education is working for all students, that we are continuing to improve, and the divisions that have caused strife are set aside so we can all work together to benefit our children.

What are some specific challenges in the education system in your congressional district?

McClellan: CD6 is a diverse district. Our local school districts reflect very different challenges across the Congressional District. What we have in common is a need for access to adequate resources. The relief we would expect in times of economic recovery is made impossible under the constraints of TABOR. In Aurora Public Schools, this is exacerbated by a lower rate of local funding, making it harder to invest in programs to turn around struggling schools. Even in districts where most schools are exceeding state expectations, we still have progress to make in closing the achievement gap for children of color. Districts like Brighton and Bennett cover vast rural areas where attracting and retaining teachers is a challenge, and a lack of sufficient resources makes addressing this challenge even more difficult. The diverse needs and challenges represented in CD6 mirror the challenges we see across Colorado. Our State Board must ensure a thorough and uniform system of education for Colorado students. There are bright spots, as well as progress to be made.

Scheffel: The challenges in the education system in Congressional District 6 (CD 6) are incredibly diverse. Some are very well known such as schools in turnaround status because they have not been able to help students achieve academically. Some challenges are more subtle like schools where students achieve academically, and staff are trying to raise the bar for their students, but they are doing it with fewer resources than schools in most other districts. The challenges in CD 6 mirror those across our state. CD 6 has schools with large numbers of English Language Learners but not

enough qualified staff to meet the diverse language needs of students. We have schools with so few resources, they find it hard to attract and retain highly qualified teachers. CD 6 has neighborhoods with many school choices which have great track records of helping students achieve academically but we have far too many areas with very limited quality educational choices for students. CD 6 has great schools with very experienced and high quality leaders, but we also have far too many schools with leaders who lack the skills and a mentor to support great leadership. CD 6 has many schools with new facilities but far too many with buildings that no longer provide an optimal environment for adequate learning. CD 6 has many schools with engaged communities and some with little community engagement.

What is the greatest issue facing Colorado schools today and how are you going to address it?

McClellan: Funding is the greatest challenge facing Colorado schools. While some education reformers may argue that money may not matter as much as the care with which it is spent, the \$855,000,000 shortfall from the negative factor has contributed to narrowed curriculum, larger class sizes, a lack of school psychologists and social workers, and a decrease in other services necessary for the social, emotional, and educational well being of students. Underfunding also contributes to inequities, where wealthier districts with higher property values are better funded, while poorer districts are forced to get by with older technology, less staff, and less safe schools. If elected to the state board, I will advocate on behalf of our schools, districts, teachers, and most importantly students to fix this problem and to encourage our legislators to find a way out of this fiscal thicket.

Scheffel: The greatest issue facing schools in Colorado is the diversity of issues facing schools. Because the issues are so diverse, the solutions needed are also diverse. Finding solutions must be accomplished at the local level with an engaged community that comes together, hears all voices and makes great decisions for students. I will continue to work hard to support local communities coming together to develop solutions that work for their students, families, and staff.

There are also issues which are faced by all schools. Consistently, we must fight the attempts of federal overreach to control our public education system. I will continue to fight for flexibility in how our schools measure success and to break the federal government's attempts to impose a one-size-fits-all education system.

All schools also spend too much time testing students. Even with the reductions the State Board of Education has approved, districts still approve additional tests for students. I will continue to work to provide flexible accountability measures so that students and teachers spend far less time testing. All schools also face issues finding and allocating enough resources to make sure there is a high quality teacher in each classroom and an exceptional leader in each school. I will continue to work to ensure there are enough resources to provide each student with great opportunities.

Additional comments on the state of Colorado education?

McClellan: No answer (n/a)

Scheffel: Delivering education options that give each student the best opportunity to have a successful future requires all stakeholders to respect each other and work together to find solutions. We must respect teachers and provide them the tools they need. At the same time, taxpayers deserve to know that their investment in public schools is being used wisely. In addition, as a state, we must develop better systems for supporting excellent teachers and instructional excellence.

PART 2: GOOD GOVERNANCE

What is the primary role of a State Board member?

McClellan: The role of the state board is spelled out in state statute. Their main job is to create rules and implement legislative policy and priority through the creation of those rules. The state board is also required to hire and oversee the staff of the Colorado Department of Education, including the Commissioner of Education. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, they are required to make the final accountability decisions for our state's lowest performing schools.

Scheffel: The primary role of a State Board member is to be the voice of the stakeholders from their congressional district, as the Board makes decisions to assure each student has access to great public education. This takes a commitment to listen to teachers, staff and community members, read materials and ask questions so we have all information necessary to make quality decisions. State Board members must work together as we set the standards, and make decisions which help schools be successful.

What will be your two primary goals as a board member and how will the public know you are working towards these goals?

McClellan: I want every Colorado child to have access to high quality public education. I want to contribute to a state board that works effectively to support the goal of well funded public schools so that every child can realize their potential regardless of their zip code.

Scheffel: My first goal is to continue to help create a system which ensures there is a high quality, well respected educator in every classroom for every student. My second goal is to continue to make sure parents are engaged in guiding the education of their children. The community will know that we are working toward these goals because all of my decisions will be framed and explained with information about how they help make progress toward these goals. Some Colorado educators have a starting salary well below most other professions which require a college degree. In addition to low starting salaries, teachers' raises often don't keep up with the rate of inflation. These combine to make it difficult to recruit and retain amazing talent in education. In addition it seems as if everyone has an opinion on improving education and yet teachers' voices are often left out of these conversations. Education professionals need to be respected and have the flexibility and resources to do their jobs. As a member of the State Board, I will continue to advocate for our teachers. Parents are their children's first teacher and should be engaged in their children's education. We must provide the information parents need to make informed decisions. They should have choices of high quality education options so they can ensure the diverse needs of their children are met. As a member of the State Board I will continue to advocate for parents' ability to guide their children's education.

What will guide your decision-making when faced with appeals of local school board decisions?

McClellan: As a public school parent and as a former local elected official, I know that local input and leadership matter. The input of local stakeholders must be valued in the process. In addition, the professional staff at the Colorado Department of Education provide vital input regarding the intersection of Colorado law and Federal law regarding requirements for schools and districts. Ultimately, the decisions of the state board must be implemented at the local level, so local feedback and buy-in are essential for success. Teachers and school executives are on the front line,

and their input and buy-in are of utmost importance for an effective plan. The state board's decision should be guided by what is best for students.

Scheffel: Making decisions on appeals are some of the toughest decisions we make as State Board members because they need to be made when members of the same community have different opinions on what is best for students. My decisions will be made balancing the priorities of making sure parents and community members have the education options that meet the needs of their students based on strong support for local control. I will balance these priorities making sure that all students have access to schools which provide great academic options for students in a safe and nurturing environment. Colorado is one of very few states which give authority to local school boards to make curriculum and financing decisions. This helps keep decisions as close to students as possible and ensures there is not a one-size-fits-all system in Colorado. I believe supporting this structure is the best way to make sure the needs of all students are met. We also know parent desires for options for their students can sometimes be drowned out by louder voices. As a State Board we have sometimes sided with parents when the options they seek have a high probability of meeting the needs of their students. And sometimes we have sided with the local school board and backed their decisions. I will continue to balance these occasionally competing interests and make decisions that are best for students.

What were the one or two best decisions the Colorado board has made in the last four years?

McClellan: One of the best decisions the state board has made in recent years is the decision to take the U. S. Department of Education up on their offer to waive out of certain aspects of No Child Left Behind. While the law was passed with bipartisan support, it became a bipartisan regret. While the requirement to provide data on educational attainment by disadvantaged groups introduced us to the worst kept secret in education (that we are not adequately educating all children, particularly those with low income or minority status), it also represented an overly prescriptive federal overreach into state educational systems. The waiver allowed Colorado to determine what was important to measure to improve student outcomes, and to implement policies that were more fair to teachers and schools in the area of accountability. It allowed the state to make the decisions about how to intervene when schools were not meeting standards. Another good decision that was made unanimously by the board was to update the rules for teacher preparation and licensing. The 2016 update of those rules was a massive undertaking and brought them into alignment with state law and educator preparation best practices. While I don't believe it was ever in doubt that these rules would be adopted, the decision showed the state board working together to improve the quality of education Colorado children.

Scheffel: Among the many great decisions made by the State Board, those increasing instruction time and reducing testing are among the best. We reduced the time students take state tests and gave a group of districts the ability to pursue using internal assessments they already use for the accountability system which could lead to their student not taking PARCC tests. We asked for data on the number of hours being spent preparing for state and local tests. We also reviewed the number of hours it takes for students to be tested. We determined that too many hours were being spent testing. We therefore approved a reduction in the number of hours that tests are administered. We also gave permission for a group of districts to develop alternative measures of student achievement. These districts use MAPS assessments to help teachers determine student needs and they will be working to determine if it is possible to have this assessment replace the PARCC tests. Another series of decisions we made significantly increased the security and privacy guidelines so the risk of student and staff data being used improperly has been reduced. A number of parents and community members brought concerns to the State Board about the rules

governing the protection of data. After asking a number of questions and receiving presentations, the State Board determined that tighter rules should be put in place for both how CDE and local districts handle student and staff data.

What were the one or two worst decisions that the Colorado board made in the last four years? And how would you work to change these policies?

McClellan: One example would be the split decision not to back the unanimous vote by the Cherry Creek School Board to decline the Heritage Heights charter application. The duly elected Cherry Creek board was acting in harmony with the community in declining the application for a host of sound reasons including lack of need, lack of community support, and concerns regarding the quality of the application. My opponent voted in conflict with the will of her own constituents on this decision, and expressed a lack of regard for the importance of the input of locally elected leadership, and the serious concerns they articulated. The decision regarding the Hope Online Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in Aurora Public Schools raised concerns for me. The input from the local board reflected valid concerns regarding Hope Online's very low outcomes. Given the challenging budget choices that the district must work with, forcing APS to continue spending public resources to pay Hope Online despite their longstanding history of very poor performance is a difficult decision to support.

Scheffel: One of the worst decisions the State Board made was to delay the setting of cut scores for CMAS tests. This decision extended the amount of time between when the tests were taken and when meaningful and useful data was returned to district and schools. Teachers and students take a great deal of time taking tests. In fact the entire school system goes into assessment mode when taking the state mandated tests. Delaying the amount of time the state took to provide meaningful information back to schools and districts didn't honor the effort put into giving and taking the tests. Since the Board did finally approve cut scores, the delays meant schools could not adjust instruction and students therefore may not have gotten the best instruction. To make sure the State Board always honors the work of students and teachers especially when so much time is spent testing, we should not delay these decisions. I will work with my fellow board members to be sure we continue to improve the timeliness of information going back to schools and districts.

Additional comments on good governance

McClellan: The state board has made some good and some bad decisions, but I am concerned that some votes are cast based on personal political beliefs rather than on what is best for students. We need less political posturing and more of a spirit of public service on the board. Having served in local office, I know that leaders can work together for the public good. The board must value our public schools over politics to put students first. As a public school parent, I will put students first.

Scheffel: Good governance requires a commitment by those who govern to spend the time listening to all opinions and seeking input from a variety of different stakeholders. Members of the State Board have been able to work together across party lines, and many decisions we have made have had support from all board members, reflecting bi-partisan support. I am committed to working together with all stakeholders to provide great education for our students.

PART 3: DATA AND DATA ACCESS

Rate the following statements on a scale of 1-4, where 1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=agree, and 4= strongly agree.

| | Rebecca McClellan | Debora Scheffel |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|
| The Department of Education has appropriately protected personally identifiable student information in the past. | 3 | 2 |
| Stakeholders in the education system, including students, families, communities, policy makers, advocacy and grassroots organizations, researchers, and professional organizations, have adequate access to information about school and district outcomes. | 2 | 3 |

It is important to have district-level and school-level data disaggregated based on students' race and ethnicity, eligibility for free or reduced price lunch, English language learners, special education students for which of the following?

| | Rebecca McClellan | Debora Scheffel |
|--|-------------------|----------------------------|
| PARCC results | X | X |
| AP completion and test results | X | X |
| SAT/ACT results | X | X |
| Discipline practices (suspensions/ expulsions of students) | X | X |
| Concurrent Enrollment | X | X |
| Other | | Graduation and Remediation |

Additional comments on data and data access

McClellan: Overall the Department of Education has done a good job following the letter and the spirit of the law. I am concerned that there is pressure on the department staff from some members (including my opponent) to go beyond data privacy requirements that are in alignment with best practices and Federal and State law, that has the effect of hiding information about how schools are doing. Without the data it's impossible for stakeholders to make informed decisions.

Scheffel: It is important for data to be disaggregated by many demographic subsets but not if it risks breaching the privacy and security of student data. We know that CDE has become much more cognizant of protecting data privacy and is working to balance the need to be accountable for the results of taxpayer investments by protecting data. In addition, we need to continue to work to make the immense amount of data available about student outcomes so it is easy to understand and use.

PART 4: STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENT

Rate the following statements on a scale of 1-4, where 1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=agree, and 4= strongly agree.

| | Rebecca McClellan | Debora Scheffel |
|--|-------------------|-----------------|
| The current Colorado Academic Standards adopted in 2010 reflect what I believe Colorado students should be learning. | 3 | 3 |
| Students should take annual summative assessments in English Language Arts, Math, Science and Social Studies. | 2 | 1 |

Additional comments on data and data access

McClellan: I do not have a rigid agenda, but would like to see our state avoid over-testing. We should always be open to the input of teachers, students, and parents. When the CDE began work on the Colorado Academic Standards the found that the Common Core math standards were more rigorous than the ones we developed and the ELA standards were similar, so it made sense to adopt those standards and combine them with our own. Our legislature's requirement for revisions allows flexibility in our standards.

Scheffel: Annual summative assessments are important, but testing every student, every year in all subjects requires too many hours. We need to continue to work to lower the burden of testing while providing clear pictures of achievement and growth. It is time for a robust community conversation about what we want our students to know, and to update the Colorado Academic Standards. Colorado needs to own its standards and communities must come together to decide what skills our students must acquire.

PART 5: SCHOOL AND DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY

Rate the following statements on a scale of 1-4, where 1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=agree, and 4= strongly agree.

| | Rebecca McClellan | Debora Scheffel |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|
| The school and district performance frameworks include the right measures. | 3 | 2 |
| Charter, innovation, and traditional district-run schools should be held to the same performance standards. | 4 | 4 |

At the end of the school accountability clock, check all of the improvement options below that you believe can be effective.

| | Rebecca McClellan | Debora Scheffel |
|---|--|---|
| Replacing district-run school with a charter school | X | X |
| Restructuring a district-run school as an innovation school | X | X |
| Hiring a lead turnaround partner | | X |
| Closing a school | | X |
| Other | Any solution must involve public input and buy in. | Changing staff, providing professional development, changing curriculum |

At the end of the district accountability clock, check all of the improvement options below that you believe can be effective.

| | Rebecca McClellan | Debora Scheffel |
|--|-------------------|---|
| Converting one or more of a district's school into charter schools | X | X |
| Designating one or more of a district's schools as innovation schools | X | X |
| Closing one or more of a district's schools | | X |
| Reorganizing or consolidating a district | | X |
| Having a public or private entity take over the district and/or one or more district schools | | X |
| Removing a district's accreditation | | X |
| Other | | Changing staff, providing professional development, changing curriculum |

Additional comments on school and district accountability

McClellan: My highest hope is for excellent local public schools for all students regardless of zip code. I do not support for profit charter schools. A community must have input regarding these difficult decisions. Where a local board and stakeholders do not want or need a charter school, that voice must be heard. School closures can be traumatic and disruptive for a community. Finally, we must ensure that all children have an opportunity to be successful in their education and whatever may come after.

Scheffel: The performance frameworks provide many right measures of success, but like the new graduation guidelines, there should be more flexibility in measuring success. All public schools, regardless of how they are governed, should be held to the same standards unless they are an alternative school serving students with exceptional needs.

PART 6: FEDERAL LEGISLATION

What changes do you hope to see as Colorado implements the new federal legislation Every Student Succeeds Act?

McClellan: It's important that we do an excellent job of listening to the priorities of Colorado stakeholders as we prepare to implement the ESSA in our state. Colorado's accountability system, educational standards, and programs for students with greater needs go above and beyond federal legislation. Reflecting the concerns and priorities of Colorado educators, students, parents and other stakeholders should be the aim as we prepare to implement ESSA in Colorado. We should not manage the public input process for a particular outcome, but rather we should actually listen as stakeholders voice their concerns.

Scheffel: As Colorado implements the Every Student Succeeds Act, I hope we provide additional measures of how we define student success. I also hope we provide additional flexibility to schools and districts in how they both provide for student needs and proof of success. In addition, I hope we honor the requests of teachers, parents, staff and community members not to make too many changes too quickly. We are often told there have been too many changes in the last five years and people need time to adjust to all of the changes. I hope we take the time to gather input from around the state and understand that with the diversity of students and districts, Colorado can't implement a one-size-fits-all education system. We need a system that allows small, large, urban and rural districts the flexibility each needs. I also hope we take the time to understand success does not look the same for each child, some need more time to make a year's worth of learning, and other students need the ability to go faster, even taking college classes while still in high school. I hope Colorado develops a system with more rewards and supports, and less punishment for those still struggling. I also hope Colorado develops more systems which meet the needs of our students and aren't created just to satisfy the federal government.

Additional comments on federal legislation

McClellan: n/a

Scheffel: I will continue to push back on federal intervention in our schools. Meeting their rules to get our tax dollars returned to support our students is not the system that best serves our students or teachers. Too many federal departments make rules for our schools and I will continue to fight for our independence.

PART 7: TALENT PIPELINE

Rate the following statements on a scale of 1-4, where 1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=agree, and 4= strongly agree.

| | Rebecca McClellan | Debora Scheffel |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|
| Colorado is doing a good job of recruiting, compensating and supporting great teachers, particularly in hardest to staff school | 2 | 2 |
| Teachers should be evaluated and held accountable to student outcomes | 3 | 3 |
| School leaders should be evaluated and held accountable to student outcomes. | 3 | 3 |
| District leaders should be evaluated and held accountable to student outcomes. | 3 | 3 |

What do you believe is the greatest challenge Colorado faces in recruiting and retaining great talent in the education system? How do you suggest the state enhance or change its approach to this challenge?

McClellan: We need to honor teachers and school leaders. They are professionals and experts who should be paid commensurately with the critical importance of their professions. We need to pay Colorado teachers more. If we really want to close the achievement gap, we should consider incentivizing the best teachers to work in the most challenged schools. We need to do more to ensure that rural districts are able to attract and retain great teachers through grants or through other mechanisms. We need to find ways to make teaching an attractive option for students graduating from high school and choosing a course of study. We should advocate for innovative solutions like student loan forgiveness programs and improved recruitment for teaching programs by colleges and universities within the districts most in need of teachers, including those with the hardest to serve populations, and rural school districts.

Scheffel: As Dean of a post-secondary School of Education, I speak daily with students who are opting not to join or stay in our profession. The first concern expressed by most is the lack of respect teachers face. They also say they don't want to be in a profession that doesn't give them the flexibility to meet the needs of their students. I also hear that the compensation structure used by many school districts inhibits people who might join the profession and makes it difficult for many to stay. In most districts in Colorado, teachers are paid based on their years of experience and education level. Professionals who wish to become educators after years of experience doing something else are faced with going back to salaries lower than when they started their first career, a move most can't afford to make. In addition, new teachers appreciate the money which goes toward retirement, but their take-home pay may not be enough to adequately support their families. They also look at salary schedules and see that raises aren't based on their effort and don't escalate as fast as other professions. As a local control state, most solutions reside with local districts; however Colorado should try to ensure entry level salaries, especially in rural districts, are raised, and caps on salaries removed, when teachers change districts. Most importantly, we can create an environment of respect for educators by having their voice at the table, showing them the respect they deserve.

Additional comments on federal legislation

McClellan: High stakes testing is not the best way to find out if a teacher is making a positive impact. Excessive testing and evaluations can be counterproductive, pressuring teachers to teach to the test, and taking focus away from valuable classroom instruction and interaction. Accountability systems should respect the finite time available to teachers.

Scheffel: Colorado needs to restructure teacher preparation and professional development programs. College students have an array of majors from which to choose and many have starting salaries higher than teachers. Prep programs need to respond by giving students more experience teaching so that new teachers can be ready to be productive and deserve higher starting salaries. In addition we need more embedded professional development that allows professionals to quickly develop skills.

PART 8: RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Rate the following statements on a scale of 1-4, where 1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=agree, and 4= strongly agree.

| | Rebecca McClellan | Debora Scheffel |
|---|----------------------|--------------------|
| The Colorado education system has adequate funding to provide an effective education for all kids | 1 | 2 |
| The Colorado school funding formula is equitable | 1 | 3 |
| The Colorado Department of Education has the capacity to fulfill its mission | 2 | 3 |
| There should be equitable sharing of locally raised Mill and Bond funds with charter schools | 2 | 4 |

In terms of resources allocation (people/time/money), what is working and not working in Colorado Education?

McClellan: Budgets are moral documents: they reflect our values and priorities. There is a difference between equal funding and equitable funding. At-risk students and underperforming districts may need more resources than districts and students who have historically always done well. There may be a need for additional resources to be allocated in districts that would benefit the most from additional services, especially wraparound services like after-school programs, school counselors, and school health professionals. Some underperforming urban districts and rural districts might be able to attract and retain teachers with additional grants.

Scheffel: Colorado's state legislators have not funded education at the levels in Amendment 23 because of growth in other parts of the state budget. Many districts have backfilled this funding by raising local taxes. Some districts have raised taxes to support facilities. In addition Colorado's local control allows each district to allocate resources and levy taxes on themselves, which means resource allocation in Colorado is not fully equitable. While these factors conspire against equitability, they also allow unique creative solutions to be developed in 178 unique school districts, each with different resource constraints. This gives Coloradans the opportunity to learn from best practices developed in many different environments. Some districts have the resources to provide

additional instruction hours, while some districts don't. Some districts get federal Title I dollars to support their at-risk students, some districts don't. Some districts have additional mills or local sales taxes supporting education, some districts don't. Some districts have cost of living levels which make it challenging for teachers to be able to afford housing, some districts don't. Some districts share local taxes equitably across all schools, some districts don't. Some schools pay for facilities out of operating revenues, some schools don't. What is working and what is not, based on resource allocations, is difficult to determine because there are few studies which tie outcomes to resources.

Additional comments on resource allocation

McClellan: Bond and mill levy sharing should be a local board decision, while charters might be allowed to appeal local funding decisions to the state board. Charter schools already exist in Colorado, with more than 100,000 students attending them. We have an obligation to ensure that these students don't fall through the cracks. On another note, Colorado's fiscal challenges make equitable funding hard to reach, exacerbating the achievement gap. Funding recommendations should reflect that concern.

Scheffel: There is a great variability in resources available to students in CD 6. A student in Cherry Creek has more funding than a student in Douglas County and less than one in Aurora. Our school finance formula was written in 1994 and has not been significantly changed in over two decades. Colorado should be having serious conversations about both the amount and distribution of resources allocated to education to be sure the resources are available to give every student access to great education.

PART 9: COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

McClellan: At a minimum, the law requires that the commissioner "shall have demonstrated personal and professional leadership success, preferably in the administration of public education" and "shall possess an earned advanced degree, preferably in education or education administration awarded from a regionally or nationally accredited college or university." The commissioner, as the state education executive, needs to run a large state agency conducting research, oversight, and guidance duties. He or she also needs to navigate the at times partisan politics of the state board, while maintaining the department as a non-partisan, research based, best practices focused state agency. Finally, the commissioner should have a good relationship with ALL stakeholders, not just the ones who are the loudest, nor the ones who are the easiest to work with.

Scheffel: I hope the next Commissioner of Education is a lifelong learner, passionate about instilling a love of learning in all students and those in the education profession. I want him/her to bring years of experience in great instructional practices, respect the complexities of the teaching profession, and know how hard it has become to be a teacher. The perfect candidate would have teaching experience. I am looking for a strong leader who can inspire others to action especially since the Superintendents in Colorado report to their local school boards, not to the Commissioner. I want a Commissioner with a track record of success. I look for someone who listens well and makes sure all stakeholder voices are heard before making policy changes. They should be attentive to reducing the administrative burden for districts so resources are allocated to classrooms. I want a Commissioner who is a great manager and can lead employees in the department in an inspirational way so they provide top notch support to districts and know how to work with a board with disparate views and opinions. I want a Commissioner who can partner with the legislature and work to make sure laws aren't passed which create burdens on districts. I want a Commissioner who appreciates parent roles in guiding the education of their children. Most important to me is to find a Commissioner with a passion for leading people in a system that works hard every day to meet the needs of all students.

Additional comments on the commissioner of education

McClellan: It is my aim to be a reasonable and calming voice on the state board. We have seen a difficult and some might even say a dysfunctional dynamic on the state board in recent years. With eight years of experience in local government, I believe I can be a positive and steady voice on the board, which I hope will allow for a less stressful experience for the staff at the Department of Education.

Scheffel: I want to thank the A+ team for putting together this survey and the community for learning about the State Board candidates. There are few things more important than making sure every child has access to great public education. I appreciate your desire to get to know how I approach that goal. I have worked with people of various opinions to make decisions that are best for students, parents and teachers. Please visit my website and like my FaceBook page. I ask for your support and your vote.