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Dear Adams 14 Families and Community Members,

I want to sincerely thank you for your patience and dedication as you work with us to grasp the complexities we are facing at Adams County 14 School District. I am deeply saddened that we find ourselves in such a place of misinformation and misunderstanding, and I pledge to do everything in my power to return us to a place of truth and common understanding.

It has been my strongest desire since joining Adams 14 in 2016 to be proactive, transparent and accountable about the day-to-day operations of the district, as well as our short- and long-term goals. We are responsible for the education and enrichment of our more than 7,500 students, and we remain committed to providing the most thorough and exceptional programming to help learners of all languages, all races and all ethnicities – as well as gender identities, backgrounds and abilities – reach their fullest possible potential.

All of us here at Adams 14 are grateful for your support as we strive to meet the needs of our diverse and deserving student population. We appreciate you taking the time to review the following information that we are providing to not only address these issues, but to provide you with clarity.

We thank you for your continued commitment to Adams 14. Your support of our students is invaluable.

Dr. Javier Abrego  
Superintendent

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## **ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING**

In Adams 14 School District, nearly half of our students are English language learners, and as such, Adams 14 deserves the best English Language Development program possible to help our students succeed.

As one of the three districts in Colorado who pioneered the Seal of Biliteracy, we remain committed toward the goal of seeing students who graduate from Adams 14 proudly sporting this seal on their diplomas. As a matter of fact, this year, we are on track to graduate more than twice as many students as last year with the Seal on their diplomas—from 41 last year to around 100 this year.

Adams 14 is not discontinuing our ELD supports or educational programming for any grade. We are simply hitting the “pause” button as we re-evaluate the best way to implement and expand biliteracy programming at the elementary level. We are fortunate to offer a K-3 Biliteracy Program at the elementary level as a part of a program model for educating English learners.

Our plan is to evaluate and devise a program based on data and research that provides a high-quality education for our students. That is why at this time we are *pausing* on expanding biliteracy to 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades, *not repealing*. We want to get the students to the best possible place of biliteracy, but we are not convinced that the current system is working as it should.

Our partners through the University of Colorado’s BUENO Center and its Literacy Squared program have long featured a stated mission of “*Becoming biliterate better, not faster.*” We believe that this is indeed a sound approach, but unfortunately, we have instead felt the push to make this happen faster, rather than better, and now we are hoping to rectify that through this pause in order to properly review the needs of the students, their families, the teachers and the program itself. Thus, we will not be continuing our contract with the BUENO Center and its Literacy Squared program until we conduct a thorough review of our ELD programming across the district.

Due to the District’s Turnaround status and the Office for Civil Rights agreement to resolve, our objective is to thoroughly review our programming so that we can provide the best educational options for our students.

We must adhere to the stipulations set forth by the Office for Civil Rights agreement to resolve, which contains all of the language we need to successfully carry out this mission. However, it is critical that we implement their directives in the most effective way possible. We are concerned that this is not happening to the fullest extent, and we know we can improve. Although there are some discrepancies, we are also facing these challenges at a time when we are experiencing the pressures and realities of Turnaround -- which give us all the more reason to get this right.

Toward that end, we will create a Review Team consisting of an ELD Coordinator, University Representatives, Biliteracy Teacher and experts from other school districts. Currently, Tonia Lopez, Assistant Principal at Adams City Middle School, is supporting the ELD department temporarily due to a recent resignation and the maternity leave of a staff member. Tonia will support this work and also be a part of the review team. The Review Team will plan to meet with school teams the first week of May to begin identifying areas of strength and areas of growth for each school. The Review team will then compile data from all of the schools to create a picture of where the district is and what the next steps need to be for the district.

The Review Team will focus on five areas of ELD programming when they conduct their reviews. These five areas consist of:

1. ELD Student Data
2. Compliance—The Lifecycle of an EL student
3. Instructional Models and Resources

- 4. Intervention
- 5. Parent Partnerships

The last ELD program review was conducted back in May of 2013 by the BUENO Center, which provided the District with recommendations. When we considered pulling a Review Team together, we reached out a couple of former BUENO Center staff members who were a part of this original review to be a part of this team. Unfortunately, due to personal health issues and time commitment, they weren't able to commit. As we review our schools, we plan on using the 2013 BUENO Center review as a resource to determine whether their recommendations are still relevant in 2018.

With two more months of the school year left, there is an urgency to conduct these school reviews so we can begin to further explore the state of our ELD programming in Adams 14. This review will allow the district to begin creating an updated strategic plan for ELD.

To ensure we are creating a strong plan that meets the expectations of our OCR agreement to resolve, as well as our Turnaround plan, we will seek expert advice to develop a revised long-term ELD plan. We will do this by establishing an expert ELD committee which will provide advice, guidance, and support to help the district provide the best ELD program for our students.

### **RECESS**

Through recess, physical education, fitness breaks, classroom activities and field trips that include physical activity, we are meeting the needs of our students fully on an ongoing basis as required by state law. Due to both staff and parent concerns regarding the repurposing of recess minutes for more instructional time, I released a memo in March to advise principals to include a 15-minute break consisting of a 10-minute recess and 5 minutes for transition as a part of the instructional day. Each school was given guidance on how to integrate the additional break during the day. To ensure we are providing a long-term solution, the Superintendent established a Recess Advisory Committee composed of staff and community members—including parents and families—to further explore the topic and make recommendations for physical activity programming options. The committee has already begun its work and plans to provide recommendations by May.

### **PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Adams 14 believes that the involvement and cooperation of parents and families is imperative to the success of the child, and so we have created a wide variety of ways for parents to communicate with teachers and receive crucial information, including:

- Face-to-face meetings that can be arranged at any time via phone call, email or through the website, for any time agreeable to the parent and the teacher. This is all being provided under an arrangement whereby teachers have available an hour and a half of plan time, morning arrival and end of day dismissal times for parent outreach and engagement. Additionally, principals were granted the use of one 45-minute teacher data talk meeting per month for parent conferences or time to meet with parents, as needed.

- The ability to check a student’s grades and progress through the Parent Portal at Infinite Campus, which features a Spanish-language translation platform
- Through the Adams 14 website or individual school websites, which offers multiple access points for connecting with staff members and the administration, including emailing a teacher
- The opportunity at any time, through prior arrangements with the teacher, to observe one’s child in class
- Parent-engagement days and school-wide meetings, where information pertinent to the school at large is shared

### **INCLUSIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT**

We take complaints and comments extremely seriously, including those addressing any potentially hostile work environments, and we follow to the letter all guidelines stipulated by the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights in addressing any raised issues. We review and investigate any and all complaints we receive, and immediately address them in the most effective way possible.

Our website features a prominently displayed complaint/concern portal, with a high-profile position on the Adams 14 website home page and options for submissions in English and Spanish.

We continually strive to significantly empower all families and community members to become engaged partners in their child’s education, by creating welcoming environments District-wide that reflect and support a culturally diverse population, which is listed as one the Board of Education’s strategic imperatives.

### **DISTRICT PROGRESS MONITORING**

After the State Board of Education approved the District’s Turnaround plan in June 2017, the District has worked with the Colorado Department of Education to create a district progress monitoring tool to track the district’s turnaround efforts and monitor its performance through established indicators and regularly scheduled reviews.

Lisa Medler, Executive Director of Improvement Planning at the Colorado Department of Education, meets regularly with District administration to monitor the District’s Turnaround plan and check our status in achieving our proposed goals.

As a district that has not met state expectations for more than six years, accountability systems were in dire need of being redeveloped and established in order to effectively track key indicators outlined in the District’s Turnaround plan. This school year, the district began to implement its Turnaround plan and has made a concerted effort to strengthen accountability and data tracking systems to ensure we are moving toward the goal of moving the needle on student success and school improvement.

As reported in the most recent State Board of Education mid-year Summary of Student Performance Trends in Adams 14, our team has established “new reporting and accountability systems across our schools, which are vital to know when students need additional support,” and we are working on



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additional assessments to assist the schools, the District and the state in determining District-wide progress.

As we continue to strive for excellence in establishing a system that delivers results, we are constantly reviewing our process through a continuous improvement feedback loop to implement, test, evaluate and improve the way we deliver services. For example, data from classroom observations has led the District to provide professional development such as Kagan's Classroom Management and Student Engagement training and Strive's small-group instruction training to address the needs within the District. We appreciate the Board of Education's support for investing in our Adams 14 educators.