

Union Pulse

Colorado Springs Education Association
January 28, 2021

CSEA History, Part 4: The History of School Closures in District 11

What is history? An echo of the past in the future; a reflex from the future on the past. – Victor Hugo

In the early 1980's, the Colorado Springs District 11 Board of Education decided to close two schools – Lowell Elementary and South Junior High School. These marked the first closures with the reasoning being “aging facilities and declining enrollment.” The Colorado Springs Business journal [wrote in 2008](#) when District 11 again decided to close schools, “That decision ... may have been economically sound, but it was otherwise disastrous.” In 2009, the District closed or repurposed 10 schools, relying on the same reasoning as well as the loss of funding. In 2012, three more schools were closed/repurposed. Interestingly, closures since the passage of TABOR have largely been on the heels of political campaigns. For example, a successful 2000 MLO, a failed 2008 MLO, and the successful 2017 MLO campaigns all rallied the staff – Teachers, ESP, and Exec Pros – to support the BOE sponsored measure. The sense of community and solidarity to maintain neighborhood schools was critical to staff support of these measures. Even when closures and repurposing occurred (with its political fallout), the solidarity established in these campaigns limited the divisiveness of closures to the extent possible. For example, the 2013 Wasson closure was hard on the community. However, the District committed to finding reemployment for staff, even after the legislature made forced transfer unacceptable with SB 10-191.

Now, in 2021, these types of discussions are front and center. The Facilities Master Plan and Academic Master Plan processes are somewhat obscured for many members, mostly because “the teaching cup runneth over.” The challenges, anxieties, and lack of interaction we feel from COVID-19 hamper awareness and discussion. CSEA continues to advocate for staff amidst this discussion of massive change. We are vocally and emphatically promoting the past precedents that were used from 1982 through 2013. We push the District to value staff and to mitigate the negative consequences that accompany closures and other systemic changes of academic programming. Again, there may be good economic reasons to examine closure and repurposing – but we remain committed as an organization to insisting that staff are afforded opportunity to remain and honored for their investment in the District.



Thumbs Up – to the new CSEA Executive Committee! Joe Schott, President, has been reelected for a second 3-year term. Monica Peeler, Vice President, will be serving her first term as VP. Amanda Hawkins, Treasurer, has been re-elected to continue in her role. Chris Gunn is new to the Board of Directors and will be serving as Secretary. Each officer has prepared a short note to you- our wonderful CSEA members!

Dear Members,

*The opportunity to serve again as your president comes as a great honor.
Our employer, D11, will see some significant challenges and opportunities in*

the next few years, which means we will, too. Recognizing that we remain stronger together than apart, we can rely on our fundamental value of solidarity to help us seize the moment and empower teachers to lead the way in educating our students, while preserving our rights.

Thank you for your commitment and dedication, without which education would flounder.

Joe Schott, President

Dear Members,

I would like to say thank you for giving me the opportunity to lead and serve in our association! I am grateful for this new opportunity and I am looking forward to working alongside you. I am inspired by all of you and I am looking forward to the great things we will accomplish this year and beyond.

Monica Peeler, Vice President

It is a pleasure and an honor to serve as CSEA treasurer for another term. I appreciate your trust in me. Your membership in CSEA is valuable and I would like to thank you for your membership. There have been so many changes and surprises this year; your engagement has been appreciated. Remember, it's not what can the union do for me, we are the union. Your voice drives the agenda. I look forward to working with you all.

Amanda Hawkins, Treasurer

CSEA Members and Executive Committee,

I am pleased to receive your offer and graciously accept the position as Secretary of the CSEA Executive Committee. I would like to thank the members of CSEA for this great opportunity to serve and work with you.

Again, I thank you and look forward to meeting you soon.

Very respectfully,

Chris Gunn, Secretary

Announcements
Mitchell Turnaround Status

As was announced to Mitchell High School Staff on Monday, District 11's Board of Education tasked the Superintendent with improving achievement at MHS to move them off the state's accountability clock. The Superintendent chose a path that means all staff are released from their positions at the end of the school year so that the school can be reconstituted. Such a decision is one that rests solely with the Board of Education. CSEA members, in the building and around the District, worked for several years to solve achievement issues by developing an innovation plan to no avail. Although the staff provided excellent thinking on academic innovations they could adopt, the administrative team insisted that the innovation plan must gut teacher rights and protections for no academic reason. Teachers declined. We will continue to support the MHS staff in the hiring and placement process and ask the membership to support each other in this situation.

Election Results

You've seen the results of CSEA's first round of elections. Elections provide the opportunity for members to shape the Association's direction and decisions, as well as join in the decision-making team. A number of our Delegates to the CEA Delegate Assembly will be attending for the first time, and one is even a first-year teacher. Engagement makes our Association vital! See the full list of delegates on the member side of our website [here](#).

Tell the Colorado General Assembly: Cancel 2021 CMAS Testing

Make your voice heard- demand that the state legislature take IMMEDIATE action to cancel this year's CMAS testing. Our students, educators, and schools are navigating so many challenges right now - let's not add standardized testing to this list. <http://coloea.org/cancel-cmas>

There is still time to submit your nominations for this year's CEA Awards!

- **All nominations are due by 5:00 PM on February 3, 2021**
- With so many people doing extraordinary things in their classrooms, school buildings, meeting rooms, and at the legislature, we need your help to find them. You can nominate a friend, fellow association member, community leader, or colleague – any Coloradoan who you admire and believe exemplifies the criteria of a respective award.
- Submit a nomination here: <https://form.jotform.com/203156536075151>
- View the 2021 Awards Criteria and Nomination Booklet here: <https://www.coloradoea.org/wp-content/uploads/2021-CEA-Awards-Nomination-Book.pdf>
- Learn more on the CEA website: <https://www.coloradoea.org/professional-excellence/cea-annual-awards/>

Virtual Events

Preparing Effective Feedback for Educators: From observation to action planning and follow-up

- February 2 – 4, multiple days and times
- The Educator Effectiveness team at CDE is presenting its Winter PLC in early February. During the PLC, participants will be building upon content explored during the Fall PLCs (prior attendance not required) related to gathering observation data that is specific, non-judgmental and bias free. Participants will explore next steps in the evaluation process once observation data is collected and sorted. The key components of interpreting the data and preparing and delivering effective feedback in support of educators' growth will be the focus. Anyone with a role in educator evaluations is encouraged to attend,

including and not limited to superintendents, district leadership, principals, evaluators, educators, and members of the Advisory Personnel Performance Evaluation Council (formerly 1338).

- **To register please visit**

http://www.cde.state.co.us/educatoreffectiveness/regional_supports The same content will be offered during each session and will be offered virtually at the following times:

Tuesday, February 2, 2021 – 1:00 PM to 3:30 PM

Wednesday, February 3, 2021 – 8:30 AM to 11:00 AM

Thursday, February 4, 2021 – 8:30 AM to 11:00 AM

Articles of Note

[Colorado State Lawmakers Plan Push To Skip School Standardized Tests Because Of Coronavirus](#)

[Coloradans Can Save 4,000 Lives By Summer If They Keep Up COVID-19 Precautions, New Model Says](#)

[Vaccinated Colorado Teachers Won't Have To Quarantine, Governor Says](#)

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This correspondence is intended for members of CSEA, ESPA, CEA, and their families. It is not intended for public distribution.