

Times-Call Video Question

What are the school district's strengths, and what are its most pressing weaknesses? How would you address these weaknesses?

The district is now stronger as a result of reversing the financial damage of 2002 -- the district regrouped and emerged as a recognized example of excellence in the areas of internal auditing and reporting. This has led to a growing confidence in the district's financial management matters.

It was this confidence that contributed to the voter support for the override and bond measures that passed last fall. The enhancement of curriculum choices around various schools has added to the district's academic standing alongside others around the state. And, the district's employees include many talented and dedicated teachers, administrators and support staff.

But having talked to hundreds of residents over the last number of years I've heard a number of comments concerning information relative to individual schools. The district does a reliable job of providing required district-wide information to residents via annual reports, financial reports, and other regular publications. And there is standard information available on each school. However, I would encourage the district to assist individual schools to be able to provide detailed information to their parents and communities. Some examples I hear about are -- what does it mean for my school to now be a "focus school"? Is there special funding for that? Where is it coming from? Does the "focus" designation create any inequities?

Also, if a member - I would suggest that the board of education continue to encourage the superintendent and district staff to seek community input into any number of decisions and grow the community and business partnerships. The "weaknesses" St. Vrain would have -- in my view -- are those like any number of other large public school districts in our state -- to improve on relationships with all the various "stakeholders" of the district -- residents, parents, employees, businesses, and local authorities.

But the biggest challenges will be for our district -- as well as others in Colorado -- to meet the demands of parents and residents for academic diversity, assessment achievement, facility equity and financial and taxation accountability. No easy task but good and open communication among all involved will go a long way to meeting those challenges.