

## EDITORIAL

# Grading our schools

**P**EOPLE IN this community have strong opinions about Pueblo City Schools (D60). Heck, we've been known to express a few of them on our Opinions pages from time to time.

So when the district is actively soliciting comments and suggestions on how it could improve, it would be a shame to pass up an opportunity to provide them. That's why we're encouraging people to participate in an online survey that D60 is using as part of its efforts to craft a five-year strategic plan.

Input from the surveys will be used along with information collected during a series of eight focus group meetings that wrapped up last month. Those meetings were well attended, with about 400 students, teachers, parents and other stakeholders participating.

Even so, there are many people in the community district officials haven't heard from yet. And the public has until 11:59 p.m. Friday to make their voices heard in this phase of the planning process.

The survey is pretty easy to complete. Just go to [pueblocitieschools.us](http://pueblocitieschools.us) and click on the "community surveys" button on the left-hand side of the home page. Then click on the choice for the strategic planning survey and answer a couple of questions to get started. One quirk is that survey participants need to click on a sentence describing their relationship with the district rather than clicking on the box next to that sentence. Once that's done, though, it only takes a matter of minutes to complete the survey.

For people who don't have students

in D60 schools or family members who work there, some of the questions may be difficult to answer. For instance, if you're not a parent of a D60 student, you probably have no idea whether the school buses usually run on time or not.

We encourage you to participate in the survey even if you don't know someone who works at or goes to school in D60. As taxpayers, we are all stakeholders in the school district. And how well D60 prepares students for the challenges they'll face in adulthood will have a big impact on our community's future.

D60's board of education plans to use data from the surveys and the focus group meetings to formulate a long-range plan that is supposed to take into account numerous issues, including student achievement, facilities and equipment needs, school safety, teacher recruitment and retention, budget planning, extracurricular and enrichment activities — to name just a few.

We're hopeful that the strategic plan will be long on substance and comparatively short on "touchy-feely" exercises like updating the district's mission and vision statements. We're not aware of any students anywhere who've gotten into better colleges or landed better jobs because their school districts had really top-notch mission statements.

This planning process can have a lot of value, though, if it's handled in the right way. D60 officials need our support and encouragement as they go through what is certain to be a difficult exercise.

One of the best ways to do that now is to complete the online survey.