

1 DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION  
STATE OF MISSOURI

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NORMANDY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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PUBLIC HEARING

9

DECEMBER 11, 2013

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Normandy High School

Viking Hall Auditorium

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St. Charles Rock Road

St. Louis, Missouri 63121

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(Starting time of hearing: 6:30 p.m.)

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| Page 2 | <p style="text-align: center;">I N D E X</p> <p>1 Opening Remarks by Ms. Vandeven 5</p> <p>2 Presentation from Dr. Lankford 7</p> <p>3 Comments from Ms. Vandeven 15</p> <p>4 Public Comment Portion</p> <p>5 Kim Morris 17</p> <p>6 Sydney BoClair 18</p> <p>7 Henry Watts 20</p> <p>8 Robert McRath 22</p> <p>9 Herbert Clifton 24</p> <p>10 Robert Miller 28</p> <p>11 Sharon Venerable 29</p> <p>12 Sam Shannon 31</p> <p>13 Zenola Shelton 33</p> <p>14 Montague Simmons 35</p> <p>15 Kourtney Shelton 38</p> <p>16 Dryver Henderson 39</p> <p>17 Debra Grayer 43</p> <p>18 Raquan Smith 44</p> <p>19 Jamarr Porter 46</p> <p>20 Earl Clay 47</p> <p>21 Monica Huddleston 50</p> <p>22 Henry Iwenofu 52</p> <p>23 James McGee 56</p> <p>24 Paul Davis 59</p>  |
| Page 4 | <p style="text-align: center;">A P P E A R A N C E S</p> <p>1 Present for the Department of Elementary and Secondary</p> <p>2 Education:</p> <p>3 Dr. Chris Nicastro, Commissioner of Education</p> <p>4 Ms. Margie Vandeven, Deputy Commissioner</p> <p>5 Dr. Ronald Lankford, Deputy Commissioner</p> <p>6 Dr. Tim Ricker, Area Supervisor</p> <p>7 Dr. Maureen Clancy-May, Area Supervisor</p> <p>8 Ms. Sarah Potter, Communications Coordinator</p> <p>9</p> <p>10 Also Present:</p> <p>11 Dr. Tyrone McNichols, Superintendent of Normandy</p> <p>12 Schools</p> <p>13</p> <p>14</p> <p>15</p> <p>16</p> <p>17</p> <p>18</p> <p>19</p> <p>20 The Court Reporter:</p> <p>21 Suzanne Zes</p> <p>22 Midwest Litigation Services</p> <p>23 711 North Eleventh Street</p> <p>24 St. Louis, MO 63101</p> <p>25 314.644.2191</p> <p>314.644.1334 Fax</p>   |
| Page 3 | <p>1 Closing Remarks 59</p> <p>2</p> <p>3 (No exhibits were marked.)</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p> <p>6</p> <p>7</p> <p>8</p> <p>9</p> <p>10</p> <p>11</p> <p>12</p> <p>13</p> <p>14</p> <p>15</p> <p>16</p> <p>17</p> <p>18</p> <p>19</p> <p>20</p> <p>21</p> <p>22</p> <p>23</p> <p>24</p> <p>25</p>   |
| Page 5 | <p style="text-align: center;">P R O C E E D I N G S</p> <p>1 MS. VANDEVEN: Good evening. We would</p> <p>2 like to go ahead and begin our presentation this</p> <p>3 evening and the public hearing. Okay. Thank you</p> <p>4 very much.</p> <p>5 First of all, we would like to welcome you</p> <p>6 and thank you for attending this evening, especially</p> <p>7 in showing your interest in the Normandy School</p> <p>8 District and in the success of its children. It's a</p> <p>9 pleasure to be here tonight to gather input from the</p> <p>10 community in efforts to support the district and</p> <p>11 your children.</p> <p>12 I would like to begin by introducing a few</p> <p>13 key people who are with us this evening. First of</p> <p>14 all, you all know Commissioner Nicastro.</p> <p>15 Commissioner Dr. Chris Nicastro is here with us</p> <p>16 tonight. Deputy commissioner Dr. Ron Lankford.</p> <p>17 Assistant commissioner Dennis Cooper. Our</p> <p>18 communications coordinator Sarah Potter and your St.</p> <p>19 Louis Regional area supervisors, Dr. Tim Ricker and</p> <p>20 Dr. Maureen Clancy-May, are here with us this</p> <p>21 evening as well. And, finally, we also have one of</p> <p>22 our state board members, Dr. Vic Lenz is here with</p> <p>23 us this evening as well.</p> <p>24 I would like to extend a special thank you to</p> <p>25</p> |

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1 Dr. McNichols for the wonderful hospitality and to  
 2 all of the Normandy community for welcoming us in  
 3 and having the arrangements set up for us. We  
 4 really do thank you for all your cooperation with  
 5 that.  
 6 To make this meeting go smoothly this  
 7 evening, we'd ask for your cooperation with a couple  
 8 of points. We will -- the meeting is scheduled from  
 9 6:30 until 8:00 p.m. We will begin with a few  
 10 remarks from the department and then we will move  
 11 immediately to the comment -- public comment period.  
 12 And, again, I would like to remind you there  
 13 are a number of ways for you to submit public  
 14 comment. We have public comment cards. Those are  
 15 the light yellow cards that you may write your  
 16 comments down. We also will have verbal remarks.  
 17 So if you fill out the golden cards, if you would  
 18 like to speak this evening, we will collect those  
 19 and we will draw those names this evening as well.  
 20 And then also you may send an email to Normandy  
 21 comments at DESE dot mo dot gov.  
 22 So if you wish, again, to provide oral  
 23 comments this evening we do need to make sure we're  
 24 able to collect those cards. Ushers will be by to  
 25 collect those as well.

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1 At this point I would like to move to the  
 2 presentation and introduce to you again deputy  
 3 commissioner Dr. Ron Lankford.  
 4 DR. LANKFORD: Good evening. And I  
 5 commend you all for coming out on this cold evening  
 6 to talk about your school district, the Normandy  
 7 School District.  
 8 I would mention that over the last six months  
 9 I have grown well-acquainted with Dr. McNichols and  
 10 Dr. Trish Adkins and also Mr. Mick Willis. And made  
 11 several trips to the Normandy School District and  
 12 visiting with them and visiting your schools.  
 13 And based upon those visits I know that your  
 14 students, your parents, your teachers and your  
 15 community have the same goals and aspirations for  
 16 the children being served that I personally have for  
 17 my seven grandchildren.  
 18 This is my 41st year in some aspect of public  
 19 education, 37 years in school -- school districts  
 20 and the fourth year with the department. So over my  
 21 career I have seen several changes.  
 22 School accountability was something that was  
 23 not really known of when I went into the business in  
 24 the early 1970s. We had school each day and we  
 25 closed the school years and closed the school

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1 buildings and resumed in the fall. But in 1983  
 2 there was something that occurred in the nation that  
 3 caught the attention of the public and I can  
 4 remember as a young high school principal dealing,  
 5 trying to come to grips with this thing that was  
 6 called the "Nation at Risk." And this report had  
 7 been done by the National Commission On Excellence  
 8 In Education. And, since that time, public  
 9 education and the quality of public education has  
 10 been at the forefront of political discussion in our  
 11 country.  
 12 There was a statement in that report that  
 13 caught the attention of the news media and it still  
 14 today will be referred to from time to time. And it  
 15 said if an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to  
 16 impose on America the mediocre educational  
 17 performance that exists today, we might well have  
 18 viewed it as an act of war. That was 30 years ago.  
 19 A strong indictment not favorable to public  
 20 education or the educational system in America.  
 21 The immediate response to that was in 1985,  
 22 in the State of Missouri, there was a piece of  
 23 legislation passed. It was called the Missouri  
 24 Excellence in Education Act. Much discussion about  
 25 improving Missouri schools spun off directly from

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1 the 1983 report culminating in 1983 with a new piece  
 2 of legislation called the Outstanding Schools Act.  
 3 And the goal of that was to assure quality schools  
 4 in every community but the quality of each school  
 5 would be defined by student performance.  
 6 When it was passed there were many things  
 7 that were brought into existence we had not known  
 8 before. An increase in funding for any school  
 9 districts in the State of Missouri all for the  
 10 purpose of improving public education. That has  
 11 been 20 years ago.  
 12 As a result of that law we are dealing with  
 13 the situation in the Normandy School District that  
 14 most probably was unanticipated at the time it was  
 15 passed. When it was passed in 1983, there was a  
 16 section called -- numbered 167.131, which prior to  
 17 that time had addressed K-8 districts about sending  
 18 students to school districts because a K-8 did not  
 19 provide a high school.  
 20 But they also included the unaccredited  
 21 school districts and it mandated that when a school  
 22 district was unaccredited, that the school district  
 23 or the students in the school district could attend  
 24 another school district, accredited school district,  
 25 within the county or an adjoining county.

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1 The State of Missouri addressed that. There  
 2 was in the St. Louis School District a court case  
 3 was filed. It had been in litigation and finally in  
 4 June of last year the Supreme Court upheld 147.131.  
 5 As a result of that, the Normandy and the Riverview  
 6 Garden School Districts had to address massive  
 7 redistribution of students or transfer students  
 8 beginning in the school year.  
 9 The timing was late. It was a June decision.  
 10 School had been closed. Contracts had been put in  
 11 place. Planning at the incoming school districts  
 12 had been put in place and a sudden shift of students  
 13 had to be dealt with.  
 14 In the attempt to help address the Normandy  
 15 School District's financial situation, in September  
 16 the Missouri State Board of Education approved a  
 17 request of a supplemental appropriation of  
 18 \$6.8 million to help Normandy bridge the gap of the  
 19 tuition payments.  
 20 At this time we do not know what is going to  
 21 happen with that request but the request was made.  
 22 There was very limited discussion with the  
 23 superintendent and the finance officer of this  
 24 school district but we worked with them to come up  
 25 with a number that we believed would bridge that

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1 gap.  
 2 You've probably read the news that yesterday  
 3 the Supreme Court dealt with the Kansas City  
 4 questions similar to this and, again, upheld that.  
 5 The best that we could do in June was issue  
 6 some type of guidance on behalf of the sending and  
 7 receiving school district relative to class size,  
 8 relative to transportation, relative to the handling  
 9 of tuition. And we must say that we commend the  
 10 receiving school districts, the Normandy School  
 11 District and the Riverview Gardens School District,  
 12 for the efforts that they made to implement a very  
 13 troublesome law that was 20 years ago enacted.  
 14 Under the law that was in effect until  
 15 August 28th of this year, the state board only had  
 16 three options. It had no power to intervene in  
 17 either school district. Prior to Senate Bill 125 or  
 18 August 29th, which happened to be after school had  
 19 already started, we had the option of replacing the  
 20 locally-elected Board of Education with a special  
 21 administrative board under the presumption it was  
 22 the fault of the Board of Education.  
 23 It had the option of merging the district  
 24 with a neighboring school district or subdividing  
 25 the district and merging it with numerous adjacent

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1 school districts.  
 2 Under Senate Bill 125 it became -- went into  
 3 effect on August 29th. There was another provision  
 4 for other, other options, which is not clearly  
 5 defined and the state Board of Education is seeking  
 6 to provide some definitions about what the other  
 7 might be with the goal of improving education in  
 8 struggling school districts, Normandy, and others  
 9 that are classified as such or might be classified  
 10 as such in the future.  
 11 The one thing that the state board did not  
 12 have the power to do was stop the transfers because  
 13 167.131 was statute. The state board can set aside  
 14 a rule that it has enacted but it cannot set aside  
 15 state statute. The statute needs to be addressed.  
 16 We also need to look at how we might help  
 17 struggling school districts improve programs. We  
 18 believe that the focus of improvement of a state  
 19 plan must focus on the needs of children and  
 20 families. We believe that access to quality  
 21 education should be made available in the  
 22 neighborhoods where the students live.  
 23 We believe that there is a collective  
 24 responsibility for school improvement. School  
 25 improvement will not be sufficient or will not be

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1 accomplished within the walls of a schoolhouse  
 2 alone. But it will be necessary that in each local  
 3 community all parents or caregivers, all patrons,  
 4 all civic and faith-based organizations, all  
 5 businesses within those communities share a  
 6 responsibility of the common goal of providing  
 7 quality education.  
 8 Choice has been in existence in both Kansas  
 9 City and St. Louis through the charter movement.  
 10 Choice is now in existence in the Normandy School  
 11 District. Choice is now operational instructional  
 12 schools. But how can it be manageable choice?  
 13 We believe there needs to be a sense of  
 14 urgency about a plan that will enable us to embrace  
 15 the goals of the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993,  
 16 which was that all students would have quality  
 17 education. The process must embrace conditions that  
 18 foster great schools. Hope is not a strategy but  
 19 embracing those plans.  
 20 It must implement instructional strategies  
 21 that work for the benefit of students. The process  
 22 must draw on best practices from successful schools  
 23 in the region, in the state, across the country and  
 24 even around the world where research has been being  
 25 done. It must include community input and a

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1 demonstration of community commitment to the process  
 2 of improving the quality of education in each school  
 3 district.  
 4 The process must implement a statewide system  
 5 that provides necessary support and intervention for  
 6 all students beginning with quality early childhood  
 7 education programs. And the process must implement  
 8 a plan that results in improved student performance.  
 9 The process must think out of the box about  
 10 achieving those things so that the students, whether  
 11 it be in Normandy, or whether it be in the bootheel  
 12 of Missouri or the extreme sides, east, west, north  
 13 or south, that all students are guaranteed.  
 14 The Missouri State Board of Education is  
 15 committed to that goal for the nearly 900,000  
 16 students that are served by public institutions. It  
 17 will take collaboration and a partnership between  
 18 the educators of the State of Missouri, the parents  
 19 of the State of Missouri, the state Board of  
 20 Education. All of us will have to work together but  
 21 in the end the goal is to benefit the students  
 22 served in the school districts.  
 23 So I wanted to say these things to -- if the  
 24 state board could come in and just switch a -- or  
 25 flip a switch and change the transfer law, it

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1 probably would do that. But it's going to take some  
 2 legislative action and working with a sound plan to  
 3 address the inefficiencies in the statute as it now  
 4 exists but simply addressing that inefficiency, if  
 5 it does not in the end bring improvement to the  
 6 services to our students, we have only gotten half  
 7 the problem that we need to deal with.  
 8 So tonight we want your input that will help  
 9 us get a better notion of the guidance and the  
 10 direction and the level of commitment of this  
 11 community toward improving of the Normandy School  
 12 District. Thank you.  
 13 MS. VANDEVEN: Okay. Great. And now  
 14 we'll move to the public comment period. If you  
 15 wish to speak tonight please make sure your speaker  
 16 cards have been submitted. If you still have one  
 17 raise -- we'll be collecting them.  
 18 And just to let you know we're sorting the  
 19 speaker cards into three categories this evening:  
 20 staff members, students and then community members,  
 21 so that we're sure to hear from each representative  
 22 group. And we'll just keep rotating through those  
 23 baskets as the night progresses. If your name is  
 24 called we ask that you proceed immediately to the  
 25 microphone, one of these microphones in the front of

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1 room.  
 2 Each speaker will be limited to five minutes  
 3 and our timekeepers will keep you -- will keep track  
 4 of the time. When they raise their one-minute  
 5 warning side, we would ask that you move to your  
 6 concluding remarks.  
 7 Audience members are asked to permit each  
 8 speaker to present without interruption. Applause  
 9 or other distractions during the speaker's  
 10 presentation will be counted as part of the  
 11 speaker's time.  
 12 Any speaker who runs out of time will be  
 13 invited to discontinue and submit the comments in  
 14 writing or email.  
 15 The final speaker will be called no later  
 16 than 7:50 to allow for a full five minutes of  
 17 comment and closing remarks. And it's important to  
 18 know that all comments, verbal and written, become a  
 19 part of the public record and may be posted on the  
 20 department's website verbatim.  
 21 So, again, we appreciate you being here this  
 22 evening. I would like to remind you of  
 23 Dr. Lankford's comments about collective capacity  
 24 and our common goal of quality education and remind  
 25 you that these public hearings are an opportunity

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1 for us to learn more about community resources that  
 2 may be useful or necessary to help move the district  
 3 back to regaining its accreditation.  
 4 So thank you very much. At this point I'll  
 5 hand it over to Dr. Cooper to announce the first two  
 6 speakers.  
 7 MR. COOPER: Kim Morris?  
 8 MS. MORRIS: Good evening. The last  
 9 time I didn't get to speak, so I made notes for  
 10 Dr. Nicastro and the state board. I speak on behalf  
 11 of the many taxpayers of the Normandy School  
 12 District.  
 13 First I want to say it is now 2013 and we  
 14 graciously accepted the children you wanted us to  
 15 from Wellston, which we love, no problem, we did  
 16 that cause we do love them. However, you also  
 17 promised the time to make it work, which you did  
 18 not.  
 19 You also implemented the student transfer law  
 20 that has caused all kinds of problems, mainly with  
 21 the taxpayers being hit multiple times in our  
 22 pocket. Francis Howell is getting extra money from  
 23 our tax dollars. Some of our students are going to  
 24 high-end districts like Clayton on our dime.  
 25 And, finally, we have a tax bill due to St.

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1 Louis County by December 31st. What about that?  
 2 Are you going to give us our refund?  
 3 All I ask for is our accreditation back so we  
 4 can all have a celebration. That's all I ask of  
 5 you. You told me that we didn't have anything to  
 6 worry about. That's all I'm saying.  
 7 MR. COOPER: Next we have a student,  
 8 Sydney BoClair. Sydney will be followed by Henry  
 9 Watts.  
 10 MS. BoCLAIR: I'm speaking on behalf of  
 11 the GATE program at Normandy Middle School. You  
 12 laid off our teacher, Ms. Kelly Schneider (ph), so  
 13 now we don't have a GATE program. For you guys that  
 14 don't know what GATE is, it's gifted and talented  
 15 education.  
 16 And so we're working on a project that could  
 17 help someone in our school. We are working on a  
 18 project that is civil rights or rights for  
 19 everybody. And the thing is if you close down our  
 20 GATE program, we can't help the school district out  
 21 and we need the GATE program not to close down  
 22 because unaccredited schools need the GATE program  
 23 because that's the gifted kids and if you close down  
 24 the GATE program then what would we do? We have the  
 25 Abbott (ph) program for other gifted kids but the

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1 kids who are in GATE, won't go -- all of them won't  
 2 go to about Abbott.  
 3 We won't have a program to help us out. We  
 4 won't have a program that will help us show our  
 5 abilities in school because if we don't have a GATE  
 6 program then some of us might not get A's because  
 7 we're just bored in class -- well, we will get A's  
 8 but we'll just be bored in class because there's  
 9 nothing to give us a little push over the bump.  
 10 So what I'm saying is can you help us out  
 11 with the GATE program so that way we won't have to  
 12 be bored in the classroom. We won't go to sleep in  
 13 the classroom just because we're bored.  
 14 If you close down the Abbott program we're  
 15 doomed because we'll have no gifted kids. We have a  
 16 lot of gifted kids. A lot of them are going to a  
 17 different classroom where everybody is just talking  
 18 loud and that's what's going happen.  
 19 So what we're doing is we're wondering if you  
 20 could not lay off Ms. Schneider so that way we don't  
 21 have to lose our gifted program, that way our test  
 22 scores will go up because we're helping the school  
 23 out and we're helping ourselves because Ms. Kelly --  
 24 Ms. Schneider is giving us the little push that we  
 25 need.

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1 MR. COOPER: Henry Watts? And Henry  
 2 will be followed by Robert McRath.  
 3 MR. WATTS: Good evening.  
 4 AUDIENCE: Good evening.  
 5 MR. WATTS: I'm here to speak tonight  
 6 from many different viewpoints. I'm a parent in the  
 7 Normandy School District. I'm a grandparent now in  
 8 the Normandy School District. I have been a part of  
 9 the district for more than 30 years. I have been  
 10 with it through the ups, the downs, the cease the  
 11 desists.  
 12 We are a community of 24 different pieces  
 13 that all filtrates into this school system. Unlike  
 14 any other district, you will not find another  
 15 district as unique as we are, period.  
 16 We know what our troubles are and we need to  
 17 solve our own problems in our own community. And  
 18 that's what we will do. We don't need the help from  
 19 someone that doesn't live and/or breathe in this  
 20 district to come in and tell us what we need to do.  
 21 We know what we need to do. We have an  
 22 administrative team in place today. What we ask  
 23 today is to give that administrative team the two  
 24 years they need to turn this school around.  
 25 We need Dr. McNichols and his administrative

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1 team and that's what we're asking. My words are  
 2 simple and it's a period. We will not stand by and  
 3 watch this school district close, period. I said  
 4 earlier I do not want to drive down Natural Bridge  
 5 and see the lights out. These lights will stay on.  
 6 We will all be committed to bringing this  
 7 district back to where it was and we have a team in  
 8 place to do that. All we ask is the state to give  
 9 us the time to do that. That's all we ask. We  
 10 don't want you coming in and messing with this  
 11 district, close this school. I don't want my  
 12 grandchild to be ushered off into another district.  
 13 And what I didn't hear is the impact on our  
 14 families. I didn't hear that. I didn't hear people  
 15 talk about how this is going to impact the families  
 16 that now have to strive to get their kids to some  
 17 other area that they don't know about, period.  
 18 We are a community of 24 but we all are one  
 19 and I ask everyone to join us in making sure our  
 20 district stays solid and give our administrative  
 21 team the time to make this district a success again.  
 22 So with that, I'll close but I'm here to stay  
 23 and the district will be here to stay. Thank you.  
 24 MR. COOPER: We have Robert McRath and  
 25 next we have Herbert Clifton.

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1 MR. McRATH: Pretty hard to follow up  
 2 from that. But due to the transfer of students and  
 3 problem or issue that we have, of course funds are  
 4 being transferred over to Francis Howell and we  
 5 don't have enough or a lot for Normandy and so we  
 6 keep transferring students over to Francis Howell.  
 7 We have to, of course, make cuts somewhere and those  
 8 cuts are coming from teachers' paychecks and so some  
 9 of them are getting laid off.  
 10 Like some of the best teachers here at  
 11 Normandy, especially at the high school, they're  
 12 getting laid off because they weren't here long  
 13 enough because of the tenure law. I know one  
 14 teacher, for instance, he teaches like math for at  
 15 least 80 percent of the school but he has to go  
 16 because he just has to go because if he doesn't then  
 17 we get sued because we didn't let him go and make --  
 18 I'm sorry.  
 19 AUDIENCE: Take your time.  
 20 MR. McRATH: So, with the Wellston  
 21 takeover if anything like that happens to Normandy,  
 22 I guess we can kind of see where it's going now. No  
 23 offense to anyone on the state board, you guys I  
 24 think took it over for like six years or something  
 25 and they had to end up transferring here because

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1 they couldn't turn it around themselves.  
 2 So, just for the community, of course we have  
 3 to stay together and discipline our children because  
 4 they are the ones that are getting the education and  
 5 they're the ones that are acting up in class and  
 6 causing the disruptions but they're also the ones  
 7 that are getting A's and advanced and proficient on  
 8 the EOC test.  
 9 We just ask that you guys give us some time  
 10 because the high school, at least, is ready to turn  
 11 around. Our attendance is up over 88 at least every  
 12 day. Behavior issues from this time last year we  
 13 had almost 4,000 referrals. Now we have like 40  
 14 that have been issued or 60.  
 15 And class sizes have been drastically  
 16 reduced. Last year I had at least 20 kids in every  
 17 class and now I have maybe 15 in most of my classes,  
 18 so that's good. But large classes wouldn't be too  
 19 bad because at least I would know that everybody  
 20 that lives in the Normandy District would be here at  
 21 Normandy instead of out at Francis Howell or Ladue  
 22 or Clayton or Ritenour or Jennings or wherever they  
 23 might go.  
 24 So, we just ask that you give us some time  
 25 because we can -- we are turning around and we are

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1 doing better, so we just need some time. Thank you.  
 2 MR. COOPER: Herbert Clifton?  
 3 MR. CLIFTON: My name is Herbert  
 4 Clifton. Most people know me as Pepper. I have  
 5 been an educator for 25 years. For too long our  
 6 students have not received the high quality  
 7 education that they deserve in the Normandy School  
 8 District. We are here tonight because the Normandy  
 9 School District lost accreditation February 1st,  
 10 2013.  
 11 The Normandy School District did not lose  
 12 accreditation overnight. What these longstanding  
 13 school board members don't want you to know is that  
 14 Normandy School District has not been  
 15 fully-accredited for over 20 years. For their own  
 16 personal reasons they have smiled, shook hands, and  
 17 provided excuses while the Normandy School District  
 18 has been performing in the unaccredited range for  
 19 the last seven straight years in a row.  
 20 Too many gullible people listening to the  
 21 same lame excuses without any supporting data and  
 22 they fully accept it and repeat it as facts. If we  
 23 were the fully-accredited school district that we  
 24 deserve to be, DESE would not be here tonight. DESE  
 25 is here tonight because the school board of the

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1 district has put Normandy in a position to be  
 2 scrutinized by DESE. Citizens want the school board  
 3 removed but they don't want DESE taking over the  
 4 district.  
 5 Our students may not have transferred to  
 6 other districts if Normandy were a high-performing  
 7 school district. The school board first penalized  
 8 transferring students by approving a transfer  
 9 district far from their homes. For many years  
 10 tax-paying parents have paid tuition, in addition to  
 11 paying property taxes, to send their children to  
 12 private school because Normandy has not been  
 13 fully-accredited for over 20 years.  
 14 Local politicians, administrators and other  
 15 outspoken individuals have misled our community and  
 16 failed our students by cheering for the board and  
 17 previous superintendent while the district performed  
 18 in the unaccredited range for seven straight years.  
 19 Instead of being self-serving cheerleaders,  
 20 state local politicians, local ministers, business  
 21 owners, private organizations, district partners and  
 22 other outspoken individuals, should be responsibly  
 23 demanding accountability from the school board and  
 24 the superintendent.  
 25 It's important to support the new

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1 superintendent but it's more important that he be  
 2 held accountable. Politicians hear your voice  
 3 loudest when you make large contributions or when we  
 4 all vote in every election. Please don't allow  
 5 yourself to be distracted by excuses, blame, or the  
 6 news media who will basically be upset over  
 7 irrelevances that do not directly effect why  
 8 Normandy is unaccredited.  
 9 The only way I know to hold the Normandy  
 10 school board accountable is to register to vote and  
 11 vote next April for new board members that will not  
 12 continually provide excuses year after year.  
 13 If you want your voices to be heard loud and  
 14 clear by elected officials and politicians, go  
 15 register to vote as soon as possible and vote in  
 16 every election. We need everyone 18 years and older  
 17 to register to vote and vote in every election in  
 18 order to demand the best education for our  
 19 communities and most importantly for our students.  
 20 I heard previously mentioned that "give us a  
 21 chance." It has been almost 20 years since Normandy  
 22 has not been fully-accredited. We have been  
 23 performing in the unaccredited range for seven  
 24 straight years and we still hear the same thing  
 25 about "give us a chance."

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1 Well, until we see an accountability plan  
 2 with dates and accountability -- we need an  
 3 accountability plan that's going to spell it out as  
 4 to what's going to be done to fix Normandy. All we  
 5 hear -- they tell you it's about the kids but I  
 6 served on the board for two years and fought with  
 7 this school board to do what was right by the  
 8 students. But they stand there, not for the  
 9 students, but to the previous superintendent. They  
 10 should be strung up and ran out of town.  
 11 As long as you continue to let these people  
 12 hold these positions and not be accountable, they  
 13 will continue to let Normandy fail.  
 14 I'm so -- one person told me I came across as  
 15 angry. Yes, I am angry because I ran for the board  
 16 to see these students get the same opportunity my  
 17 kids received, if not better. I sent my kids to  
 18 private school and they both went off to college and  
 19 are moving along. And I want to see this for every  
 20 student in Normandy but under this school board that  
 21 does not happen and under the previous school boards  
 22 the same thing does not happen.  
 23 This has been going on for years and years  
 24 That they have been failing our schools academically  
 25 and socially and we need a safe and conducive

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1 environment for teaching and learning for our  
 2 district to be successful. Thank you.  
 3 MR. COOPER: Our next speaker will be --  
 4 is it Robert Miller? And then followed by Herbert  
 5 Clifton.  
 6 AUDIENCE: He just spoke.  
 7 MR. COOPER: Oh, that's who we just had?  
 8 His name was in there twice.  
 9 MR. MILLER: I would like to know when  
 10 we're going to get some answers here from the state  
 11 Board of Education people. I think it was several  
 12 months ago the legislators were taking a tour of the  
 13 state and I had the privilege of attending one of  
 14 those meetings and we gave a lot of input. We saw a  
 15 couple of your superintendents, your superintendent  
 16 here, Art -- what is it Art McNeal? They gave a lot  
 17 of input. But what is your plan?  
 18 You know I see now you're out with a  
 19 consultant group in Indianapolis or something. When  
 20 are we going to hear some input from you people  
 21 about where we're going to be maybe next semester?  
 22 Otherwise it's going to continue on.  
 23 And somebody indicated earlier that the law  
 24 that has been in motion for 20 years and somebody  
 25 decided a year ago to pull it out and obviously we

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1 aren't too happy with this plan we're under now.  
 2 And I think most of you would agree we need some  
 3 answers.  
 4 You favor the Missouri superintendent's plan  
 5 or maybe it should be the millionaire's plan. What  
 6 is your position? When are we going to hear about  
 7 it? It's not another 20 years like someone said.  
 8 You know, you read the report. We have made no  
 9 progress with our country versus other countries.  
 10 It's just as bad as it was 20, 30 years ago.  
 11 I think it's time to get something moving and  
 12 tell us what you're going to do. I hope I can get  
 13 some feedback today but here it is, we just give our  
 14 input and then we go home and then there will be  
 15 another meeting.  
 16 MR. COOPER: Our next speaker will be  
 17 Sharon Venerable followed by Sam Shannon.  
 18 MS. VENERABLE: Good evening, everyone.  
 19 My name is Sharon Venerable. I'm a parent with the  
 20 Normandy School District and I have a tenth grader  
 21 here at Normandy High School. And basically I have  
 22 a question for the board. It reads: I understand  
 23 that accreditation has been an issue for many years  
 24 and many of the parents within this district choose  
 25 to because they still have the means to send their

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1 children to private schools to get an education, so  
 2 we have a mix of income and financial abilities  
 3 within the district.  
 4 One of our concerns is that now that you have  
 5 opened up the door for transfers that many of those  
 6 parents will simply drop that situation where  
 7 they're sending their children to a private school  
 8 and send their children out to other districts  
 9 because now they don't have to pay for it but  
 10 they're able to pay for it. And that only brings  
 11 more fiscal burden to the issue we have for paying  
 12 for the transfer students who are already going.  
 13 So I want to know will you do anything or put  
 14 any deterrence into place that will help keep us  
 15 from having our own struggling students from having  
 16 to take that burden on and become even more behind  
 17 in what you're trying to do to help them. They're  
 18 struggling and suffering more because families may  
 19 move in and take advantage or those who are able to  
 20 pay for education will leave and cause everything to  
 21 collapse and run the district down.  
 22 So that was my question to you and maybe  
 23 there could be a waiting period or something. I  
 24 mean, if they haven't even tried the school system,  
 25 how is it they get the opportunity to, you know,

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1 complain and go out to another district? So, that's  
 2 my question to you. Thank you.  
 3 MR. COOPER: Thank you. Sam Shannon?  
 4 Sam will be followed by Zenola Shelton.  
 5 MR. SHANNON: Good evening, everybody.  
 6 My name is Sam Shannon. I am a council member for  
 7 the City of Wellston. I came here tonight -- was  
 8 really a little bit angry because I was at home and  
 9 I looked at the TV. I heard the newscaster say that  
 10 Normandy is here because of the merger of the  
 11 Wellston School District. And I couldn't fathom  
 12 that being the problem with Normandy because, as I  
 13 remember, DESE came into our school some years ago  
 14 because they said we were unaccredited. That we had  
 15 provisional accreditation. That we had to do  
 16 something about it.  
 17 So they sent a man in there named  
 18 Dr. (inaudible), if I can remember, to come in there  
 19 and turn the city around, turn the school system  
 20 around. He stayed there for a number of years  
 21 telling us how much progress we were making. Then  
 22 after that period of time, DESE said oh, no, no, no,  
 23 we're going to merge you all with the Normandy  
 24 School District.  
 25 So, my question is why -- and this is in no

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1 way a reflection on the Normandy School District --  
 2 but why would DESE take a school that had  
 3 provisional accreditation in the first place and  
 4 merge them with a school that also had failing and  
 5 provisional accreditation?  
 6 Why would you not take the children from  
 7 Wellston at that point in time and tell them, hey,  
 8 you have the right to transfer to any other school  
 9 that you want, that you feel you need to go to?  
 10 But, instead, you all said the only school they  
 11 could go to was the Normandy School District. Now,  
 12 DESE you're here saying that Normandy School  
 13 District isn't doing no good and we need to do  
 14 something about it.  
 15 I have 18 grandchildren. Some of them have  
 16 graduated from high school. Some of them are in  
 17 grade school and they go to the Normandy School  
 18 District.  
 19 The problem I have also was that I had -- I  
 20 got a grandson. He has been transferred to Francis  
 21 Howell but his mother had a problem because he lived  
 22 about a mile from the school and she thought that  
 23 the child would be bussed to school because she said  
 24 it was too bad for him, there were too many bad  
 25 intersections for him to cross. But you couldn't

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1 bus him to the Normandy School District but you find  
 2 the time to charge the Normandy School District to  
 3 bus him off to Francis Howell.  
 4 So I'm trying to see where is the logic in  
 5 all of this. You say you have a plan. A plan is a  
 6 plan as long as they stay on the table. We need  
 7 action. We need this community to come together.  
 8 We need these parents to get out and start beating  
 9 the streets even if we have to come up to Jefferson  
 10 City and sit on your steps. We need a change and we  
 11 need it now. Thank you.  
 12 MR. COOPER: Thank you. Zenola? Our  
 13 next speaker will be Montague Simmons.  
 14 MS. SHELTON: Hello, everyone. I'm a  
 15 parent of three in the district and all at different  
 16 levels: high school, elementary and pre-k.  
 17 My problem is with DESE and this whole  
 18 situation that you all took an unaccredited school  
 19 district and put them with a school threatening to  
 20 lose their accreditation and I haven't found  
 21 anywhere ever that that has happened in the history  
 22 of America.  
 23 You all have set the community up to fail  
 24 with all of the -- everything that you have in  
 25 place. The transfer situation is taking the money

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1 out of the community, out of the school district.  
 2 All the students at this point don't have enough  
 3 room to succeed because of all of the cuts you  
 4 all -- they had to cut all of the higher-education  
 5 programs for the kids that are in gifted programs.  
 6 The teachers are getting snatched away from the  
 7 higher-education classes and now those classes won't  
 8 be offered next semester, such as calculus and a lot  
 9 of the honor classes have been taken away. They're  
 10 merging the kids at the elementary level and now the  
 11 classrooms will be too big.  
 12 And another thing is I have a senior and at  
 13 this time we have been applying for scholarships.  
 14 We have been accepted to over ten colleges at this  
 15 point. And you all promised that accreditation  
 16 wouldn't be an issue when being accepted into  
 17 college and you all were correct but the thing that  
 18 you were incorrect about is the scholarships that  
 19 they are qualified to apply for. Because I come to  
 20 find there are different colleges in Missouri and  
 21 out of state, where my daughter can't apply for the  
 22 scholarship because she is coming from an  
 23 unaccredited school. She's accepted to go there but  
 24 she can't go because of my financial status and now  
 25 she can't apply for a scholarship. So you all, at

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1 this point, have threatened her future and becoming  
 2 successful in life.  
 3 All of these decisions that you all have  
 4 made, no one has considered the life of the child.  
 5 Because, at this point, I would like you all to  
 6 explain to me how I'm supposed to send my daughter  
 7 off to school, to one of the topnotch schools at  
 8 this point in America, that she can't even apply for  
 9 the scholarship that she needs to attend. And this  
 10 breaks my heart because I have another child who's  
 11 coming up in this district because we're not going  
 12 anywhere because I stand behind my school district.  
 13 And I won't see it fail.  
 14 So when you all can give me some answers, I  
 15 would love those answers because you all haven't put  
 16 anything on the table, at this point, that shows me  
 17 that you're actually caring about the needs of our  
 18 community at all. You all have taken away  
 19 everything and you all will not take away our  
 20 integrity.  
 21 MR. COOPER: Thank you. Montague  
 22 followed by Kourtney Shelton.  
 23 MR. SIMMONS: Good evening.  
 24 AUDIENCE: Good evening.  
 25 MR. SIMMONS: First and foremost, thank

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1 you for the opportunity to do this publicly. I  
 2 think the discussion is a long time coming and I  
 3 like the tone that I'm hearing because  
 4 accountability is a discussion we need to be having  
 5 but the accountability, in this case, directly  
 6 belongs to DESE.  
 7 We have seen statewide district after  
 8 district in almost every district in the state,  
 9 every time they move in they disrupt not only school  
 10 districts but communities. Every time they move in  
 11 you see districts being economically devastated.  
 12 Every time they move in you see a transformation  
 13 that is not positive in those districts.  
 14 Unfortunately, in this case, I don't expect  
 15 them to do any better. I think they need to be held  
 16 accountable. I think, in this case, they need to  
 17 see changes in the way they operate, in the way they  
 18 actually function in our state.  
 19 There is no way you can actually have  
 20 children develop and transform when you're draining  
 21 dollars every day from the district, when you're  
 22 actually blaming for everything -- if you want to  
 23 talk about the problem with no child left behind, we  
 24 can do that. We can talk about how that actually  
 25 undermined our ability to perform statewide. And

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1 that happened district after district in the state.  
 2 And you know this. Anybody that has been in  
 3 education for years knows this. They have been in  
 4 devastation. This isn't new.  
 5 So for you, over the last, what, not just 10  
 6 years, 15, 20 years, we have seen them decimate St.  
 7 Louis City public schools. We have seen them do the  
 8 same thing in Kansas City. We have seen them do it  
 9 to other districts throughout the county.  
 10 The unfortunate reality is I have no faith  
 11 that you're going to do the right thing. I think  
 12 it's up to us to actually organize to remove you. I  
 13 have no faith, no trust that you're going to do what  
 14 needs to be done. Our children's future is actually  
 15 on the line.  
 16 I graduated from this institution. We dealt  
 17 with challenges. Everybody wants to come in and  
 18 attack but every time the community, the parents,  
 19 they rose up and made a difference. I am only here  
 20 because people, organizations like -- here Beyond  
 21 Housing was going out of the way to do stuff not  
 22 only in the districts, but in the communities  
 23 themselves and in accordance with the plan you  
 24 already knew about. So for you now to come in and  
 25 take away accreditation and say they haven't been

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1 accountable, it's unreasonable, it's unjustifiable.  
 2 So at this point I think our efforts,  
 3 unfortunately, need to cast a better light on you  
 4 and figure out what needs to change statewide. And  
 5 if we need to actually be able to connect with these  
 6 other districts, not just across St. Louis but in  
 7 Kansas City and every other city district, we need  
 8 to do that. I think those efforts should start  
 9 right now.  
 10 MR. COOPER: Thank you. Next is  
 11 Kourtney followed by Dryver Henderson.  
 12 MS. SHELTON: Hi, my name is Kourtney.  
 13 I have been going to Normandy since I was in  
 14 kindergarten. I have been in the school district my  
 15 whole life. I'm a senior now and I'm very sad that  
 16 we are like this because we shouldn't be. I feel  
 17 like if you were trying to help us get our  
 18 accreditation back, firing teachers and making  
 19 students transfer, it's not helping us at all. It's  
 20 actually making us fail even more because I don't  
 21 think you guys realize how much you're hurting us,  
 22 especially me because I'm a senior and like my  
 23 teachers are leaving and that's not fair.  
 24 Like you're going to make our classes bigger.  
 25 That's not fair. You're going to put our students

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1 with students that are not in a higher level as the  
 2 honor students and that's not fair. You are not  
 3 giving us a chance to get our accreditation back.  
 4 You're actually making us feel worse. That's what  
 5 is making us angry about the whole situation. Thank  
 6 you.  
 7 MR. COOPER: Thank you. Dryver  
 8 Henderson followed by Debra Grayer.  
 9 MR. HENDERSON: Hey, fellow Vikings.  
 10 Glad you're here. Glad you love our school and our  
 11 communities and our children.  
 12 You know one of the reasons for the poor  
 13 attendance tonight, it's not all cold weather, it's  
 14 a factor, but the reason they're not here is apathy  
 15 already. They said we didn't hear anything from  
 16 DESE at meeting one. I don't think we're going to  
 17 hear anything from them at meeting two.  
 18 Already we're hearing the morale of the  
 19 teachers and the parents, the few that come out, has  
 20 dropped. Remembrance of five years ago after  
 21 Lawrence came there were happy days for a few weeks  
 22 and then the morale started to change. Well, maybe  
 23 the morale has not slipped because of Dr. McNichols,  
 24 I hope it hasn't because he is a very affable,  
 25 friendly, fine man, however -- however -- however,

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1 what we're seeing and hearing is the end of  
 2 Normandy.  
 3 Bel Nor, at the end of my street, is closing.  
 4 Seventy teachers, approximately, are losing their  
 5 jobs and I don't hear the union fighting hard enough  
 6 to save them or anybody out here.  
 7 I can tell you, DESE, we, the communities of  
 8 Normandy, the 24:1, the people who played baseball  
 9 in St. Vincent's and over at UMSL, we are committed  
 10 to Normandy. We love Normandy. And we sure don't  
 11 want you to take it away from us and give it to a  
 12 pool of other unaccredited schools and turn them to  
 13 charter schools. No. That's not us. That's not  
 14 the future we want.  
 15 We do want you to stop the transfers. But I  
 16 know you, DESE, cannot do it. And, yet, you have  
 17 counsel. You have advisory capacity. And you have  
 18 not advised Normandy. I don't know about Riverview  
 19 Gardens. Normandy and Riverview Gardens have not  
 20 yet applied for an injunction to stop the transfer  
 21 process.  
 22 An injunction is a legal term. It's like an  
 23 appeal. When you say I don't like the decision,  
 24 well, there is no law in America that requires one  
 25 to kill itself. We don't have to, in a criminal

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1 court, testify against ourselves and then get  
 2 killed. You know committing suicide is not a court  
 3 decision. And, yet, we're -- but it is our job to  
 4 speak up in our defense and say, hey, that's wrong,  
 5 stop but we haven't raised a voice yet. Why? What  
 6 are you waiting for?  
 7 Oh, you know what I have heard, secretive  
 8 plans, secretive strategies. That's not right.  
 9 That's not good. How long do we have to wait for  
 10 these secret strategies and secret plans to come  
 11 out? When we wait more for the DESE plans, it's too  
 12 late. It's going to be too late for Normandy if we  
 13 do not start, if we do not apply for the injunction  
 14 probably in the next two weeks. If we have an  
 15 injunction, I'm told by people who have been there  
 16 in the court sitting on the bench, judges, lawyers  
 17 who know, it will be granted, if passed, in a  
 18 heartbeat. All right.  
 19 You know the only downside is our students  
 20 will have to come back who have transferred. I look  
 21 forward to welcoming them back. I look forward to  
 22 their being helpful with us. But that's the only  
 23 thing that's going to stop the bleeding of a million  
 24 and a half per month out the door.  
 25 Even if we get the 6.8 million, which DESE

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1 has asked for, which, frankly, everything I've  
 2 heard, no legislator wants to give to Normandy  
 3 because they haven't deserved it. They haven't  
 4 earned it. So I don't think that they're going to  
 5 give -- these conservative tightwad republicans,  
 6 it's not against the republicans but those people  
 7 are not going to give us the money.  
 8 All right. Even with the money, it's not  
 9 enough to save us. We are going to be bankrupt in  
 10 April, maybe early March if we don't get that money.  
 11 So we're out. So we're waiting while DESE makes  
 12 plans, while Normandy continues to do nothing.  
 13 Stop the transfers. You apply for an  
 14 injunction. I can give you a team of lawyers who  
 15 will help. We will prepare the brief for you to  
 16 file an injunction to get our money back. We will  
 17 get our money back. We have lost the first semester  
 18 but we get our money not going out for the second  
 19 semester.  
 20 Now, this board, 25 years not being  
 21 fully-accredited, seven years, oh, every year we're  
 22 getting better. Every year we're getting better.  
 23 No, we're not. Seven years, 25 years. With a few  
 24 bumps, down, down, down. Hey, we're doing great.  
 25 We're getting a little better. We're making

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1 improvements. No, we're not. Hey, we got an  
 2 excellence award from the state school board. No,  
 3 you didn't. You got a participation award. They  
 4 were so embarrassed by the Normandy award that they  
 5 had to change the name and change the rules. You  
 6 cannot get the award you got last time because of  
 7 participation.  
 8 MR. COOPER: Thank you very much. We  
 9 need to move on.  
 10 MR. HENDERSON: After you apply for the  
 11 injunction, the school board resign, all of you.  
 12 Then let's get a new board.  
 13 MR. COOPER: Thank you. Our next  
 14 speaker is Debra Grayer. Debra will be followed by  
 15 Raquan Smith.  
 16 MS. GRAYER: Hello, everybody. I've  
 17 been in Normandy since '75. I have children and  
 18 grandchildren that are in the district. I have a  
 19 daughter that had a full-ride scholarship back in  
 20 2000 and she's also -- how can I tell her what  
 21 happens to Normandy on the news-related,  
 22 financial-related? What exactly is going on? Are  
 23 they closing their doors for good? What is actually  
 24 going on?  
 25 The DESE, I understand I am in education

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1 also, give us some answers as parents, grandparents  
 2 and something to tell our children what is actually  
 3 going on with the transfers and everything else. I  
 4 don't have the answer but I see the sad faces.  
 5 What's going on in the school district? Thank you.  
 6 MR. COOPER: Raquan followed by Jamarr  
 7 Porter.  
 8 MR. SMITH: Good evening.  
 9 AUDIENCE: Good evening.  
 10 MR. SMITH: My name is Raquan Smith. I  
 11 am originally from the Wellston School District and  
 12 to hear the same conversations that I heard at  
 13 Wellston is tearing me up inside.  
 14 When I was at Wellston I was at lunch and in  
 15 the blink of an eye I found out the school I called  
 16 home will be closed down at the end of the school  
 17 year. To hear that and knowing that you can't do  
 18 anything to stop it, it makes you feel that you're  
 19 inadequate. It makes you feel that you don't count.  
 20 So during the transfer my freshman year here  
 21 at Normandy I heard those same conversations and I  
 22 seen the same signs. Now, me, being a senior, it's  
 23 all coming to the light. I'm realizing that the  
 24 school I've tried to make -- or that I have made my  
 25 new home, will soon be closed.

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1 I feel like Normandy is in the same  
 2 predicament that Wellston was in and, if so, this is  
 3 not good. We need to do something. I'm asking you,  
 4 DESE, help. I'm asking you to not do what you did  
 5 to Wellston, my first home, I'm asking you not to  
 6 come here and take away something that I have held  
 7 on and grasped to for so long. I'm asking you not  
 8 to do what you secretly say you are going to do.  
 9 I know that you came here the first time just  
 10 to hear what we had to say, to hear the emotions,  
 11 the opinions, but what I want you to do this time is  
 12 listen. What I want you to do is go home this  
 13 evening and start a plan and come back as soon as  
 14 possible and tell us what we need to do in order to  
 15 keep these doors open. In order for these teachers  
 16 to keep their jobs. In order to keep black African  
 17 American males off these streets. That is what I  
 18 need you to do.  
 19 Me, personally, going through what I went  
 20 through at Wellston, the situation I have  
 21 encountered, I can give you examples of what my  
 22 friends are now going through. The students that  
 23 went to Wellston are not going to Normandy. They  
 24 have fallen by the wayside.  
 25 The friends that I had, gave up on themselves

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1 simply because DESE has not taken the time to listen  
 2 to them. The students here are giving up on  
 3 themselves simply because they're not being heard.  
 4 This is the third meeting I have been to, the  
 5 second one I have spoke at, and I feel like I have  
 6 not been heard. I would like to be heard this  
 7 evening. Thank you.  
 8 MR. COOPER: Thank you. Jamarr Porter?  
 9 Jamarr will be followed by Earl Clay.  
 10 MR. PORTER: Before I start I would like  
 11 to say -- I would like to thank Dr. McNichols. I  
 12 think he has done an excellent job in the district  
 13 so far. The second thing I will say is I graduated  
 14 from Normandy in 2010 and being here at Normandy I  
 15 not only met teachers, I met family members.  
 16 I would like to say to DESE that if you merge  
 17 this school district with another one, where would  
 18 we go? U City don't want us. Clayton don't want  
 19 us. Francis Howell don't want us. They made that  
 20 public.  
 21 But I not only came to talk to DESE, I came  
 22 to talk to the students that are here too. You can  
 23 make it from Normandy. It's not impossible to make  
 24 it no matter what DESE says or no matter what DESE  
 25 don't do.

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1 The last thing I will say to DESE is you keep  
 2 saying that you have a plan to do this, a plan to do  
 3 that. It's good to have a plan but it's even better  
 4 to start working at it. Thanks.  
 5 MR. COOPER: Thank you. Earl Clay  
 6 followed by Monica Huddleston.  
 7 MR. CLAY: Hello, community. I would  
 8 like to commend the whole community and all of the  
 9 various concerned people about this very important  
 10 issue of accreditation and, behind that, the care in  
 11 education of our youth starting from preschool ages.  
 12 Given the rapport from the community tonight,  
 13 it seems there was a rapport from the state board  
 14 but, also, there is a rapport from the community.  
 15 And the community seems very concerned that the  
 16 state, through its board, is not recognizing the  
 17 community's needs, nor is it responding in any kind  
 18 of reasonable way to those needs. That is what I  
 19 hear over and over again in this meeting.  
 20 Now, there have been recommendations that the  
 21 board, the state board that is, needs to resign.  
 22 That they become more responsive to the community  
 23 and that they start to give answers and not just get  
 24 input to the problem of achieving and maintaining  
 25 accreditation because a lot of the methods -- it has

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1 come across that there is a track record of the  
 2 board and the track record is it's not doing what it  
 3 is designed to do and it's not responding to the  
 4 community. And this is a historic type of pattern.  
 5 First of all, we have to recognize that the  
 6 State of Missouri, ever since it has become a state,  
 7 has been racist in nature, in the structure and  
 8 design. And in order to move away from that racist  
 9 discriminatory pattern, there will have to be some  
 10 fundamental changes.  
 11 And I don't know if the state board is white  
 12 or black but I know it should not be even if it's  
 13 the case that people aren't able, because of  
 14 technical reasons, people who are representative of  
 15 the people here, aren't able because of technical  
 16 reasons to be on the board. There should be a  
 17 special effort designed to correct past  
 18 discrimination as reflected in the board's  
 19 composition and that's what needs to happen.  
 20 And I don't know if the board is thinking  
 21 about these types of measures to change its pattern  
 22 of racism and discrimination, both functionally and  
 23 by design, but it should be because there is no  
 24 time. There's no time for failing to address these  
 25 issues because the children, their futures are at

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1 stake.  
 2 And it's not only African American children,  
 3 but if your children do not get the benefit of the  
 4 value of African American children, your children  
 5 will suffer. Every person who has African American  
 6 children are now suffering, some of them, a great  
 7 number of you, personally.  
 8 Now, this is -- somehow people in authority  
 9 and mostly those white people in this country,  
 10 because of the history of this country, don't  
 11 realize that they suffer too as a result of racism  
 12 and that is institutionalized racism and that's what  
 13 this is a grand example of, institutionalized  
 14 racism. We can identify it because it happens over  
 15 and over. And it's part of the system and it's  
 16 designed to do that. That pattern hasn't been  
 17 broken.  
 18 And, before I take too much time, I want the  
 19 board to answer the question of if Superintendent  
 20 McCoy, who did have some answers to these types of  
 21 problems and had demonstrated that he knew how to  
 22 start on the road to correct these problems, if  
 23 there has been any kind of effort to get input from  
 24 him and those like him, and, also, the local NAACP  
 25 and other organizations, which are civil rights

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1 organizations. And, hopefully, that's reasonable  
 2 and that will be done.  
 3 And, finally, I would like to say that the  
 4 state also should look into federal remedies to this  
 5 problem that they have demonstrated they have not  
 6 been able to start to solve and that's their  
 7 responsibility to look to the federal government if  
 8 they are unable to deal with these problems because  
 9 we, the people in the community, especially the  
 10 African American community, have both legally and as  
 11 public policy looked to the federal government to  
 12 help with many of our problems and we intend to do  
 13 so. We hope you see the light and start to do so  
 14 along with us.  
 15 MR. COOPER: Thank you. Next is Monica  
 16 Huddleston followed by Henry -- I'm sorry -- Henry  
 17 Iwenofu?  
 18 MS. HUDDLESTON: Good evening. My name  
 19 is Monica Huddleston. I am mayor of the City of  
 20 Greendale, which is not very far from here, one of  
 21 the 24 municipalities that make up this great school  
 22 district.  
 23 Several of the mayors had a meeting with  
 24 Dr. Nicastro the other day and we had quite a bit of  
 25 discussion about different ideas. And the one thing

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1 that came out of that meeting was that DESE  
 2 certainly did not have the authority to change the  
 3 state statute about the transfer situation. I  
 4 understand that. But what DESE does have  
 5 100 percent control over is reestablishing the  
 6 accreditation, even if it has to be provisional, for  
 7 this district so that it can continue to exist and  
 8 continue to tackle its problems.  
 9 I understand we have an academic struggle to  
 10 fight. I understand there's a graduation rate and  
 11 an attendance rate that we have to improve but this  
 12 piece of paper and some other plans that Dr.  
 13 McNichols put in writing to this community when he  
 14 first came here and he's still doing it tonight, has  
 15 time frames and has goals.  
 16 He gave himself 18 months to two years to  
 17 turn it around. I think the board should hold him  
 18 accountable for that but he cannot do that if the  
 19 district does not exist and he cannot do that if we  
 20 remain unaccredited and have to send all of our tax  
 21 dollars elsewhere.  
 22 So we have had a revolving door of  
 23 superintendents in this district for too long. You  
 24 can't keep changing folks, y'all. You can't every  
 25 two to four years change superintendents and expect

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1 things to be stable. You can't change teachers  
 2 around every five minutes, administrators every five  
 3 minutes, superintendents. You can't toss out this  
 4 board and throw in that one. You have got to stick  
 5 with somebody and stick with the plan and let that  
 6 plan work and hold those people accountable and that  
 7 is what I believe we have to do.  
 8 But I do believe DESE owes us a couple more  
 9 years with this man, Dr. McNichols, and if he  
 10 doesn't do it, then go ahead and do what you got to  
 11 do but give him his two years, please.  
 12 MR. COOPER: Henry? Next will be Mayor  
 13 James McGee.  
 14 MR. IWENOFU: Good evening. I am the  
 15 chairman (inaudible) but what I felt tonight was  
 16 people buying into the concept that Normandy is  
 17 failing because of something that Normandy or DESE  
 18 does. This is a bigger scheme than we can think  
 19 about. One example I like to use is before 1954, in  
 20 this country, you don't have to take a test to get  
 21 into college. And we know what happened in 1954.  
 22 All of the (inaudible) justices in the supreme  
 23 court. You didn't take tests. I can list a few  
 24 other people.  
 25 So the issue that we need to address with

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1 DESE, what they can do, when they make determination  
 2 of what schools should be unaccredited or  
 3 accredited, they should look at their rules.  
 4 Attendance is one of the things that they use.  
 5 Fifty-nine percent of our student body is transient.  
 6 Studies have shown that transient kids tend to have  
 7 problems in academic performance. They have  
 8 problems in attendance.  
 9 So if you look at the socioeconomic  
 10 background of the community, a cookie-cutter  
 11 approach does not work for every school district.  
 12 You have to look at what can we do in this  
 13 community -- now, I heard people talk about, well,  
 14 um, it looks like it's all African American  
 15 communities. Look at Kansas City, Cape Girardeau,  
 16 St. Louis City, and those, historically, are people  
 17 who have been denied opportunity to go to school.  
 18 They have to go to work.  
 19 We have a court not too far from here  
 20 (inaudible) separate but equal was changed in 1954,  
 21 not too long ago. Some of us here were born before  
 22 1954. So the issue I -- DESE is a part of the  
 23 problem.  
 24 Someone talked about institutional racism.  
 25 Now, whatever you want to call it, today every kid

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1 gets a chip. That chip simply means that you have  
 2 the right to quality education. You have  
 3 healthcare. You have all kinds of things so at a  
 4 certain age you are able to participate in the  
 5 economy.  
 6 What we are doing to ourselves in this  
 7 country is simple denying people opportunity to get  
 8 education, opportunity to participate in the  
 9 economy, therefore, they're coming back and haunting  
 10 us in prison, incarceration. We spend \$30,000 a  
 11 year on soap in prison. Take a 20-year-old kid  
 12 follow him 20 years, 40 years, he comes out and he's  
 13 going to depend on us. Why don't we spend that  
 14 money, that opportunity, to get our kids educated?  
 15 So Normandy, may be the micro issue that  
 16 we're talking about today but the most important  
 17 thing to say to Dr. McNichols and his team and the  
 18 people of this community, don't fight each other  
 19 over Wellston, it was this. It wasn't that. The  
 20 measure they use will not work here. If you take  
 21 \$1 million a day in transportation, you take  
 22 15 million from our struggling district, they are  
 23 not going to make it.  
 24 The question I have for DESE today: What are  
 25 you going to do with these kids when the school

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1 district fails to meet the requirement? What are  
 2 you going to do? Are you going to say wait a  
 3 minute, kids need to walk to school, not drive, wake  
 4 up at four o'clock in the morning to get to school  
 5 at eight o'clock in the morning? That has an impact  
 6 on them.  
 7 We have to think about what we are doing to  
 8 our kids. They are the future of this society.  
 9 They are the ones that are going to be taking care  
 10 of us in the nursing homes. I don't want to go to a  
 11 nursing home but they are the ones that are going to  
 12 take care of us. They have to go to school to be  
 13 our police officers. I sit around and I'm thinking  
 14 you are going to take care of me?  
 15 And we have to think about our students.  
 16 It's not a white kid or a black kid. It's an  
 17 American kid. The Supreme Court was right. Every  
 18 kid should get an education and we need to make sure  
 19 that we are giving our children an opportunity to  
 20 compete with the global economy. We are not doing  
 21 it.  
 22 This is the only country that we are trying  
 23 to prevent people from getting an education to be  
 24 able to produce and that's crazy any time you are  
 25 keeping the future back, a portion of your future.

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1 And one of the things I want to say to folks,  
 2 the best way to get people to understand is to  
 3 quantify the impact of racism, of entitlement or  
 4 whatever. When you quantify you don't put numbers  
 5 on it, you put a face on it and people will begin to  
 6 understand the impact it has on you.  
 7 So, folks, the last thing I need to say is if  
 8 DESE doesn't want to help us or the legislators  
 9 don't want to help us, we're going to have to go  
 10 back to what we did in 1954. They have a right  
 11 under the U.S. Constitution. So we have to think  
 12 about their education. Thank you very much.  
 13 MR. COOPER: Thank you. James McGee?  
 14 And our last speaker of the evening will be Paul  
 15 Davis.  
 16 MR. McGEE: Good evening. I want to  
 17 thank you, DESE, and all of you here for the  
 18 concerns that we have. We are a part of 24:1. If  
 19 you don't know what that is, that's 24  
 20 municipalities with one vision for the Normandy  
 21 School District. And, believe me, we are strong.  
 22 Now, what we're doing with 24:1, we believe  
 23 in strong community and with that strong community  
 24 we have to have a strong education system. Also,  
 25 engaging families. We have put into place PNO.

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1 That is parental neglect ordinances. Well, how does  
 2 that help Normandy? Helps them with their  
 3 attendance rates. Also helps them with behavior.  
 4 And, also, with that, it's going to help them with  
 5 their academics. And then we believe in successful  
 6 children.  
 7 Now, at our board meeting, I don't know  
 8 whether some of you all came to the play The Color  
 9 Purple, I had to keep pinching myself because those  
 10 kids were so professional. And, we, in our board  
 11 meeting, we called up that young man and gave him an  
 12 award for being in that play and so professional.  
 13 We, also, at our board meeting, we had a young man  
 14 that goes to Normandy that had a 4.0 GPA. We gave  
 15 him an award. Not only that but just had a young  
 16 lady in our last board meeting had straight A's.  
 17 You know what, this is a wake up for our  
 18 community. We have failed our children and we have  
 19 to take responsibility.  
 20 We have an acronym called RAP. That is  
 21 responsible, accountable and productive. And our  
 22 children are very productive. We just have to stand  
 23 up and help them. Now, the community has a plan,  
 24 the school has a plan. What I want to know, DESE,  
 25 what are your plans?

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1 Now, there's one thing I know you could do  
 2 immediately and that's make Normandy provisional  
 3 immediately. That's your power. And if you use  
 4 that power then Normandy can give them that  
 5 extension that they need, the two years that Dr.  
 6 McNichols is doing a fantastic job in coming up with  
 7 those plans.  
 8 If you give him those two years, the  
 9 community is going to happen. 24:1 is going to  
 10 happen. The 24:1, the 24 municipalities that is  
 11 unique in all of Missouri. We took our plan to  
 12 Washington D.C. We didn't call Washington D.C.,  
 13 they called us. And they want to make 24:1 a role  
 14 model for the whole country and Normandy was  
 15 included in that plan.  
 16 So what we need you to do is give him his two  
 17 years to turn this school around. This is a wake up  
 18 for our community. And thank you so very much.  
 19 MR. COOPER: Thank you. Last speaker of  
 20 the evening is Paul Davis.  
 21 Let me quickly remind you we did have several  
 22 people who had filled out cards to speak. We're  
 23 sorry the time does not allow that. Remember there  
 24 are other ways that you can turn in your comments.  
 25 There is a website that Margie pointed out and cards

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1 down here that you can fill out if you wish to do  
 2 so. Thank you.  
 3 MR. DAVIS: Good evening, everyone.  
 4 AUDIENCE: Good evening.  
 5 MR. DAVIS: I'm glad to be here tonight  
 6 because I want to speak for my son. My son started  
 7 in the Normandy School District in the fall of 2004.  
 8 He has been very successful in the Normandy School  
 9 District. I am one of the parents who transferred.  
 10 I heard a lot of people say we want the transfer  
 11 kids to come back. Well, I think those kids got a  
 12 right.  
 13 The Supreme Court of the State of Missouri  
 14 said they had a right to go to whatever school of  
 15 their choice or their parents' choice to try to  
 16 prepare them for their future.  
 17 My son is at Francis Howell. It has been a  
 18 struggle for me and him both. We have to get up in  
 19 the morning at 4:30. His bus comes at 5:33. Now,  
 20 most of you all are probably still in bed. But he  
 21 has not missed a day and I haven't missed a day of  
 22 being at the bus stop with him. All I'm asking the  
 23 state is give my son his rights to life, liberty and  
 24 the pursuit of happiness. Thank you.  
 25 MS. VANDEVEN: Thank you all very much.

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1 That does conclude our public hearing for the  
 2 evening. We do sincerely thank you for your very  
 3 thoughtful comments and your questions. Safe  
 4 travels home. Thank you again to Normandy for the  
 5 wonderful hospitality.  
 6 (Whereupon, the record ended at 7:55 p.m.)  
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1 CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER  
 2 I, Suzanne Zes, within and for the State  
 3 of Missouri, do hereby certify that the witness  
 4 whose testimony appears in the foregoing deposition  
 5 was duly sworn by me; the testimony of said witness  
 6 was taken by me to the best of my ability and  
 7 thereafter reduced to typewriting under my  
 8 direction; that I am neither counsel for, related  
 9 to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action  
 10 in which this deposition was taken, and further that  
 11 I am not a relative or employee of any attorney or  
 12 counsel employed by the parties thereto, nor  
 13 financially or otherwise interested in the outcome  
 14 of the action.  
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 17 \_\_\_\_\_  
 18 Court Reporter  
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