

Good Morning School District 14.....

This year School District 14 celebrates one hundred and fifty years of operation. Melissa McElhaney and Dr. Domangue have invited me here this morning to share with you what our school district meant to me growing up and its impact on me as a staff member.

Let me explain how I fit into this looking back at 150 years. First, I was not here the entire 150 years, but, school district 14 has been a big part of me for the last 75 years.

I was born on block from our elementary, on the corner of Pawnee and Duclo and attended my first 8 years of school there. I started first grade in the fall of 1950. My classroom was where the current elementary music room is now located. In third grade we moved into the new 1953 addition to the school while the junior and senior high occupied the old 1923 building. In 7th grade we moved back into the 1923 side of the school for junior high.

What I remember most of those 8 years was that we were always overcrowded. This was the Korean War time, Fort Carson was very full and many military families lived in Manitou because of lower rents. We had split sessions in first grade, half of us went to school in the morning and half in the afternoon. Each teacher taught both sessions seeing students from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm. In 6th grade, my class was in the basement of the library across Duclo Ave. from the school and in 7th grade we went to school first semester in the new high school building which was still under construction. 2nd semester, we moved back into the junior high and the high school students moved into the new building right here, that was in 1957. Finally, in 8th grade we had a relatively normal school year again back in the 1923 building.

My most memorable year was 8th grade, my home room teacher was John Konselman. He was not only my teacher and basketball coach, but also my lifelong mentor. It was in John's class that I suddenly woke up and started taking school seriously. It was the year I grew up and somehow, I know not how, he was responsible.

When I moved into high school, John moved as well and became our high school principal. My junior year he called me into his office and informed me that he wanted me to run for Student Council President. I did as he requested and was elected for the following year.

After graduating from high school, I spent 4 years in college and returned to a summer job here in Manitou as I planned to go to graduate school in the fall. Late summer, John came to see me and informed me that graduate school could wait because he needed a second high school counselor and couldn't find one. And so, I began a continued and, in fact, a lifelong association with School Dist. 14.

After 4 years as counselor, Mr. Bundy, our superintendent informed me that I was going to be the new Manitou Elementary Principal. I couldn't spell elementary or principal, but off I went.

Two years later, Mr. Bundy again called me into his office and told me I was going to be his assistant in charge of coordinating our K thru 12th curriculum. During my second year as Director of Curriculum, Mr. Bundy told me he was going to retire (he had only held the position for 28 years) and he expected me to apply for the job. . . . and I did. It was perhaps no coincidence that John Konselman, my 8th grade teacher, my high school principal and my first boss, had left the district to work elsewhere and had run for and won a seat on our school board which hired me as Superintendent in 1974 a position I held for 23 years before retiring in 1997.

I bring this up because of all the district 14 staff who were so important to my life, I remember John the most. He was truly my lifelong mentor! John passes away 10 years ago last May.

This brings me to my real message to you this morning.

I began my remarks by welcoming School District 14 to this kickoff meeting. Each of you are School District 14. This school district is not brick and mortar structures, it is not programs or systems, IT IS YOU!

As you welcome our students back on Friday morning, remember that you are going to be a significant if not the most important influence on their lives during this coming school year.

No matter what your role is – bus driver, custodian, food service, instructional aide, teacher, counselor, coach or administrator, you will have a pronounced impact on our young people.

I hope you will enjoy this responsibility and gain satisfaction from it. As a lifelong student of Manitou Springs School Dist. 14, I thank you for your service. HAVE A GREAT YEAR!