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To the Silverton School Board,

I am writing to give Elizabeth Barszcz my highest recommendation and full support for her application to become the Superintendent of the Silverton School District. Having worked closely with Elizabeth for over 20 years—first hiring her as a brand-new middle school teacher and later serving as her principal, direct supervisor, evaluator, mentor, thought partner, co-leader, and supporter—I have had the privilege of repeatedly witnessing her unwavering professionalism and dedication to the students, staff, and families of Silverton in serving to educate and support all of our students. Her knowledge, training, and experience, along with her deep commitment to this community, both professionally and personally, have prepared her for this leadership role.

Elizabeth is a lifelong learner and an innovative leader who continually seeks to improve educational outcomes for every single student. She is continually reading educational books and literature as she dives into the latest research, professional development opportunities, and collaboration with educators beyond our district. She not only has a deep and broad knowledge base as she continually seeks to deepen her own understanding of the complex field of education, but she also shares her knowledge with staff and parents to ensure that best practices are implemented effectively. Her passion for learning can be seen in her support of individualized professional development plans for staff members, the many parent education and support initiatives that she has started over the past five years, and her above-and-beyond efforts to create personalized learning opportunities for high school students to keep them engaged in school. All of these examples show her overall commitment to creating a culture of continuous learning and improvement for students and staff alike.

As a classroom teacher, Elizabeth's leadership qualities quickly emerged. She was instrumental in setting high standards for fieldwork and was a substantial contributor to laying the groundwork for what our current fieldwork looks like. She was one of the first with the vision to create transformative learning experiences for Silverton students through experiences like the Amtrak trips to San Francisco to study West Coast immigration and drives across the country to watch a Civil War reenactment. While these may seem like ordinary fieldwork experiences today, they were anything but normal at the time. She organized and hosted a 10-day visit from Rwandan students and their teacher to Silverton to support the expedition she was working on. She was a member of the earliest versions of the instructional leadership team, volunteering her time after long days in the classroom to provide support for other teachers and staff so they could better support their students.

As a K-12 principal, Elizabeth has created and overseen the formation of many impactful and important initiatives, including the development of high-impact tutoring structures, sustainable support for personalized schedules for high school, updating and realigning expeditions and curricula to the revised State Standards, and the development of individualized parent data review meetings. She has played a key role in creating a pathway to differentiated professional development for our educators, created access to the Neurosequential Institute training for multiple staff members, initiated teacher and parent book clubs, developed the Family Engagement Center, and started and sustained long-term working connections with Rachel Turiel, Andrew Nalani, Selena Sermeño, Lee Copenhagen, and Cyndi Gueswel.

She is also a highly skilled presenter, having made professional presentations at multiple EL Education National Conferences, CDE-sponsored events, and through the successful coordination of multiple site seminars that have drawn educators from across the country to Silverton. She has a network of professional contacts throughout the region, including Durango 9R, regional districts at Fort Lewis, BOCES, the Southwest Colorado Educational Collaborative, San Juan BOCES, and the Colorado Department of Education. She has no hesitation in reaching out to others for advice, suggestions, or guidance when needed.

Elizabeth is a natural and responsive leader with a leadership approach focused on both people and results. She is resourceful, responsive, and skilled at navigating unexpected, complex, or escalating situations with reassurance and competence. She has a calm demeanor, professionalism, and a high level of ethical integrity. I have never seen her at a loss for what to do or how to respond to a situation. Her path forward in all situations is to keep everyone as safe as possible (both physically and emotionally), to treat all involved with respect and calm, to be professional in listening, assessing, and recognizing the situation, and then to move forward with a clear and clearly communicated plan of action.

Her leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic clearly showed her ability to adapt, problem-solve, and prioritize the well-being of students and families in the face of uncertainty and a rapidly changing environment. It's worth noting that during the first two years of COVID, the district did not lose any students or families due to disengagement from the school, which was the case with the majority of schools across the state and country. Through Elizabeth's direct outreach efforts with parents, re-organizational efforts around curriculum and schedules with staff, and targeted and prioritized interventions and support for students, we were able to keep 100% of students engaged and connected with the school.

Through her time as principal, I have seen her navigate challenging conversations with students, staff, parents, community members, and school board members. Her conversations with students are always honest, age-appropriate, and focused on the next steps toward improvement, whatever that may be. She has earned high trust from the students in all grades, in large part, I believe, due to the respect and supportive manner in which she interacts with them. Students feel safe under her care.

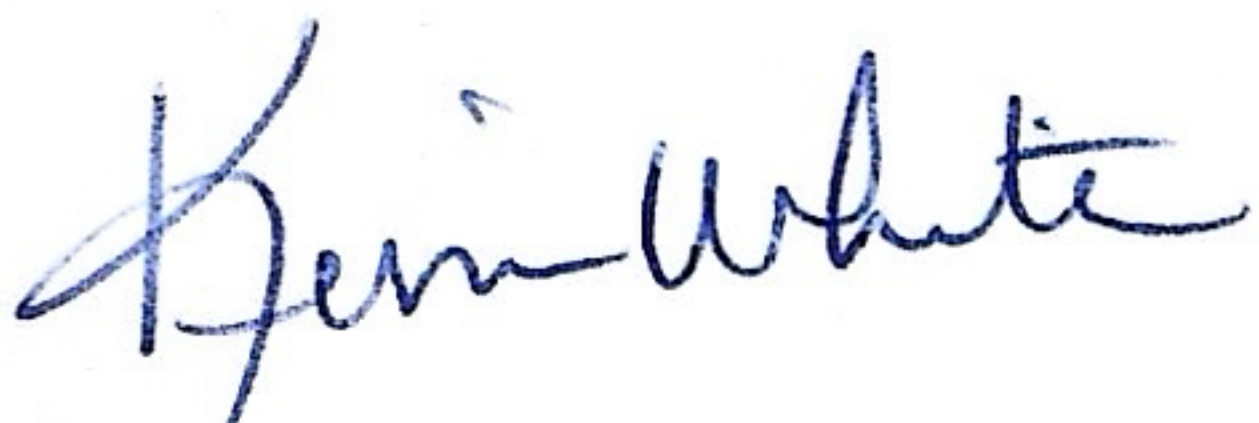
Over the years, I have also watched her manage difficult situations with parents in which they needed to be barred from entering the building due to safety issues. I have watched her navigate complicated conversations with board members in their roles as parents, in which she had to set boundaries or give answers that were not to a board member/parent's liking. I have watched her navigate conversations with employees who needed some level of correction or who needed to be let go for various reasons. Elizabeth handled all of these complex situations with professionalism, without regard to the potential consequences that might come to her from an unhappy community member, board member, parent, or employee. Time and time again, when dealing with challenges with students, staff, parents, or board members, she has consistently demonstrated a quiet strength along with fairness, respect, and a commitment to upholding the district's standards and policies.

Elizabeth has the expertise and administrative skills it takes to run a school district. She has taken on significant responsibilities in securing and managing funding for the district through the creation of connections and partnerships with a variety of funders. She has attended multiple school finance trainings and is directly involved in the management and oversight of our school finance structures and budgeting. She is a highly proficient and successful grant writer who has taken on the bulk of the grant writing, reporting, and management over the past few years. She is currently the main person in charge of testing logistics, CDE ESEA Formula Grants, and an ever-increasing amount of state reporting required each year. Her strong organizational and communication skills are an asset on multiple levels.

As a passionate advocate for students and an unwavering leader in our district, Elizabeth has the commitment, experience, and vision that Silverton needs now and into the future. She would be an asset to any school district, but she is a particularly important asset to Silverton. I am not exaggerating when I say that every structure and initiative within our school reflects her contributions, insights, hard work, and commitment. Her dedication to Silverton and to the school is a given. She is an ideal candidate who is ready to step into the role of Superintendent.

I am confident that under her guidance and leadership, the Silverton School District will continue to grow and thrive. I fully support her in the role of Superintendent.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kim White". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kim" being more prominent than the last name "White".

Kim White