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New principal chosen to lead Denver's Cole

By [Nancy Mitchell](http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/nancy-mitchell/) <<http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/nancy-mitchell/>> , Rocky Mountain News ([Contact](http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/nancy-mitchell/contact/) <<http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/nancy-mitchell/contact/>>)

Wednesday, November 28, 2007

Denver Public Schools officials on Tuesday announced a new principal to head the historically struggling - but soon to be revamped - Cole Middle School in

northeast Denver.

Julie C. Murgel, 36, currently principal of Whiteman Elementary in southeast Denver, will lead Cole as it becomes a school serving students in preschool through seventh grade next fall.

Whiteman is among the eight schools slated for closure at school year's end. Murgel is credited with improving state test scores and decreasing discipline referrals, according to a DPS news release.

Murgel, a Montana native, speaks Spanish and spent five years at Lake Middle School in west Denver teaching math to English-language learners. Parents and community members can meet Murgel in a "meet-and-greet" beginning at 6 p.m. Dec. 6 at Cole, 3240 Humboldt St.

Murgel said she expects to begin splitting her time between Whiteman and Cole in January, after DPS appoints a support person to help at Whiteman

9 News

Tuesday, November 27, 2007

Counselors say grieving students must be given emotional outlet

written by: [Nelson Garcia](#)

<mailto:nelson.garcia@9news.com?subject=RE:Counselors%20say%20grieving%20students%20must%20be%20given%20emotional%20outlet>, Reporter

created: 11/27/2007 6:36:08 PM

Last updated: 11/27/2007 8:12:00 PM

DENVER – As soon as word got out about the shooting death of 10-year-old Auralia Cisneros, Denver Public Schools sent a crisis team to her school, Force Elementary, to help her classmates deal with the pain.

Cisneros was killed in her home Monday night in what police say was a drug-or-gang-related shootout. Police say Cisneros was hit in the crossfire.

"You know, kids don't have the verbal abilities that we as adults have to be able to talk about their grief and what they're going through," said Judy Becerra. Becerra is the director of programming at Judi's House, a non-profit dedicated to

helping kids grieve with the loss of someone close.

"As adults, we have a hard time dealing with these feelings," said Becerra. "These are kids who don't have the life experiences in the skills that we as adults have."

Judi's House was founded by former Broncos quarterback Brian Griese. Becerra says Griese wanted to provide a safe place for kids, in a home-like setting, so they can cope with their emotions.

Students can go through art therapy, where they paint to illustrate their feelings. They have a sand tray room where kids can take toys and play out how they feel. Becerra says often times kids make a coffin to be buried in the sand.

"A lot of times, that's a traumatic thing for kids, seeing the coffin be buried," she said. "They'll replay the trauma over and over again."

Judi's House also has a drama room where children can either dress up or perform puppet shows to begin verbalization of their emotions. But, Becerra says the most popular place is called "The Energy Room" where students can squeeze out their anger in a padded room. They punch the walls, stuffed animals, or hit each other with foam sticks.

"It gets out what's inside," said Becerra.

Becerra says DPS sends kids to Judi's House all the time. But, not all school districts handle tragedy the same way. In Douglas County, the parents of a car accident victim, says Ponderosa High School did not do enough for students grieving their son's death.

"He was a good kid, he really was," said Jim McCarty. His 17-year-old son Jake died October 20th. But, Jim and his wife, Judy, say the student body at Ponderosa was never informed that grief counselors were available. The McCarty family says the school would not even do a moment of silence over the daily announcements.

"The students who knew Jake weren't at the school. They were at the McCarty House," said Ponderosa Principal Chuck Puga.

Puga says, at first, nothing was said because he had not gotten permission from Jake's parents. Plus, he says it is difficult to stop the entire school day.

"(We) want to make sure that we want to meet the needs of all our students of 2,100 students in this school," said Puga. "And, out of those 2,100 students at our school, some kids knew Jake, some kids didn't know Jake."

Jake's parents say the principal was disrespectful to Jake and his friends.

"Any minimal effort, I think, on his part to help these kids," said Judy McCarty. "There are a lot of kids who are suffering and struggling and need his help or the counseling department's help."

Douglas County Schools Spokesperson Whei Wong says the district does have a recommended procedure when it comes to grieving students, one that includes seeking permission from the parents of the deceased student. But, Wong says a principal can make adjustments based on the needs of a school.

Becerra says everyone needs a chance to grieve, especially young kids and teens.

"Just sitting with them, listening and being someone that's safe for them to be with through their grief is a privilege," said Becerra.

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The Cherry Creek News

Wednesday, November 28, 2007

PRINCIPAL NAMED FOR THE NEW COLE ECE-8 SCHOOL

Denver, CO – Denver Public Schools (DPS) today named Julie Murgel as the principal of the Cole ECE-8 School when it opens this fall as a new school serving the Cole community. “Julie has a strong proven track record of leading successful school reform,” said Superintendent Michael Bennet. “We are confident that Julie’s vision, instructional knowledge, and passion for student success will be instrumental in creating a premier ECE-8 school at Cole.”

Murgel, currently the principal at Whiteman Elementary School, emerged as the top pick due to her leadership experience, commitment to students, and strong vision for Cole’s future. Throughout her fourteen year career in education, which includes five years of accomplished urban educational administrative experience as principal, assistant principal, and curriculum specialist, Murgel’s focus has been centered on improving student learning and engaging the school community. During her first year as principal at Whiteman, Murgel improved CSAP scores in 7 out of 10 areas, decreased discipline referrals by 55%, and improved overall student attendance rates. “I will work passionately to ensure that Cole will be a school where all students receive the most

rigorous education possible and are prepared academically and socially for high school,” said Murgel. “I look forward to working together with the Cole community.”

A 10-member search committee, composed of four teachers, three parents, two administrators and a member of the business community, considered a total of 14 local and national candidates. After interviewing five finalists, the search committee unanimously recommended Murgel for principal of the new Cole to Superintendent Michael Bennet and Chief Academic Officer Jaime Aquino.

“Mrs. Murgel is a passionate leader,” said Gail Minella, a Mitchell parent and member of the search committee. “The vision that she wants to help create for the new Cole will benefit our entire community.”

DPS is inviting parents and community members to meet with the new principal in a Meet and Greet scheduled for Thursday, December 6, 2007, at 6:00 p.m. at Cole, located at 3240 Humboldt St.

-The Cherry Creek News-

Denver Post

Wednesday, November 28, 2007

From one scheduled to close to one set to reopen

Whiteman’s principal is awarded the “grand responsibility” of taking over the embattled Cole.

By Jeremy P. Meyer The Denver Post

The principal at a school tabbed for closure next year will take over at the oft-troubled Cole in northeast Denver, Denver Public Schools officials said Tuesday.

Julie Murgel, 36, is principal of Whiteman Elementary, one of eight DPS schools to close as part of the district’s reform plan.

Cole has a history of problems — being labeled one of the worst schools in Colorado a few years ago and being closed by the state.

A charter-school organization took over operations in 2004 but pulled out earlier this year, effectively closing the school again. DPS officials made reforming Cole part of the package, promising to open it in 2008 as a preschool through seventh grade.

“I’m excited,” said Murgel, who walked through the historic Cole building Tuesday night after the announcement. “I was just looking around, saying, ‘Wow, look what the community is entrusting me to do.’”

“It’s a grand responsibility, and I don’t take it lightly. I know the success is riding on strong leadership. I’m ready to start.”

The leadership of the new Cole was one of the more controversial aspects to the district’s reform plan. The community group Metro Organizations for People held a protest in front of the school before the school board’s Nov. 19 vote, demanding a strong leader and clear plan for Cole.

The school board made the timely hiring of a principal a component of the reform, saying a principal must be in place by Dec. 20.

In a statement Tuesday, Superintendent Michael Bennet said Murgel is the right choice.

“Julie has a strong, proven track record of leading successful school reform,” Bennet said in the news release.

Murgel, the principal at Whiteman since 2006, was assistant principal at Rishel Middle School for two years before that.

The district credits Murgel for improving Whiteman’s scores on the Colorado Student Assessment Program in seven of 10 areas, decreasing discipline referrals by 55 percent and increasing overall student-attendance rates.

However, Whiteman’s performance continued to be “unsatisfactory” and its enrollment continued to decline, making it a target for closure.

Murgel will meet with community members at 6 p.m. Dec. 6 at Cole, 3240 Humboldt St.

Nola Miguel of Metro Organizations for People said she looks forward to hearing Murgel’s plans for Cole.

“I’m really hoping it is the right person,” Miguel said. “I want to know how she plans on involving community and parents, how she will find committed staff, her school plan and vision, what is going to make Cole work this time?”