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DPS advised to skip over DNC

By Nancy Mitchell

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

Denver Public Schools' security chief and the city's Office of Emergency Management advised the district on Monday to delay the start of school this fall until after the Democratic National Convention.

Security Chief Ed Ray told DPS board members on Monday that the city has not made an official request but that "the preference" would not be to have schools and the DNC in session.

"We want to hope for the best but we have to prepare for the worst," said Ray, addressing the board with Justin DeMello, director of the city's Office of Emergency Management.

"It would be very prudent on our part if we can accommodate a delayed start to school."

Ray and DeMello said the city and school district pool resources in the event of emergencies - with schools serving as shelters, for example.

If something went wrong at the DNC, they said, it would be easier to work together if schools were not in session.

In addition, DPS has 24 schools within 1.5 miles of the DNC's main site, the Pepsi Center. Classes in the closest schools likely would be disrupted or delayed because of heightened security, Ray said.

"We don't want to be alarmist," DeMello said. "We're just using some caution. We'll have a good plan in place either way."

DPS board members are expected to vote Jan. 24 whether to delay the start of school by two weeks - until after Labor Day.

mitchelln@RockyMountainNews.com or 303-954-5245

Manual asks for freedom from district, union rules

By Nancy Mitchell

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

A second Denver school is asking to be freed from the union and district rules that its principal and teachers say are slowing student progress.

Manual High School Principal Rob Stein said his staff voted unanimously last Thursday to seek autonomy, requesting a waiver of the teachers union contract and of Denver Public Schools policies that are impeding student achievement.

Copies of the proposal were delivered Monday to Denver School Board President Theresa Pena and to Kim Ursetta, president of the Denver Classroom Teachers Association. Both the school board and the union's governing board must approve such a request.

Manual joins Bruce Randolph School, also in north Denver, in asking DPS and the DCTA to free it from regulations governing issues such as the hiring of teachers and flexibility in school budgeting.

But while the DPS board enthusiastically approved Randolph's plan, the union board has yet to vote on its autonomy bid. Ursetta said the board is expected to vote Jan. 22.

Neither Pena nor Ursetta would comment on the Manual proposal, saying they had yet to study it. Pena said the board likely would not vote on the proposal until next month.

Stein said his teachers had been talking about the Randolph bid and their own desire for autonomy since before schools went on break last month.

Denver Post

Tuesday, January 15, 2008

DPS kids to get rec center memberships

By Christopher N. osher The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 01/15/2008 08:33:15 AM MST

About 28,000 students from 60 public schools in Denver will get free recreation center memberships, the Denver Parks and Recreation Department announced last night.

The city agency worked with Denver Public Schools to identify the 60 schools that would participate. Over the next year, the agency will track students who use the recreation centers.

Staffers will meet with the students to explain the programs. Students also will receive a letter explaining the program for their parents, a certificate good for a one-year membership and a waiver that their parents or guardians to sign. The certificates can be redeemed at the neighborhood recreation center.

DPS may alter budget formula to help poor pupils

By Jeremy P. Meyer
The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 01/15/2008 01:16:24 AM MST

A proposed budget formula for Denver schools would earmark more money for poorer students and increase base amounts for high school and middle school pupils, according to administrators.

Denver Public Schools administrators want to rework the budget to provide more help for students with greater needs, especially poorer students.

Most of the additional funding would come from refinancing the district's pension plan,

which would free up between \$15 million and \$18 million a year, said Tom Boasberg, DPS chief operating officer.

The administration discussed the matter Monday with school board members in a work session. The board will have a deeper discussion about the budget later this month.

Among the recommendations:

- Increase by \$2.4 million a year the per-pupil base funding for secondary school students, raising it to the same level as that for elementary school students — helping about 21,000 students.
- Increase by \$6.3 million a year the per-pupil funding for poorer students, giving low-income students in the 20 poorest schools the most money — \$402 per student over and above the base.
- Increase by 30 to 40 percent the per-pupil funding for gifted and talented programs, giving roughly \$90 per gifted and talented student over and above the base.
- Increase by \$3 million the funding for specialized services for nurses, social workers and mental health and for interventions for students with mild or moderate disabilities.

Jeremy P. Meyer: 303-954-1367 or jpmeyer@denverpost.com

<<mailto:jpmeyer@denverpost.com>>

DPS eyes more early classes

Not to worry, teens: District wants more kids in preschool, kindergarten

By Jeremy P. Meyer
The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 01/15/2008 12:40:39 AM MST

More young children in Denver would attend preschool and kindergarten classes under an early-childhood education plan announced Monday by Denver Public Schools administrators.

Next school year the district is expected to add 1,400 more preschool students using money collected through a city sales tax and 1,000 additional kindergarten slots with money from other funds.

"All the research says that getting kids into preschool and kindergarten puts them in a much better footing academically," said David Suppes, the district's chief strategy officer. "It's a great thing, but we still have to work through some hurdles."

The expansion of the early- childhood education program is in step with the city and county's sales tax that was approved by voters in November 2006. The 1.2-cent tax on every \$10 purchase is raising about \$830,000 per month for preschool programs for Denver children, and now the district is going to be able to tap into that program.

"This is the district's largest expansion (of preschool)," said Superintendent Michael Bennet. "The demand is high, which is good."

About 4,000 children attend preschool classes in the district now — with 3,500 children in half-day classes.

DPS surveys show parents want their kids in full-time programs, and administrators figured it must add 3,300 half-day slots to meet that demand.

Next fall's expansion will meet about 63 percent of that demand, which will be accomplished with the addition of 25 to 35 classrooms across the region and modular classrooms in the Montbello neighborhood.

Enrollment for next fall's preschool classes begins Jan. 28.

The district is able to make these additions without raising tuition for the classes, which is \$195 a month for half-day attendance. Only 17 percent of families pay from \$75 to \$195 because of state and federal subsidies.

DPS still must get its classrooms approved by Qualistar Early Learning, a third-party group that evaluates the quality of the facility, staff, curriculum and other areas.

Twenty-six DPS classrooms have been rated so far — earning two to three stars out of four — and district officials hope to have at least 120 rated by the end of this school year.

Officials with the voter-approved Denver Preschool Program are excited about the district's move to increase preschool offerings.

"We want DPS to be the biggest partner with the Denver Preschool Program and one of our most important partners," said James Mejia, the program's chief executive. "They will have some of the broadest reach into the community to provide these services. We are going to do everything we can to help."

For kindergarten, DPS currently provides classes to about 6,600 students — with 4,800 attending full-day kindergarten. The district wants to add 25 kindergarten classes across the district, using money from federal and state resources as well as general fund dollars.

Officials hope to add 1,200 full-day kindergarten slots next school year without raising tuition, which is \$270 a month, Suppes said.

Jeremy P. Meyer: 303-954-1367 or jpmeyer@denverpost.com
<<mailto:jpmeyer@denverpost.com>>

Numbers

4,000 Number of children who attend preschool classes in Denver Public Schools, with 3,500 in half-day classes

1.2 cents Voter-approved sales-tax hike on every \$10 purchase to help pay for quality preschool for 4-year-olds

\$830,000 Amount that the tax raises each month

\$1.5 million Amount that DPS officials expect to need to upgrade preschool classrooms by 2008-09

Cherry Creek News

Tuesday, January 15, 2008

DPS announced Early Childhood, Kindergarten expansion

Written by Staff

FROM DPS:

Denver Public Schools (DPS) today unveiled an extensive increase in preschool and kindergarten as a result of Mayor John Hickenlooper and city council's Denver Preschool Program (DPP) passed by Denver's voters. The administration plans to increase preschool offerings by 32% and full-day kindergarten offerings by 25% for the 2008-2009 school year. Kindergarten registration began on January 7th and preschool registration begins on January 28th.

"We are excited to be able to expand our offerings for our four and five year-olds," said Superintendent Michael Bennet. "DPS is in the business of offering quality preschool and kindergarten and our hopes for the future are to be able to offer space in a full-day class to every four and five year-old in the city who wants one. We are enormously grateful to Mayor Hickenlooper, to city council, and most of all to Denver's voters."

The district currently serves 4,000 preschool students - 3,500 students are attending half-

day classes and 500 students are attending full-day classes. In 2007-2008, the district modestly increased its offerings by 8.5% to accommodate an additional 300 students. The first phase of the 2008-2009 school year preschool expansion will result in 1,200 to 1,500 additional half-day slots. The district's preschool expansion efforts are focused on converting current half-day offerings to full-day offerings without affecting this year's tuition.

The district's childhood education (ECE) expansion was first announced on October 1, 2007, as one of the six central proposals presented by DPS to A+ Denver, a civic organization of more than 100 members, in order to raise student achievement and address the district's concerns around building capacity and declining enrollment.

"Expanding the number of ECE and kindergarten seats offered in our district allows our city's youngest students the opportunity to grow further academically in their early years," said DPS Board of Education member Bruce Hoyt. "We are that much closer to reaching our achievement goals as a district and a city if our students are better prepared and have the right foundation with which to begin their academic careers."

Starting in the 2008-2009 school year, any family registering for preschool services in the district will at the same time be enrolled in the Denver Preschool Program. DPP is a new program funded by a tax increase approved by Denver voters in 2006 and is intended to increase the availability and affordability of high-quality preschool services for four year-olds in Denver. DPP provides reimbursement directly to the preschool provider based upon the income level of the families enrolled, and the quality level of the facility. The funds available through DPP allows the district to charge tuition that is far below the actual cost of providing preschool services.

DPS is fully committed to the quality of its preschool programs. In line with this commitment, DPS will have all of its classrooms rated by an independent, pre-school rating organization, Qualistar. Those classrooms in DPS that have already been rated have consistently received three stars out of four stars.

9 News

Monday, January 14, 2008

DPS to add more kindergarten and pre-k

spots

posted by: [TaRhonda Thomas](#)

<<mailto:TaRhonda.Thomas@9news.com?subject=RE:DPS%20to%20add%20more%20kindergarten%20and%20pre-k%20spots>> , Reporter

DENVER – By next school year, there will be thousands more available spaces in public school pre-k and kindergarten classes.

The increase is part of an expansion plan presented to the Denver School Board on Monday.

"It's so critical, when we have an interest in closing the achievement gap for children of all income levels," said Denver Schools Superintendent Michael Bennet.

The \$20 million plan would increase the number of available pre-k spots by 32 percent and the number of kindergarten spots by 25 percent.

It would also expand the number of full-day pre-k programs offered in public schools.

In a recent study of the families of 4,000 students, parents of more than 3,000 students enrolled in Denver Public Schools' pre-k classes say they would rather have them enrolled in a full-day, rather than a half-day. Currently there are only about 500 full-day spots and 3,500 half-day spots.

"Our hope at Denver Public Schools is that, in the very near term, every child who wants a full-day preschool is going to be able to get it," said Bennet.

The pre-k spaces will be available to families, regardless of their ability to pay tuition

"About 85 percent of our children in the Early Childhood (Education Program) don't pay anything to be there," Bennet said.

Funding for the expansion will come from a variety of sources, including money from a sales tax increase approved by voters in 2006.

Schools will study the demand for the classes in their area and then come up with their own plans on how to expand.

Bradley International is one of the schools that does not currently offer a full day

of pre-k classes.

However, Principal Heather Regan is currently evaluating the data to determine how the school can better serve its community.

"If we can help support parents in any fashion with that, I think it's very important," she said.