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Union vs. DPS over Bruce Randolph: 2 letters

by DP Opinion on February 10, 2008

Re: "A leader in school fight," Feb. 3 Susan Barnes-Gelt column.

<http://www.denverpost.com/opinionheadlines/ci_8133777>

Thanks for Susan Barnes-Gelt's well-reasoned column concerning the Denver Public Schools "kerfuffle" [over Bruce Randolph School].

Bringing all of the stakeholders to the table is something I've been suggesting for months now. In Aurora Public Schools, where I teach, the union and school board met for several months in discussions over granting limited autonomy to schools and groups that thought they could tailor their schools to unique needs.

After jointly visiting Boston Public Schools, the two governing boards hammered out a memorandum of agreement and presented it to the voting members of each organization, who then proceeded to approve the proposal overwhelmingly. It is time for "a leader" to step forward and broker a similar process for DPS.

Where are they?

Matt Bergles, *Denver*

Susan Barnes-Gelt is seeking the voice of leadership in the Denver Public Schools. It seems that this has already been established - by the Denver Classroom Teachers Association. The direction where the DCTA is going is what is best for the union and does not include parents or teachers.

That is the voice that has emerged, and don't mess with them.

J.D. Moyers, Centennial

Rocky Mountain News

Saturday, February 9, 2008

Principal merit pay plan back on track

DPS doled out \$600,000 in '07

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/>>)

Saturday, February 9, 2008

Denver Public Schools' performance pay plan for principals got off to a shaky start last year when the district lost \$3.5 million of federal funds because no one was administering the program.

But a year later, administrator Kathy Kochis has come on board and won back \$5.5 million, and DPS Superintendent Michael Bennet said the plan is back on track.

In 2006, DPS was awarded the five-year, \$22 million Teacher Incentive Fund grant, "but we didn't have the administrative apparatus set up that we needed to."

"It's not the way things should be done," Bennet added, "but I feel very good about the way things are going now."

Kochis, in a work session Thursday with school board members, said the district recovered and paid out \$600,000 to principals in September for the 2006-07

school year.

The criteria used for principals was the same used in DPS' pay plan for teachers, known as ProComp. Funded by Denver voters in November 2005, ProComp is the first wide-scale plan in the U.S. to pay teachers based on factors such as achievement and working in high-poverty schools.

It has drawn national attention and, in 2006, the U.S. Department of Education awarded \$42 million to 16 districts, including DPS, to create and implement similar pay plans for teachers and for principals.

Part of the grant requires DPS slowly to assume funding of the principal pay plan so that, by the time the grant runs out in 2010-11, the district can pay for it.

Kochis said Thursday that the principals' plan for this school year contains some elements similar to ProComp, but not all. For example, both plans reward teachers and principals for working in high-poverty schools.

But principals can receive money for their willingness to document, via video or in writing, instructional strategies that have lifted their schools' scores on state exams.

Harrington Elementary in north Denver was among those asked to record their practices so other schools can learn from them.

"We had broken the image of what a school like us should be doing in both math and writing," Principal Sally Edwards said. "That's a validation of what we're doing and how hard we work."

Like some other principals and teachers in high-poverty schools, Edwards said a few thousand dollars more a year isn't what draws her to work in urban areas. But the recognition of the challenge helps.

Bennet said the plan is one more initiative within DPS to base compensation on performance. The district learned Thursday that it had won a \$4.75 million grant from the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation and from the The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation to support its work in that effort.

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Performance pay for principals

Principals in Denver Public Schools are eligible for extra pay for working in high-poverty schools and for showing progress in their students' growth. Here's a look at the current DPS merit-pay plan for principals, modeled after its plan for teachers:

Element Criteria Amount possible

1. Work in a Schools with poverty rates \$6,000 for principals, hard-to-serve school of at least 75 percent \$4,500 for assistant principals
2. Show overall student Percent growth on new \$4,000 to \$6,000 for principals, academic growth DPS school rating system, \$3,000 to \$4,500 for amount to be determined assistant principals
3. Show academic growth Minimum of 10 percent \$2,000 to \$3,000 for principals, in selected subject growth on state exam \$1,500 to \$2,250 for asst. principals
4. Be a top-performing Based on new DPS \$6,000 to \$10,000 for principals, school school rating system \$4,500 to \$7,500 for asst. principals
5. Be willing to document Based on growth on state exams, \$6,000 to \$10,000 for principals, best practices self-nomination \$4,500 to \$7,500 for asst. principals

Totals possible annually: Up to \$35,000 for principals; up to \$26,250 for assistant principals

That data, for example, could be used by teachers to better cater their teaching strategy to individual students.

The program also will deliver data to DPS operations departments, such as food service, human resources and transportation, to improve their efficiency.

"By taking a new approach to how information is used in the district and the classroom, teachers and administrators can take action based on what's working and what's not working to influence student achievement and graduation rates before the child fails a grade level," Janet Mountain, executive director of the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, said in a statement released by DPS.