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Denver Post

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Janus' gift will finance DPS teacher program

By The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 03/06/2008 12:48:12 AM MST

Denver-based Janus Capital Group will pump \$3 million into Denver's public-school system to create a program that is intended to improve teacher recruitment, development and retention.

The Janus program will be funded over three years. It is the largest corporate gift Denver Public Schools has ever received.

Janus' plan will create a residency program for new teachers who will receive intense training in DPS methods and work for a full year with a master teacher before teaching independently. DPS will work with universities to provide master's-level accreditation for resident teachers.

"This is incredibly exciting," DPS Superintendent Michael Bennet said Tuesday. "This will give us a much more robust teaching program."

Almost half of DPS's teachers leave the profession within their first five years on the job.

DPS plans hold a nationwide search for an executive to run the program, called the Janus Education Alliance.

Tom McGhee, The Denver Post

DPS pensions deemed costly

Officials seek legislation to merge the program with the state system.

By Jessica Fender
The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 03/06/2008 12:51:22 AM MST

Each Denver Public Schools student is allocated \$250 less than students in surrounding suburbs and \$650 less than kids in districts with similar demographics, according to the Denver district's statistics.

At fault is a DPS-run teachers pension program that's far more costly than its state-run counterpart, school officials told a House committee today, laying the groundwork for a potential legislative solution later this session.

DPS pays \$50 million — or \$800 a student — more toward teacher pensions than the state's PERA system, said Tom Boasberg, chief operating officer for DPS.

District officials are talking with Senate President Peter Groff about introducing legislation that would merge the two pension programs.

Details are still sketchy as to how that could happen without harming state pensioners.

A drop in the number of students — and, therefore, the number of teachers — in Denver schools has left one active employee for each retiree drawing a pension, Boasberg said.

The state system boasts more than two active workers paying in for each retiree receiving a check.

DPS already is planning to refinance part of its pension program to save up to \$18 million a year and is selling a handful of its buildings.

Schools vigilant on child welfare

Officials look for ways to cut a surge in referrals that could be partly an overreaction.

By Christopher N. Osher
The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 03/06/2008 12:34:45 AM MST

A Denver 6-year-old was investigated by police and social service workers for telling a 6-year-old girl she had "a sexy booty."

Two 5-year-olds were reported to child-welfare investigators after they kissed on the playground.

And according to Denver City Councilman Doug Linkhart, another youngster was suspended for three days for playing tag because he hit a girl on the behind.

Those were among the examples shared Wednesday morning as city and school officials met to review a 55 percent increase in child-welfare referrals following a new "report-everything" recommendation from prosecutors — and the recent prosecution of a principal for an alleged failure to do so.

Police Chief Gerry Whitman said his agency and school officials are trying to figure out how to respond to rising caseloads. New policy guidelines are being crafted, he said.

Those guidelines would give examples of when school officials should and shouldn't call police or social service workers to report potential crimes or sexual assaults.

"I appreciate your hearing this issue, because we are facing a crisis in terms of an increase in reporting," said Roxane White, the manager of the Denver Department Human Services, during the meeting with City Council members to discuss the matter.

White urged a more flexible attitude. Referrals from Denver schools to the DHS child-abuse hotline jumped from 162 in January to 251 in February, amounting to a 55 percent increase, White said.

The increase also is using resources, with school referrals now 27 percent of all referrals to DHS, up from 14 percent.

The surge in reporting follows the prosecution of Nicole Veltze, who has been temporarily reassigned from her job as principal of Skinner Middle School.

Veltze is scheduled on Tuesday to attend a plea hearing and scheduling matter in Denver County Court on misdemeanor charges of failure to report a crime at her school. Her lawyer has said that Veltze had been investigating a sexual-harassment claim that one 13-year-old made against another 13-year-old.

Authorities say Veltze violated the law by failing to call police about the incident in a timely manner.

In addition, prosecutors urged last month that teachers and principals should aggressively report incidents, said Bob Anderson, who reviews expulsion and suspension hearings for Denver Public Schools.

Anderson recalled that Lamar Sims, a chief deputy in Denver District Attorney Mitch Morrissey's office, recommended during a seminar on Feb. 4 that school officials should take a "report-everything approach."

Anderson said there's worry among school administrators that if they fail to report even the slightest of incidents, they could risk losing their license to teach or work as supervisors in schools.

Morrissey declined to attend Wednesday's meeting on the issue because the Veltze case is still pending and he didn't want to jeopardize it, said Morrissey's spokeswoman, Lynn Kimbrough.

Kimbrough added that Morrissey believes it is up to lawyers for the Denver public school system to advise their employees on what their legal responsibilities are, and that prosecutors should not be giving out hypothetical examples of what could or could not lead to prosecution.

Councilwoman Jeanne Faatz noted that the law requires prosecution when there's a "willful violation" of the requirement

to report sexual assaults. She said she believed that terminology should give school officials some discretion in handling cases.

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Guest Commentary

Education plan isn't enough

By Rona Wilensky

Rona Wilensky is principal of New Vista High School in Boulder, and was education aide to Gov. Dick Lamm in 1984.

Gov. Bill Ritter's Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K) calls for aligning K-12 and post-secondary education. Here's what's wrong with such a plan:

- The proposal reflects confused thinking about the difference between preparing all kids for post-secondary education and preparing all kids for college classes.
- To prepare all kids for college classes requires enormous changes in practice that are unaddressed by the proposal.
- Aligning K-12 with higher education wrongly assumes that higher education effectively meets the needs of our society.

The proposal claims to prepare students for various post-secondary options. But the focus is on preparing them for freshman-level classes in colleges. Despite education reform rhetoric to the contrary, the writing skills needed in freshman English are not the same skills needed in training programs to be a nursing assistant. The math skills needed for college algebra are not the ones needed in a commercial art program.

The dilemma is that college for all requires much more than the clarification of higher education expectations and their alignment with K-12. Alignment is a housekeeping measure; what we need is deep reform across higher education and K-12.

Children come to school with vast differences. Most are the result of the social and economic inequality in our society; others owe to the delightful diversity in interests, talents and dispositions. Mostly, schools offer one model of learning to all. Those who come to school with the endowments that a middle-class upbringing provides and with the capacity to sit still will be extremely successful. But those who come “behind” in school readiness, with a non-traditional learning style or non-academic interests, will probably disengage from academic learning early on.

Aligning K-12 diploma endorsements with clarified higher education standards doesn't change key problems with the status quo: We don't provide all children with the supports they need to be ready for school and we don't provide all students with consistent access to high quality teachers who can address gaps in school readiness and differences in learning styles and interests. Until we tackle these issues, schools will continue to produce differentiated success for students.

CAP4K assumes that what and how colleges teach is what is needed for success in the world beyond schooling. There is considerable evidence that colleges are less effective than we need them to be: Less than half of freshmen graduate within six years; only 31 percent of students in their final year are proficient in basic literacy skills; employer surveys consistently reveal dissatisfaction with college graduates' skills; and large numbers of graduates enroll in technical programs at community colleges to qualify for jobs. We must reform the collegiate system, not simply clarify its expectations. Raising the bar when it's the wrong bar is a bad idea.

Finally, the state recently enacted new college entrance requirements for the class of 2010 to decrease the remediation rate. Preliminary data indicate that fewer students will qualify for college under the new rules. Raising the bar without raising support means that fewer students will reach it.

By redirecting attention and resources away from the complex issues of school readiness, teaching, and the expectation that higher education should align itself with what society really needs, CAP4K does a disservice to genuine education reform.

Rocky Mountain News

Thursday, March 6, 2008

A simple kiss at school may morph into criminal investigation

By Jeff Kass, Rocky Mountain News

Public officials called it "nutty" and "foolishness" Wednesday morning, and one asked whether SWAT teams would now descend on teenagers kissing at school.

The Denver district attorney calls one such case a crime.

The difference between a kiss, and a crime, centers on the requirement that Denver Public Schools employees "make a report if child abuse or neglect reasonably is suspected."

But a meeting Wednesday of the City Council Safety Committee indicated that a climate of fear among DPS employees is spurring an unwarranted increase in abuse and neglect referrals. The head of Human Services

indicated the agency was being overloaded, and there was concern about police resources.

"It's just getting to the point of ridiculousness where we're prosecuting kids for kissing," Councilman Doug Linkhart, who chairs the Safety Committee, said after the meeting.

Much of Wednesday's discussion involved issues of sexual harassment. Among the examples cited Wednesday was a referral to Human Services for two 5-year-olds who were kissing. In another case, one 6-year-old said to another 6-year-old, "You have a sexy booty."

There was no sanction in the case of the 6-year-old, but it remains a traumatic experience for children and their parents to be "ordered in" to Human Services, said spokeswoman Benilda Samuels.

Safety committee discussion indicated the trigger for these and other cases came in January when the district attorney served Skinner Middle School principal Nicole Veltze with a misdemeanor summons for failure to report an unlawful sexual contact.

Veltze was investigating the case, but in the meantime, the girl's mom notified police, said Rich Caschette, Veltze's attorney. Police and the district attorney are making an example out of Veltze because they believe DPS is underreporting crimes, Caschette added.

After the Veltze case was filed, Chief Deputy District Attorney Lamar Sims attended a training with DPS principals about the requirement to report child abuse or neglect. Linkhart indicated that Sims further prompted employees to overreport.

In February, Human Services said it received 251 referrals from DPS. Previously, the monthly average was 142, Samuels said. That's a 76.7 percent increase.

GRIEGO: This teacher succeeds because she believes

By Tina Griego, Rocky Mountain News (Contact)

Thursday, March 6, 2008

This is turning out to be "inspiration week" here in my corner of the paper. On Monday, I told you of the remarkable students in the running to win Daniels Fund scholarships. Today, I bring you a remarkable teacher.

Linda Alston last appeared in this newspaper in June 2006. That was when she received the inaugural Kinder Excellence in Teaching Award. A national prize - \$100,000 to do with as she liked. (She invested most of it.) That award came on the heels of other national prizes.

Alston started teaching for Denver Public Schools in 1989. She's now at Howell Elementary in Montbello. It resembles the schools Alston has served nearly all her career: low-income, largely minority.

Scholastic has just published Alston's book *Why We Teach*, and it prompts my call to her classroom where a child answers: "Good afternoon. Ms. Alston's class. Elisa speaking. How may I assist you?"

Elisa, 6 years old, cute as all get out, informs me later that answering the phone is one of her jobs. They all have jobs in Alston's class: meteorologist (reads the weather report); accountant (does the head count); historian (marks the date, day and year).

What's your job title, I ask Elisa.

"Afternoon receptionist," she says.

Let's talk for a second about expectations. "High expectations" is the mantra of the day, repeated so often it tends to lose meaning. It's become a fuzzy- wuzzy concept, broad and vast and vague enough to disguise mediocrity.

I will tell you I have high expectations of students. And then I will remind you that during my year writing about North High School, I found myself thrilled that half of the graduating class was going to college or vocational school only to realize - a thunderclap - that had this same proportion been college-bound at ThunderRidge High School in Highlands Ranch, where I also spent a year, I would have been appalled. So easy it was, this insidious ratcheting down of my expectations.

So, I stop when I get to one particular passage in Alston's book. It comes right after she describes how she succeeded with a second- grade class that chewed up and spat out teachers like old gum. "What I did was very

simple," she writes. "I believed in myself. I believed in the children . . . The answers lie in one's fundamental beliefs about children."

And that summation, straightforward as it is, simple as it sounds, is what every master teacher I have ever known has said about why they succeed with their students.

They believe and their students know it.

"Here's the tricky thing," Alston tells me. "People think they believe in children. They'll say, 'Unequivocally, I have high expectations.' But bring them into my classroom and they look at the plants on children's tables and the fine china my kindergartners use to serve our guests tea and they say, 'Oh, if this were my class, we couldn't do that. My kids would make a mess.'

"It's that self-fulfilling prophecy. If it surprises you that my kindergartners are reading, then how can you have believed in them? If you had faith, why are you surprised? So, then what people go to is, 'Oh, they must be the exception.' And my answer is no. No, they are not."

Alston says she believes all children, not only those who are poor, not just minorities, suffer from this lack of adult faith in their capacity to learn. Still, she chooses to work in lower-income schools because she knows these students need the extra support, and if they do not succeed in school early on, they will find it harder to do so later. They may drop out, she says, join gangs, die in the streets.

"I am railing against that possibility," she says. "Their very lives are at stake . . . I am not perfect. I don't have all the answers. I get frustrated. And then I get back to work. That's what commitment is. What are we going to do? Just give up on children?"

We talk in her lovely classroom with its plants and colorful posters, the air smelling faintly of sandalwood. Her students work at their own stations, coming to show her their writing or counting or reading. She praises them and they glow and preen and start the next page. I see words like "dignity" and "philosophy" and "integrity" in their reading material, heavy stuff for a kindergartner, I catch myself thinking.

"What does integrity mean?" she asks her class. Hands shoot up. "When your parent or teacher or nobody is looking and you do the right thing," a boy answers.

Alston said she did not write her book only for teachers, though there is much for them to ponder. It is her celebration of children. From it she hopes we are moved to re-examine our beliefs and reaffirm our commitment to them.

I feel a tap on my shoulder. Six-year-old Marlen is at my side, smiling. "I invite you to have tea with me," she says, gesturing toward a table set with silk flowers.

Why, I tell her, I would love to.

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Teacher sex case bill clears House panel

Measure would require reporting within 24 hours

By Steven K. Paulson ASSOCIATED PRESS

A bill that would give school districts 24 hours to report allegations of sexual misconduct by teachers was approved by the House Judiciary Committee on Wednesday.

House Bill 1344 also would require the state Department of Education to pass that information on to other school districts inquiring about teacher applicants.

School districts would be required to report any teacher who is fired or who resigns because of allegations of illegal behavior involving a child, if the claim is supported by significant evidence, even if there is no conviction.

The measure now goes to the full House.

Rep. Gwyn Green, D-Golden, said teachers have resigned after sexual misconduct with students and then molested other children at other schools because the state and school districts failed to conduct proper background checks.

The bill would give the state Department of Education 10 days to do a preliminary background check on a teacher candidate and report any problems to the school districts.

A full background check could take two to three months, potentially allowing teachers who fail to report their criminal histories to get classroom jobs before the results come back, Green said.

She said some districts weren't reporting violators, as required by state law.

"We're talking about negligence," Green told the committee.

Green's bill would revoke a requirement that children report abuse within 180 days because some children are traumatized by the abuse.

It would require settlements that allow teachers to avoid a license-revocation hearing to be made public.

Ted Thompson, president of the National Association to Prevent Sexual Abuse of Children, said current law allows offenders to go from school to school without being fired.

He said parents have a right to know if a sex offender was in their children's school, but often they are not told of settlements involving offenders.

“(The bill) assures that offenders won't be able to go from school to school with confidentiality agreements,” he said.

“I think we can all agree we don't want inappropriate individuals to move from one area to another.

“The current law essentially restrains the victim and allows those responsible to essentially have an out.”

The committee killed another measure, House Bill 1011, that would have lifted the statute of limitations on lawsuits against private schools over sexual assaults on children.

Lawmakers said it would remove incentives for people to come forward immediately with allegations of abuse.

Denver Business Journal

Thursday, March 6, 2008

Janus sets record with \$3M grant to Denver schools

Denver Business Journal - by [Mark Harden](#) Denver Business Journal

Janus Capital Group is making a three-year, \$3 million donation to the Denver Public Schools -- the largest single corporate gift to the city's schools in history -- to improve the district's teacher recruitment and retention programs.

DPS officials say the program is badly needed to help it find better teacher candidates and reduce turnover.

"We in education face a real human-capital crisis," DPS Superintendent Michael Bennet said. "It's the 90 percent of the iceberg that nobody sees when you talk about school reform."

The norm of teachers staying with the district for their entire careers is gone, officials say. Nearly half of the district's teachers don't make it to their fifth anniversary, and DPS usually has to replace between 8 percent and 12 percent of its 4,250-member teaching corps each year.

Skill levels for incoming teachers vary widely. Most are novices, and many can't cope with the special challenges of urban schools.

"We're not producing the number of people here in Colorado to teach through traditional routes, and this [Janus grant] is going to give us the opportunity to broaden those routes," Bennet said.

The funds from the Denver-based investment-management firm (NYSE: JNS) will be used to establish a new residency program. College students will spend a year in DPS classrooms training with "master teachers" and studying urban education before being hired as teachers themselves.

Other goals are to broaden the district's nationwide teacher recruitment efforts, streamline the teacher hiring process and expand professional-development and advancement opportunities for teachers, said Blair Johnson, president of the Janus Foundation.

He said his company was looking for a major, high-impact, local education project to support. After talks with Bennet and Brad Jupp, his chief academic policy advisor, "we decided that where we could make the biggest difference was to attract, develop and

retain the best and brightest teachers -- new ones out of college, and also some mid-career changers," Johnson said.

DPS is now searching for a "special assistant to the superintendent" to administer the program, dubbed the Janus Education Alliance.

The new official will spend six months developing a business model and action plans for the program. The residency program is to be launched by next January, beginning with 25 teachers per year and building to 100 in three years.

Bennet said the new Janus-funded program complements "ProComp," the district's pay-for-performance program that rewards teachers for improved student achievement and professional development, because both are aimed at better teaching.

"We need to think differently about how we recruit people, ... how we support them, how we build career ladders for people over time so [DPS] becomes something they want to commit themselves to, and how we compensate people is a big piece of that as well," he said.

The Janus gift follows last month's announcement of \$4.7 million in grants to DPS from two nonprofit foundations for a "performance management" initiative. Officials said the earlier grants will help streamline the district's gathering and delivery of data on student achievement and other matters, making it easier for both teachers and administrators to gauge performance.

Business Wire

Thursday, March 6, 2008

Janus Capital Group Makes Three-Year, \$3 Million Commitment to Improve

Teacher Recruitment, Training and Retention in Denver Public Schools

Janus Education Alliance Created to Elevate the Teaching Profession and Make Denver a Place Where Teachers Come to Perfect Their Craft

DENVER--([BUSINESS WIRE](#))--Denver Public Schools (DPS) today announced that Janus Capital Group is making a three-year, \$3 million commitment to create a program to improve teacher recruitment, development and retention. Called the Janus Education Alliance, the program will be funded by the largest corporate gift DPS has ever received.

The primary purpose of the Janus Education Alliance is to boost student achievement by investing in DPS teachers at every stage of their careers. Specifically, the Janus Education Alliance is designed to:

- Work closely with organizations that recruit promising young teachers and mid-career professionals interested in teaching;
- Enhance the district's human resources and professional-development staff to ensure that DPS attracts, trains and retains the best possible faculty;
- Create improved professional-development opportunities, such as year-long classroom "residencies" that enable new teachers to learn from DPS "master" teachers;
- Elevate the status of the teaching profession; and
- Build an innovative organization that positions DPS as a national educational leader.

The Janus Education Alliance also will help address the unprecedented teaching shortage facing school districts today. Research indicates that half of new urban teachers leave the profession by the end of their third year, usually because they

feel unsupported and unprepared for success. Nearly half of DPS teachers leave the profession within their first five years on the job.

“Given the high teacher turnover and low graduation rates in Denver, we have a rare opportunity to change the landscape of urban education,” said Blair Johnson, Janus senior vice president of corporate communications. “We decided we could have the greatest impact by creating an organization that elevates the teaching profession and takes teachers to new heights.”

This spring, following a nationwide search, DPS plans to hire an executive to run the Janus Education Alliance.

“The reforms we’re making in the Denver Public Schools are transformational changes, not incremental ones,” said DPS Superintendent Michael Bennet. “To make meaningful, lasting change you need partners who are energetic and engaged. That’s why it’s so important that Janus is stepping up at a critical time for our schools.”

Bennet said the Janus Education Alliance will work with several partners to identify promising young teachers and mid-career professionals interested in becoming teachers in DPS.

“By offering advanced training, better-defined career paths and our pay-for-performance plan, we’re confident that DPS will attract the best and brightest teachers – and that they’ll stay here longer,” Bennet said. “As word spreads, we believe Denver will become a destination for top-notch teachers eager to hone their craft.”

In addition to Janus’ financial contribution, members of the investment management firm’s research and finance departments are helping DPS tackle various operational challenges. Their volunteer work ranges from analyzing budgets to evaluating ways to increase productivity and optimize student-teacher ratios.

The DPS Foundation, which oversees charitable funding for the district, called the Janus Education Alliance a landmark initiative.

“Janus’s commitment to DPS is exactly the kind of partnership that will make a difference in our schools,” said Barbara Berv, president and CEO of the Denver Public Schools Foundation. “The DPS Foundation’s mission is to drive community investment in our schools, and that’s just what Janus is doing. It’s making an investment in Denver’s children that will pay off in the future as better schools create a stronger community with a more robust economy.”

About the Denver Public Schools Foundation

The DPS Foundation raises funds in support of The Denver Plan, the district’s ambitious education reform plan to improve student achievement. The Foundation supports programs such as professional development for principals and teachers, improved curriculum and quality of instruction, after-school programs, and community partnerships. For more information, visit www.dpsfoundation.org.

About Janus Capital Group Inc.

Founded in 1969, Denver-based Janus Capital Group Inc. (Janus) is a recognized leader of growth and risk-managed investment strategies. Our commitment to deliver for investors is rooted in our research-intensive approach and relentless passion to gain a competitive edge. At the end of December 2007, Janus managed \$206.7 billion in assets for more than four million shareholders, clients and institutions around the globe. Outside the U.S., Janus has offices in London, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Singapore. Janus Capital Group consists of Janus Capital Management LLC, Enhanced Investment Technologies, LLC (INTECH) and Capital Group Partners, Inc. (doing business as Rapid Solutions Group). In addition, Janus Capital Group owns 30% of Perkins, Wolf, McDonnell and Company, LLC.