

News Clips

Headlines

Rocky Mountain News

Thursday, March 27, 2008

- Letter: Pension report insulting to teachers
- CSAP gripe has wrong target

Cherry Creek News

Monday, March 24, 2008

- Keeping Billy from becoming "Billy the Kid"

Rocky Mountain News **Thursday, March 27, 2008**

Letters

Pension report insulting to teachers

As a veteran teacher of DPS who is retired after serving the children of Denver for 29 years, I am appalled at the Piton Foundation report on DPS' compensation package emphasizing retirement benefits.

It is simply an insult to those of us who entered the profession and/or those who are currently entering or preparing to entering the honorable profession of teaching with the intent of remaining in the profession and working to improve our teaching through education and practice. Hopefully, some of those teachers who are "stuck" in the system after having taught 10 or more years (the implication of the report) will speak. I, for one, am tired of being blamed for the woes of the current Denver Public School system.

Lois M. Gould, Denver

Letters

CSAP gripe has wrong target

If letter writer Victoria Brady's 9-year-old daughter's teacher ". . . told her the [CSAP] scores would be looked at all her life and even as an adult when she tried to get a job," it seems the mother should be on a crusade against the teacher, not the CSAPs. CSAP tests traumatic for 9-year-old,"March 18.)

Stephen Petrie, Aurora

Cherry Creek News

Monday, March 24, 2008

Keeping Billy from becoming “Billy the Kid”

Written by Councilman Doug Linkhart
Monday, 24 March 2008

I watched one day as the city’s juvenile court tried kids who had been issued summons for various incidents. One kid was there for a fistfight after school. Another was there for jostling in a hallway. Most were there for problems that occurred months earlier and received either a \$100 fine or a couple days of community service.

This kind of behavior used to result in a kid being sent to a school’s dean or a note to parents. Suddenly it seems like we’re using the police and courts for what should be handled among school administrators and parents.

The same can be said for incidents perceived as involving sexual contact. In February, such reports related to kids under ten years old skyrocketed by 76%, amounting to 251 incidents in only one month. Some of these reports involving nothing more than a couple of kids kissing or accidentally touching a private area while playing tag. These activities are inappropriate but are by no means criminal.

The number of reports from schools regarding supposedly-sexual contact will hopefully decline after the city and school administration help clarify what should be reported. But the question remains about how schools should handle these and other sorts of inappropriate behavior.

Our first priority must be to keep our children safe. Any activity that involves harm, bullying or harassment of another child should be treated seriously. Teachers should be reporting these incidents and administrators should be forwarding these reports to the appropriate authorities when serious enough. Most of all, parents need to be notified and involved.

For incidents that are not serious, the best strategy is one being implemented incrementally throughout Denver Public Schools, called restorative justice. This strategy involves bringing together the kids involved in a particular incident, along with their parents, identifying the reason for the incident and resolving differences so the problem does not reoccur.

Restorative justice has shown positive results in schools where it has been implemented. During the 2nd year of implementation at Montebello High School there was approximately a 50% reduction in the number of tickets and arrests. Between the first semester of last year and the first semester of this year, North High School saw a 25.6% reduction in arrests.

Not only does restorative justice cause a direct reduction in calls to the police and Human Services; it also leaves victims feeling better (“restored”) and reduces the chance of incidents reoccurring by resolving problems rather than simply punishing someone. Studies have shown that traditional criminal punishments often lead juveniles to additional crime as an adult. None of us can afford that result.