

Denver Public Schools
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
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October 1, 2007

Dear Horace Mann Middle School Parents:

Today we are announcing a package of reforms to dramatically improve opportunities for our students and secure the future of Denver Public Schools (DPS). The reforms will be presented in a meeting with A+ Denver, a citizens group of 150 people, who live or work in Denver and whose mission is to make student achievement and public school reform the top priority in Denver. Taken together, we believe these reforms will help us ensure that our district can break the cycle of painful cuts to schools over the past five years.

A+ Denver's Facilities and Finance subcommittee spent months reviewing our finances, studying every aspect of our budget, examining student achievement trends, and the portfolio of programs and services we offer to Denver families. They made recommendations regarding our financial condition and provided criteria for us to use in making recommendations for school closures. With the capacity to serve 100,000 students and a current student population of 68,000, the committee concluded that school closures needed to be one part, but not the only part, of efforts to address key financial challenges facing the District and to significantly improve our ability to deliver the educational promises of the Denver Plan.

Included in our package of reforms, we are recommending that Horace Mann Middle School's existing program be replaced by a new ECE-8 program in the Horace Mann facility, located at 4130 Navajo St., in fall, 2008. Students currently enrolled in 6th and 7th grade will be able to continue their middle years education at the new school. We know this is a very hard decision for the affected children and families, but we believe that the new school will provide a much richer, academic opportunity.

Horace Mann Middle School enrollment is declining. With only 292 sixth through eighth grade students, it is a challenge to meet students' needs with a shrinking budget and to hire enough teachers to offer a comprehensive middle school program that includes diverse course options for students. In addition to declining enrollment, state rating and student achievement levels are not where we want them to be. As you know, Horace Mann Middle School has been rated "low" based on Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) results – for three consecutive years.

Remington Elementary School Principal Veronica Benavidez, will be the Principal of a new ECE-8 school at Horace Mann. The new ECE-8 program at Horace Mann will also be the school of reassignment for Smedley and Remington Elementary Schools, both of which are being recommended for closure. Horace Mann will serve students with mild/moderate disabilities and have a multi-intensive center based program. The affective needs center program currently

located at Horace Mann 6-8 will be relocated to Centennial ECE-8. Savings from the closures of Smedley and Remington will be reinvested in the new ECE-8 program at Horace Mann.

We understand how troubling this school transformation will be for your family, and we are prepared to work closely with you to provide clear information about the new school being created and provide support to students changing schools. We are confident that these closure recommendations meet the A+ Denver criteria and that the new ECE-8 program at Horace Mann will offer your student a better education than he or she is receiving today.

The Board of Education will vote on our recommendations on November 19, 2007.

We look forward to meeting with you about the reason for the change in program structure at Horace Mann and about how we can better serve your child at their new school.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael F. Bennet". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M" and a stylized "F".

Michael F. Bennet
Superintendent