



# Board News

Denver Public Schools Board of Education  
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## Nov. Ballot Language Set For Bond, Mill

The Board of Education this week unanimously approved ballot language for the November election asking voters to consider a \$310 million bond package and \$20 million worth of improvements through a mill levy increase.

"If the bond is bricks and mortar, the mill levy is chicken soup for the soul," said Board member Theresa Peña. The various components of the mill levy will add to the "educational breadth" within the district, she said. The mill levy ideas represent the best thinking of a citizens committee, she added, and that committee

had an "overriding objective" of expanding educational opportunities across the district.

"This is one of the most exciting mill levy packages DPS has ever put forward," said Board president Elaine Gantz Berman, who highlighted the infusion of art and music instruction into elementary schools and the expansion of all-day kindergarten and early childhood education opportunities.

The \$20 million mill levy proposal would mean that the owner of an average single-family home (worth \$251,000) would pay an additional \$48 each year. ■

### Bond Q&A

*How can the district finance a new \$310 million bond without increasing the tax rate?*

As the result of a previous bond election, the district has a reserve – additional tax dollars – that is available to repay debt. This reserve came about because Denver property values have increased (even greater than was anticipated). These reserve funds can be applied to future debt. Along with the reserve dollars that are available, Denver property values are expected to continue to climb and generate the necessary tax dollars for the proposed \$310 million bond. As a result, the current tax rate can remain unchanged.

*Then why hasn't the district's operating budget also increased as the result of increased property values?*

The increased property values do not yield a parallel flow of increased dollars to the district's operating budget. State school funding laws govern the district's spending and those laws take into account increases in local sources of tax dollars. The tax rate for the bond repayments is set and collected separately.

*Why does the ballot language approved by the Board of Education state that an additional \$39 million in taxes will be raised?*

See Q&A on page 2 ▶

### The Mill Levy Proposal

#### 1. Provide Art/Music Teachers In All Elementary Schools

- Arts include visual arts, music, drama and media arts.
- Teachers would be allocated based on enrollment with an average of one for each elementary school. Allocations would range from .5 to 1.5 teachers.
- Schools could share teachers or create two .5 positions from one position to offer a greater range of art classes.
- The proposal would add at least 90 new art/music teachers in 2004-2005

#### 2. Purchase New Textbooks

- Textbooks dollars would be in addition to the \$1 million for textbooks provided in the 1998 mill levy. This means a total of \$4.5 million for textbooks per year.
- Dollars would be allocated primarily to support implementation of new educational programs.

#### 3. Increase Funding For Repairs And Maintenance

- Dollars would increase funds available for annual maintenance like roof replacement, painting, repaving, etc.

#### 4. Expand All Day Kindergarten And Early Childhood Education Classes

- Provide one all day kindergarten class for every school with more than 50 percent of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch.
- Change criteria for scholarships for tuition-based kindergarten and early childhood education classes to make additional families eligible.
- Double the number of scholarships available for tuition-based kindergarten and early childhood education classes.
- Continue to allow low-income students meeting income eligibility requirements to participate tuition free. Students from higher income families would continue to pay tuition consistent with district policy.

#### 5. Improve High School Graduation Rates

- Particular emphasis would be placed on improving the graduation rate and closing the achievement gap by providing: a) additional advanced and other rigorous courses and programs; b) an instructional program that respects differences among students and helps each achieve at a high level; c) revising curriculum to reflect high expectations; and d) support for more students to participate in advanced courses including tutoring and help with study skills.
- Dollars generated would be used for staff development for teachers and other staff; instructional coaches; curriculum revision; teacher recruitment and retention bonuses; and program startup costs.

#### 6. Improve Academic Achievement In Under-Performing Schools

- This initiative would boost the achievement of low performing schools and/or increase the attractiveness of neighborhood schools through the establishment of new choice programs.
- Specific strategies would be tailored to the needs of each school selected. A parent and community committee would be established for each selected school to collaborate with staff in developing the special program.
- Staff would focus on about eight schools every two years.
- Dollars would be used for staff development; new instructional materials; start-up costs associated with new programs; additional instructional coaches; staff recruitment and retention incentives, and staff support of the change process.
- Schools would be selected based on student achievement and desirability of the school to the neighborhood community.



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## Teacher Contract Approved

Following a successful ratification vote by members of the Denver Classroom Teachers Association (announced Aug. 29), the Board of Education this week unanimously approved a new teacher contract for the 2003-2004 school year.

Several Board members and Superintendent Jerry Wartgow lamented the compensation components of the deal.

"I don't think anybody really feels good about what we could offer teachers or any of the other unions, but tough choices were made," said Superintendent Wartgow. "This was a very, very difficult year."

Board of Education President Elaine Gantz Berman said that "good, well-compensated teachers" are the key to academic success. "We will continue to work together, we will have a strong partnership ... Our teachers are the core of everything that happens in this school district."

The contract reduces the teacher work year by three days (one student contact day, one professional development day and one parent-conference day – see related story), increases the benefit allowance for teachers from \$3,288 to \$3,712, provides for continued educational increments, and increases the contribution paid by the district to the retirement system from 2.9 percent to 5 percent for the 2003-2004 school year.

The new contract also restructures the long-standing Collaborative Decision-Making committees as Collaborative School Committees. ■

### Board Modifies 2003-2004 Calendar

With the ratification of the new agreement between DPS and the DCTA, the Board of Education approved changes to the 2003-2004 calendar. Teachers will work three fewer days this year for a total of 181 days. One of the days is a half-day with students.

#### Traditional Calendar

- Last day of school for students (½ day) changes from Thursday, May 27 to Wednesday, May 26 (May 27 becomes a non-duty day for teachers)
- Monday, Oct. 20 (no school for students) changes from a professional day to a non-duty day for teachers
- Tuesday, Feb. 17 (no school for students) changes from a parent conference day to a non-duty day for teachers

#### Continuous Year Calendar

- Last day of school for students (½ day) changes from Friday, June 11 to Thursday, June 10 (June 11 becomes a non-duty day for teachers)
- Monday, Oct. 20 (no school for students) changes from a professional day to a non-duty day for teachers
- Monday, April 12 (no school for students) changes from a professional day to a non-duty day for teachers

## Fields At Sabin Named For Ted Hackworth

The Board of Education on Thursday unanimously approved a committee recommendation to honor Ted Hackworth by naming the athletic fields at Sabin Elementary School for the former Denver Board of Education member and soon-to-be-retiring Denver City Council member.

Hackworth has been serving on the City Council for the past 24 years. Previously, he served six years on the Denver Board of Education.

As a member of the school board, Hackworth was instrumental in starting the Fred N. Thomas Career Education Center. In his role as a representative on City Council, he provided discretionary funds for playground equipment and landscaping projects at Denver schools.

In his 24 years on City Council, Hackworth has served on every committee and has a near perfect attendance record. He attends every monthly neighborhood association meeting in his district and has done so for his entire tenure. ■

#### ► Q&A from page 1

TABOR (the Taxpayer Bill of Rights) and state law prescribe the ballot language that all school districts must use when asking voters for additional tax support. The maximum estimated debt on the proposed \$310 million bond would require \$39 million annually in taxes. However, the district expects that the existing tax rate is sufficient to generate the needed revenue. TABOR and state law requires that the district describe this as a tax increase. But the current property tax rate that is specifically used to repay bonds will not increase if voters support this proposed bond. ■

## Board Notes

### *In other action this week, the Board:*

- Recognized Essie Garrett, a teacher at the Emily Griffith Opportunity School (EGOS), for her personal contribution to EGOS students. In July, Garrett ran 310 miles from Arnold, Nebraska to Denver as a tribute to Emily Griffith, the founder of the school. Garrett, who raised \$21,500 for the school, traced the path Griffith followed when she and her family moved from their homestead in Nebraska to Denver in 1895.
- Approved the Construction Advisory Committee's final report for the Centennial Elementary School four-classroom addition project.
- Approved revisions to the Challenges, Choices and Images Charter School contract changing the location of the charter school; increasing the school's maximum enrollment to 600 students; and increasing the term of the charter school to 30 years.

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