



Board News

Denver Public Schools Board of Education
board.dpsk12.org

Parent Involvement Policy Considered

The Board of Education this week took its first look at a proposed policy for parent involvement that affirms parents as “equal partners” with teachers and other staff in the education process.

The proposed policy follows requirements for developing such a document, spelled out in the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

After a thorough look at the proposed language, the Board asked for changes to some of the wording and asked for a new draft in time for the Oct. 2 meeting.

“I think we’re together on this; I think it’s a matter of shading and interpretation,” said Superintendent Jerry Wartgow.

States the draft policy: “Denver Public Schools believes that parents (including those who are economically disadvantaged, have disabilities, have limited English, have limited literacy, are of any racial or ethnic minority background, or are parents of migratory children) are equal partners with teachers and other staff in the education of their children and that parent involvement and empowerment are essential at all levels throughout the school district.”

The proposal, developed by a parent-led task force, spells out in the operating procedures the roles and responsibilities for central administration and for principals and teachers.

For instance, central administration would enhance parent involvement by

“fostering a welcoming and responsive environment for parents;” by “ensuring accountability of the staff at all levels throughout the district in working with parents and partners;” and by “ensuring flexibility and accessibility within central administration operations and flexibility within district-wide processes and procedures,” among many other steps.

At the same time, principals, teachers and all school staff would work in collaboration with parents and guardians by “setting high expectations for excellent customer (student/parent) service;” by “promoting parent involvement in site-based leadership and decision making;” and by “establishing and promoting communication as a source of trust and flexibility between the school and parents.”

The policy “asks and encourages” that parents be involved in their children’s education, and then suggests some steps in an attachment. Among those steps, parents would be encouraged to be involved in their children’s learning by “taking the initiative to seek the best educational opportunities for their children;” by “respecting teachers and supporting school staff as partners in the education of their children;” and by “identifying and addressing barriers to parent involvement.”

The policy also calls for establishing a parent advisory council to make recommendations for implementing and ensuring the success of the policy itself. ■

“Joint Advisory Council” Proposed

A new Joint Advisory Council would serve as a forum for councils to provide an update of their constituency’s activities and objectives under a new policy being proposed to the Board of Education.

Approval of the policy would bring a series of existing advisory councils under one roof. Existing councils – serving Asian, Black, Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual or Transgender, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian, Gifted and Talented, and Special Education populations – would continue to exist. However, they would be organized as a group under the new joint council.

The proposed policy, discussed in the Board work session this week, would require that the Joint Advisory Council identify common topics or activities on which the various individual councils could collaborate. A representative from each advisory council would serve on the Joint Advisory Council.

“The Joint Advisory Council will work to strengthen and support the role of parents as active participants in their children’s achievement; and will serve as an advocate for equity in the needs of all children across the district,” states the proposed policy.

The Board asked for some minor alterations in the concept and a new draft of the organizational language before taking formal action on it. ■

New Athletic Passes Available

Parents and all sports fans have a new fee structure after the Board of Education approved some changes this week.

General admission will remain \$5 per event, but individual adult athletic passes are \$60 each and good for admission to any event for the entire school year. They are available at each high school. The “family pass” concept was scrubbed.

Also under the fee schedule:

- Students are \$3 (with student ID)
- Student athletes are free as long as they have paid the \$60 athletic fee
- School teachers and staff are free (with school identification)
- Senior citizens are \$1
- Children under 12 years old are \$1
- Students under five years old are free.

All general admission fees for state contests are determined by the Colorado High School Activities Association. ■

Board Notes

In other action this week, the Board:

- Recognized Donna Wittrock, executive director of the Department of Food and Nutrition Services, who was recently installed as president of the American School Food Service Association. “School meals are an important link to literacy,” Wittrock told the Board. “Those who work in school food programs are an integral part of a child’s education.”
- Recognized the West High School National History Day team, which placed first in Senior Group Performance at the national competition, held at the University of Maryland last June. The students’ entry was “Voices From Sand Creek.” The students – Chris Apodaca, Pablo Moreno, Cristian Orozco, Andrew Ramirez and Blanca Trejo – performed the gripping account of the Sand Creek massacre, drawing a standing ovation. The Board also recognized their teacher, Barbara Allen, and Denver School of the Arts teacher Ed Glassman, recipient of the Richard Farrell Teacher of Merit Award at National History Day.
- Approved the agreement between Denver Public Schools and the Association of Buildings and Grounds Workers.



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Five Charter Schools Present Plans

Five charter school applicants presented proposals to the Board of Education this week. The district's School Improvement and Accountability Council is expected to deliver its analysis of the proposals at the Board meeting on Oct. 2, and final Board of Education action is scheduled for Oct. 16. Following is a recap of each proposed school:

Leaders High School

The applicants for Leaders High School propose to establish a grades 9-12 high school based on the Leaders Challenge Program by integrating the program's successful leadership practices into an academic-based curriculum. A maximum enrollment of 400-500 students would be reached over the first four years. Leadership High School intends to provide an interdisciplinary academic curriculum that develops each student's leadership potential and prepares students for leadership roles in civic, business, international and non-profit worlds. The applicants are considering a variety of sites including the campus of Johnson and Wales University in northeast Denver. The charter school concept is an outgrowth of Leaders Challenge, a non-profit organization that partners with 25 schools and serves 250 students.

American Charter School

The mission of the American Charter School is "to extend benefits of English literacy and a high school liberal arts education to immigrant communities in the Denver Metro area" and to instill in students "a lifelong love of learning that helps them achieve their American dreams." The school's target audience would be students from ages 15 through 21. Adults would be served through an extension program that would be funded through other sources. About 300 full-time students and 100 part-

time students would be served, primarily in northwest and northeast Denver. The school would offer a flexible schedule of morning, evening and weekend classes. No specific location is currently being eyed, although the possibility of using existing district facilities has been discussed. The main sponsor of the American School is the Jared Polis Foundation.

Southwest Early College

The applicants wish to establish Southwest Early College as a small high school of 400 students. It would be the school's intent that no teacher instruct more than 80 students each week. In cooperation with area colleges, juniors and seniors would have the opportunity to take college-level, credit-bearing courses within the school facility. The school hopes to make higher education more accessible and attractive for low-income students and to demonstrate new ways of integrating high school and college curricula. Organizers are planning to lease portions of the Loretto Heights campus in southwest Denver.

Green Valley Ranch/Montbello Charter School

Edison Charter Schools is proposing to establish a K-8 charter school in the new Green Valley Ranch facility being built in close collaboration between Denver Public Schools and the City and County of Denver

at Tower Road and 48th Ave. in Green Valley Ranch. This would be the second Edison Charter School (after Wyatt-Edison) within Denver Public Schools. The national Edison model follows performance standards in five major areas – humanities and arts; mathematics and science; character and ethics; practical arts and skills; and health and physical fitness. The capacity of the school is 750, but the applicants suggest the building could accommodate 800 students based on the Edison program.

Highline Academy Charter School

A charter school based on the Core Knowledge curriculum would serve 312 students in grades kindergarten through sixth-grade in 2004-2005. Within three years, 400 students through eighth grade would be served. Core Knowledge is a research-based, challenging and content-rich curriculum. Character education, foreign language, tuition-based full day kindergarten, and daycare services before and after school would all be part of Highline. The school would have small classes serving 23 students with a full-time teacher. The applicants state that studies have shown Core Knowledge schools outpace the state average on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP). Highline Academy applicants are currently looking for space in east Denver. ■

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Mill Levy, Bond Package Details Online

Looking for detailed, school-by-school information (also in Spanish) about the \$310 million bond package and \$20 million mill levy package? Access the DPS website at www.dpsk12.org.

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.

A previous issue of Board News did not list the dollar amounts for each of the six proposed programs the \$20 million mill levy would support. Here they are:

- \$6.5 million to provide art/music teachers in all elementary schools
- \$3.5 million to purchase new textbooks
- \$2 million to increase funding for repairs and maintenance
- \$3.5 million to expand all day kindergarten and Early Childhood Education classes
- \$2 million to improve high school graduation rates
- \$2.5 million to improve academic achievement in under-performing schools