



Board News

Denver Public Schools Board of Education
board.dpsk12.org

Voters Overwhelming Support Bond And Mill Proposals

Showing their support for the direction of Denver Public Schools, voters Tuesday overwhelmingly approved a three-year, \$310 million bond proposal for facilities and a \$20 million mill levy override, providing additional operating funds for the district.

The mill levy proposal garnered an unprecedented 60 percent voter support (58,901 – 39,346); the bond proposal earned 57 percent voter approval (55,637 – 42,200). (Note: These numbers are unofficial until verified by the Election Commission.)

"I don't believe in our history we passed elections with these margins. I can't thank the voters enough for their confidence in DPS. It's an incredible victory for our kids," said Board President Elaine Gantz Berman. "We will not disappoint the voters. We will live up to their expectations, so watch us!"

Superintendent Jerry Wartgow thanked the many individuals and groups, including Mayor John Hickenlooper, who supported the district in the election. He made the commitment that the district will continue in the positive direction that has

brought it recognition and public support.

The \$20 million mill levy proposal will provide \$6.5 million for art and music teachers in elementary schools, \$2.5 million to revitalize and reconstitute neighborhood schools, \$2 million to increase support for capital investments, \$3.5 million for new textbooks, \$2 million to support middle and high school reforms, and \$3.5 million to expand all-day kindergarten and early childhood education opportunities.

The bond is scheduled to add a new K-8 school in Green Valley Ranch, a new K-8 school in Montbello, eight-classroom additions at Schenck and Gust elementary schools, and major upgrades of the Fred N. Thomas Career Education Center Middle College of Denver and Byers School (150 S. Pearl St.), recently vacated by Denver School of the Arts. Some work at North High School and planning for a major renovation are also included.

A complete list of bond projects and more detail about the mill levy initiatives are available on the web:

www.dpsk12.org/bond_plans/. ■

Three New Charters Approved; One Denied

Three new charter schools received approval from the Board of Education, while one charter application was denied. The approved charter schools are Green Valley Ranch/Montbello Charter School; Highline Academy; and Southwest Early College.

The application of American Charter School was formally denied but the approved resolution directed district staff to explore the possibility of contracting with the organizers to provide a program for English language learners that is coordinated with the district's high school offerings.

Following is a recap of the approved schools:

Green Valley Ranch/Montbello Charter School:

Edison Charter Schools will establish a K-8 charter in the new Green Valley Ranch facility being built in collaboration between Denver Public Schools and the City and County of Denver at Tower Road and 48th Avenue. The charter contract calls for the Foundation for Educational Excellence to pay the district \$243,000 to defray costs associated with construction and furnishing

of the new school.

Conditions of the charter approval include providing a revised budget and development of an enrollment process to attract and enroll a diverse student population. Enrollment will be 500 to 750 students. This is the second Edison Charter School (after Wyatt-Edison) in Denver Public Schools.

Highline Academy:

A charter school based on the Core Knowledge curriculum, Highline will serve 300 students in kindergarten through sixth grade in 2004-2005. Within three years, 380 students through eighth grade will attend. Character education, foreign language, tuition-based full-day kindergarten and day care services before- and after-school will be part of the program.

The application was granted based on the securing of a location between Alameda and Yale, and Colorado and Havana by Feb. 27, 2004. In addition, the school must

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Board Makes Commitment to English Language Learners

The Board of Education introduced a proposed resolution that reaffirms its commitment to serve English Language Learners and to facilitate their participation in the district's mainstream English language program.

Board members asked for any and all public comment on the draft and indicated a final version might be adopted in December.

The Board's draft says that the district will provide an educationally sound program that enables students to become proficient in reading, writing and speaking English. The draft expresses the Board's commitment to implementing an educational program that promotes equal educational opportunity for all students regardless of language barriers.

The draft resolution states, "Sufficient human and material resources shall be allocated to the program to achieve the aim of this resolution. To that end, the District shall continue actively to recruit instructional staff qualified to serve the needs of students participating in the program and shall provide training as needed to ensure that teachers have the skills necessary to implement the program."

The document also calls for monitoring, review and modification of the program as required. The district will implement the resolution in compliance with state and federal laws and any applicable court order regarding education services for students whose primary language is not English.

A complete copy of the draft resolution is available on the district's web site at www.dpsk12.org/board/meetings/agenda_archives/. Click on the November 6 agenda.

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reserve up to 40 percent of its enrollment slots for students from attendance areas of schools on improvement or corrective action pursuant to the No Child Left Behind Act.

Southwest Early College:

Southwest Early College will be a small high school where juniors and seniors will have the opportunity to take college-level classes. The school's intent is that no teacher would instruct more than 80 students each week. The school hopes to make higher education more accessible and attractive to low-income students.

The application was granted based on a number of conditions, including securing a location at Loretto Heights College or another southwest Denver location by Feb. 27, 2004 and the establishment of an enrollment process that attracts a diverse student population. The applicant must also provide a revised budget that includes

projected costs for the facility. Enrollment is limited to 300 students the first year and may grow to 380 students.

Denial of American School:

Reasons the Board gave for denying the American School application included:

- The description of the charter school's educational program, pupil performance standards and curriculum do not enable each pupil to meet or exceed the district's content standards.
- The proposed charter school will not likely be implemented as described in the application.
- Education of individuals 21 and over is beyond the mission of DPS and will not meet criteria for funding.
- The charter intends to pursue sites outside of the district, and DPS would have to obtain permission from each of these districts. ■

Board Notes

In other action this week, the Board of Education:

- Approved amendments to the agreement between the Denver Public Schools and the Vocational Teachers Federation, effective July 1, 2003.
- Recognized the State Championship Boys 5A Cross Country Team from West High School – coaches Louis Cruz and Brad Barnes; and team members Yusuf Ahmed, Abdurahman Faki, Mohamud Ige, Toby Gonzales, Frank Medina, Abiud Mojica, Jessie Romero, Frank Slater, and Daniel Trujillo.

DREAM Act Helps Immigrants Attend College

The DREAM Act, currently before the United States Congress, will improve educational opportunities for immigrants, and the Board is urging Congress to pass the legislation. Rev. Lucia Guzman introduced the Board resolution to support the DREAM Act, and the Board approved it unanimously.

The DREAM Act would allow undocumented students who have lived in the United States for at least five years and have graduated from high school or received a graduated equivalency diploma (GED) to legalize their immigration status, qualifying them for in-state tuition and financial aid.

The Board believes the DREAM Act would vastly improve the number of undocumented youth who will continue their education in college and provide hope and motivation to immigrant Latino youth.

The Board noted that too few Denver Public Schools students are completing the coursework necessary to achieve a district diploma and the resulting dropout rate is unnecessarily high. The DREAM Act has the potential to lower the dropout rate by providing students with the motivation to complete high school. ■

District Receives Three Grants

The district has received three grants from the Colorado Department of Education, Expelled and At-Risk Student Services. The grants are:

- **Social Work Services Department**, \$353,182. The district will partner with families to increase student attendance and improve academic performance of truant and at-risk students. This grant will add services to Hill, Merrill, and Randolph middle schools.
- **P.R.E.P. Refocus Middle School**, \$300,000. The grant will be used to increase staff size so that more students

can be effectively served, thereby reducing district expulsion numbers. In addition, the staff will act as a resource for one middle school per quadrant to assist with the establishing of an alternative classroom in the home school.

- **Psychological Services Department**, \$357,427 for the Suspension/Expulsion Prevention Project. The goal of the project is to reduce suspension and expulsion rates and prevent categorization as "persistently dangerous" in three schools – Rachel B. Noel and Martin Luther King, Jr. middle schools and Montbello High School. ■

Five More Nonpublic Schools Approved for Opportunity Contracts

The Board of Education reconsidered and accepted the applications of five nonpublic schools that were previously denied opportunity contracts. That means DPS has accepted 74 nonpublic schools to participate in the 2004-2005 Colorado Opportunity Contract Pilot Program.

Since all five schools previously denied have submitted information requested by the Board, their applications were accepted based on the condition that documentation is received by March 1, 2004 that shows all standards required by law have been met.

A list of participating nonpublic schools is posted on the district's web site, www.dpsk12.org, under "updates" on the main page.