



Board News

Denver Public Schools Board of Education
board.dpsk12.org

Governor's Distinguished Improvement Award - Again!

For the second year in a row, Denver Public Schools has earned the Governor's award for the most improved school district in the state of Colorado.

In a proclamation released Thursday, Gov. Bill Owens lauded Denver Public Schools for being "strongly focused on boosting student achievement for all of its students."

Noting progress on 2003 School Accountability Ratings, the proclamation recognized the district "as one of the best urban school systems in the United States."

Owens also proclaimed that Monday, Jan. 12 would be designated as a day "recognizing the achievements of Denver Public Schools."

Earlier in the day Thursday, Gov. Owens singled out DPS Superintendent Jerry Wartgow and Columbine Elementary

"We are particularly proud of the record of the Denver Public Schools"

- Governor Bill Owens

School Principal Janice Spearman during the State of the State address. In front of a live television audience and packed

chambers in the House of Representatives, Owens commended Denver Public Schools as a district on the move.

"We are particularly proud of the record of the Denver Public Schools," said Governor Owens during his annual address before the Colorado legislature.

As one example of the many schools making progress throughout the district, Governor Owens praised Columbine Elementary School Principal Janice Spearman for her school's earning the Governor's Distinguished Improvement Award this year. "Janice, thanks for what you're doing for our children - thanks very much," the Governor said. ■

More ECE And Full-Day Kindergarten Classes Planned For Fall 2004

The Board of Education this week considered a plan for spending \$3.5 million to expand early childhood education and full-day kindergarten classes in the 2004-2005 school year.

When voters approved a \$20 million mill levy in November, the district committed to providing one full-day kindergarten class for every school that has more than 50 percent of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. The district also committed to doubling the number of scholarships available for both full-day kindergarten and early childhood education classes.

A committee of more than 75 stakeholders studied the options and recommended to the Board on Thursday that the district continue its \$185-per-month preschool tuition and \$260-per-month full-day kindergarten tuition but that it: 1) make it easier for families to qualify for scholarships, and 2) double the number of scholarships available.

To do that, the district would adjust the sliding fee scale for tuition-based classes so more students receive scholarships. Schools with greater percentages of subsidized lunch students would receive more scholarships for families who qualify.

Early Childhood Education

If there is more demand than space available in a classroom, the school would hold a lottery. Regardless of whether students fill a subsidized or tuition-based slot, the students selected by lottery would be enrolled.

Full-Day Kindergarten

Recommendations also included spending mill levy funding to provide a full-day kindergarten class in every school with 50 percent or more students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. For the 2004-2005 school year, that number is projected to be 68 schools.

In these classrooms, if there is more demand than space available, the school would hold a lottery to determine enrollment. However, the makeup of each classroom would be proportional to the percentage of free and reduced lunch students in the school.

For example, if 60 percent of students in a school qualify for subsidized lunch, then 60 percent of students in a full-day kindergarten classroom would receive scholarships, and 40 percent would pay tuition.

The plan also recommends that the

How Many More?

Early Childhood Education

Implementation of this plan potentially will result in an additional 11 tuition-based preschool classes. When combined with classes funded through the Colorado Preschool Program, Title I and Head Start, the total number of preschool classes in the district will be 185.

Full-Day Kindergarten

The number of full-day kindergarten classes funded through state and mill levy dollars will increase by 68, bringing the total number of these classes to 82. Classes will be added with no increase in central staff.

district increase the number of scholarships available for schools that offer tuition-based full-day kindergarten but that have less than 50 percent of students qualifying for subsidized lunch. In these classrooms, if there are more students desiring full-day kindergarten than slots available, a lottery would determine enrollment based on those able to pay tuition and the number of scholarships available at the school.

The committee's recommendations are posted in their entirety following the Jan. 8 meeting agenda from this link: www.dpsk12.org/board/meetings. The Board of Education is expected to take action on this plan at the Jan. 22 meeting. ■



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Construction Advisory Committees Being Formed; Applicants Welcome

The Board of Education is seeking parents, teachers and community members to serve on one of five Construction Advisory Committees that will play a major role in deciding the appearance of new classroom additions and new schools around the district.

The committees will assist new K-8 schools in Montbello and Green Valley Ranch, a classroom addition at Schenck Elementary School (1300 S. Lowell Blvd.), a classroom addition at Gust Elementary School (3440 W. Yale Ave.), and a classroom addition at the CEC Middle College of Denver (2650 Eliot St.)

The committees will start meeting in January and finish work in about six to eight weeks.

If you are interested, send your letter of interest to the Board of Education by Friday, Jan. 23.

In your letter, please include your name, address and telephone number and indicate the specific project that interests you. Also please indicate the membership category for which you are applying - parent, Denver resident or teacher.

If you are a parent, include the names of your child or children and the school or schools they attend. Also please include the name of the neighborhood or community organization you represent, if any, and state the reasons why you believe you should be appointed.

Completed applications can be mailed or delivered to the Denver Board of Education, Room 705, Denver Public Schools, 900 Grant St., Denver, CO 80203.

To receive Board News by e-mail, send your name, mailing address, e-mail address and phone number to pio@dpsk12.org.

Bonds Sold In Two Hours

The Board of Education this week authorized issuance of \$310.8 million in general obligation bonds following the successful sale of the bonds Wednesday, Jan. 7. Chief Financial Officer Velma Rose said the sale took just two hours and "well surpassed our expectations."

On average, the bonds promised buyers a return of 4.5 percent. "That's the lowest interest rate DPS has seen in 40 or 50 years in the sale of your bonds," said Nate Eckloff, managing director of RBC Dain Rauscher.

The ballot question posed to voters – and

handily approved by voters in November – authorized the district to have a total aggregate principal plus interest of \$790 million over the 25-year payout of the bonds. With the low interest rate achieved this week, the long-term costs are \$549 million – \$241 million less than might have been required had the market been less favorable.

As promised, the bond sale and resulting debt will not require an increase in current property tax rates.

"On all accounts, thank you very much for a job well done," said Board member Bruce Hoyt. ■

Pay for Performance Pilot Shows 'Promising Results'

Student achievement gains in the Denver Public Schools-Denver Classroom Teachers Association Pay for Performance Pilot were strongly linked to teachers who wrote the highest quality objectives, according to a four-year study presented during a special Board of Education meeting this week.

The study conducted by the Community Training & Assistance Center (CTAC) of Boston also indicated that the pilot served as a catalyst that enabled Denver to become "focused on student achievement in a more coordinated and consolidated way. Many changes have been systemic...stimulating other parts of the school system to improve the quality of support and service. The result is a catalyst for change that benefits all students and teachers," the study concluded.

One reason for the pilot's impact, the study noted, has been the "sustained leadership" of the Denver Classroom Teachers Association (DCTA) and the Denver Board of Education, which joined to create the pilot and "stayed the course" despite leadership changes in the district.

A complete copy of the report is posted online - <http://www.ctacusa.com/>; look for "Catalyst for Change" on the main page.

The study summarizes its findings in

four major areas: (1) The relationship of teacher objectives, as measured by substance and quality, to student achievement; (2) The impact of the pilot on student achievement based on two independent assessments; (3) The effects of a range of student, teacher and school factors on the results of the pilot; and (4) The broader institutional factors that have affected implementation.

In the area of objectives, the study found that teachers who set the highest quality objectives achieved higher student test scores on state and national tests than students of teachers who scored lower on the rubric.

"The district has been changed by this project. It has already paid off," said Superintendent Jerry Wartgow. "Examples are the work we're doing around setting objectives and implementing OASIS ... The bottom line is that we can create a fair compensation system that includes student growth as one component."

Student growth is expected to be one of five components in a new Teacher Compensation Plan that is scheduled for a March vote by members of the DCTA. Final details of that plan may be forwarded to the Board of Education for consideration in February. ■

Board Notes

In other action this week, the Board of Education:

- Appointed Jeannie M. Peppel as the interim principal at John F. Kennedy High School. John MacPherson, recently the principal there, is taking a position as Communications Director with the Denver Public Schools Retirement System.
- Approved architects to work on the Gust Elementary School addition (Roth Shepard Architects), Schenck Elementary School (Wong Strauch Architects, P.C.), learning landscape projects at Carson, Southmoor, Whiteman, Barrett, Gilpin, Philips, Ebert, Swansea and Whittier elementary schools, and other code, boiler and athletic facility projects.