



Board News

Denver Public Schools Board of Education
board.dpsk12.org

“ProComp” Officially Ratified; Teacher Vote Next

The Board of Education this week formally ratified terms of a revolutionary Professional Compensation System for Teachers (“ProComp”) that would fundamentally change the way teacher salaries are set.

“This is a landmark agreement,” said Denver Classroom Teachers Association President Becky Wissink during brief comments before the Board of Education.

Wissink reported that the DCTA Board of Directors also had voted to support the contract language. The package goes next to the association’s representative council.

The campaign to discuss the proposal in every school has already begun, she said, and teachers will vote in early March. Votes will be counted Friday, March 19.

If approved, the contract would require voter support for the additional \$25 million that would be necessary to fund the ideas embedded in the plan. A vote might be

considered in November 2005 with implementation beginning in 2006.

Under the plan, teachers would be compensated in a variety of ways for their work to impact student achievement – gaining relevant skills and knowledge related to student growth and their instructional discipline, working in hard-to-staff schools, achieving goals for increased student achievement, and earning at least “satisfactory” appraisals. Teachers who earn “distinguished” appraisals would be eligible for larger raises. Traditional raises for years of experience and educational credits would be set aside.

The deal would mean “new opportunities for teachers, great opportunities for kids,” said Board of Education President Les Woodward.

Information on the compensation system can be found at:

www.denverteachercompensation.org ■

High School Transportation Changes Studied; Flexibility Seen, Some Issues Too

Discussing the proposed changes in high school transportation with the Board of Education this week, seven high school principals said they see many appealing features of the proposed switch to RTD but some hurdles to clear, too.

“We are very supportive of the idea,” said George Washington High School principal Mario Williams. “The research says high school students will perform better if they get a little more sleep in the morning. I think it will have a strong impact on attendance...and when we don’t have to

rely on yellow buses, it opens just so many possibilities for programming.”

The proposal before the Board would eliminate the use of Denver Public Schools buses for high schools. Instead, students would be provided with passes to use RTD. Out of 17,000 current high school students, about 3,000 are eligible to receive transportation but only about half of those students typically ride a yellow DPS bus on any given day.

The change would allow high schools to
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Ebert Elementary Students Reassigned

In the fall, approximately 50 students who now attend Ebert Elementary School will attend one of three nearby elementary schools instead – Whittier, Wyman or Gilpin.

The Board of Education this week approved the proposal to consolidate Ebert’s enrollment and move another 60 students served through the onsite homeless program to Gilpin Elementary School. There is substantial capacity available at the surrounding schools to accommodate additional students.

Because Ebert’s enrollment would be around only 100 students next year, the school would be allocated fewer than four classroom teachers, meaning that each

teacher would need to instruct a multi-grade classroom, and there would be little flexibility to address grade-to-grade enrollment fluctuations.

“I do not believe that the depth and breadth of curriculum will exist next year to serve Ebert’s population,” said Board member Theresa Peña.

Others agreed, saying that from an educational standpoint, having 3.5 teachers serving six grades would be a disservice to those students.

“The bottom line is that it doesn’t seem right that the kids at Ebert would have only three and half teachers next year,” said Board member Kevin Patterson. “We’ve made so much progress with the literacy

Plan For Art & Music Expansion Approved

The Board of Education this week approved the plan for enhancing elementary art and music programs using the \$6.5 million in new money approved by voters as part of the November 2003 mill levy initiative.

“This is a great proposal,” said Board member Michelle Moss, “and something that will really benefit the children of Denver Public Schools.”

Rosanne Fulton, Executive Director of Curriculum, told the Board all elementary school principals want to “thank the voters for this opportunity to provide a much more comprehensive educational program.”

The plan requires all elementary schools in the district to provide a sequenced, comprehensive, standards-based curriculum in the arts. Over the course of their elementary education, each student will attain standards-driven levels of arts awareness and experience in visual arts, vocal music, instrumental music, drama and dance.

The plan also requires the district to crystallize key learning in each arts discipline, define the methods for assessing these learnings, and provide professional development aligned with the standards and assessments.

Teacher allocations will be based on each school’s enrollment – from .5 teachers in small schools to 1.5 teachers in larger schools. Schools are expected to add this new allocation to existing efforts in arts and music, not supplant what’s already being spent. However, the plan allows for Area Superintendents to consider exceptions where “application of this rule would be unreasonable.”

plan and the math program. We want to provide the best and the strongest program that DPS has to offer.”

The Board and district staff praised the parents, students, staff and community members who tutor at Ebert for attending the community meetings to discuss the proposal.

“Needless to say, nobody is happy with the prospect of changing the Ebert family,” said Board member Elaine Gantz Berman. “Closing a school for us is a very serious decision – one that we try to avoid. If the numbers weren’t as dramatic as they are, we wouldn’t be taking a look at this.”

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Bradley Elementary School Proposes International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme

Bradley Elementary School proposed this week to establish itself as the "building block" in Denver Public Schools for the International Baccalaureate experience.

The International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme at Bradley would launch an "inquiry-based curriculum with a global focus." The school would serve as a feeder for the successful International Preparatory Magnet at Hamilton Middle School and highly regarded "IB" program at George Washington High School.

Bradley Elementary School principal Angelo Spataro was joined by about a dozen enthusiastic parents and teachers.

"Bradley would love to be the first one in DPS to give it a shot," said teacher Jennifer Fuhrmeister. (Garden Place Academy has offered a program similar to International Baccalaureate, but it wasn't officially linked to the organization that certifies such programs.)

To start with, Bradley would need three additional teacher allocations to provide the program – one foreign language, one visual arts, and one site coordinator to work with teachers in implementing the program. Principal Spataro requested that funds for those costs come from the school revitalization portion of the mill levy initiative.

"I'm very excited about this," said parent Deborah Johnson. "We are so ready for this we are just popping at the seams."

Principal Spataro said 94 percent of existing parents support the proposed change.

District staff, does, too.

The model "is a viable educational model for retaining and attracting additional students to Bradley Elementary School," said a companion staff report. The proposal "will increase choice options in southeast Denver and present an attractive model for families interested in program continuity from elementary through high school."

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start the day for students at 9 a.m. (instead of the current 7:30 a.m. time). But it would also prompt many schedule and cultural changes for high schools.

Board members, who indicated they have received a substantial quantity of feedback on the proposal, quizzed the principals and district staff on a host of issues.

Can schedules be built in time for next fall? Can athletics be accommodated? Will high schools offer a "zero hour" class at 7:30 a.m. to allow students the flexibility to be involved in after-school activities and sports? Will a longer school day (potentially 7:30 a.m. - 4:15 p.m.) fracture school staffs? Does RTD really provide the necessary access to all students? Will students travel long distances on RTD to attend magnet schools?

In some cases, principals indicated they need more time to gather feedback from students, parents and faculty.

"We know the advantages and how it opens up some flexibility for us," said GW's Williams. "(But) the other drawback is the whole concept of change and moving to something so different."

South High School principal Bill Kohut said the shift to RTD would open up schedule flexibility. For instance, he said, some juniors and seniors involved in pursuing college courses wouldn't have their schedule tied to school bus schedules. And other students who work late into the evening in order to support their families could start

school at a later hour in the morning. "This creates a realm of opportunities we haven't had," said Abraham Lincoln High School principal Scott Mendelsberg.

"When you talk about reform," said North High School principal Darlene LeDoux, "it's looking at more creative ways to reach our student population and to do that we have to have options."

Several principals said the athletic scheduling might be difficult but all said they would work to offer schedules so athletes could start at 7:30 a.m. in order to be on time for practices and games by 4 p.m., when game schedules often begin.

John Leslie, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, said the issue has been reviewed with all athletic directors. As long as athletes could have the option of an early schedule for academics, he said, the single biggest impact on the Department of Athletics might be the fewer spectators – and a resulting drop in revenue – because classes are still continuing when the games start.

To provide feedback on this issue to the Board of Education, there are several options. The Board of Education's next monthly public hearing is at 7 p.m. Thursday, March 4. To sign up to speak that evening, please call 303-764-3211. Written comments may also be sent via e-mail to board@dpsk12.org or write to Board of Education, Room 705, DPS, 900 Grant St., Denver, CO 80203. ■

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Ebert principal Joan Wamsley and Northeast Assistant Area Superintendent John Youngquist have made a commitment to meet with all Ebert parents to find the best educational option for their child.

"We want to make sure you're happy with where you're going and that we meet your individual needs," said Berman.

Polaris Program Moves To Ebert

In related action, the Board approved plans to move the Polaris Program currently at Crofton Elementary School to the Ebert site beginning with the 2004-2005 school year. This will allow the program to expand, particularly at the first and second grade levels.

The Polaris Program began in the 2000-2001 school year to provide a highly gifted/high achieving program for students in northeast Denver. Enrollment has increased from 99 students in 2000 to 191 in

2003. The program currently is operating at capacity in the Crofton site.

The Polaris Program has attracted more than 20 students who are new to the district each year it has operated. With the highly gifted students from other areas of the city and the newly-identified highly gifted students from the northeast area, accommodating all students who wish to enroll in the Polaris Program has become more challenging each year. In addition, more than 60 students in 2002-2003 were turned away from the Polaris Program because of lack of space. A substantial percentage of these students would likely have qualified for the program.

The Ebert facility is almost twice as large as Crofton, which would allow program enrollment to grow at both the primary and intermediate levels, as well as provide additional space for current program components. ■