



Board News

Denver Public Schools Board of Education
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Denver Teachers Embrace ProComp

Members of Denver Classroom Teachers' Association (DCTA) today ratified a new salary system that will pay teachers for improving student achievement as well as other professional accomplishments that closely align their work with the district's instructional goals and priorities.

Through the Professional Compensation System for Teachers, dubbed "ProComp," teachers can increase career earnings by improving student achievement, earning successful professional evaluations, working in the most academically needy schools and advancing their skills and knowledge.

DCTA President Becky Wissink said 59 percent of union members supported the proposal.

"It's fitting that Denver – the district that enacted the first collective bargaining agreement west of the Mississippi – has approved the first contract in the nation that will put teacher salaries on a par with many other professions and catapult K-12 compensation into the 21st century. ProComp will give teachers more control over their financial destiny while closely aligning their work to the district's goals

of improving student learning and attracting, retaining and rewarding the best teachers."

Added Board of Education President Les Woodward: "We're delighted teachers have supported the ideas that are at the heart of ProComp. The new system acknowledges and rewards outstanding teachers and will enhance their professional capabilities. But the bottom line is the compensation system's impact on student achievement. Our pilot has shown that students benefit when teachers work toward rigorous student achievement objectives. It's thrilling to have worked with the teachers association on a plan that will greatly enhance the ongoing drive to improve student achievement."

ProComp differs from the current salary system in four distinct ways:

1. The district will pay annual salary increases for demonstrated student growth and bonuses to teachers in schools that are judged distinguished based on academic gains. It would eliminate scheduled increases solely for years of service.

2. Teachers will receive salary increases for demonstrated acquisition of additional knowledge and skills related to student growth and their instructional discipline.
3. The district will offer incentives for teachers of demonstrated accomplishment who choose to work in schools with the greatest academic need. Similar bonuses will be offered to teachers and specialists who fill positions where there are shortages of qualified applicants.
4. The net result is that teachers who meet and exceed rigorous expectations in a fair system will have no artificial limits on their annual and career earnings.

During the next 18 months, transition committees of teachers and administrators will complete further work on elements of ProComp. The final step will be approval by Denver voters of \$25 million in additional revenue to fully fund the new system. That vote is planned for November, 2005. ■

RTD Brings More High School Choices, Flexible Schedules

DPS high schools this fall will offer classes through 4:15 p.m. daily as a result of the Board of Education's unanimous decision yesterday to replace traditional yellow buses for high school students with Regional Transportation District (RTD) service.

High schools could offer more educational choices for students by keeping the 7:30 a.m. start time and staying open later.

Board members and Superintendent Jerry Wartgow acknowledged that the change will mean an adjustment for some families, students and teachers. However, they also said making the switch to RTD allows schools more freedom to schedule classes and programs throughout the day.

"This proposal will expand the options we have for secondary reform, which are currently restrained by bus schedules," said Superintendent Jerry Wartgow. "What we're finding in high schools throughout the country is that this is a changing world. High school students are working, attending college courses and providing childcare

in addition to going to school. We'll be better able to meet individual needs."

The decision also means that some elementary schools will move up their start time to 8 a.m. District staff will study the feasibility of starting elementary schools earlier and will make a proposal to the Board in the next month.

The plan approved by the Board will provide high school students who live farther than 3.5 miles from school with an RTD bus pass (for students who attend neighborhood high schools and high school magnet programs with the exception of Denver School of the Arts).

Under the plan, the district will establish parameters for RTD transportation (such as ride times that are too lengthy or trips that require multiple transfers). Accommodations may be made in these situations.

The plan doesn't change transportation for special needs students, and high school activities buses will continue to run as they have this year. ■

13 Schools Set For Revitalization

The first group of schools is set for revitalization.

The Board of Education this week identified 13 schools eligible to tap \$2.5 million targeted for the revitalization campaign that was envisioned under the 2003 mill levy election.

The schools are Bradley, Brown, Ford, Gilpin, Montclair, Remington, Sabin and Stedman elementary schools and Cole, Henry, Hill, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Skinner middle schools.

The vote on the plan was 5 – 2. Both Kevin Patterson and Theresa Pena indicated that the pool of schools should be expanded or, at least, include more schools as soon as next year.

Chief Academic Officer Sally Mentor Hay said it would be at least two years before the staff would propose adding new schools to the list, based on the staff's capacity to manage the changes.

"It's important that these schools not just get a new label but that there's a substantive new program in place," said Mentor Hay.

Some schools will be ready to implement new programs with the 2004-2005 school year, she said, while others will need a year of planning to get ready.

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Denver Public Schools
Public Information Office
900 Grant St. Room 402
Denver CO 80203

Textbook Plan Approved

The Board of Education this week approved the staff's plan for spending \$3.5 million in mill levy dollars geared for expanding textbook purchases.

The plan begins with supporting purchases made at the beginning of the current school year for English language development textbooks for elementary classrooms where instruction is in Spanish and for phonics books in kindergarten through grade two.

After that, funds will be used to buy materials for English language development, Everyday Mathematics and Connected Mathematics.

Next are textbook purchases in alternative schools and materials at the high school level for field testing new curricula in U.S. History, geometry and biology and newly revised "Introduction to Literature and Composition" and "American Literature" courses.

Chief Academic Officer Sally Mentor Hay said it would require \$25 million to make all textbooks "current" in all schools. Additionally, she said staff would propose policy changes soon for the textbook purchasing cycles and establish the purpose of district textbook purchases as compared to those selected and purchased at the individual school level.

Advanced Kindergarten Program Readied

Up to 100 students may be enrolled next school year in an Advanced Kindergarten Classroom (AKC) program that will be housed in four schools – Edison, Gust, Palmer and Crofton elementary schools.

The Board of Education was given an overview of the program this week.

The Gifted and Talented Education Department will manage assessments and applications but the "AKC" program will not be part of the Highly Gifted program itself and does not guarantee acceptance for future highly gifted services.

The program has set an April 14 deadline for interested parents, with enrollment decisions being made by mid-May.

Staff Advises Expanding Rigorous AVID Program

District staff this week proposed to the Board of Education that DPS start AVID programs next year at 12 middle and high schools.

Ten schools already are implementing AVID – Advancement Via Individual Determination, a rigorous academic program that targets students who read at or near grade level and are not participating in accelerated and/or advanced placement (AP) courses.

Students attend an AVID elective during the regular school day and small group tutorials two to three days per week. The program helps students meet high school graduation and college admissions requirements.

The proposal suggests the district pay

all AVID program costs except for those associated with tutors. Total costs for 2004-2005 for DPS are estimated to be about \$545,000 (a total of \$215,000 would be the responsibility of participating schools). Part of the \$2 million designated by 2003 mill levy funds for improving graduation rates would be used as a funding source.

The proposal would expand AVID to Baker, Gove, Grant, Horace Mann, Martin Luther King, Merrill, Rishel and Smiley middle schools; Centennial K-8 School; and John F. Kennedy, Montbello and North high schools.

The Board is scheduled to make a decision about the expansion at the April 1 meeting. ■

Charter Contracts Finalized

The Board of Education this week signed three-year contracts for Southwest Early College and Highline Academy, two DPS charter schools opening in the fall.

Southwest Early College, on the Loretto Heights College campus in southwest Denver, is a small high school where juniors and seniors may take college level classes. The school hopes to make higher education more accessible to low-income students.

Enrollment is limited to 240 students the first year and may grow to 400 students.

Highline Academy, in a yet-to-be determined location in east Denver, is a Core Knowledge middle school. Character education, foreign language, tuition-based full-day kindergarten and before- and after-school daycare are part of the program. Enrollment is limited to 299 students the first year and may grow to 391 students. ■

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Next is a community-based process at 12 schools (Cole Middle School's ongoing reforms, started last year, are also being provided with dollars from this revenue stream). Each school will organize a committee of parents, school staff, the principal, Area Superintendent and others to evaluate what program or changes to consider as a means to making improvements at the school.

The committee is expected to gather community feedback about the ideas being considered on an ongoing basis, said Mentor Hay, and each committee will conduct a market analysis of the specific reasons that have led many parents to choose other options than the neighborhood school. ■

Board Notes

In other action this week, the Board of Education:

- Recognized East High School student Henry Kofa and Abraham Lincoln High School student Abe Alvarado for earning state champion titles in wrestling. Alvarado is a three-time state wrestling champion and the 2004 Co-Colorado High School Wrestler of the Year. Kofa is the first state wrestling champion from East High School in 51 years.
- Promoted Gerardo de la Garza from interim principal to principal at Horace Mann Middle School.