



Board News

Denver Public Schools Board of Education
board.dpsk12.org

Roadmap To Secondary Reform Emerges

The Board of Education unanimously approved a resolution this week establishing the secondary reform initiative that was part of the \$20 million mill levy approved by voters in November 2003.

"This formally sets in motion our movement toward eliminating as much as possible the deplorable dropout rates and unacceptable graduation rates...and closing the gap between higher and lower performing students," said Board member Lucia Guzman, who is co-chairing the district's Commission on Secondary School Reform.

The Commission will study the issues inhibiting student success and graduation rates in secondary schools and recommend needed policy and programmatic changes to ensure that students successfully transition to postsecondary education and the workforce.

"This will be challenging because there are not widespread examples of success that have been put forward anywhere in the nation," said Superintendent Jerry Wartgow. "This work is an absolute essential first step to getting to where we want to be in this district...I think we're up to the task."

The resolution cites a national report showing that academic growth for students slows in high school compared to earlier grades; achievement gaps widen between White and African-American/Hispanic students; and achievement of students in the United States declines in high school compared to the achievement

of students in other countries.

The resolution further references statistics from recent studies that compel the work of the Commission:

- Only 37 percent of Colorado ninth-graders are likely to graduate in four years and enroll in college within a year
- Colorado's low-income students' chance for college in 2001 was a mere 17.2 percent
- At the tenth grade level, only 37 percent of Colorado students achieve at the proficient or advanced level in mathematics and only 52 percent achieve at these levels in writing

"By any measure," the resolution states, "the number of students who enter DPS high schools but fail to graduate is unacceptably high; and the gap in achievement, graduation and college attendance between high performing students and lower performing students is of great concern."

"Denver Public Schools has been named the most improved school district in Colorado for two years in a row, yet achievement gains in secondary schools have not kept pace with the district as a whole; and the future of our community depends upon a well-educated population who can participate as citizens in the democratic process, contribute to the economic vitality of the region and provide economic security for their families."

The Board of Education will appoint Commission members and outline scope of work in the next month. ■

DPS Hires American School For Immigrant Education

The Board of Education on Thursday unanimously approved a one-year contract with the American School to operate and manage an English as a Second Language program for immigrant students between 16 and 21 years old.

"We're serving students who haven't been part of the DPS family," said Board member Elaine Gantz Berman. "I think this is a very exciting, new area that we are heading into."

Opening for the 2004-2005 school year at a location to be determined, the program is expected to serve 300 full-time students who would enroll for one to two years and then transition to other public high schools, GED programs, community college, other programs or the workforce.

The deal implements the crux of the

ideas proposed in the American School's charter application that was denied by the Board in November. Among the reasons for denial were the school's intent to serve adults over the age of 21; the division of the school into multiple locations; and a curriculum not up to district standards.

"There was merit in the educational part of that proposal," said Wayne Eckerling, Assistant Superintendent for Research, Planning and Special Programs. "This plan serves 16- to 21-year old immigrants who otherwise might not be served in a traditional high school setting."

The program will operate according to federal, state and local laws and district policies, but its instructors will be employed by the American School. ■

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Daily News

Daily News will arrive most weekday afternoons, bringing you the nuts and bolts of daily individual school and districtwide events and news. Note that Daily News recaps in one end-of-the-day communication the news releases issued throughout the day.

News Releases

News releases will arrive throughout the day, bringing you the details of daily individual school and districtwide events and news. Note that Daily News recaps these news releases in one end-of-the-day communication to recipients. (see "Daily News" above)

Inside DPS

Inside DPS (a newsletter for the employees of Denver Public Schools) will arrive at the beginning of each month during the school year. Subscribe to read about highlights and who's who in Denver Public Schools.

Board News

Board News will arrive the day after each Board of Education meeting. The Board of Education usually meets twice each month on the first and third Thursdays.

See News By E-mail on page 2 ▶



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Board of Education Meeting Agendas

This twice-monthly email will notify you prior to each Board of Education meeting about topics of discussion and action items on the upcoming agenda.

Board of Education Weekly Activities

This weekly email will notify you about Board of Education activities and meetings throughout the community.

Schools To Weigh In On Proposed Bell Times

Following the Board's recent decision to extend the length of the school day at high schools next year by replacing yellow bus service with RTD service for qualifying high school students, the district is fleshing out the details of the plan.

Eliminating yellow bus service to high schools frees up some buses to serve additional elementary and middle school routes and therefore change some of their bell times.

"We've prepared the first round of proposed bell times for schools next year," said Superintendent Jerry Wartgow. "We're asking the schools and principals, working in collaboration with Collaborative School Committees, to talk about whether we need to make exceptions and modifications. We can get this worked out so it's a very positive win-win for everybody."

The proposals are accessible under "Updates" at <http://www.dpsk12.org>

Graduations Begin In Four Weeks

High school graduations are fast approaching.

The last day of school for high school seniors is Thursday, May 13; graduation ceremonies begin the next day and continue through the month. Emily Griffith Opportunity School graduations will take place this summer.

Please go to:

www.dpsk12.org/docs/grad2004.shtml for scheduled times, dates and locations of graduation ceremonies.

04-05 Budget Changes To Bring Challenges

Last month, the Board of Education began discussions on the 2004-2005 budget and how best to remedy a \$24.5 million projected difference between revenues and expenses.

At this week's Board meeting, Superintendent Jerry Wartgow noted that "there will be changes" and extended appreciation for the "support and understanding in our community over the next few months as we balance the budget."

"This is a very, very difficult time in the district," he said, referencing that fewer teachers are being allocated overall to schools next year. "To close the budget gap, we're making significant adjustments."

Superintendent Wartgow's plan to make ends meet would reduce central office department budgets by 13 percent (\$9 million), alternative school budgets by 2.71 percent (\$2 million) and school budgets by 3.1 percent (\$7.7 million).

"The 3 percent reduction, combined with enrollment loss in some schools, can be very dramatic," he said.

Reducing reserves and making one-time reductions (\$5.3 million) and providing a smaller salary increase to employees than normally would be anticipated (\$2.3 mil-

lion) is also part of the plan.

Four major spending issues mean the list of needs eclipses the revenues. Those four issues are:

- The district's contribution to the DPS Retirement System currently is under funded. An additional \$7.9 million is required to boost the contribution rate from 4.98 percent to 8.12 percent.
- Increases in scheduled debt service for the Certificates of Participation that were used to refinance the pension system in 1997 require an additional \$1.8 million. This is part of a scheduled 22-year payout.
- District charter school enrollment is expected to grow by 1,993 while enrollment in all other schools is expected to drop by 1,713 students. This will generate a net increase in pass-through expenditures of \$7.4 million.
- The district is continuing an effort to eliminate the previous use of one-time funding sources from the base budget.

Under state law, the Board must adopt a balanced budget for 2004-2005 by June 30. For more information, access www.dpsk12.org/news/press/2004/03/25c.shtml. ■

Board Notes

In other action this week, the Board of Education:

- Approved the appointment of Joyce Simmons from interim principal to principal of John Amesse Elementary School.
- Reviewed proposed policy changes to align benefit policies for employees who are not part of a bargaining group (principals, professional technical employees, unaffiliated employees and other managers, supervisors and administrators) with benefits provided to teachers and others covered by negotiated agreements.
- Considered a new policy to implement House Bill 04-1002, which was signed by Governor Owens on March 17, 2004, and calls for schools to provide a daily opportunity for willing students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. No student or staff shall be pressured, compelled or coerced into reciting the Pledge.
- Approved an award of invitation to bid to Avant Datacomm Solutions, National Network Services and Telesupport Services to secure competitively priced offers for furnishing and installing wire and cable for telecommunications, data, video and security systems at Bradley, Bromwell, Marrama, Steck and University Park elementary schools; Park Hill K-8; Hamilton and Morey middle schools; and East and George Washington high schools. Expenditures will be paid from the 2003 General Obligation Bond.
- Appointed the following underwriting firms for refunding the 1999 general obligation bond issue: Book Running, Stifel, Nicolaus & Company Inc.; Senior Manager, Hanifen Imhoff Division; and Co-Senior Managers, George K. Baum and RBC Dain Rauscher. Co-Managers are A.G. Edwards & Sons, Inc.; UBS/PaineWebber; Piper Jaffray & Co.; JP Morgan Securities, Inc.; Harveston Securities; Kirkpatrick, Pettis, Smith, Polian, Inc.; and Wells Fargo Brokerage Services, LLC.