

inside dps

high quality early childhood education is “the best payback”



How do you close the persistent learning gap that is evident once students start kindergarten?

The Denver Public Schools Task Force on School Readiness has a research-based answer: boost the availability and quality of early childhood education programs and make sure all parents know the importance of preparing students for school.

Board of Education member Bruce Hoyt, who served as a co-chair of the task force, said that making sure all young children have a solid start is an easy investment decision: “It’s the best payback of any social program I know. The research is so clear and so compelling.”

The task force, representing a broad coalition of community organizations, non-profit groups and the private sector, recommended a major upgrade in services and programs to parents of young children.

“Broad research has proven that quality early childhood education (ECE) programs with strong parent involvement and education can largely eliminate this pre-kindergarten gap,” the report states. “Disadvantaged children who have had the benefit of quality ECE attend school more frequently, are less likely to need special education services, score better on achievement tests, and graduate from high school at higher rates

than their peers who failed to attend such a program.” Among the task force recommendations:

- Establish and aggressively promote what it means for children to be ready for school to parents, other ECE providers, and the community at large.
- Reach out to Denver parents of children birth through five with the intent of supporting and educating parents in getting their children ready for school.
- Work with the DPS/City of Denver Joint Council on Early Care and Education to expand the number of ECE providers who are participating in quality improvement programs.
- Assess children appropriately once they enter DPS and set clear goals for progress.
- Reduce class size in preschool and kindergarten classes; make all-day kindergarten available on a voluntary basis to all children.
- Guarantee language and literacy skills for all children.
- Develop a work plan by January 2006 that spells out how the district intends to implement these recommendations.

The report recaps two studies that looked at the impact of quality early childhood education over time. One of those studies, The Perry Preschool Program, demonstrated the

online high school finds a home, reaches out

By Ashley Woodard, Communications Office Intern

What do a professional model living in Italy and a traveling professional skateboarder have in common? Both are students who share the same virtual classroom through the Denver Public Schools Online High School.

This non-traditional "classroom" moved this year to the second floor of McKinley-Thatcher Elementary School. Math, English, social studies and science lessons are prepared here by the online school's faculty and delivered to students via the Internet. Faculty also work individually with students in their offices and the school's computer lab.

Denver Public Schools Online High School pairs district standards with individualized education.

The borderless classroom lets students throughout the world benefit from personalized curriculum that encourages academic growth.

Students might choose to enroll because they do not live near a regular high school or because they do not learn well in a traditional learning environment.

"Our curriculum is partnered with Denver Public Schools curriculum; our basis of learning is the same, it is just packaged differently," said Jeanne Ross, principal.

The online high school brings the relevance of the world's technological advancements directly into each student's

curriculum. Students complete traditional courses using untraditional methods, enabling them to acquire technological skills and academic skills simultaneously.

Ross, who has taught in Denver Public Schools for 14 years, began working within the "virtual classroom" in August 2003. That was the maiden year for the high school, which offered Colorado Online Learning courses to ninth-grade students. The following school year, classes expanded to the 10th grade, and, this year the school serves ninth through 11th grades. Next year the school will expand to 12th grade.

Denver Public Schools Online High School requires students to successfully complete an academic course outline that is identical to all other Denver high schools. Students engage in objective assessments such as quizzes and scored exercises, as well as subjective assessment activities such as journals and discussions.

"We work to form a triangle among the student, the teacher and the parent," Ross said.

Freshman Natalie Scherlong said the schedule flexibility is key. "I can spend more time working with my teacher at my own pace," Scherlong said. "Now I do better in school and I enjoy learning much more." ■



New Board of Education members Jill Conrad (left) and Jeanne Kaplan began their four-year terms on November 17.

Denver Elects Two New Board Members

Last month, Denver voters elected Jill Conrad to one of the Board's two at-large seats, replacing outgoing Board President Les Woodward, and also elected Jeanne Kaplan to represent District 3 (east-central Denver), replacing term-limited Board member Elaine Gantz Berman.

Board member Kevin Patterson was re-elected to represent District 4 (northeast Denver); Board member Michelle Moss was re-elected to represent District 2 (southwest Denver).

There are seven members on the Denver Board of Education. Five are elected by voters within five districts; two are elected at-large by voters across the entire city. Board members' terms are four years. The Denver Board of Education is the policy-making body for the district. Its powers and duties are established in state law. Stay in touch with Board meeting dates and agendas via the Web at <http://board.dpsk12.org>. ■

The Denver Plan

Last month Superintendent Michael Bennet presented a draft of The Denver Plan to the Board of Education, kicking off a two-month process to gather further employee and public feedback before the plan is finalized. In the end, the plan is meant to be a shared vision and a shared commitment on behalf of the children in our district. "In developing this draft, we have asked ourselves at

every step along the way, 'Will this help our kids?'" said Superintendent Bennet. "Although there are many changes proposed for DPS in the draft, virtually all of them are the result of the many hours we have spent with principals and teachers over the past few months."

The Denver Plan is online at <http://thedenverplan.dpsk12.org>. To share comments and suggestions, email thedenverplan@dpsk12.org. ■

inside ProComp



opt-in process — generates numerous calls and questions

With the historic first opt-in window for ProComp nearly half over, call center operators and ProComp team members have responded to hundreds of calls and emails, and transcript evaluators have analyzed university and in-service credits for scores of educators interested in joining the new pay system.

Nearly 57,000 hits were recorded on the ProComp opt-in website in the first seven days following the November 1 election. In addition, DPS staff logged more than 1,200 visits to the Personal Opt-In Calculator to run test scenarios of projected ProComp earnings. A brochure, *Thinking About Joining ProComp?*, was created and distributed to all schools, and open houses were conducted around the district for educators to learn first hand about ProComp.

The personal opt-in salary calculator, available at www.denverprocomp.org, helps teachers and student services professionals see how they might fare under ProComp. Using each educator's own personnel information as well as choices they put into the software program, the calculator makes broad estimates of projected ProComp earnings and compares them to the traditional salary system.

Andre Pettigrew, co-chair of the Transition Team, said, "We prepared for weeks before the election to be ready for the first opt-in window. Our goal continues to be to create a new standard of

service and reliability for DPS." Most phone calls and email questions are answered on the day they are received.

During the first two opt-in windows, educators may receive an increase in their starting ProComp salary for advanced degrees and up to 30 credits earned from universities and DPS in-services since their last lane change. College transcripts and in-service records are being reviewed by a group of eight retired DPS educators.

After credits are evaluated, educators are notified of their appointment for a face-to-face meeting to establish their initial salary under ProComp. After the salary is set, educators then decide whether they want to join ProComp.

The actual opt-in process is conducted online at www.denverprocomp.org. Each educator is solely responsible for his or her decision whether to join ProComp. Those who do elect to join have a 72-hour window in which they can change their mind. After that, the decision is permanent.

Educators with questions should call 720-423-3900. Questions can also be emailed to optin@dpsk12.org, and more information is available on the web at www.denverprocomp.org.

The opt-in window for the 2005-2006 contract year will remain open until December 31, but the salary setting meeting must be conducted before the site is open for an individual to join ProComp. The window to join for 2006-2007 runs from February 1-March 31, 2006. ■

Q&A

Additional Advanced Professional Licenses Qualify for ProComp Increase

ProComp has established a process for approval of additional advanced licenses and certificates that qualify for the 9 percent (of the index salary) increase under the Knowledge and Skills component.

This salary increase is paid to educators who hold national licenses that require rigorous study and examination and are not required for DPS employment. Currently they include the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and numerous licenses for Student Services Professionals (SSPs).

Because the list of qualifying licenses/certificates for SSPs is not comprehensive, a form soon will be posted on www.denverprocomp.org that can be used to request a review of a specific license for inclusion in ProComp. To be approved, the license or certificate:

- Must be recognized by the DPS Department of Human Resources and appropriate professional council.
- Must exceed the entry level requirements called for by the district and the Colorado Department of Education.
- Must require documented or supervised practical experience or reflective practice verified by the licensing agency.
- Must require passing an examination that requires rigorous content knowledge.
- May require further demonstration of expertise when renewed.
- May require demonstration of results by exceeding national benchmarks for performance set by the licensing institution.

The list of approved licenses can be found in the green *Thinking About Joining ProComp?* brochure that has been distributed to schools and departments. It is also available on the ProComp website (www.denverprocomp.org) under "About ProComp." ■

ProComp Open Houses

Teachers and SSPs can get questions answered and try the new personal opt-in calculator at a series of Open Houses in December from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at various schools. The December 1 Open House is at Place Middle School. Other sessions will be December 5, 7, 13 and 15 from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Check the dps home page or www.denverprocomp.org for locations.

Q. What credits are available for buy-out for teachers opting into ProComp?

A. A special benefit is available to teachers who join ProComp during the first two opt-in windows. A maximum of 30 university and DPS in-service credits earned since an educator's last lane change may be used to set initial salary under ProComp. The credits must be converted to semester hours. Other restrictions may apply. For complete information on which credits may be eligible, please refer to the *Thinking About Joining ProComp?* brochure that was distributed to each school and is available on the web at www.denverprocomp.org.

Q. Can employees of charter schools join ProComp?

A. Charter school teachers who work under contracts specific to the school do not qualify for ProComp. Some educators at charter schools, however, are actually DPS employees and part of the DCTA bargaining unit. The district provides them to the charter school on a contractual basis. In this case, the educators are eligible to join ProComp.

Q. Now that ProComp has been passed by voters, are the benefits "retroactive" to the beginning of the school year?

A. An educator who joins ProComp in the first opt-in window that covers the 2005-2006 contract year will be paid retroactively to September 2005, or the first date of employment, whichever is more recent. These include payments for working in hard-to-staff positions and in hard-to-serve schools, as well as tuition reimbursement. During the first two opt-in periods, payment for advanced degrees and licenses is figured into an educator's starting salary.

Educators pilot new student growth objectives tool

Eight schools and three departments or teams are pilot testing the new online tool for setting student growth objectives (SGO). In most schools, objectives are being submitted on paper forms while the online tool is thoroughly tested.

Participating teachers, specialists, principals and managers will be able to provide feedback about the tool through an online survey and focus groups. This feedback will be used to improve the SGO tools before they are used districtwide in the 2006-2007 school year.

In pilot schools and departments, the objectives have been written and submitted online. Principals and managers also are working with the online reporting tool that enables them to review teacher objectives and approve them.

While teachers and Student Services Professionals outside the SGO pilot are welcome to enter their objectives online, they also must submit paper copies to their principals or managers. Objective-setting resources for all educators are available at www.dpsteacherobjectives.org. These include a handbook with sample objectives, down-loadable word documents to submit objectives and instructions for submitting objectives online. ■

ProComp

The Professional Compensation System for Teachers was designed jointly by the Denver Public Schools and the Denver Classroom Teachers Association.

For more information about ProComp, visit www.denverprocomp.org, call 720-423-3900 or email optin@dpsk12.org.



comings & goings

Appointments

Kevin Adams: Teacher Secondary, Morey Middle
Folayemi M. Adesola: Nurse, Kaiser Elementary
Michael A. Alonzo: Teacher, Secondary, Abraham Lincoln High
Shawne M. Anderson: Teacher, Secondary, CLA
Emily Annear: Teacher, Special Ed. Center Program, Hill Middle
Erin Blett: Teacher, Elementary, Schenck Elementary
Lisa U. Bolan: Teacher, Secondary, George Washington High
Breena J. Caldwell: Teacher Secondary, Bruce Randolph Middle
Maria G. Castillo: Teacher, Elementary, Amesse Elementary
Linda Chavez: Social Worker, Education
Catherine Dale: Teacher, Elementary, Greenwood Elementary
Julie L. Davis: Teacher Secondary, Martin Luther King Jr. Middle
Johanna M. Deaboim: Teacher, Secondary, Manual/Millennium Quest High
Tonatiah F. Diaz: Teacher Secondary, Skinner Middle
Kristen Dorighi: Occupational Therapist, Education
Guillermo J. Echeverria: Teacher Secondary, Rishel Middle
Jane M. Elliott: Teacher, Elementary, Cowell Elementary
Amanda Erickson: Teacher, Elementary, Steck Elementary
Sara A. Finney: Teacher, Hamilton Middle
Michelle L. Frame: Teacher, Elementary, Newlon Elementary
Serena L. Gilliam: Teacher, Elementary, Cheltenham Elementary
Sandra Gomez: Teacher, Elementary, Ashley Elementary
Amy Good: Teacher, Elementary, Marrama Elementary
Alice B. Grigg: Teacher, Elementary, Doull Elementary
Michael Gropper: Teacher, Elementary, Marrama Elementary
Lee R. Hammond: Teacher Secondary, Henry Middle
Patricia C. Hoffman: Teacher, Vocational, Emily Griffith Opp. School
Earl Howard III: Student Advisor, Montbello High
Janice A. Howard- Nwuke: Teacher, Elementary, Philips Elementary
Kristine J. Jimenez: Teacher Secondary, Rachel Noel Middle
Daniel Kehm: Teacher, Elementary, Castro Elementary
Angela King: Teacher, Elementary, Newlon Elementary
Amy D. Kolquist: Teacher Secondary, Martin Luther King Jr. Middle
Kelly Kuehl: Speech Language Pathologist, Education
Kimberly D. Lajevardi: Teacher Secondary, Rachel Noel Middle

Ryan Lerand: Teacher, Secondary, Manual/Millennium Quest High
Rochelle N. Levitt: Teacher, Secondary, George Washington High
Jonathan D. Lipson: Teacher Secondary, Kunsmiller Middle
Carole K. Lohr: Teacher, Elementary, Fallis Elementary
Bernadette C. Lopez: Teacher, Beach Court Elementary
Nicole P. Lopez: Teacher Secondary, Skinner Middle
Lauren Lovda: Teacher, Elementary, Gilpin Elementary
Kelly Maes: Nurse, Education
Susan Maresca: School Counselor, High School, Manual/Millennium Quest High
Janell Martinez: Teacher, Secondary, North High
Amy J. Martinson: Teacher, Elementary, Fallis Elementary
Gary J. Mason: Teacher, Elementary, Brown Elementary
S. J. Massie: Psychologist, Education
Allyson C. McGraw: Teacher Secondary, Bruce Randolph Middle
Lindsay R. McNatt: Teacher, Elementary, Fairview Elementary
Elizabeth A. Menter: Teacher, Special Ed. Center Program, Montbello High
Stephanie Micsak: Speech Language Pathologist, Education
Alissa Miklin: Teacher, Elementary, Ford Elementary
Stacey Milliken: Teacher Secondary, Denver School of the Arts
Sara Moneypenny: Teacher, Secondary, East High
Timon Morales: Teacher Secondary, Smiley Middle
Rebecca Myers: Teacher Secondary, Skinner Middle
Alenda L. Noble: Teacher, Secondary, CLA
Anne Marie Notargiacomo: Teacher, Elementary, Smedley Elementary
Ruth M. Ocon Neri: Teacher, Elementary, Schenck Elementary
Carina Oliva-Quiroz: Teacher, Elementary, Munroe Elementary
Teresa L. Page: Teacher Secondary, Rishel Middle
David S. Pahs: Teacher Secondary, Bruce Randolph Middle
Tamara Porter-Burt: Teacher, Elementary, Smedley Elementary
Gabriela M. Quiroga Chavez: Teacher, Elementary, Brown Elementary
Hugh Ragin: Teacher, Secondary, South High
Lee A. Rains: Teacher, Elementary, Eagleton Elementary
Sanice L. Rhea: Social Worker, Education
Shauna M. Rogers: Teacher, Special Ed. Center Program, Fairview Elementary
Gina Romano: Teacher, Elementary, Fairmont Elementary
Lorraine Roybal: Teacher Secondary, Place Middle

Adriana Santacoloma: Teacher, Elementary, Fairmont Elementary
Denise R. Sazzmann: Teacher, Spec Ed Center, Sabin Elementary
Charlene G. Simms: Library Media Spec, Bruce Randolph Middle
Shane Stanton: Teacher Secondary, Bruce Randolph Middle
William A. Starn: Teacher, Elementary, Cheltenham Elementary
Brittany L. Thorngren: Teacher Secondary, Kepner Middle
Constantine S. Vakas: Director, Transportation, Operations
Barbara Webster: School Counselor, High School, CLA
Timothy J. Weise: Teacher, Secondary, West High
Lech A. Wisniewski: Teacher Secondary, Kepner Middle

Tomas Esquibel: Teacher Secondary, Kepner Middle
Rudy Garcia: Teacher, Elementary, Remington Elementary
Dane H. Haaf: Teacher, Elementary, Fallis Elementary
Katherine J. Kirksey: Teacher, Elementary, Knapp Elementary
Jaclyn Mattern: Teacher, Secondary, CEC Middle College of Denver
John Records: Teacher, Secondary, West High
Tracee L. Sifford: Teacher, Elementary, Newlon Elementary
Dina Zainy: Teacher Secondary, Kunsmiller Middle

Retirements

Kathryn Doctor: Nurse, Park Hill Elementary
Thomas J. Marick: Teacher, Elementary, Asbury Elementary
Pamela E. Stutheit: Teacher, Elementary, Newlon Elementary

Reappointments

Francheska Branch: Library Media Spec, Elementary, Ashley Elementary

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Holidays



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focus on

William Taylor

Vocal Music Teacher
East High School



Years with Denver Public Schools: 14

Greatest or latest accomplishment: Acceptance of Concert Choir to perform at the Colorado Music Educators Convention (CMEA) in January.

Why you decided to become a teacher: I love music and I love working with teenagers.

Four words you think students would use to describe your teaching strategies: Challenging, varied, inspiring and fun.

One way you give your students recognition: End-of-year-banquet to recognize achievements in music.

From your experience, the most effective way to communicate with parents: Through email, if possible.

What you do for fun: Small construction jobs.

Hometown: Denver, Colorado.

Person who has influenced you most in life: My father.

Favorite restaurant: Adega Restaurant and Wine Bar (now closed).

Best book you've read in the past year: "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: And Other Conversations About Race" by Beverly Tatum.

Family: Wife – Jessica; one sister; two nephews; and Mother and Father.

Philosophy for life: All you really have is your integrity.

Three items (books, records, movies, presidents, etc.) you would take with you if you were stranded on an island: A piano, an iPod and tools.



Denver Citywide Marching Band Trumpets "Most Improved" Award

The Denver Citywide Marching Band received the "Most Improved Class 4A Band Award" at the Colorado Bandmaster's Association Metropolitan Qualifying Rounds in October, held at Littleton High School. This award is given to the band with the most dramatic improvement in score from the previous year's competition.

The band also traveled to Chicago to perform in the "State Street Thanksgiving Day Parade." Other performances from the 2005 season: Littleton Western Welcome Week Parade, Colorado State Fair Parade, Denver Veterans Day Parade, and performances this month at the "Xcel Energy Parade of Lights" on Friday and Saturday, December 2 and 3 in downtown Denver. The band also performed several half-time shows for Denver Public Schools home football games.

The band has three missions: to educate, to perform and outreach to the Denver community. Band membership is open for the 2005-2006 marching season. Please contact Nancy Vandevender, program assistant, for more information at nvandevender@comcast.net or 303-589-0536. The band's website is <http://www.dcmbsparentcorp.org>. ■

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION *from page 1*

positive effects of quality early childhood education on children in poverty and tracked students for decades to show that students who receive quality pre-school programs fare much better in future learning years.

For instance, of those students who did not have access to quality early childhood education, 16 percent were in the top 10 percent of their class for achievement by age 14. But those students who had access to an ECE program, 48 percent were in the top 10 percent for achievement by age 14.

High school graduation rates revealed a similar trend — students who attended a quality ECE program had higher graduation rates (65 percent) than those who did not (45 percent).

DPS' own data detail the learning gap exists among students entering kindergarten. Students from higher income families recognize both uppercase and lowercase letters at a rate more than four and five times the rate of their lower income peers. The ability to recognize letters among students entering kindergarten is a strong predictor of future school success.

"It's very clear that investing in preschool and investing in programs that help parents understand the critical and profound importance of early learning is one of the best investments any community can make," said Superintendent Michael Bennet.

A complete copy of the final report is available at <http://deesr.dpsk12.org>. ■

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