

Appendix  
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**Denver Public Schools  
Report to the Board of Education**

**FOR BOARD OF EDUCATION ACTION**

**REVITALIZATION PLAN  
FOR  
GILPIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**



**Submitted by:**

**Northeast Area Superintendent's Office  
June 2, 2005**

**MOTION**

I move that the Board of Education approve the revitalization plan for Gilpin Elementary School contained within this report and that the Superintendent be directed to appoint appropriate district staff to implement the plan beginning with the 2005-2006 school year.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Gilpin K-8 School Revitalization Committee convened on October 5, 2004. Since that time, the Committee members have held approximately two sessions per month during which they have engaged in a comprehensive strategic planning, asset mapping, and plan development process. This process resulted in the identification of four main focus areas for school revitalization: academic excellence, climate and culture, parental engagement, and community engagement. During the course of the Committee's work, it was decided that Gilpin would move from being a grades K-5 school to a grades K-8 school in the fall of 2005. This change was fully factored into the Committee's work.

This plan will detail the individual components for revitalization proposed for each of the focus areas. For each component of change, the plan format will include discussion of four key areas: 1) a description of what the change component entails, 2) why this change component was selected, and 3) the expected impact and outcomes of successful implementation of the component.

### **I. Focus Area—Academic Excellence**

#### **Component One—A Schoolwide System for Language Proficiency and Diversity**

##### **Description**

Gilpin's population of language diverse learners calls for the development and implementation of a clear and systematic plan for supporting English language learners (ELLs) & native English speakers in development of academic and social language. To take full advantage of Gilpin's diversity, such a system will also include specific provisions for cross-cultural experiences in heterogeneous groupings.

Well regarded research (Miramontes, Commins, Nadeau, 1997) has resulted in a significant expansion of our knowledge regarding the strategies and content to support successful language acquisition and academic achievement for ELLs. The following principles developed from this research will be used as a foundation for the design and implementation of Gilpin's Schoolwide System for Language Proficiency and Diversity:

1. Knowledge is best acquired when learners actively participate in meaningful activities that are constructive in nature and appropriate to their level of development.
2. The more comprehensive the use of the Native language, the greater the potential for linguistically diverse students to be academically successful.
3. The native language should be used purposefully and deliberately as a foundation for thinking and learning.
4. Second language instruction must be organized to provide students the time, experiences, and opportunities they need to fully develop language proficiency within a range of social and academic contexts.

5. Decisions regarding transition to formal literacy instruction in the second language, and exit from the ELA program must be based on assessments of reading, writing, and oral language proficiencies in both languages.
6. Parents must play a major role in the learning and schooling of their children.
7. Instruction must be organized to provide opportunities for cross-cultural interactions, which will help students understand and respect their own culture and other.
8. As part of a professional learning community, all teachers are equally responsible for decisions regarding the instructional program for linguistically diverse students.

Through the Revitalization Initiative, Gilpin will create the full time position of English Language Development Specialist. In concert with the developing Professional Learning Community (PLC) component described below, this position will design and oversee the implementation of the system described above. This position will also be responsible for developing and overseeing the professional development and material needs of the system, as well as providing coaching to all Gilpin teachers working with ELLs. Finally, again in concert with the PLC, this Specialist will coordinate the development and implementation of an effective set of assessment tools to maximize student learning through data driven instruction.

### **Why Selected**

Gilpin's high percentage of ELLs, and highly mobile population, requires that a consistent and comprehensive system be in place for language development. Further, a major goal for Gilpin is to develop strong literacy proficiencies in native language for all students. Such an approach values the language and knowledge students bring to school, and, in fact, utilizes such diversity and skills as an educational asset for all Gilpin students.

### **Expected Impact/Outcomes**

- Increased academic achievement for all students
- Systematic and consistently high quality application of proven principles for transition from native language to second language
- Increased individual planning and facilitation of language transition for all ELL students.
- Earlier exposure to ELD for all students, and for a longer period of time.
- Increased understanding of and respect for one's own culture and others'

## **Component Two—Structural Approaches to the Introduction of the Grades Kindergarten through Eighth (K-8)**

### **Description**

The implementation of the K-8 model at Gilpin will create a very new and exciting environment for learning at Gilpin. The addition of grades six, seven, and eight provides

the opportunity to build a seamless educational system that prepares students and their families for the key transition to high school. Once the K-8 model was introduced as a reality for Gilpin, the Committee began to integrate this model into the Revitalization plan.

To improve overall student achievement as well as teacher effectiveness, and to address the challenges of adding three new, upper grade levels, and therefore more advanced curricula, the Committee is recommending that Gilpin institute platooning among its staff for curriculum and content delivery. This means that teachers at grade levels four through six (then seven and eight as the K-8 model is implemented) will begin to specialize in the subject matter that they deliver. For example, while fourth grade literacy may be delivered by all fourth grade teachers, one fourth grade teacher will become the designated math teacher while another will specialize in social studies and/or science. It is anticipated that over the next few years, this approach will also be applied to grades one through three. At the upper grades, this approach allows for the hiring of highly qualified staff per the No Child Left Behind who may then teach math, science, and social studies to multiple grade levels. In conjunction with the Professional Learning Community (PLC) to be described below, this approach will result in the highest quality delivery of curricula and new levels of depth and effectiveness with content for all Gilpin students.

A second structural approach will be to organize Gilpin into a Lower School, comprised of grades ECE through Three, and an Upper School comprised of grades Four through Eight. Again, in conjunction with the PLC described below, each school will be organized into teams of teachers responsible for seamless delivery of instruction, and both horizontal and vertical integration of curriculum. In addition, this structural approach will allow for Gilpin to create subtle yet important transitions for students as they move from the Lower school to the Upper school. Behavioral as well as academic expectations can be clearly delineated as students progress. Also, this structural approach addresses the wide range of developmental differences inherent in a school with students ranging in age from four through fourteen. Therefore, the design and delivery of the behavioral and character education components described below will also be affected by this internal organization. Finally, given the large percentage of ELLs, this approach will allow the Upper School to design a consistent and comprehensive approach to ELD post transition to English.

### **Why Selected**

The addition of grades six through eight over the next three school years offers great opportunity as well as great challenge. Platooning acknowledges the need for the most effective teaching at all levels, while the organization of Gilpin into a Lower and Upper schools acknowledges and address the multiple differences between the K-5 model and the K-8 model.

## Expected Impact/Outcomes

- Increased student achievement
- Increased teacher effectiveness
- Increased teacher satisfaction
- Decreased disciplinary events
- Decreased teacher turnover

## **Component Three—Development and full implementation of a Professional Learning Community (PLC).**

### **Description**

“Throughout our ten year study, whenever we found an effective school or an effective department within a school, without exception that school or department has been a part of a collaborative, professional learning community” Professor Milbrey McLaughlin, Stanford University

"Milbrey McLaughlin has found that successful teachers, without exception, single out their professional community as the source of their professional motivation, the reason they don't burn out in the face of exceedingly demanding situations, and the foundation of their ability to adapt to today's new students."  
(Senge, P. (2000). *Schools that learn: A fifth discipline fieldbook for educator, parents, and everyone who cares about education*, Doubleday: New York.)

“The most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is developing the ability of school personnel to function as professional learning communities”. Rick DuFour and Robert Eaker, Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practice for Enhancing Student Achievement.

A true PLC exhibits the following six traits:

- Shared mission, vision, and values
- Collective inquiry into best practice
- Collaborative Committees
- Action orientation and experimentation
- Continuous improvement
- Results orientation

For Gilpin, the challenge of increasing student achievement while simultaneously growing into a K-8 school makes the introduction of a PLC imperative. The ability of faculty to share resources, to develop greater expertise as platooning rolls out, and to support one other in refining best practice aligns perfectly with the intent and key characteristics of a true PLC.

## **Why selected**

The demands for successful teaching and learning in highly impacted urban school environments call for teachers and all staff to work together to pool their collective expertise and resources in the furtherance of their educational mission. The research referenced above has shown that PLC's are a most effective a way to organize and conduct the business of successful instruction and high achievement. In Gilpin's case, the Revitalization Committee believes that full implementation of a PLC will create the type of environment to not only successfully implement current instructional models and programs, but also to instill a culture of respect and collaboration that will be adhered to by not only teachers but all students, families, and staff.

## **Expected Impact/Outcomes**

- Increased student achievement.
- Increased enrollment.
- Increased teacher job satisfaction.
- Consistent and effective application of best practice schoolwide.
- Creation of a culture of high expectations and mutual respect.

## **Component Four—Best Practice Instruction in Literacy and Math, and the Service Learning Approach to the Natural Sciences, the Social Sciences, and Technology**

### **Description**

The Revitalization Committee believes that the current district Literacy and Math programs represent best practice in instructional delivery and materials in those two critical content areas. It is the Committee's belief that continued professional development and coaching, along with the English Language Proficiency system described above, and full implementation of a PLC, will greatly enhance the effectiveness of these two programs. Along those lines, the Committee is recommending the addition of a full time Math coach for two years to support all grades within Gilpin. The PLC will assume responsibility for the math coaching component after the two year period.

The introduction of the K-8 grade configuration caused the Committee to carefully consider how instruction in science and social studies should be addressed. In depth and lively discussion resulted in the Committee recommending that Gilpin frame its content in these areas as: The Natural Sciences, the Social Sciences, and Technology. Beyond the curriculum and content, which will come from the District, the Committee was also interesting in finding a method of delivery that would not only engage students in content area learning but also provide the opportunity to engage the students directly with the community. To do this, the Committee is recommending that Gilpin create a partnership with Earth Force to create a Service Learning system for the Natural Science, Social Sciences, and Technology. Earth Force is a national organization that gives youth the

civic skills and knowledge to create lasting solutions to environmental problems in their communities. Earth Force has a proven track record in the Denver area and provides support and materials to educators blending best practices from the fields of youth development civic engagement, environmental education and service learning. This seemed to the Committee to be a perfect framing for BOTH natural and social science education for Gilpin students and teachers. Further, this approach holds great promise for continuing the English language development for students transitioning to English, post third grade. The Committee is recommending the hiring of a full time Service Learning Specialist for a two year period to work directly with Gilpin PLC/teachers and Earth Force in the creation of standards based, grade level appropriate service learning project opportunities, particularly but not exclusively for Gilpin's Upper School students. It is anticipated that after this two year period, the PLC will be well prepared to take over the operation and further development of the service learning system, in an ongoing relationship with Earth Force.

### **Why selected**

The implementation of the PLC and the introduction of the ELD system and Specialist position referenced above are expected to significantly impact student achievement in math and literacy. Development and implementation of the service learning approach to science and social studies further provides a proven and community engaged approach that will greatly expand the learning horizons for Gilpin students.

### **Expected Impact/Outcomes**

- Increased student achievement
- Increased enrollment, given the appeal of the service learning approach in combination with classroom learning.
- Increased student content knowledge in science and social studies.
- Increase English language development for native English and Spanish speakers
- Increase knowledge about and skills in the use of technology for learning.
- Increased parental involvement, in part through participation in the service learning project.
- Increased teacher effectiveness and satisfaction
- Increase community involvement in Gilpin through the service learning project opportunities and activities.

## **Component Five—All Day Kindergarten Classes**

### **Description**

The Gilpin Committee proposes that the school offer only Full Day Kindergarten. In order to assure this, the Committee is recommending that a .5 FTE be added to the Revitalization budget to support this approach.

## **Why Selected**

Research clearly indicates that early intervention is the only way that we can begin to equalize students' experiences. Many Gilpin students are entering school with few language experiences and the two and a half hours spent in the half day Kindergarten classes is minimal based on the need. Also, many of these students are not attending a quality ECE/pre-school to give them the extra advantage to increase their language skills. Therefore, they are entering each grade level significantly behind. Once behind, they are not able to catch up to their grade level and meet proficiency expectations from year to year.

## **Expected Impact/Outcomes**

- Increased student achievement
- Increased school readiness
- Decreased family issues negatively impacting learning
- Increased enrollments
- Increased parent engagement
- Increased social/emotional skills

## **II. Focus Area—Climate and Culture**

### **Component One—Time to Teach: A schoolwide approach to positive behaviors**

#### **Description**

Rick Dahlgren's "*Time To Teach*" program is a classroom discipline model that is based on the premise that expected behaviors need to be systematically taught. It is an instructional approach to discipline that introduces essential skills that every student must have in order to be a successful learner and allows for successful classroom management. Successful classroom management strategies provide structure in the classroom. The "teach to's" or routines and rituals give students a feeling of security. This program provides specific methods and strategies for "teaching to" expected behaviors. The value of this program is that after thoughtful consideration of the expected behaviors in the classroom, the teacher teaches the students the expected behavior, not just an explanation. The end result is that teachers teach more and students learn more. Everyone is happier and the school building is a calmer environment for all. We feel that the structure that this program provides will have a positive effect on teacher-student, student-student, and even parent-teacher interactions throughout the school year.

This program is also intended to provide a safe environment for our students, staff and parents. We were experiencing an increasing number of students who were confrontational at school and at home. They were exhibiting behaviors that were threatening, persistent, and destructive. Many of our students were coming to school without a clear understanding of how to appropriately behave in social settings. We felt that provisions needed to be made for these students as well. This discipline program

seemed to meet the needs of our students and the expectations of our teachers and parents.

### **Why Selected**

Research shows that aggressive and violent behaviors are increasing among children and youth in American schools. Youth confront their parents, teachers, and school personnel with persistent, threatening, and destructive behaviors are increasing at alarming rates. Violence corrodes the educational process and threatens the safety of both students and teachers. We believe that good discipline at school will address minor problems in order to prevent major ones.

Many of our students enter school unprepared socially and academically. They are easily distracted, noncompliant, disruptive, aggressive, and depressed. Rick Dahlgren describes them as antisocial because of the consequences of early peer and adult rejections. These children are in serious jeopardy of life-long problems unless their self-esteem is improved. (2001, p.3) Stanley Coopersmith of the University of California (1967), found that young people that have a high self-esteem are happier and therefore meet the environmental demands of life more effectively. This is an apt description of our student body, and we feel that by providing the appropriate tools for our students and fostering respect and safety for our students that the teachers will be able to teach and students will be able to learn.

Our staff has chosen a proactive approach to discipline by using the “Time to Teach” process. Having no defined discipline program in our school was a major issue among the staff and parents. We felt that this issue needed immediate attention, and we had the training in the fall of this year, and have begun instituting its practices. The continuity of this program has unified the staff and has provided a consistent program of action and consequences for inappropriate behavior. We feel that through modeling and teaching acceptable behaviors for our students they are better able to respond and think before engaging in inappropriate behavior.

“Time To Teach is a more proactive model that teaches students better ways of responding before they engage in inappropriate behaviors.” Rick Dahlgren

### **Expected Impact/Outcomes**

- Increased student achievement
- Increased time on task for all classes and students
- Decreased behavioral issues and problems
- Increased strategies and consistency in dealing with those behavior/discipline problems that do arise.

## **Component Two—Schoolwide implementation of Character Education**

### **Description**

As part of our Revitalization plan, Gilpin will fully implement the District’s “Educating for Character in the Denver Public Schools” program. This comprehensive approach to culture development will develop the set of core values and beliefs that place academic achievement and personal and cultural respect and understanding at the very highest level of priority for Gilpin students, families, and staff. This program has four key phases:

- Getting started, which informs our community of the value and importance of a comprehensive character education system;
- Developing a School Profile, which will allow us to fully understand our current climate and directions in which to move;
- Creating a School-wide Touchstone which will clearly identify and define our values and approach to behavioral expectation and school climate; and
- Integrating Core Values into the Daily Life of Gilpin.

This work will directly support the development of our PLC, and in fact, is designed to foster the development of such an “intentional learning community”.

### **Why Selected**

The addition of grades six through eight over the next three school years will dramatically change the composition of Gilpin’s student population. Along with these changes will come new developmental and behavioral realities. It is only with a planned, comprehensive, schoolwide approach to character development that Gilpin can expect to create the type of learning environment that successfully prepares all young people for their academic success.

### **Expected Outcomes**

- Increased student achievement
- Decreased behavior issues and problems
- Increased leadership development opportunities for students
- Increased understanding of citizen responsibility and community connection

## **III. Focus Area—Parental Engagement**

### **Component One—The Family Support Model for Increased Student Achievement**

“The research is abundantly clear: nothing motivates a child more than when learning is valued by schools and families/community working together in partnership...These forms of [parent] involvement do not happen by accident or even by invitation. They

happen by explicit strategic intervention”. Michael Fullan, Broadening the Concept of Teacher

### **Description**

The Committee is recommending the creation of a strategic and systemic approach to supporting ALL Gilpin families in the school community by developing and introducing the Family Support Model for Increased Student Achievement. This model will be developed by a Family Support and Engagement Specialist hired to work with students, parents, and teachers to identify the barriers to parent/family engagement, and to create support systems to address those barriers. Using a partnership development model designed to find ways to cultivate support and engagement from ALL parents, this recommendation entails the creation of a broad range of specific, educationally related activities, opportunities, and events for participation. In Gilpin’s case, this approach must recognize that parents have widely varying capabilities and interests when it comes to participating in their child’s education. However, it also recognizes that virtually all parents would like to participate, given the right fit in terms of opportunities. This position will work in concert with teachers to develop in-school, home, and community activities that directly support the instructional delivery at Gilpin. While focused primarily on student learning, this system will also include educational opportunities for parents such as English as a Second language classes for parents, parenting skills development, and specific strategies to support student learning. Along those lines, this component will also focus on the development of a strong, active Parent Teacher Organization, and other similar structures to formalize the parents’ role in the Gilpin school community.

### **Why selected**

Gilpin serves an extremely diverse population. Significant segments of the population bring serious social and emotional issues that negatively impact proactive and productive participation by parents in their students’ learning. This situation has caused significant stress on teachers above and beyond the everyday challenges of teaching, and has limited the educational resources available to support instruction in the classroom. While the above description appears to address school community deficits, this component is actually designed and intended to ultimately create an asset based system of parental engagement and investment in Gilpin.

### **Expected Impact/Outcomes**

- Increased student achievement
- Increased enrollment
- “Decreased social service intervention events”
- Increased participation from ALL Gilpin parents
- Increased teacher job satisfaction and effectiveness

#### **IV. Focus Area—Community Engagement**

##### **Component One—Development of a Community Engagement system**

###### **Description**

Similar to the parent engagement system, Gilpin will develop a broad range of participation and support opportunities for the businesses and other community organizations within the Gilpin attendance area. Businesses and other community organizations (including individuals without school age children) are typically very willing to support their neighborhood schools with resources, expertise, and active participation such as visits to businesses, visiting the school for demonstrations, etc. The key is being ready with a broad menu of resources and opportunities that the community can provide, and that will also support in-classroom and service expeditionary learning opportunities for Gilpin students. Such participation is particularly relevant to the expeditionary learning system being implemented at Gilpin. This system will also be developed and coordinated by the Parent and Community Engagement Coordinator position mentioned above.

###### **Why selected**

The changing demographics and business development of the Gilpin neighborhood have brought in many new enterprises and organizations. Engaging these potential partners in Gilpin's educational system can only add to the great potential for resource development, and increased community participation.

###### **Expected Impact/Outcomes**

- Increase business participation in, and resource development for, Gilpin's instructional programs.
- Increased student achievement
- Increased student and staff awareness of community partners and opportunities
- Increase community awareness of Gilpin K-8

##### **Component Two—Marketing**

###### **Description**

Gilpin will retain the services of a marketing professional with experience in promoting K-12 educational institutions. This professional will develop a marketing plan, and accompanying materials, that clearly articulates Gilpin's assets, instructional practices, and unique educational community.

## **Why selected**

Successful implementation of this Revitalization plan will create a highly desirable school of choice for the Gilpin neighborhood and its community. However, word of mouth cannot be relied upon exclusively to inform the community of Gilpin's progress in a timely enough manner. Therefore, aggressive and targeted marketing will be necessary to increase enrollment over the next two years.

## **Expected Impact/Outcomes**

- Increased student enrollment
- Increased community involvement in Gilpin

## **Sustainability**

The Committee carefully considered how each of the key components of the Gilpin Revitalization plan would be sustainable once the Revitalization funding ends. Central to assuring sustainability is the establishment of the Professional Learning Community (PLC). Since the Committee believes that the PLC will be fully implemented after Year Two, it is completely realistic to expect the PLC to assume the key responsibilities initially assigned to the English Language Development Specialist and the Service Learning Specialist. Further, Earth Force commits to developing the funding and other resources necessary to sustain its involvement on a permanent basis. Therefore, as indicated above, these two positions will no longer need to be funded, nor do we expect materials or equipment purchase that could not be handled by Gilpin's yearly operating budget.

The Committee believes that the Family Support and Engagement Specialist position should be a permanent resource available to Gilpin's students, families, and teachers. Therefore, an aggressive strategy will be formulated over the first two years of the plan to fund and maintain the Family Support and Engagement Specialist's position on an ongoing basis. Finally, it is the Committee's assessment that all other aspects of this plan are fully sustainable after the Revitalization period.

## **Revitalization Plan Budget**

### **Mill Levy Funding**

Year One--\$280,000

1.0 FTE Service Learning Specialist (certified)--\$55,000  
1.0 FTE Family Support and Engagement Specialist (non-certified)--\$35,000  
1.0 FTE English Language Development Specialist (certified)--\$55,000  
.5 FTE Kindergarten Teacher--\$27,500  
1.0 FTE Math Coach--\$55,000

Professional Learning Community Training and Development--\$30,000  
Parent Training and Instructional Materials--\$5,000  
Service Learning Materials and Expenses--\$10,000  
Marketing Plan Development, Implementation, and Materials Development--\$7,500

Year Two-\$260,000

1.0 FTE Service Learning Specialist (certified)--\$55,000  
1.0 FTE Family Support and Engagement Specialist (non-certified)--\$35,000  
1.0 FTE English Language Development Specialist (certified)--\$55,000  
.5 FTE Kindergarten Teacher--\$27,500  
1.0 FTE Math Coach--\$55,000

Professional Learning Community Training and Development--\$15,000  
Parent Training and Instructional Materials--\$5,000  
Service Learning Materials and Expenses--\$7,500  
Marketing Plan Development, Implementation, and Materials Development--\$5,000