

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF EDUCATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1,
IN THE CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER AND STATE OF COLORADO
HELD IN THE BOARD ROOM, 900 GRANT STREET
5:00 P.M., THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2006

I. Call to Order – 5:00 p.m.

A. Pledge of Allegiance

B. Roll Call

President Theresa Pena called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m. The following Board of Education members were present: Jill Conrad, Rev. Lucia Guzman, Mr. Bruce Hoyt, Mrs. Jeannie Kaplan, Mr. Kevin Patterson, and Ms. Theresa Pena. Mrs. Michelle Moss was present via telephone connection.

C. Introduction of Newly Appointed Principals

Carla Santorno introduced the new principals for two new K-8 schools in the northeast section of the city: Damon Smith, Green Valley Ranch-Picadilly, and Kevin Fletcher, Montbello Village Place.

D. Recognition of Nationally Board-Certified Teachers

Lita Weinstein, Department of Human Resources, and Kim Ursetta, President of the Denver Classroom Teachers Association (DCTA), recognized two Nationally Board-Certified teachers: Mary Carlson, Park Hill Elementary School; and Krista Skuce, Slavens ECE-8 School.

E. Recognition of Outstanding Female High School Athletes for National Girls and Women-In-Sports Day

Ms. Pena read the Proclamation for National Girls and Women in Sports Day and introduced Leslie Moore, Director, Athletics and Student Services, and the following Outstanding Female High School Athletes: Alma Chavez, Abraham Lincoln High School; Mary Higgins, East High School; Kira Newman, George Washington High School; Allison Ipson, John F. Kennedy High School; Britany Ortega, Manual High School; Shatoria Nelson, Montbello High School; Estella Amaran, North High School; Candace Wilson, South High School; Frances Annan, Thomas Jefferson High School; and Angelica Chavez, West High School.

II. Board Member Reports

A. Student Board of Education Report on the Denver Plan

Ms. Conrad introduced Student Board of Education President, Hannah Picasso-Hobin; Frances Annan, from Thomas Jefferson High School; and Ian Ruskey, from P.S. 1 Charter School, to present the report.

B. District School Improvement and Accountability Council (DSIAC) Report on The Denver Plan

Jose Merida, member of the District School Improvement and Accountability Council (DSIAC), presented the report.

III. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Bennet mentioned that this is the week that the schools receive their budgets from the district; it has been a commendable process that is going well.

He has been working very hard, with the leadership of Rev. Guzman and Ms. Conrad, and the Governor's Office and the Legislature, on legislation regarding the problem with the district's ability to restructure Bruce Randolph Middle School. That Bill passed today, unanimously, out of the House Education Committee.

IV. Consent Agenda

Assistant Secretary Jacquie Lucero read the Agenda items by number and sequence. In accordance with Consent Agenda procedures, the following items were removed from the Agenda and held for discussion:

IV-C-3 Motion to Act on the Renewal of the Life Skills Center of Denver Charter School Contract

IV-C-5 Motion to Act on the Renewal of the Ridge View Academy Charter School Contract

IV-C-6 Motion to Act on the Renewal of the Skyland Community High School Charter School Contract

IV-C-9 Motion to Act on the Staff Proposal Concerning the Manual Educational Complex and Related Attendance Boundary Change

Mr. Hoyt moved that all matters on the Consent Agenda not held be approved.
Mr. Patterson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously and the following items were approved:

A. Board of Education

1. Minutes of the Regular Board of Education Meetings of January 19, 2006, and January 27, 2006 - Copies are appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-A-1a and IV-A-1b .
2. Gift Report – A copy is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-A-2.
3. Finance and Audit Committee
 - a. Motion to Ratify E-Rate Structured Cable Contracts with Avant Data Comm, National Network Services, and TeleSupport Services - A copy of this motion, contracts for E-rate structured cable for various schools, is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-A-3a.
 - b. Motion to Ratify E-Rate Network Switches Contract with MSN Communications - A copy of this motion, a contract for E-rate network switches for various schools, is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-A-3b.
 - c. Motion to Ratify E-Rate Cisco Equipment Maintenance Contract with MSN Communications – A copy of this motion, a contract for E-rate Cisco equipment maintenance for various schools, is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-A-3c.
 - d. Motion to Ratify the Construction Contract for the Smith and Swansea Elementary Schools, and Montbello High School Renovation Projects - A copy of this motion is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-A-3d.
 - e. Motion to Ratify the Construction Contract for the Beach Court, Colfax, Garden Place, Remington, and Valdez Elementary Schools, and West High School Renovation Projects - A copy of this motion is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-A-3e.
 - f. Motion to Approve the Construction Contract the Doull, Goldrick, Johnson, Munroe, and Traylor Elementary Schools; Rishel Middle School; and John F. Kennedy High School Renovation Projects - A copy of this motion is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-A-3f.

- g. Motion to Approve the Construction Contract for the South and Thomas Jefferson High Schools and All City Stadium Athletic Field Projects - A copy of this motion is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-A-3g.
- h. Motion to Approve the Construction Contract for the Cory, Holm, and Samuels Elementary Schools; and Place Middle School Mechanical Upgrade Projects – A copy of this motion is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-A-3h.
- i. Motion to Approve the Construction Contract for the Carson Elementary School and Hill Middle School Renovation Projects - A copy of this motion is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-A-3i.
- j. Motion to Approve the Construction Contract for the Bradley Elementary School Renovation Project - A copy of this motion is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-A-3j.
- k. Motion to Approve the Construction Contract for the Lake Middle School Renovation Project - A copy of this motion is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-A-3k.
- l. Motion to Approve the Construction Contract for the North High School Renovation Project - A copy of this motion is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-A-3l.
- m. Motion to Approve the Construction Contract for the Horace Mann Middle School Renovation Project - A copy of this motion is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-A-3m.
- n. Motion to Approve the Construction Contract for the Barrett, Columbine, Ford, Marrama, McGlone, and Oakland Elementary Schools; and Manual High School Renovation Projects - A copy of this motion is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-A-3n.
- o. Motion to Approve the Use of Additional Contingency Funds for the New Montbello Village Place K-8 School - A copy of this motion is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-A-3o.
- p. Motion to Approve a Grant Agreement with the Gates Family Foundation Concerning the Renovation of Tennis Courts at Rishel Middle School - A copy of this motion is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-A-3p.
- q. Motion to Approve Cooperative Agreement with the City and County of Denver for the Construction and Use of Tennis Courts at City Park- A copy of

this motion, to approve the cooperative agreement with the City and County of Denver for the construction and use of tennis courts at City Park for the benefit of East High School, is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-A-3q.

4. Motion to Appoint DPS Foundation as the Board of Education Designee to Administer the James S. and Mable Cook Trust – A copy of this motion is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-A-4.

B. Administrative Services

1. Human Resources

- a. Motion to Approve the Personnel Transaction Report – A copy of this report is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-B-1a.
- b. Motion to Ratify Agreement Between Denver Public Schools and the Vocational Teachers Federation – A copy of this motion is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-B-1b.
- c. Motion to Approve an Extension of the Collective Bargaining Agreement Between Denver Public Schools and the Communication Workers of America
A copy of this motion is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-B-1c.
- d. Motion to Accept the Arbitrator's Report Regarding 77 390 00166 05, Denver Classroom Teachers Association and School District No.1, DCTA Grievance #05-18 – A copy of this motion is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-B-1d.

2. Facility Management

- a. Motion to Accept Donation from the Mountain States Bank for the East High School Scoreboard - A copy of this motion, the acceptance of \$25,000 from the Mountain States Bank for a new scoreboard at East High School, is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-B-2a.
- b. Motion to Approve the Naming of the Former Baker Middle School as the Denver Center for International Studies - A copy of this motion is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-B-2b.
- c. Motion to Approve Land Transfers to the City and County of Denver – A copy of this motion, land transfers to the City and County of Denver for the right-of-way at Hilltop Service Center, is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-B-2c.

d. Motion to Approve the Utility Easement at the Hilltop Service Center - A copy of this motion is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-B-2d.

C. Educational Services

1. Motion to Approve the 2006-2007 Denver Public Schools Continuous-Year Calendar - A copy of this motion is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-C-1.
2. Motion to Act on Contract on Initial Application from the West Denver Preparatory Charter School - A copy of this motion, to act on the contract for a three-year term, is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-C-2.
4. Motion to Act on the Renewal of the Odyssey Charter School Contract - A copy of this motion is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-C-4.
7. Motion to Act on the Renewal of the Wyatt-Edison Charter School Contract - A copy of this motion is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-C-7.
8. Motion to Approve the 2006-2007 K-8 Configuration - A copy of this motion is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-C-8.

D. No Items

E. Denver Public Schools Retirement System

1. Motion to Approve Amendment of Section 40.60, Re-Employment of an Annuitant of the Denver Public Schools Retirement and Benefit Plan - A copy of this motion, regarding resumption of retirement benefits by an annuitant who has been re-employed by a DPSRS-covered employer, is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-E-1.
2. Motion to Approve Amendment of Sections 70.88(1) and 70.102(2) of the Denver Public Schools Retirement and Benefit Plan - A copy of this motion, which clarify members who are covered by the new tier of benefits effective July 1, 2005, is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-E-2.
3. Motion to Approve Amendment of Section 117 of the Denver Public Schools Retirement and Benefit Plan - A copy of this motion, which clarifies the calculation of earned service, is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-E-3.

V. Old Business

There was none.

VI. New Business

A. Student Services

1. Expelled Students Report - A copy of this report is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, VI-A-1.

B. Policy Review

1. New Policy IK, Student Academic Achievement - A copy of this policy, which will provide and implement a framework to drive the strategic plan, policies, resources, and district operations, to positively impact student achievement, is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, VI-B-1.

Ms. Peña stated that over the last twelve months, the Board and the district have been working with the Broad Foundation and CRSS Consulting Firm to look at urban school school reform, at a national level. As part of that effort, the Board has put together a new policy that outlines the framework, in conjunction with the Denver Plan. These will become the guiding principles by which the Board will continue to govern and work with staff. The Board is very interested in hearing feedback from the public on the proposed policy.

2. New Policy JFABD, Homeless Students - A copy of this policy, which will provide policy and procedures to meet the needs of enrollment/retention of homeless students, in accordance with state and federal laws, is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, VI-B-2.

C. Budget and Finance, Financial Services

1. 2006-2007 Preliminary Budget - A copy of this report, which will identify the Portion of the 2006-2007 projected revenues that is from the state for purposes of implementing Board of Education Policy DAB, Contingency Reserve, is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, VI-C-1.

Ms. Peña said that Agenda items that were removed and held from the Consent Agenda will be discussed after the Public Comment Session, because some of the speakers are addressing these Agenda items. The Board will go back into session and vote on the Agenda items that were held.

Mr. Bennet reported that the new technology in use in the Board Room was not paid for by the district. These improvements are from the courtesy of Comcast's cable franchise agreement with the City and County of Denver, which enable them to do the upgrades. He expressed gratitude to Comcast, the City's Office of Telecommunication, and Ceavco for the installation work.

Ms. Peña recessed the Regular Meeting at 6:08 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION – 6:00 P.M.

Purpose Behind Restructuring of Manual High School

Michael Davis, Manual Alumni, spoke in support of Manual High School. He said that he applauds the Board for purposing to restructure Manual into one school. Manual needs an incoming freshman class, an enrollment drive to entice students to return to Manual, and to add more VocTech programs.

Skyland Charter School Renewal

Allen Smith, Principal, Skyland Charter School; David Taylor, Senior, Skyland Charter School; Arthur Baraf, Skyland teacher; and Jeff Park, spoke in favor of renewal of the charter. Mr. Smith requested that the Board delay acting on the renewal application until the March meeting.

Sweat-Free Purchasing Policy

Josh Schachterle, Mu Son Chi, and Julie Gonzales, from the Ethical Trade Action Group (ETAG); and Ernesto Garcia from El Salvador, requested that the district adopt and implement a sweat-free purchasing policy and reiterated their request for a follow-up meeting with district representatives.

DCTA Survey Results

Kim Ursetta, President of the Denver Classroom Teacher Association, presented their annual bargaining survey results in the context of the Denver Plan. A copy is attached to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, VII-1.

Suicide Prevention

Jo Mosby, parent and member of the Board of the Suicide Prevention Coalition of Colorado and the Suicide Intervention Network Board, and volunteer with the Colorado State Office of Suicide Prevention, said her son Justin was twenty when he committed suicide, two years out of high school. She has asked every School Board of every district she speaks at to start, create, and implement a system-wide program for suicide prevention. She said suicide is a preventable act.

The Board meeting was reconvened following the public comment session at 7:02 pm. Mr. Hoyt moved that the Board of Education go into executive session for the purpose of conference with an attorney for the purpose of receiving legal advice on specific legal questions as authorized by CRS Section 24-6-402 (4)(b). Mr. Patterson seconded the motion.

The motion passed with six “Ayes.” Mrs. Moss’ vote could not be heard because the telephonic connection had been momentarily disconnected.

The Board affirmed that the executive session held from approximately 7:00 -7:30 pm on February 16, 2006, that was not recorded was confined to conference with our attorney Mary Ellen McEldowney on specific legal questions as authorized by CRS section 24-6-402(4)(b).”

DISCUSSION HELD AGENDA ITEMS

IV-C-3 Motion to Act on the Renewal of the Life Skills Center of Denver Charter School

Mr. Patterson moved approval of the Resolution 2965. Mr. Hoyt seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. A copy of this Resolution is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-C-3.

IV-C-5 Motion to Act on the Renewal of the Ridge View Academy Charter School

Mr. Patterson moved approval of the Resolution 2966. Ms. Conrad seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. A copy of this Resolution is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 06-03, IV-C-5.

IV-C-6 Motion to Delay Action of the Skyland Community High School Charter School Renewal Application

Mr. Patterson moved approval of a motion to allow a thirty day extension for Skyland Community High School, with action taken at the next Regular Board of Education meeting on March 16, 2006. Ms. Conrad seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

IV-C-9 Motion to Act on the Staff Proposal Concerning the Manual Educational Complex and Related Attendance Boundary Change

Mr. Patterson moved approval of the staff proposal. Mr. Hoyt moved approval of the following substitute motion: “Close the Manual Education Complex for the 2006-2007 school year and reopen it for 2007-2008 school year for a ninth-grade class and phasing in another grade each year thereafter; facilitate a choice selection to a higher performing high school for all students living in the Manual Education Complex area; conduct interviewing-skills and resume-writing workshops so that teachers will be prepared to actively participate in this year’s staffing cycle; and for all other employee groups, conduct meetings with the appropriate bargaining unit representatives and Human Resources to ensure that all contractual obligations are honored.” Rev. Guzman seconded Mr. Hoyt’s motion.

Ms. Conrad stated, first of all, that the Staff Proposal Concerning the Manual Educational Complex is not viable. She has spent many hours researching this issue. She has spoken to many people in the community, including students and has wrestled with what to do and is still not 100 percent sure which is the best way to go. Whatever goes forward must rebuild educational opportunity for all students in the Manual community, involve parents and community in the process, and address any transportation issue. She asked Mr. Hoyt if his proposal would address those aspects.

Ms. Peña asked Brad Jupp, Academic Policy Advisor, and Ethan Hemming, School of Choice Office, to respond to questions.

In response to Ms. Conrad's question regarding transportation, Mr. Hemming said that transportation could be provided to Manual students to the five higher performing high schools in Denver, through No Child Left Behind, with RTD passes.

Mr. Jupp said that in order to provide children access to higher performing high schools a model would have to be developed, and could be developed, that allowed those students to access schools like East, South, Thomas Jefferson High Schools.

In response to Ms. Peña's question regarding resources, Mr. Jupp said that they would have to combine resources that are already supporting Manual High School with philanthropic community resources in order to ensure that every single child at Manual had access to individualized support.

Mrs. Kaplan stated she would not vote for this proposal unless she and the community is guaranteed that Manual will reopen in the year 2007 in a new configuration; and that the community will have a very important part in the decision-making.

Mr. Jupp stated that they could guarantee that Manual will reopen in 2007-2008 and that the community will have voice in the development of a new school design.

In response to Mrs. Kaplan's question regarding tracking current Manual students, Mr. Jupp said that they would work to make sure that every student has an individual mentor. They will try to make sure they know where the students are, giving them every reasonable support to make sure they are staying in school and getting the best educational opportunity possible in a higher performing school or school of their choice.

In response to Ms. Conrad's question regarding a neighborhood academic learning center, Mr. Jupp said they are committed to ensuring there will be a neighborhood academic learning center that can support the students in the Manual attendance zone.

Mr. Hoyt said that as he considered the Superintendent's proposal, it seemed clear to him that it was wise to close Manual now and allow students to start that transition now. He stated that he cares deeply about Manual High School, he graduated from Manual and still has close ties to the school. He is the Co-Founder of the Friends of Manual and has been a mentor for two years to Manual students. He has a deep love for Manual, but the status quo at Manual High School is simply unacceptable.

Mr. Hoyt pointed out that there are only 95 seniors today out of 475 freshmen who started four years ago; that is a graduation rate of less than 20 percent. Fifty-four percent of neighborhood students choose to attend a school other than Manual. As enrollment declines, resources shrink leaving fewer athletics, electives, and opportunities. Manual needs to be rebuilt based on academic achievement. This plan will allow us time to plan and implement a successful program that the community deserves and allow us to start building anew.

Rev. Guzman said that she had served as Co-Chair, along with Dr. Dorothy Horell, of the Secondary School Reform Commission. When the commission issued its report, parts of it were unpopular because they stated that this district was responsible for academic malpractice within many of its high schools. Secondary schools in this district have been left without support, without proper leadership, and without proper opportunities for students to succeed.

Rev. Guzman said that the Board of Education has two major responsibilities. The number one responsibility is to hire the Superintendent. When they hired this Superintendent they gave him a mandate to bring us a strategic plan that was bold and supportive of making major changes in this district and which would comply with the recommendations of the Secondary School Reform Commission. The other responsibility of the Board of Education is to ensure that this district establishes educational opportunities for its students. There is no more time. She said this proposal is consistent with the Board's mandate to the Superintendent to take bold action. It will not be popular, but it is bold. The only way that we can bring equity to all the areas in this school district is to begin reform. We are not doing this to punish people; we are doing it because it would be immoral if this Board of Education did not take these steps.

Mr. Patterson noted that there has been a lot of discussion about the history and direction of Manual, how we've gotten from the Manual of old, the reformed Manual under the small school model, and where we are today. What we need to understand is that we have to find a model that will be successful. As children and families continued to leave Manual for other schools, his fear was that Manual would be left with a curricular program that would not guarantee a high school diploma by the end of four years. All classes could not be offered because the continued shrinking of the school population would not allow us to staff the building in a way that actually provided a semblance of educational opportunity.

Mr. Patterson said we can't keep looking for simple solutions to these complex problems. We have to go deeper and try to get to some of the core issues. There are fundamental problems with the way things are organized. We can't continue to let Manual just sit there and watch it die on the vine. We have to go in and do something very dramatic to make the change that we think will provide greater opportunity.

Ms. Peña told the Manual students in the audience that she has spent a lot of time at Manual, visiting classrooms and lunchrooms, talking to students, teachers, security guards. What she heard while listening to students speak at the community forums gave rise to the most compelling argument to close Manual. Students told us that we had not provided the right opportunities for them. Closing Manual will give your siblings, your peers, a different chance. The students who spoke convinced her that Manual worked for them, but it did not work for three out of four of them. Seventy-five percent of their peers dropped out, transferred to different schools, or flat out disappeared.

This is a unique opportunity for this community, to have a program that would be the crown jewel of this school district. It would be a school for those of you who live in the community. The challenge for us is to take the first step. We will have a very authentic community process helping the district plan what the next program will look like. Over the next six to eight months,

we are committed to include, not just those of you who have committed to Manual, but those who have walked away from Manual, those who dropped out. Finally, you have experienced the closing of one your schools by the state because we failed that school. If we do not do something dramatically different at Manual, the state will take over Manual.

Mr. Bennet said he does not have a vote tonight but he will stand up and say that he is proud of what the Board is doing tonight. We spent a lot of time apologizing this past week and as a district we have a lot to apologize for, especially to the students standing here tonight. We cannot lose sight to what brings us here—the commitment to ensure that all children in our district achieve. We cannot compromise. We in this country have compromised too long, particularly when it comes to our poor children and our children of color.

Tonight is not the end of Manual. It is the beginning of a sustained, relentless, difficult, painful effort to rebuild our secondary schools in this district. Manual has had a significant history in Denver and it will play a significant role in Denver's future. There will be a Manual High School in Denver. In the meantime, we need to do all we can to provide Manual's current students with what they asked us for, a quality education, access to electives, sports, books and supplies. Unfortunately, we believe we can do that in the other schools in the district better than we can do it today at Manual. To our committed teachers and staff, we need to make sure that we provide them with every option to continue to contribute to the district, and we have them to thank for their service at Manual. This is a hard thing to do, but it is the right thing to do and I'm optimistic about our children's future.

Ms. Conrad moved to postpone the decision on this proposal for one week. The Manual community had not heard about the proposal called for in the substitute motion and has not had sufficient time to digest the full impact. This new proposal needs time to be explored. Motion failed for lack of a second.

Ms. Peña called for the vote on the substitute motion offered by Mr. Hoyt. Voting "No," Ms. Conrad. Voting "Aye," Rev. Guzman, Mr. Hoyt, Mrs. Kaplan, Mrs. Moss (via telephone), Mr. Patterson, and Ms. Peña. The motion passed six to one.

Ms. Peña adjourned the meeting at 8:37 p.m.

SPECIAL PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION, FEBRUARY 13, 2006

Also attached to the minutes of this meeting are comments of the Special Public Comment Session held February 13, 2006, regarding the K-8 Conversions and the Manual Educational Complex plan.

Jeanne S. Kaplan, Secretary
Board of Education

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2006**

K-8 CONVERSIONS – WHITTIER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Tammy Boston, parent and member of Whittier’s Parent Organization and member of Metro Organizations for People, said they have worked with parents and community on the issues involved, and is in favor of Whittier converting to a K-8 school.

Paul Titus, member of the Whittier Organizing Committee and a member of Metro Organization for People, is concerned that the K-8 program at Whittier may be discontinued before they are given a chance to succeed. The program started this year and is working very well. If this program is allowed to continue it would be a success.

Student Karen Perez, a sixth-grader at Whittier, said it doesn’t make any sense to go through all the paperwork to go to another middle school for one year when she could stay at Whittier for middle school.

Student Karen Holguin, a sixth-grader at Whittier, said that Whittier needs the eighth grade because it is losing many fifth, sixth, and seventh graders to other middle schools. Many sixth and seventh graders do not want to move from one school to another.

Ima Holguin, Spanish-speaking parent, spoke through an interpreter asked that Whittier be allowed to be the one K-8 School in northeast Denver because they feel this model will work well for their students.

Lita Sharpe, parent and co-founder of the group, Northeast Parents for Quality Education (NEQUE). Since inception, the group’s focus has been solely on Whittier, to enhance and support, and increase the school’s attractiveness to neighborhood students. She expressed her support continuing the K-8 conversion plan that was approved by DPS a year ago.

MANUAL COMPLEX

Jorge Merida, President of the Manual Parent Group, declared that the district has not done a good job; it has failed Manual. He said many people have lots of good intentions, they want the best for Manual, but nobody came to them and asked how they wanted that goodness to be applied to them. They have good ideas and want participation. They asked that the Board put this plan on hold until they are included in the process.

Student Arcely Lerma, Junior, asked why they can’t be helped to be better students at a later time, not today.

Danielle Brooks, freshman, disagreed with the district plan. She said that Manual is an icon in east Denver.

Taylor Lopez, freshman, said they are not just a school, they are a family. Their teachers are passionate and they deserve a chance.

Yolanda Castorena, freshman, said this plan is not fair to Manual students. She asked who would take responsibility for students dropping out because of constant change.

Jackie Falcon, Manual teacher, expressed the belief that Manual does need to change back to being one school. Do not move students out of the school; it is not fair to force children in the neighborhood to go to school outside their neighborhood. Manual has been set up for failure; it has been neglected since busing ended.

John Collins, Manual teacher, said Manual was a true inner-city school, but when busing stopped and they bought into the three school concept and lost a lot of classes. His son graduated from Manual. He feels it was good enough for his son and good enough for the students attending now.

Students Jessica Pacheco and Tera Roden said they were upset that the plan would make them switch schools their last year. Manual's principal is one of the greatest leaders and mentors they have known. This is their family, their school. Just because they are poor is no excuse to mess up their education.

Candy C de Baca, Manual graduate, said that Manual does not have any representative on the Student Board of Education. No one asked the students or parents what would work for them, which is why the small school initiative failed. Poor students have unstable lives at home. Manual is in a poor neighborhood and needs the best teachers and more teachers; teachers who care about why kids drop out.

Charles Malek, President of the Friends of Manual and Manual graduate, said that Friends of Manual is a non-profit group formed for the sole purpose of providing resources to enhance Manual's experience. He said that he had come to voice his support for the Superintendent's plan for Manual; they will continue to provide resources for Manual students during this semester. No matter how the school looks in the future, they are committed to making sure that Manual's needs are met.

Bill Porter, community member and volunteer, said there would be more support from the community if they had an idea of what they were supporting. Information is very important; we cannot function in ignorance. Teachers did everything they could to support the three school program. There should be teacher and student input in whatever plan is put in place.

Van Schoales, from the Colorado Children's Campaign, said that the Colorado Children's Campaign contributed to the start of Manual's three small schools. The move to small schools in 2000-2001 was to raise student achievement after busing. Many of Manual's problems started with a long list of compromises between old Manual and new Manual.

Ms. Peña said that decisions such as these are never easy for the Board or the district. Fifty-four percent of neighborhood students do not attend Manual, they leave the Manual area for other

schools. Board members and staff are extremely committed to rebuilding Manual with an authentic community process. The Board and the Superintendent are listening to input from students, teachers, and community. We are not doing this to inner-city kids; we are doing it for inner-city kids.