I. **Roll Call – Notice of Meeting**

President Elaine Gantz Berman called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m. The following Board of Education members were present: Ms. Elaine Gantz Berman, Ms. Susan G. Edwards, Mrs. Michelle Moss, Mr. Kevin Patterson, and Mr. Lester Woodward. Mr. James Mejía arrived at 4:25 p.m. and Rev. Lucia Guzman was absent and excused.

Assistant Secretary Jacquie Lucero read the notice of the meeting.

II. **Staff Presentations**

A. **English Language Acquisition Program – Annual Report**

Superintendent Jerry Wartgow explained that the report submitted to the Board was presented in compliance with the U.S. District Court Order, was submitted for information only, and that he and his staff would be pleased to address any questions or concerns from the Board. Currently, he said, the entire English Language Acquisition (ELA) Program is under review by district staff as part of the Seven Point Action Plan in support of district goals. He said that a report with recommendations would come from that review and that the Board could wait until that report to pose questions.

Mrs. Edwards asked when the review might yield discussions, and Dr. Wartgow replied that staff would be ready to present a report to the Board during the second week in February.

Ms. Gantz Berman said that the ELA Program is a very high priority for the district and that the Board is looking forward to having further discussions on how to improve it to best suit the needs of English language learners within the district.

A copy of the report entitled *English Language Acquisition Program Annual December Report* is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 02-01(s), II-A.

B. **Pioneer Charter School Renewal Application**

Sherry Eastlund, Charter Schools Project Leader, explained that Pioneer Charter School is in the fifth year of its five-year charter and that, by law, Pioneer representatives must submit a charter school renewal application to the Board by
December 31 of the fifth year of operation. That application, she said, was submitted
to the Board of Education on November 30, 2001. She introduced Dorothy Ward,
Interim Principal of Pioneer Charter School, and Ginger Maloney, Dean of Education
at the University of Denver, to make the presentation and address questions from the
Board. She also introduced Susan Korach, Co-Chair of the Pioneer Governing
Board.

Ms. Eastlund said that, by law, the Board has until February 1, 2002, to consider
Pioneer’s application for renewal. At that point, she said, they must render a decision
regarding approval or denial of the request. She said that Pioneer officials have
agreed to allow the Board to announce its decision at the February Legislative
Meeting on February 21.

Ms. Ward said that part of the charter school renewal application process was to look
over the school’s first three years to see what improvements could be made, and that
Pioneer staff has worked diligently to make changes based on those observations.
She said that staff has included more specificity in the curriculum and placed a
stronger emphasis on student achievement by including such programs as a
schoolwide reading program, Success For All, which includes intensive teacher
training. There is also a stronger focus on professional development, she said, with
ongoing programs to improve teacher instruction, and implementation of the
“Thursday Afternoon Club,” which provides weekly training for teachers in
mathematics and writing. She stated that teachers have compiled lists—called “hot
lists”—of their students who are achieving below grade level in reading, writing, and
mathematics. Children on these lists, she said, have been targeted for extra attention,
such as after-school tutoring sessions four times per week. She said that, in the past,
Pioneer suffered from a high degree of staff turnover, but that the measures taken
have created a structured program with a specific program for teachers to embrace,
and that the turnover problem seems no longer to be an issue.

She said that the school community has become more cohesive after the merging of
their Collaborative Decision Making (CDM) team and their Bilingual Parents
Advisory Committee (BiPAC). The merger, she said, allowed joint decision-making
and brought both very important groups together for a single cause, and allows for
input from all segments of the community on an equal basis. She said that the
community is aware of the problems facing the school—especially the
“unsatisfactory” rating received by Pioneer—and have expressed their willingness to
do whatever is necessary to remedy their situation, even to the point of relieving staff
who are not aligned with the school’s mission and goals. There is a commitment at
Pioneer, she said, to quality instruction and teachers who are skilled and dedicated to
giving the best to children. She said that they have enlisted the assistance of the
entire school community and that she feels they are finally a unified force working
together to benefit the children they serve.

Ms. Ward said that Pioneer also has the advantage of a unique partnership with the
University of Denver (DU) and that the partnership has been especially strong over
the past year with DU representatives truly stepping forward with assistance and
counsel. She asked Dr. Ginger Maloney to elaborate on the partnership from DU’s
perspective.

Dr. Maloney said that she is relatively new to the position of Dean of the College of
Education at DU, but that her involvement with Pioneer Charter School goes back
many years, stemming from her work at the Sturm Family Foundation, which
provided some of the early funding for the school. She said that she is uncertain of
the original intent of the partnership between DU and Pioneer, but that she has found
it a tremendous learning experience for both institutions and one that has been
challenging in a very exciting way. The most rewarding part of the partnership for
DU, she said, is the ability to take what is learned in real-life educational situations
into their classrooms as they train future educators to work in urban settings.

She said that there is not a magic bullet for helping children learn, but that much
more is known today about how to make schools work to improve academic
achievement for children, and that she is pleased to have been able to put some of
that learning into practice at Pioneer. At first, she said, they struggled with a model
of differentiated staffing, which was an ideal that would allow student teachers to be
trained in a real educational setting with master teachers available to provide
assistance. She said that that model had not worked well because a highly impacted
school such as Pioneer needs the most experienced teachers, and those teachers must
be provided with as much support as possible. Revisions have been made in the
program and in how teachers are paid, she said, so that they have been able to attract
teachers with more experience and provided them with incentives to stay.

Dr. Maloney said that one of the problems at the beginning was that the plan was
overly ambitious—feeling that they could do more than they actually were able to do
in terms of an extended school year and an extended school day, all with the same
level of resources. She said that they have learned that that is not possible and are
still in the process of trying to determine a way to continue to offer those important
services to families through alternative streams of funding. It costs a great deal of
money, she said, to offer a high quality school geared toward serving children in a
highly impacted urban setting. She said that several grant applications were currently
in development to try and increase the school’s revenue base and bring new resources
to the school.

She said that they have also learned through the years that the partnership with
Pioneer requires a great deal of time and effort. The original commitment of DU was
primarily at the governance level, she said, with the Dean of the College of Education
and a member of DU’s Board of Trustees on Pioneer’s governance board. She said
that that arrangement has proven to be inadequate in terms of truly making the
partnership work; therefore, this year, for the very first time, DU is fully funding a
clinical professor to be at Pioneer Charter School 80 percent of the time. This
professor, she said, is at the school on a daily basis, working with teachers and
administrators on school reform issues. She explained that the professor has a
doctorate and that her expertise is in educational leadership and school reform, and that she is providing a consistency that had been lacking at Pioneer and that can make a real difference. DU is committed to funding that position, she said, for two more years, which has been reaffirmed to her by the DU Chancellor. Additionally, she said, DU is funding another faculty member working during the winter quarter with the arts integration instructor at Pioneer to help strengthen that program. She said that the university has a curriculum and instruction department with a great deal of expertise in arts integrated instruction, and a faculty member from that department will be working to help link academic standards to a more fully developed arts program at Pioneer. There is a need in the community, she said, to provide stronger arts instruction for low income children so that they can compete on an equal basis for openings at the Denver School of the Arts and for the planned arts school at Manual High School.

Dr. Maloney said that the responsibility of the partnership between DU and Pioneer can sometimes be intimidating to her because it is the children attending the school whose lives would be most impacted by its success or failure. She said that she feels that responsibility in a personal way and that she is personally committed to playing a stronger role on the Pioneer governance board. Over the next three years, she said, some of the goals include strengthening the governance board to allow Pioneer to achieve more self-sufficiency; increasing parental involvement; developing a committee structure; and becoming more aggressive in addressing the issue of student achievement. She said that she is trying to make DU’s presence on the governance board one of truly functional participation.

Marili Cuesta, second grade ELA teacher, said that she is in her second year of teaching at the school and that she is dedicated to remaining there. She said that she is proud of the ever increasing community involvement at the school and noted that many parents were present in the audience to lend their support. Parents at Pioneer, she said, are very interested in their children’s education and in getting to know their children’s teachers. She said that there are many after-school activities designed to involve parents such as reading programs and Literacy Night; these activities let parents know that school officials welcome them and want them to be a part of the educational process. Recently, she said, they held a group parents night, to which they called in groups of parents according to their children’s levels of achievement, and spoke to them about how best to help their children achieve at their level of academic development, and to generally discuss student achievement and assessments. She said that the purpose of these conferences was to give parents strategies and skills, and to instill in them the confidence to know that they can help their children at home. The conferences, she said, were very successful and they received feedback from parents asking for more conferences along similar lines.

James Duran, Assistant Principal at Pioneer, said that he wished to extend his gratitude to Pioneer’s teachers, who have stood fast in their determination to serve children despite a very difficult year in the school’s existence.
Mr. Duran stated that Pioneer is a character education school, which is a program that addresses affective education in schools, i.e., social behaviors and peer interaction. Character education, he said, is a positive alternative to confrontation and violence. In a correlated matter, he explained that he is in charge of discipline at the school, and that when he started his job at the beginning of the 2001-2002 school year, he was told that the school had some discipline issues that needed to be addressed. He said that he has not yet encountered anything that could be interpreted as a serious discipline issue.

He said that Pioneer’s teachers are the reason that he has confidence that the school can recover and flourish. Pioneer’s faculty, he said, is strong and dedicated to serving the children of the school, and committed to the school itself. He stated that the teachers’ use of character education in the classroom has reduced the potential for misbehavior dramatically and that, while there are still isolated incidents that require a student to be disciplined, those incidents have decreased dramatically. He said that he was alarmed upon his arrival to find that an elementary school had an in-house suspension room, the Positive Action Class; however, it has not been used even once this year, meaning that many of the discipline problems that used to cause that room to be used are being addressed elsewhere and with other methods, thus keeping children in the classroom and exposed to instruction.

Ms. Ward said that she feels that they finally have a staff that is willing to work together to support the school’s mission and to create a school unlike any other in Denver and one that could become a useful educational model. She said that the ability to hire differentiated staff could only occur through their existence as a charter school, and that it has allowed them to hire people appropriate to the positions they fill, including those who are still in teacher training or those who have not yet completed all the steps toward full licensure. Pioneer Charter School, she said, is a great place for creative teachers to use their talents to work “outside the box” in ways that might not be readily acceptable in other settings.

She said that she could not provide the answers to all the challenges faced by Pioneer, but that she feels that the school has a vibrant staff and school community who are willing to go the extra mile to create the best school possible. The Pioneer community, she said, is very unique and diverse and offers endless possibilities and opportunities for growth.

Ms. Gantz Berman said that the report presented to the Board is not an annual review to inform the Board of all the good things going on at Pioneer; it is a report requesting a renewal of charter school status. She said that she is still confused about why Pioneer needs charter school status to further its accomplishments.

Ms. Ward said that she would not have been able to hire the staff she has now, nor would she have easily been able to make adjustments in her staff as easily as she did without charter school status. She said that the bureaucracy and politics involved in dismissing a district teacher would have overwhelmed the process at Pioneer, and
that their charter school status helped them simplify what would have been a very complicated process.

Dr. Maloney said that Pioneer is a unique charter school, especially in light of its partnership with DU. She agreed that charter school status would allow them to develop the kinds of staffing arrangements that would best suit the school and would allow practicing artists to act as instructors as part of the proposed arts integration program.

She said that Pioneer students show evidence of family stability that is not apparent in other schools in the area, and she feels that is also due to charter status. Families choose Pioneer, she said, and parent satisfaction ratings for the school are very high, as indicated by surveys of parents that are conducted on an annual basis. Also, she said, as a charter school, Pioneer is not bound by geographical boundaries and students who move from their areas may still attend the school, which allows the children to be served with greater consistency.

Dr. Maloney stated that it is important that Pioneer staff and administration own their accountability and that the school’s governance board takes that charge very seriously because they feel that true school reform cannot be accomplished without meaningful accountability for their impact on children.

Mrs. Edwards said that some of the components that appeared in the initial Pioneer proposal are now coming into widespread acceptance in the educational world—pay-for-performance, extended school day and year, and differentiated staffing. She said that one of the purposes of charter schools, as originally set forth in the Charter Schools Act, was to test and examine different ways of educating children, which is exactly what Pioneer has done. Some of what they have done has worked well, she said, and the lessons learned have been learned well. Rather than ask why Pioneer should be granted charter status, she said, it might be more appropriate to ask why their charter should not be renewed or how the Denver Public Schools would be better served if Pioneer were not a charter school. She said that their charter allows Pioneer the flexibility to have such a strong partnership with DU and the support of various foundations that would not have been provided without charter school status. These are important questions, she said, and she voiced the opinion that the Board should discuss them in depth before making a decision regarding the charter.

She thanked the parents and staff of Pioneer who chose to attend the meeting in support of Pioneer, and said that she was very encouraged by their attendance. Community involvement, she said, is assumed to be a “given” with charter schools, but she hasn’t seen much evidence of it at Pioneer since the school’s inception. She expressed the hope that attendance at the meeting by parents would serve as a signal of a new dedication to parental involvement. She said that excitement about and dedication to the school must come from the families it serves and not from outside forces, such as DU representatives.
Ms. Gantz Berman said that she did not wish to be misunderstood and that she does not believe that Pioneer should not be a charter school; however, it is important that all parties are clear about why Pioneer is seeking to renew its charter. She agreed that charter schools should push innovation in all schools and that the things that are attractive about Pioneer should be present in all schools.

She thanked the Pioneer representatives for their presentation and the time and effort it took to prepare it.

A copy of the report entitled Pioneer Charter School Renewal Application is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 02-01(s), II-B.

C. Program Evaluation – K-8 Schools

Janet Raban, Manager of Program Evaluation, said that the kindergarten through grade eight (K-8) evaluation responds to concerns raised by the Board of Education with regards to the possibility of designing a K-8 school for the new Stapleton Redevelopment area. She said that questions to be addressed would include:

- Can the needs of the students in the middle grades be accommodated to the same degree as in a school with a traditional middle school configuration?
- What is the size of the school population to be served?
- What are the constraints on the physical plant?
- Will there be certification or licensure issues?
- Will there be additional transportation costs?

This report, she said, presents an overview of the K-8 grade span configuration, based on a review of available research on grade configuration. She noted that the report’s Executive Summary provides a list outside source materials used in preparing this program evaluation. She said that she also conducted personal conversations and telephone interviews with administrators from California and Ohio, and that she summarized these contacts in Appendix A, pages six through eight.

Ms. Raban stressed that her evaluation does not advocate one grade level configuration over another, as there is not any evidence that the K-8 model is superior to the district’s traditional K-5/6-8 configuration. There is also a substantial body of qualitative and quantitative research, she said, that supports the district’s middle school model.

She said that research provides a balanced, but cautionary, look at the implications of implementing a K-8 grade span as an option for the Stapleton site. The K-8 model, she said, can function as a viable alternative to traditional middle schools, but it is important to understand that the two longest running of the district’s K-8 schools—Slavens and Moore elementary schools—are schools of choice at the middle school level, and the new school at Stapleton would be a school of assignment. She noted that Grant Ranch Elementary School is a K-8 school of assignment, but that it had not
been in operation long enough to be able to provide data regarding student achievement to show its success as a school of assignment.

After interviewing administrators from other districts and reviewing available information, Ms. Raban said she found some commonalities. With regard to student achievement, she said, studies in Maine, Connecticut, Florida, Ohio, Minnesota, and California suggest that students in K-8 schools out-performed those in K-5/6-8 models; however, administrators in those districts unanimously agreed that achievement levels have less to do with grade configuration than with the educational program, school size, and demographics of the student population. She said that other factors that affect achievement are the fact that students in K-8 schools make fewer transitions, thus they suffer less achievement loss during those transitions. Also, she said, teacher’s instructional specializations also affect achievement, as does tracking, ability grouping, and recruitment and training practices. She said that a study in Cleveland found that proficiency test pass rates and achievement gains were greater for sixth grade students in K-8 schools, but they attributed that to the smaller school size and more personalized targeted instruction, as opposed to grade configuration.

Ms. Raban said that both within the Denver Public Schools and other districts she contacted, school administrators agree that K-8 schools have higher attendance rates; more familiarity and caring between students and teachers; students have greater self-esteem, which manifests itself in enhanced achievement levels; older students act as role models for the younger ones; dropout rates are lower; and there is less violence and drug abuse.

She said that parental participation plays a key role in the implementation and success of the K-8 model in schools. Changes in the grade configurations of neighborhood schools, she said, were based on parental initiative and needs and, as a result, there is a greater sense of community, parents have a longer affiliation with the school, and there is greater parental participation in the upper grade levels.

Ms. Raban said that studies in Florida found that there were not any significant additional costs to implementing and operating a K-8 program, except perhaps in the addition or remodeling of a gymnasium and/or the conversion of a classroom into a science laboratory. School administrators agreed, she said, that the construction of a K-8 school might delay or even eliminate the need for additional elementary or middle schools.

She listed the key issues to be considered prior to implementing a K-8 program in the new school at Stapleton:

- Parental and/or community support
- Staffing certification and licensure
- Accommodation of the academic needs of middle school students by subject area specialists
• Educational program design
• Sacrifice of academic and exploratory opportunities for smaller school size
• Marketability.

In conclusion, Ms. Raban stated that there are disadvantages of the K-8 configuration that are very similar to those of the K-6 model. She said that the Board heard a report in February 2001 that stated that the implementation of the K-6 model was adversely affected by teacher certification and licensure issues, schools not offering mandatory keyboarding classes to sixth grade students, the impact on enrollment in neighboring schools, fewer exploratory opportunities, the adverse influence of older students on the discipline and safety of the younger ones, and teachers not being apprised of districtwide professional development opportunities appropriate for middle school level teachers.

Based on the information presented in this report, she said that she could not draw any conclusions regarding the academic efficacy of a K-8 model. However, she said, it is possible that very different results may occur if the model is imposed upon a school rather than embraced as the choice of the school community. She introduced Delia Armstrong, Principal of Moore Elementary School, to address questions or concerns by the Board regarding the K-8 model.

Mrs. Edwards said that the issue of traditional configuration versus K-8 is extremely complex and one that district officials need to understand, and discussions need to be held concerning how best to meet the needs of middle school-aged children. She said that decisions must be made about what the district can afford and is willing to commit to in regards to alternative configurations. Also at issue, she said, are the differences in staffing, funding, and treatment between K-8 schools that are schools of choice and K-8 schools that are schools of assignment. She said that staff members are meeting to develop standardized policies and practices within the district to ensure that there is equitable treatment of schools and students. Part of the discussion, she said, should be the question of whether the district is still committed to the middle school model and whether it is still the best way to educate adolescents. She said that she would like to begin those discussions prior to the Board making a decision regarding the educational plan for the new Stapleton school.

She said that she appreciated the report and that even though it did not reach any conclusions regarding K-8 schools, it did bring up the important point of differences between school communities choosing that their schools convert to the K-8 model and schools having the K-8 model imposed upon them. She thanked Ms. Raban for her efforts in gathering the information and compiling the report.

Mrs. Moss said that both of her children attend Grant Ranch School and that she is very pleased with the K-8 grade configuration and the school educational program. She said that Jim Kullhem, Principal of Grant Ranch, has provided excellent leadership, and that he and his staff have accomplished much in the short time that the school has been in operation. From the perspective of a parent, she said, she feels
that there is a need for both types of educational plan—middle schools for parents who feel their children need the more expansive choice options and K-8 schools for parents who want their children in a smaller community with more personalized attention. She said that sending her children to Grant Ranch was the best alternative for her family, but that she truly appreciated the choices she had. It is important to remember, she said, that not every idea works for every child and that educational options should be provided to parents whenever possible. She encouraged her fellow Board members and the Superintendent to continue to allow parents to make good educational choices for their children, and stated that the middle school model was not the only method of accomplishing that goal.

Mr. Patterson said that it is difficult to make decisions regarding the school for Stapleton, as the community in that development does not yet exist. He expressed appreciation to Ms. Raban for the time and effort she put forth in her report and said that it would definitely be helpful in forming a decision about the future direction of the new Stapleton school and the district’s commitment to the middle school model.

Ms. Gantz Berman said that one of the issues facing the Board over the past few years was the question of the impact on K-6 and K-8 schools on existing middle school programs versus issues of school design, choice, and site-based management. The most important consideration, she said, must be whether the educational model or models chosen are most beneficial to the children served by the district.

Dr. Wartgow said that this issue is very complex and merits extended discussion among Board members to reach a balance between consistency, district goals, and site-based management. On one hand, he said, the options for choice offered to parents and students is very attractive; but on the other hand, these same options provide numerous complications related to such issues as student performance, school design, and professional development. He said that school design proposals are being brought forward to district administration from schools and that it would be helpful for staff making recommendations to know the Board’s feelings and positions on these issues.

Ms. Gantz Berman thanked Ms. Raban for her informative report and for her honest conclusion that there are not definitive answers for the questions arising around K-8 schools.

A copy of the report entitled K-8 Schools Program Evaluation is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 02-01(s), II-C.
D. School Design Proposals

2. Steck School Design Modification*

Beth Biggs, Assistant Area Superintendent for the Southeast Area, introduced Irene Martinez-Jordan, Southeast Area Superintendent, and Toni Knight, Principal of Steck Elementary School.

Ms. Biggs stated that in the spring of 2000, the Board of Education approved the addition of sixth grade at Steck, and that the plan was implemented at the beginning of the 2000-2001 school year. In the original proposal, she said, the Steck CDM provided three reasons for wishing to implement a sixth grade: (1) to allow students to continue to build fundamentals of education in a small, familiar environment; (2) to allow students another year of maturity and academic development; and (3) the implementation of a sixth grade class would greatly service the Steck community by giving parents an additional choice.

Over the past two years, she said, sixth grade enrollment dropped from 22 students to 18 students during the 2000-2001 school year, and during the current school year, sixth grade enrollment in only eight students. She said that the Steck CDM recognized the problem during the 2000-2001 school year and tried to address the problem by conducting two community surveys and holding community meetings to determine why the program had not attracted sixth grade students. After determining the wishes of the school community, she said, Steck’s CDM and administration have proposed to the Board that they be allowed to revert back to the traditional kindergarten through grade five model.

Ms. Biggs said that since the decision to request reversion back to the K-5 model, Steck administrators and CDM members have begun to work with the administration and CDM of Hill Middle School with the intention of building a stronger relationship between the two schools, making transition from elementary school to middle school easier for Steck students.

She said that staff recommends that the request to allow Steck to revert to the K-5 model be approved, effective with the 2002-2003 school year.

Mr. Patterson said that he had not been a member of the Board when the original proposal to implement a K-6 program at Steck was approved and asked what had caused to community to make the original request, i.e. overcrowding at Hill, parent dissatisfaction with Hill, etc.

Ms. Knight replied that approximately 75 percent of the Steck student population attends the school under the Choice option and, therefore, the school has a community of parents who are continuously looking at educational opportunities for their students. She said that after the initial sixth grade enrollment drop in

* This agenda item was taken out of sequence.
2000-2001, in speaking with parents, school officials found that parents are more interested in the long term educational opportunities for their children, than in extending the elementary school experience for one additional year.

Mrs. Moss said that the experiences in declining enrollment do not seem to be mirrored at other extended elementary school sites in the district, as they seem to have steady enrollments with children opting into the programs every year. Ms. Biggs confirmed that statement and said that none of the other schools with K-6 or K-8 programs appear to be contemplating a reversion back to their original models.

Mrs. Moss said that she has been involved with a school that has an extended elementary program and that preparation to embark on that model had been extensive, with surveys, interviews, and community meetings. She asked what had happened to make Steck officials feel that the program could be viable when, ultimately, it was not.

Ms. Knight said that she was not the principal at Steck when the proposal was made to change the school design to K-6, but that she could confirm that such measures had taken place at the time—the community was surveyed by a school design subcommittee, who have continued to meet throughout the 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 school years. At the time, she said, the committee felt that they had done thorough research and community outreach, but that the program simply had not worked out as well as anticipated.

Ms. Biggs said that there also seems to be a great deal of interest among the community in Hill and the educational opportunities offered there. She said that staff members at Hill are working closely with Steck staff on articulated programs between the two schools.

Mrs. Edwards said that it is important to consider the fact that the administration and parents who are making the request to revert to a K-5 program are not the same people who made the original request. However, she said, a decision to change a school design should be considered in the long run, as it is very difficult and disturbing to the educational program to make such changes. She said that, as a Board member, she finds it difficult to reverse such a decision that was obviously made with consideration to long-term implications.

She said that she feels that school communities request permission to establish a K-6 model for two reasons: (1) to avoid the middle school of assignment to which students would go following fifth grade; and (2) to bolster the enrollment of the elementary school in order to retain staff. As an educational model, she said that she is not sold on the K-6 model; one of the major disadvantages is the fact that when children from such schools finally do enter middle school, their peers have already attended the school for a year and have routines and relationships more firmly established, putting the new children at a distinct social disadvantage.
However, she said, K-6 does offer parents who want to pursue such a model another opportunity for choice, although there should be reasonable limits to the number of choice options the district can or should provide. She said that she is in support of the request by the Steck community to revert back to a K-5 model because it is what the school community feels is best for their school at this juncture.

A copy of the report entitled *Staff Analysis of Program Re-Design Proposal for Steck Elementary School* is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 02-01(s), II-D-2.

1. **Knight Fundamental Academy – All Day Kindergarten Proposal***

Ms. Gantz Berman said that she wished to make the public and her fellow Board members aware of the fact that Knight Academy is the only district elementary school that currently does not offer a kindergarten program. She explained that the State of Colorado does not have a law regarding compulsory kindergarten attendance, which is a fact that many people do not realize and are, therefore, surprised when they learn that a district elementary school does not have a kindergarten program.

Ms. Biggs said that the administration and community of Knight Fundamental Academy wish to request that the Board of Education consider their request to change its existing grade design from first grade through fifth grade to kindergarten through grade five. She said that the current philosophy of Knight emphasizes a traditional, structured educational environment in teacher-directed classrooms, with a focus on teaching basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. The proposed addition of kindergarten to the model, she said, is in addition to the existing grades one through five structure. She said that Knight officials have requested a full-day kindergarten program, with the core academic kindergarten program, as approved by the Denver Public Schools Board of Education, taught in the morning session. She said that there would not be additional costs for transportation if the program is approved, but that school officials have requested that children taking part in the extended kindergarten program be allowed to ride a school bus if they have older sibling(s) who are transported. Additionally, she said, they are requesting that children who might not be eligible for transportation be allowed to ride the bus if there is room on the bus and the route is convenient to their home.

She introduced Amina Williams, Program for Pupil Assistance (PPA) staff member at Knight, and said that Ms. Williams has been with Knight since its beginning as a fundamental academy in 1982. She said that Ms. Williams—as well as Keith Mills, Knight Principal, and various members of the school’s CDM—have been promoting the idea in the Knight neighborhood and have

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* This agenda item was taken out of sequence.
reported that there is a great deal of interest in participating in an extended kindergarten program.

Ms. Biggs explained that academic core subjects would be taught in the morning and enrichment opportunities would be offered in the afternoon, as per the approved extended-day kindergarten program, which would be tuition-based. For parents for whom the extended-day program is not an acceptable option, she said, there would be a half-day program conducted in the morning. She said children in both the extended-day and half day programs would receive the same academic core kindergarten curriculum and, upon successful completion of it, would be prepared to enter first grade. Admission to Knight’s extended day kindergarten program would be open to all children in the district who are five years old by September 15, she said, but district enrollment procedures will be followed.

She said that staff feels that the Knight full-day kindergarten proposal is sound and recommends that the request be approved.

Mrs. Moss asked why the sixth grade and kindergarten programs at Knight were dropped originally and why the school community feels that kindergarten should be restored.

Ms. Williams replied that the sixth grade program at Knight was dropped in 1987, when the Board of Education voted to reconfigure elementary schools and adopt the middle school model. At that time, she said, kindergarten was also dropped because it was not cost effective for kindergartners to be transported for a half-day of instruction. She said that the reason for dropping kindergarten was not a philosophical one and that many Knight staff members were opposed to the idea.

Mrs. Moss asked if the pupils participating in the full-day kindergarten would be separate from those attending the half-day program only.

Mr. Mills said that the interest shown by neighborhood residents has been solely in the full-day program and, given that level of interest, the major focus has been on that program. He said that if some parents wish to have their children attend kindergarten for only half a day, they would be included in the morning portion of the full-day program.

In response to a question from Mrs. Edwards, Mr. Mills said that they are currently anticipating only one class of full-day kindergarten for the 2002-2003 school year, but that they do have space for two classrooms should that level of interest be shown. He said that of the families expressing interest in having their children attend the program, only three to four would be there under the Choice option and the rest would be neighborhood children.

Mrs. Edwards asked if the program would be marketed and promoted, either in the neighborhood or districtwide.
Mr. Mills said that he has worked extensively with the various homeowners associations in their attendance area to mend bridges and promote Knight as a neighborhood school after so many years of being a magnet school and not available to all people living in the area. Many families in the area, he said, have sent their children to Cory Elementary School because it has a kindergarten, and then just kept them there because the children were in an environment that had become familiar to them. He said that he would continue to promote his school within the attendance area and that there were several homeowners associations who were waiting to hear the decision about the full-day program so that it could be included in their newsletters.

In response to a question from Mr. Patterson regarding transportation, Dr. Eckerling said that children throughout the district may ride district buses on a space available basis. However, if a bus must be added to transport children home from a half-day kindergarten class at Knight, there would be an added transportation cost for the program.

Mr. Patterson asked Mr. Mills how he would be able to come up with the extra teacher allocation from Knight’s Resource Allocation (RAM). Mr. Mills said that the program would require only a .5 RAM and that he could arrange that without disrupting any programs currently taking place. Ms. Biggs added that the addition of a full-day kindergarten would likely also increase the pupil membership so that additional support within the RAM would be provided.

Ms. Gantz Berman commended Mr. Mills on his performance as Knight principal and thanked him, Ms. Biggs, and Ms. Williams for their presentation before the Board.

A copy of the report entitled Staff Analysis of Program Re-Design for Knight Fundamental Academy is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 02-01(s), II-D-1.

III. Board Member/Superintendent’s Presentations

There were no reports.

SUPERINTENDENT’S COMMENTS

Dr. Wartgow welcomed staff and students back from Winter Intermission. He said that there is a great deal of work to be accomplished within the district and that the upcoming weeks would provide much discussion about the district’s new Seven-Point Action Plan. He wished everyone well and shared his hopes for an exciting and successful spring.
IV. **Adjournment**

Ms. Gantz Berman adjourned the meeting at 5:45 p.m.

Susan G. Edwards, Secretary
Board of Education