I. **Roll Call and Notice of Meeting**

President Elaine Gantz Berman called the meeting to order at 7:11 p.m. The following Board of Education members were present: Ms. Elaine Gantz Berman, Mrs. Susan G. Edwards, Rev. Lucia Guzman, Mr. James Mej a, Mrs. Michelle Moss, and Mr. Kevin Patterson. Mr. Lester Woodward was absent and excused.

Assistant Secretary Jacquie Lucero read the notice of the meeting.

II. **Board Member Presentations**

A. **National Inclusive Schools Week**

Rev. Guzman read the following Proclamation into the record:

> Whereas, the National Institute for Urban School Improvement has designated the week of December 3-7, 2001, as National Inclusive Schools Week; and

> Whereas, the Denver Public Schools is a partner with the National Institute for Urban School Improvement in promoting inclusive practices; and

> Whereas, the Denver Public Schools is committed to ensuring that each and every student feels welcome and is learning; and

> Whereas, the educators and families of the Denver Public Schools understand that all children — students with and without disabilities, English language learners, and those with special talents — experience greater learning if teaching aligns with their abilities and interests; and

> Whereas, by their efforts to make our schools and classroom high performing and inclusive, the educators and families of the Denver Public Schools have contributed significantly to building a stronger and more inclusive Denver community;

> Now, therefore, the Board of Education of School District No. 1 in the City and County of Denver joins with the National Institute for Urban School Improvement and proclaims December 3-7 as Inclusive Schools Week in the Denver Public Schools.
Ms. Gantz Berman said that she is pleased that the district is joining with the National Institute for Urban School Improvement in promoting National Inclusive Schools Week because inclusiveness is a vital part of the Denver Public Schools community.

III. General Audiences

James Sutherland, representing Globefest Foundation, spoke, as the applicant, on behalf of the charter school application for the Metro Academy of Technology and Science. He said that he had submitted additional information for the charter school application earlier that day and that he would appreciate the Board's review of that information.

He said that their curriculum is strong and their target population is at-risk students, although their approach would work equally well with many different types of learners. He said that the additional information addressed the learning needs of different types of students. Also, he said, it would clarify some of the questions the Board and district staff had about the virtual reality component of the Metro Academy application.

Mr. Sutherland said that he was not aware of any other program in the district that deals with alternative methods of instructing at-risk students. He said that the Metro Academy would work in partnership with local colleges and universities to bring in qualified, certified professors to help in the areas of science and mathematics to enhance the level of growth for their students.

He said that an essential part of the Charter Schools Act is the promotion of unique and different educational programming, and that he did not feel that the district was living up to that aspect in selecting and approving charter school applications. The Metro Academy of Technology and Science, he said, is different and unique in that none of the other existing charter schools or charter school applicants propose to work with at-risk students in the same manner as they are proposing.

Mr. Sutherland said that, prior to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, Metro Academy representatives had planned two community outreach meetings to explain their program and garner community support. Those meetings, he said, were canceled and the applicants had to change their strategy for reaching out to the community. He said that the meeting was rescheduled and that evidence of community support was submitted to the district.

He said that he hoped Metro Academy would become an alternative to parents placing their children in private schools, and work in partnership with the district to offer northeast Denver children and families a viable educational alternative in a public school setting.

Angelia Teague, northeast Denver parent, said that she attended the informational meeting about the Metro Academy of Technology and Science and was impressed with the discussion on bridging the learning gap between African American and Hispanic
students and Anglo students. She said that all of the topics discussed were impressive and inspiring, and that she came to feel that the Metro Academy would be viable alternative to the education her children are currently receiving.

Ms. Teague said that she is excited about the prospect of her twin daughters attending the Metro Academy, as it is vital that young people today have a firm understanding of technology and are able to utilize the tools available to enhance their educational opportunities. The knowledge of computers and software programs is vital for young people, she said, and is the only way that they will have a chance to succeed in the corporate sector of the future. As a single parent and a full-time student, she said, she has learned about the advantages of distance learning an option offered for students by the proposed charter school.

Pastor Leon Simmons said that he is well acquainted with Mr. Sutherland and is pleased that he is reaching out to help not just African-American students, but all students in northeast Denver who are at-risk. He said that he has two adolescent children and that, as they enter those troubled years of adolescence, he is finding that they might have greater needs than can be addressed in a regular, crowded public school setting. He said that the school that Mr. Sutherland is striving to open would give his children, and others like them, an opportunity to learn in a way that is not available in the mainstream educational system.

Rev. Simmons said that at-risk children, unfortunately, have a very narrow concept of what the world holds for them, and many of them believe that if they are good at sports, they will automatically become the next great athlete. It is important to give these children real-life skills, he said, so that they can use them as tools to enhance their lives and help them become productive citizens.

In response to a question from Mr. Mej a, Mr. Sutherland said that he was aware the staff’s recommendation that a charter be denied for the Metro Academy of Technology and Science. He said that he was present to ask the Board to give careful consideration to their application and not be irrevocably swayed by the staff report.

Mr. Mej a said that his interpretation of the proposed budget is that they have received a grant in the approximate amount of $1.5 million from the Mayor’s Office of Economic Development, and asked if those funds were a certainty.

Mr. Sutherland said that he had been working with people from that office and that, to the best of his knowledge, they still feel that the Metro Academy is still a viable program for the community.

Mr. Mej a said that he has two areas of concern regarding this application the first being the budget and its very high startup costs, and the second being the proposed curriculum and educational program. He said that district staff has outlined several concerns in these areas, and he suggested that Mr. Sutherland use those concerns in
working with a curriculum expert with the aim of resubmitting the application in a future year.

Mr. Sutherland said that the Metro Academy has a curriculum set and offered to show it to the Board, should they wish to see it. This curriculum, he said, is based on district, state, and national standards. Mr. Mej a said that he would like to see that and urged Mr. Sutherland to submit it to Dr. Eckerling and his staff.

Mr. Patterson said that he feels that parental and community support for charter schools is key to their success. He asked Ms. Teague about her neighborhood school and what benefits she could foresee in the Metro Academy’s program versus that of her home school.

Ms. Teague said that her children currently attend Amesse Elementary School and that she was very displeased with the school’s recent School Performance Report, and for the other schools in her area that would be educational options for her children based on transportation availability. Until the possibility of Metro Academy was presented, she said, she did not foresee any alternative for her daughters except private schooling.

In response to a question from Mr. Patterson regarding a location for the program, Mr. Sutherland said that he has considered three sites as potential locations. The first choice, he said, would be a site within the Stapleton Development; also under consideration is a site at 18th Avenue and Gaylord Street, and one at 40th Avenue and Chambers Street.

Mr. Patterson said that he would like to see more evidence of community support and, perhaps, speak with other people who participated in the development process. Without firm commitments from a number of parents and community members, he said, the school cannot succeed.

Ms. Gantz Berman thanked the supporters of the Metro Academy of Technology and Science for appearing before the Board. She said that the Board would discuss the staff recommendations and all information submitted by applicants prior to voting on the matter at the December Legislative Meeting.

Guadalupe Martinez, speaking with the assistance of a translator, said that she has four children one attending West High School, one attending Baker Middle School, and two at Greenlee Elementary School. She said that her son had attended an elementary school in Thornton until January 2000, when her family moved to Denver and she enrolled her son at Greenlee. Her son was placed in a bilingual classroom, she said, where he was taught using Spanish, without any English instruction. This was done against her wishes, she said, as she wanted her child to learn English. She said, in fact, that a translator accompanied her to enroll her son to ensure that she was not misunderstood.

She said that her son is now in fourth grade, but reads at a first grade level. Concerned about her son’s lack of progress, she said, she has spoken with the school principal several times to point out to him what she sees as indifference on the part of her son’s
teacher. She said that, as a result of those discussions, her son was placed in an after-school program for one hour twice a week, but still has not demonstrated any improvement.

Ms. Martinez said that she is very concerned about her child’s education and angry at the way her request regarding her son’s education was ignored. She said that her son is very intelligent and it is frustrating to watch him not making progress in his education. In a recent visit with his teacher, she said, the teacher tried to convince her that her son was not doing poorly and that a grade of D was acceptable.

Ms. Gantz Berman asked Ms. Martinez to provide a written statement regarding the situation with her son, so that it could be kept on file and followed up. She asked Dr. Wartgow to look into the situation and assign a bilingual staff member to assist Ms. Martinez in getting her son into the educational program she prefers him to attend.

SUPERINTENDENT S COMMENTS

Superintendent Jerry Wartgow stated that the Board would be presented at its next meeting with school improvement plans from schools that were rated unsatisfactory on school accountability reports. He said that he looked forward to discussing the details with the Board.

He also stated that the district is very enthused about a partnership the district has entered into with the Mexican Counsel General to develop a plaza at Horace Mann Middle School, where live television from Mexico will be delivered daily for students’ enjoyment and edification. Another part of the project, he said, will be evening literacy classes for adults beginning in January, which is very exciting for the school community.

IV. Adjournment

Ms. Gantz Berman adjourned the meeting at 7:41 p.m.

Susan G. Edwards, Secretary
Board of Education