I. **Call to Order – 5:22 p.m.**

   A. **Pledge of Allegiance**

   B. **Roll Call**

   President Lester R. Woodward called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m. The following Board of Education members were present: Ms. Elaine Gantz Berman, Rev. Lucia Guzman, Mr. Bruce Hoyt, Mrs. Michelle Moss, Mr. Kevin Patterson, Ms. Theresa Peña, and Mr. Lester Woodward.

Mr. Woodward reported that on Tuesday, January 4, 2005, a Montbello High School student lost his life during a fight with another student in the school cafeteria. He called for a moment of silence for those who have suffered personal loss.

II. **Board Member Reports**

   None at this time.

III. **Superintendent’s Reports**

   Dr. Wartgow stated that it was appropriate to take a moment to reflect on the challenging situation the entire Montbello High School community is continuing to cope with today, two days after the tragic event that unfolded there on Tuesday afternoon. First, our heartfelt sympathies and condolences are extended to the family and friends of the students involved in this tragic incident. It is important for the greater Denver Public Schools community to take the entire Montbello High School community into our collective hearts and prayers, not only tonight but during the days and weeks to come. What the staff and students out in Montbello are dealing with is extraordinary, but they are handling it with grace and professionalism.

   Many students at Montbello High School hold high expectations for themselves and their learning environment. The students demonstrated tremendous poise, insight, and maturity far beyond their years in face of the attention they received from the media. Yes, there are problems at Montbello High School; nobody is denying that. Yes, there is room for improvement; nobody is denying that. But we have a strong faculty and strong leadership at Montbello, who are committed to providing a quality educational experience.
He thanked Mayor Hickenlooper and his office staff, the Denver Police Department, Councilman Michael Hancock and his office staff for their tremendous support and encouragement helping us face what is truly a community tragedy together. He also thanked the district’s crises counselors who were there yesterday and continue to help students cope with a huge range of emotions that no teenager should ever have to face.

He reported actions that the district and school has instituted since then include reemphasizing a weapons watch program that has been in place with the Denver Police Department. This program encourages students who have knowledge about weapons, and other things that could be a threat to themselves or the school, to come forward. An anonymous hotline, much like Crime Stoppers, is in place; students can earn up to a $500.00 reward for reporting weapons. This was discussed at three assemblies held at the school and was well received by the students. We have high expectations for these students and they continue to rise to those expectations. We will be reemphasizing this district-wide. He is sending out a letter, which will also be signed by Chief Whitman, to all middle and high schools. Additional radios are being supplied to schools so that all teachers will have access to instant communication when they are on lunch duty and other supervisory situations.

We all have a stake in safety. It is a community-wide issue. Students need to know that they play a role in creating a safe and caring learning environment, especially in cracking this code of silence, which, unfortunately, too many adhere to today.

A community meeting will be held tonight at 7:00 p.m., to gather further feedback and suggestions from the community. He said that he and Board members Kevin Patterson and Theresa Peña would be leaving this meeting shortly, to attend. Other community forums will be held at all district high schools. He urged the community to come forward and share their thoughts, concerns, and suggestions. This incident happened at Montbello High School; we are committed to ensure it does not happen at any other high school.

Dr. Wartgow noted that the following safeguards had been in place before this incident. Security cameras had been installed in Montbello High School as part of the 2003 bond initiative. The fact that there was a surveillance camera in the cafeteria is extremely important to documenting the facts and finding out what really happened. The Denver Police Department, in the spring of 2004, added an additional school resource officer at Montbello. So Montbello has had two full-time Denver Police officers in the school. DPS Safety and Security have an additional three officers in the school; plus, two patrol officers are assigned to the Montbello and Green Valley Ranch neighborhoods. He reiterated that prior to the incident at Montbello all of these safeguards had been in place. Montbello High School has been recently restored. A tour of the building at the start of the school year would have showed a dramatically different school, with new lighting and new paint, much brighter and attractive. This is not a school that could be characterized as a ghetto school. This is a school of which we can be proud.
Dr. Wartgow said he wanted to convey the following important message to the staff at Montbello High School. From everything he has seen, from everything he has been told, and from all indications on the surveillance tape, which he reviewed carefully, the Montbello school staff, including the Denver Police Department School Resource Officers, did an extraordinary job of responding to this tragedy right from the very start. The incident that led to this tragedy was extremely quick. It happened in less than one minute. The response by trained personnel, with CPR and first aid, was instantaneous. That is documented on the surveillance tapes. The injured student was on a gurney and being taken out of the building by paramedics and a professional ambulance squad, within eleven minutes of when the incident started. This was on a snowy day, with icy roads; the instantaneous response from everybody was remarkable. Staff response was just absolutely outstanding. The staff at Montbello should not be second-guessing themselves. These teachers, nurses, food service personnel, police officers, and security officers did their job in an extremely professional, quick-thinking manner. They did everything that was humanly possible.

This is a setback, but we will get through it. He stated that he is confident that our schools are safe. He said that he is committed to reviewing the situation and the investigation. The Denver Police Department is doing an extremely professional job. When the report is complete, we will look at it and, as best we can, we will figure out what happened, how it happened, and why it happened. He is committed to doing everything humanly possible to be sure that it never happens again.

Mr. Patterson offered his own personal condolences to both families that were directly impacted by this event. Hearts go out to the families involved. It is difficult to express the shock and pain displayed at Montbello High School. The 1450 students, staff, teachers need our support to stand with them and for them to get through this grief. They have been through a lot and we really need to be there for them. We have to pay attention, listen, and care for these children. He said that he spoke at the ninth grade assembly this morning and was encouraged by their attitude, their positive nature. These children need us to hear them. We need to find ways to communicate with them, to engage them, help them grow, help them move through, help them achieve. This incident has been characterized as a Montbello issue but this is a high school issue. This is an issue, not just in Denver, not just in Colorado, but across our nation. We have weapons in our schools. We need to have children tell us when they see them. Children know what is going on in their buildings, better than we do. We have to make sure they feel comfortable telling us. He acknowledged and thanked the Denver Human Services crises team for their support.

IV. Consent Agenda

Assistant Secretary Jacquie Lucero read the agenda items by number and sequence. In accordance with Consent Agenda procedures, the following item was removed from the Consent Agenda and held for discussion:
IV-C-1 Motion to Approve Staff Recommendations to Change Columbine, Gilpin, Harrington, Mitchell, and Whittier Elementary Schools to ECE-8 Schools.

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

A. Board of Education

1. Minutes of December 2, 2004 – A copy is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 05-01, IV-A-1.

2. Finance and Audit Committee

a. Motion to Approve Award of Invitation to Bid #BD 1019 for Structured Cabling to M3 Telecom, National Network Services, and Telesupport Services - A copy of this motion, an invitation to bid which was done to solicit responses from pre-qualified vendors to provide structured cabling at Carson, Cory, McKinley-Thatcher, and Samuels Elementary Schools, Denison Montessori, and Thomas Jefferson High School, is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 05-01, IV-A-2a.

b. Motion to Approve Academy Sports Turf as the Vendor for Synthetic Turf and Track Surface Projects - A copy of this motion, to approve Academy Sports Turf as the vendor for synthetic turf and track surface projects at Abraham Lincoln, East, Montbello, and Thomas Jefferson High Schools, is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 05-01, IV-A-2b.

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 05-01, IV-B-1a.

DISCUSSION AGENDA

IV-C-1 Motion to Approve Staff Recommendations to Change Columbine, Gilpin, Harrington, Mitchell, and Whittier Elementary Schools to ECE-8 Schools.

Mr. Patterson asked for a brief report on the proposal. Nan Baumbusch, Special Assistant to the Superintendent, presented an update of the proposal. She introduced: Steve Weir, Principal, Columbine Elementary School; Cathy Gonzales, Principal, Gilpin Elementary School; Sally Edwards, Principal, and Cindy Miller, Assistant Principal, Harrington Elementary School; Reggie Robinson, Principal, Mitchell Elementary School; Jai Palmer, Principal, Whittier
Elementary School; Sally Mentor Hay, Chief Academic Officer; and Wayne Eckerling, Assistant Superintendent of Research, Planning, and Special Programs.

Mr. Patterson moved adoption of this motion. Mr. Hoyt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. A copy of this report is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 05-01, IV-C-1.

V. Old Business

A. Revitalization Plan for Montclair Elementary School – A copy of this report, recommending that the Early High-Strides and School-Wide Enrichment Models be implemented at Montclair Elementary School beginning in the 2005-2006 school year, is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 05-01, V-A.

B. Revitalization Plan for Hill Middle School – A copy of this report, recommending that Hill Middle School become a Campus of Arts and Sciences with a focus on technology and an expansive arts electives program beginning in the 2005-2006 school year, is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 05-01, V-B.

C. Policy Review

1. New Policy

   a. Policy DAB, Contingency Reserve – A copy of this policy, which would mandate a three percent Contingency Reserve created over three years, is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 05-01, V-C-1a.

2. Revision of Policy

   a. Policy JC, Pupil Assignment – A copy of this policy, which would make the policy consistent with the core values, strategies, and filters included in Choice Options Resolution 2908, is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 05-01, V-C-2a.

   b. Policy IF, School Design – A copy of this policy, which would make the policy consistent with the core values, strategies, and filters included in Choice Options Resolution 2908, is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 05-01, V-C-2b.

VI. New Business

There was none.

Dr. Wartgow stated that he wanted to remind everybody that the next meeting is on January 27. The Board normally meets on the first and third Thursdays, but this has been changed, so the next meeting will be January 27, 2005.
VII. Adjournment

Mr. Woodward adjourned the Regular Meeting at 5:55 p.m.

Public Comment (First Thursday of Each Month)

Roll Call

President Lester R. Woodward called the Public Comment Session to order at 6:01 p.m. The following Board of Education members were present: Ms. Elaine Gantz Berman, Rev. Lucia Guzman, Mr. Bruce Hoyt, Mrs. Michelle Moss, Mr. Kevin Patterson, Ms. Theresa Peña, and Mr. Lester Woodward.

Renewal of Charter for Community Challenge Charter School

Daniel Sparks, teacher assistant, youth mentor, and former student, said that at Ace Community Challenge School he had obtained his GED and had gained the skills and courage necessary to succeed. He said his commitment to Ace is deep because if it had not been for Ace he might have been incarcerated or even dead. He asked the Board to renew its charter school application.

Heidi Hendrickson, parent, said her daughter was failing before they found Ace. The school worked with her daughter and now her daughter is getting As.

Dr. Ramon del Castillo said that he has worked and consulted with Ace about five years. He and Dr. Luis Torrez conducted a program evaluation. They met with parents, students, teachers, and staff. They found that the model used by Ace is a very effective model, designed to meet the needs of these high-risk category students. Parents feel their children are respected, they feel respected, and they believe they have strong communication and strong relationships with the staff and the teachers. Students feel very positive about the small classrooms, individualized attention, and the curriculum.

Dr. Luis Torrez, professor at Metropolitan State College of Denver, said he had worked with Dr. del Castillo on the application for reauthorization of the charter. He has been involved with Ace Community Challenge School for approximately five to six years and supports their application for reauthorization of their charter. He said he helped conduct the study for the focus group and can say, categorically, that the teachers, counselors, and other professional staff are pleased to be working at Ace; they are exceptionally committed. He urged the Board to consider their application for renewal.

Louise Abeyta, grandmother and legal guardian of Joseph Abeyta, said that Ace has helped her grandson. Joseph was at his lowest point before he came to Ace. He was not attending school. Since attending Ace, the teachers have taught him how to learn, how to study, how to listen. He has made a 100 percent turnaround. He has become an intelligent young adult, knows how to complete a job application, and is not afraid to speak up to let people know who he is and what he wants from life.
Joseph Abeyta, student, said that he had previously attended John F. Kennedy High School but he really was not going to school. Ace worked with him and gave him a chance. He asked the Board to renew their application.

Fred DeHerrera, West High School Dean, said that he had come to support renewal for Ace Community School. Ace has done a very good job in the community. He has referred many students to Ace and many of the referrals have returned to West High School and have graduated.

Tiffany Ortiz, former student, said before she went to Ace she was not passing her classes and was always in detention. Ace changed that and she would like to see them help other students as they helped her.

Andrew Moore, student, said before he came to Ace he was failing all his classes and never went to school. At Ace he gets straight As and has perfect attendance. He asked the Board to renew Ace so he can return next year.

Eloy Chavez, Principal, Ace Community Challenge Charter School, requested that the Board approve, on behalf of the students, parents, staff, and community-at-large, the renewal of their charter school application. Their goal has always been to work with kids who have been struggling, to get them to develop a solid foundation for learning, and to send them back to the mainstream Denver public school so they can graduate. They work with a special population. They work with them until they get to a point in their own minds where they value school, where they want to go to school in a safe place, and where they do not want to hurt the person next to them. They have a strong curriculum and have shown growth the past two consecutive years on the CSAP.

Rev. Guzman thanked all the families and students in attendance. She thanked Dr. Luis Torrez and Dr. Ramon del Castillo for volunteering their expertise to be resources for this school.

Support for K-8 School at Whittier Elementary School

Jai Palmer, Principal, Whittier Elementary School, said that the school and community are very supportive of the K-8 process.

Ethel Blackwell, member of Whittier Elementary School Organizing Committee and a member of Metro Organization for People (MOP), said that her children and grandchildren went to Whittier and now her great-grandchildren are going to Whittier. The organizing committee is concerned that this change will not be as successful as it could be if they have to wait for funding until Whittier has totally converted to the eighth grade. This proposal calls for additional staffing needs. The Whittier Organizing Committee is looking forward to working with the School Board on these funding concerns.

Bobbie Morrow, Whittier teacher, said that they had come to reiterate their support for the K-8 conversion. The advantages for their students in the K-8 model far outweigh the obstacles they may face, and they are excited about the prospect of change. However, they cannot over
emphasize the importance of having the resources necessary to make these changes successful. In addition to their current staffing, they will need, at least, a PPA as well as a P.E. teacher, and support for extra-curricular activities, such as sports, special interest clubs, and tutoring. Without additional district resources, their ability to provide these services will be hampered.

Breanna Marquantte, Tailor Boling, Jay Stepney, and Kacjae Bernet, sixth-grade students at Whittier Elementary School, said that they are excited about their school becoming a K-8 school. They asked the School Board to seriously look at the budget allocation for their school. They have not had a gym for a couple of years and would like art, music, dance, and foreign language classes. They presented a petition signed by parents, students, and teachers.

Contingency Reserve Fund

Kurt Starr, Chairman of the District School and Improvement Council (DSIAC), said Velma Rose, Chief Financial Officer, asked them to comment on the new proposed Board policy DAB, establishing a Contingency Reserve Fund. This policy also addresses the Contingency Reserve levels in the Mill Levy Override Funds; it will support the goal of accelerating the teacher staffing timeline before the legislature acts on K-12 funding for the upcoming budget year. The Council studied this proposal. The entire Council voted overwhelming to support the adoption of this policy.

Renewal of Charter for Pioneer Charter School

Amber Billington, teacher, said that Pioneer staff has been focusing on the empowerment of their students since 1997, and that their successes are long lasting, sustainable, and bound to grow. The entire Pioneer community is working toward a common goal, lifelong success for all students. She said that adding sixth, seventh, and eventually eighth grade to Pioneer would enable the growth that is happening in the elementary years to continue.

Ingrid Garcia, fourth grade student, said she felt privileged to talk about her great school, Pioneer Charter. She has been at Pioneer Charter for five years. She was three-years-old when she came to Colorado in 1998 from Mexico City. She did not speak English when she came to Pioneer, but in kindergarten and first grade her teacher spoke Spanish. In second grade she entered an English class. With the patience of her teachers and tutors she persevered and now she speaks two languages and is a proficient fourth grader.

Jennifer Leblanc, literacy coordinator, said she has worked at Pioneer charter for the past four-and one-half years, and has seen amazing changes resulting in phenomenal growth. This past year they scored 42 percent proficient or advanced on CSAP. She believes that this is a direct result of their extensive staff development in literacy, mathematics, and English as a Second Language (ESL), as well as, their focus on the use of data in the classroom as a means to drive instruction. She said they plan to continue focusing on creating a professional learning community. She said she is excited about the future of Pioneer and the possibility of adding the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades.
Flor Varela’s remarks in English are attached to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 05-01, P.C. 1.

Fernando Esparza, parent, spoke in Spanish. Translated: His children have developed leadership skills and have been improving their studies. Since the classes are small, teachers are able to dedicate more time to them. Students respect each other. He asked the Board to continue the Pioneer charter school and extend it to eighth grade.

Cole Middle School Options

Tonya Hope, Jose Arteaga, and Erlinda Moreno, parents and members of the Cole Conversion Committee and the Metropolitan Organization for People (MOP), said that more than 150 people participated in the three-month charter school selection process. After KIPP was chosen to run the school, they worked to inform parents about what is happening. Ms. Hope said they had come to present proposals concerning those decisions.

They read the Metropolitan Organization for People’s Cole Conversion Committee Proposals for DPS School Board – January 2005. A copy of this proposal is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 05-01, P.C. – II.

Ms. Moreno said they want to be included in the coming decisions. They are working to the same end—a good education for their children. They are willing to work with the district to find the best options for Cole students.

Dr. Eckerling said that there will be multiple choices for families; information will be available in Spanish and English. He said that they will do everything they reasonably can to ensure people have time to make decisions and are not disadvantaged by the timeline. The choice period cannot formally be extended, but they will try to make sure no one is disadvantaged if they can not get the application in by a certain date. He said they would work with the families to resolve issues as favorably as possible for the children.

Metro Organization for People (MOP) Proposal Update

Maria Martinez, Shelley Travis, and Phuonglan Nguyen, members of MOP, said they had come to present proposals on education reform. They read the Metro Organization for People - MOP Education Committee’s Proposals for DPS Literacy Report/Report Card. A copy of that proposal is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 05-01, P.C. – III.

In response to Ms. Nguyen’s question regarding steps to implement these proposals, Mr. Woodward said that due to time constraints of a public meeting, the staff would be unable to respond at this time.

Mrs. Moss said that she is a member of the Parent Empowerment Council for DPS and that they have been discussing with Joe Sandoval, Southwest Area Superintendent, how to standardize parent-teacher conferences, similar to what their group has proposed for report cards.
In response to Ms. Nguyen’s question regarding a response to these proposals, Ms. Mentor Hay said that staff would take it under consideration and that she would be the staff member they could contact for questions.

Susan Molina presented an update on the choice proposals the MOP education committee has been working on since May 26. They have met with Michael Simmons, Community Relations Department, and Ethan Hemming, Manager, School of Choice Office. They presented suggestions for addressing the needs of Spanish-speaking parents by incorporating a Choice Fair in the four quadrants of the city in order to improve the level of involvement for students of color, students of free-and-reduced lunch, and ELA students. In June, the Superintendent indicated at a meeting that an annual bilingual diversity report could be done. They would like to work with the district on compiling this data and publishing it as quickly as possible.

Gordon Duvall summarized work that MOP has been doing on the reform process. One of the long-term proposals MOP made to the Board was to begin dialog around the ideas of reform using William Otay’s book, “Making Schools Work.” In September, MOP and their partners brought Dr. Otay to Denver to educate parents, students, teachers, and principals on Dr. Otay’s ideas and provide a forum for discussions. They want to continue to meet and dialogue with Board members and staff to explore the adaptation of some of these reforms strategies.

**Substitute Teachers Drop of Pay**

Judith Lurie said she had been a substitute teacher for the district for over twenty years. The recent substitute teacher pay cut, $40 a day, has been an unbelievable hardship. This cut makes planning for retirement almost impossible. Substitute teachers do not have a union or leverage. She asked the Board to please rethink this issue. Cutting substitute teacher pay is not the right tack to take; in order to get good people, you need to pay them decently.

Mr. Woodward adjourned the Public Comment Session at 7:15 p.m.

Michelle Moss, Secretary
Board of Education