MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING (03-18) 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
3:00 P.M., THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2003

I. Call to Order

A. Pledge of Allegiance

B. Roll Call

President Elaine Gantz Berman called the meeting to order at 3:10 p.m. The following Board of Education members were present: Ms. Elaine Gantz Berman, Mrs. Susan G. Edwards, Rev. Lucia Guzman, Mrs. Michelle Moss, Mr. Kevin Patterson, Ms. Theresa Peña, and Mr. Lester Woodward.

C. Special Hearing – Charter School Applications

Ms. Gantz Berman said that the next couple hours have been scheduled to hear charter school presentations and said that 20 minutes is allotted for each presentation. She first asked Dr. Wayne Eckerling, Assistant Superintendent of Research, Planning and Special Programs, to briefly review the process and timelines.

Dr. Eckerling said there are five charter school applications. The process will be to listen to the applicants today. On October 2nd, the School Improvement and Accountability Council (SIAC) will make its recommendations. On October 16th the Board will take action on the applications. Staff will prepare sample resolutions and have those ready for the 16th. State law requires that you act on the applications within 75 days, which means that the latest you could act would be October 30th.

Mr. Woodward asked when they would hear staff discussion and recommendations, and Dr. Eckerling said that also would happen on October 2nd, after the SIAC presentation.

Ms. Gantz Berman told everyone that the sequence of presentation was determined by lottery. She also said that their allotted 20 minutes included questions from the Board, and the Board generally asks quite a few questions. Dr. Eckerling suggested that presenters focus on high points, because the Board has copies of the applications.
Leaders High School Charter School (LHS)

Thomas Spalding, founder of the Leaders Challenge Program, presented background on that program, since LHS is based on that program. It was founded in 2000 as a nonprofit organization that teaches leadership skills, community service skills, and civic responsibility to high school students throughout Colorado. In its inaugural year, Leaders Challenge partnered with 10 metro-Denver high schools and had 60 participants. This year, the program is served 250 participants from 25 high schools throughout Boulder, Denver, and Colorado Springs metro areas. The objective of the program is to really get high school kids engaged in the community through 150 hours of community service a year and a wide and varied range of practical experiences.

From that program, presenters reasoned, it would be amazing to take the concept of Leaders Challenge and build a charter high school, so its not just an extracurricular program but a full-time program that integrated leadership skills and leadership content into the other core academic subject areas. A charter school was the next logical step in the progression of Leaders Challenge, they said.

The applicants for LHS propose to establish a grade 9-12 high school by integrating Leaders Challenge Program’s successful leadership practices into an academic-based curriculum. A maximum enrollment of 400-500 students would be reached over the first four years. LHS would provide an interdisciplinary academic curriculum that develops students’ potential and prepares them for leadership roles in civic, business, international, and non-profit worlds. The applicants are in discussions with Johnson and Wales University in northeast Denver to locate the school on its campus, he said.

Mr. Patterson questioned the $250,000 Title V grant in the budget. He asked what their chances are of getting the grant were, and what would be their fall-back plan if the grant does not come through.

This would be the grant cycle that is due in January and comes out in the spring, the presenter said, and that they have the resources it takes to put together a proposal, and they believe their chances are excellent. These are federal funds for charter school start up. He said they have a good grip of the process, but if they don’t receive them, they would aggressively seek funds from other organizations.

Mrs. Edwards asked if they have charter school applications in to other districts, and the answer was “no.” She asked the presenter to talk about location and who their targeted students are, who their market is.

Mr. Spalding responded that he was very involved and impressed with Johnson and Wales University, and the university president is very interested in having the charter school on their campus. They believe it would be a very positive partnership. As far as students they want to recruit, he said they want a population reflective of the diversity of the city and the real world, and they would plan to have some of the 200 high school
students already involved in Leaders Challenge to go into the junior highs to speak to students about this charter school.

Mrs. Edward asked if they plan to provide transportation.

The presenter said no, they do not intend to provide transportation, but there is a small line item in the budget for reimbursement of bus tokens and such.

Mrs. Edward asked if they have any measures of the effectiveness of the Leaders Challenge Program.

Mr. Spalding said it is hard to measure when they’ve built a “leader,” but of their inaugural class, 100% of the students went to college. He said they would track if kids stay in college, if they are they involved in student and community activities, and so forth. As for statistics, since the program is so very young yet, and their first class of students just went to college two weeks ago, they have none, he said.

Mr. Patterson asked if there is a minimum number of students they would need enrolled in the first year to be solvent.

The presenter responded that the minimum number in the first year would be 80.

Mr. Patterson said he noticed that the parent members are appointed by the board and elected by the students, and asked what their thinking was behind that.

The presenter responded that this has been revised slightly, but they wanted to keep a component of governance that was innovative and also incorporated leadership. What they ended up with on the board were two student representatives elected by a combined vote of the parents and students, and two parent members elected by the same combined vote. The rest of the board would consist of one appointee of the DPS Board of Education; a local, state, or federal elected official; a businessperson; a non-profit leader; and one other member. All other members also are subject to ratification by a combined vote of parents and students, he said.

Mr. Patterson asked what evidence they have of community support.

Mr. Spalding said that even though Leaders Challenge has a million-dollar budget, they probably have a million dollars in good will as far as community involvement is concerned. They have a full-time staff person whose job is to find speakers, leaders from all areas to come and talk to students every week. They have a network of a few hundred speakers, leaders, and volunteers who come in and contribute to the program. They would expect to have a very similar model for LHS, he said.

Dr Wartgow said he wanted to go back to the question on recruitment and demand related to the letters of support. He asked if he understood correctly that they proposed to start out with 100 ninth graders, and the answer was yes, between 80
and 110 ninth graders. Dr. Wartgow asked what their sense of demand was for this program. He said they have an impressive cadre of leaders, and it sounds like an intriguing program, but he candidly said that as he has been out in the schools and community, no one had suggested that they would like to have this type of school. So he said he needs to know a little bit more about the demand.

Mr. Spalding said that in the first year of the Leaders Challenge Program, they only had a couple hundred applications to get 60 students. This year, he said, they expect to have 5,000 applications for 200 spots, they have 30 schools on the waiting list, and he thinks next year their problem will be how to pick the students rather than how to recruit them. When they surveyed teachers, principals, parents, and students and told them about LSH, they had a very high response from adults who were interested and from students who would be interested in attending the school. A novel aspect of their recruitment is that they plan to target students, rather than parents, because that is the kind of kid they are looking for, a potential leader who can take that role in deciding their own destiny with their parents, he said.

Dr. Wartgow said he had been impressed with what this program had done at Manual High School, for example, and what occurs to him is that they helped with the district’s Manual Leadership High School, and it sounds like the students that they are trying to attract are the siblings of those very leaders that they helped created in our schools, and he said he can’t see how recruiting those kids out of our other schools would benefit DPS. You’ve done a great job in Manual, he said, but if you are going after the students you’ve trained and are pulling them out of Manual, what added value is this to DPS? In fact, it might be a negative, he said.

The presenter said that this program becoming a school gives them increased stability to deliver the Leaders Challenge Program to other DPS schools. They have had to say no to a lot of applicants, but with this program as a school, they will be able to serve more students in other schools in DPS. So for every student they draw out of DPS, they can serve an additional DPS student or more, he said.

Dr. Wartgow said he understood, but again using Manual as an example, he is still concerned that because they are developing leaders in our school, who are serving as role models and bringing a lot of other good things with them, that pulling them out of our school is a huge loss to the school. This is a selfish DPS perspective, of course, but we have our students at interest, he said.

Mr. Spalding said he didn’t know if there was a response to that question that would make Dr. Wartgow feel good, because it’s his job to be passionate about DPS. Neither LHS nor Leaders Challenge Program is skimming the cream off the top. Ninety percent of their students weren’t considered leaders before they were in the program; those are the students that they are really trying to recruit. There are so many programs out there for the top and the bottom students, but it is the 98% in the middle that they are trying to reach. They are interested in students who think they are ordinary that LHS can make into extraordinary leaders. This issue goes back to the question of whether good leaders
are born or made, the presenter said, and they believe they are made. So they are not as concerned as Dr. Wartgow would be about selecting people who are already leaders; that is not their goal. Their goal is to make leaders, they said.

Ms. Peña said she wanted to go back to their recruiting strategies, because as she looked at the profile of their student, it is almost a flip of the population profile of DPS students. She heard them say that they would use existing students to go out to the schools, and yet if 75% of their students are Anglo and two-thirds is female, she said the challenge is to find role models that accurately represent the DPS student body to buy into the program.

The presenter said their statistics are those for the program as it exists in Denver and Boulder and other suburban communities. If they isolated Denver statistics from the whole, they would be much more diverse, he said. They believe that the statistics do reflect the ethnic makeup of the communities that the programs are in.

To follow-up, Ms. Peña asked why, since only two of the 23 high schools that they are with are Denver schools, did they pick Denver for a charter school?

Mr. Spalding said that one reason was his great relationship with Johnson and Wales University. He believes that would be a successful location. When he started the program, he started it in Denver, he said, and most of his donor base, most of his community service volunteers, his staff and his office are in Denver.

Mrs. Edwards asked what they envision for athletic opportunities for students and whether Mr. Spalding would have a position at the school when or if it opens.

They said they have no plans to run varsity programs themselves, but would work with students to find other local high schools where they could participate in sports if they wished. He said they have checked with CHSAA and with other charter schools that do something similar. Mr. Spalding said he would have a board position, and the staff that runs the Leaders Challenge Program will still do that, and will support the high school as well. He said he would not have a job at the school.

Mrs. Moss said that she noticed from their application that their teachers don’t have to be certified to teach in the school. One question, she said, is how they would ensure that a teacher is qualified to teach the core areas that they have in the application, and two, is how they would meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind, in terms of highly qualified teachers.

Teachers need to have enough credit hours in the content areas to be qualified to teach in a particular area, he said. That’s one of the reasons they need to have at least 80 students to start up; they need to hire qualified teachers in each of the content areas.
American Charter School

Jared Polis said that he, Albie Segal, and Jeremy Cooper would be making the presentation of behalf of the American Charter School and talked about the history of how they came to this charter application. He said there had been a program run for the last three years by Aurora Public Schools (APS). Aurora schools this year discontinued that program, which was an adult literacy program that served about 800 students of age 18 and up. They had a waiting list as well. When they talk about adult literacy, Mr. Polis said, what they are essentially talking about is teaching English to new immigrants. That is about 80% of what is referred to as adult literacy in this state. He said that Colorado is one of only two states that had no state funding. So the challenge becomes how to find funds to allow people to learn English. Fortunately they have a provision in the state constitution that every child under 21 is entitled to a thorough and uniform education. So what they have set about to do is to create a charter school that will focus on teaching students English and also give them access to earning a diploma, he said. The school will instruct students in content areas like civics, history, and economics while they are learning English. They will read English-level appropriate materials in those disciplines, and once they have learned English they will have the opportunity to take on-line courses in math and science. There is a huge demand for this, he said, and they hope to begin next year as a DPS charter school.

Mr. Segal said their goal is to open three to five American School campuses next September, with at least one in Denver. He said they are applying for another charter in Greeley and are dedicated to looking for those pockets of immigration where existing, under-used facilities can be utilized to allow students to attend on weekends and at night, at times when generally they will need to be going. He said they have included in the packet responses to questions from SIAC.

Mr. Segal introduced Jeremy Cooper who taught at the Aurora Campus and has been working closely with them.

Ms. Gantz Berman asked why the program in APS was discontinued. The program was up and running, and it obviously was terminated for some reason, she said.

Mr. Segal responded that students were not actually enrolled in APS, and it was a financial drain on the district. Aurora schools did not collect per-pupil operating revenue (PPOR) on any of the students. It was run as an adult literacy program, and they received federal grants of only about $300 per student to run it. APS currently has a moratorium on charters, which is why they didn’t approach them, he said.

Ms. Gantz Berman followed up with a question on the population. She said they all have access to the PPOR up to the age of 21. However, they have a portion of their students over 21, so where would the funding come from for them, and how would the differentiation between the teachers be handled, she asked.
Teachers in the program would be very similar, Mr. Segal said. Essentially they are running a charter school for students under 21, but when there is space available in classrooms—the demand for over 21 is so enormous they will not be able to fully meet that need—they hope not to turn away anyone under 21. As there is room, they will allow students over 21 to be part of the program. Those students come with two sources of funds—one is the same federal grant APS had before at about $300 per student, and the other is tuition. There would be a modest tuition for the adult students, he said.

Dr. Wartgow asked if the potential site for this school would be at Lowry.

Mr. Segal said they would look at sites, because they don’t expect to have one school with a lot of students; they expect to have a number of smaller schools. He said they would like to have one site in North Denver, but it would be a site that is under-utilized and they can collaborate with. The site that they were going to use at Lowry was the Community College of Aurora site, which had some empty classrooms. If those classrooms are still available, they might open a second site there, because that is another pocket of need that they have identified. So they are not looking at one site, they are looking at several sites because they want the school to answer the needs of the population they are serving, and not make students travel long distances to get there, he said.

Three or four campuses, one school application, Dr. Wartgow ruminated. He asked if all of the campuses would be within the city and county of Denver.

Possibly, but possibly not, Mr. Segal responded. He said they have a letter of support for this project from APS superintendent.

Dr. Wartgow said it seems to him that there are other ways to implement this model. He asked if they had considered contracting with the district, instead of operating a charter school, or if they considered operating this out of a community college. He said he didn’t have a problem with the program, but he did have some concerns about sources of funding, the same concerns that Aurora had. We consider charter schools part of our school district, not just an add-on or an annoyance. I’m not sure that I’m comfortable with this model—getting into adult education, sites in or out of Denver—or I would need more information at least, he said.

There are very specific reasons that it doesn’t work as well with other models, Mr. Segal said. Community colleges, for instance, have an issue when students who attend don’t have the proper documentation, are not citizens or can’t prove their residency or legal status, they don’t receive their funds, and they are considered as out-of-state students, essentially. Here in K-12, of course, there is a constitutional duty to provide education to everyone under 21 and to receive funding for it. The main reason that they are seeking status as a charter school is that for them to run the program to the benefit of the students that they serve—and they urged that they are DPS students, too, the 18, 20 year olds, and have as much right to a public education as students in conventional schools—they need the autonomy to be able to grow and shrink their presence in campuses, to close campuses where there is no demand, to open campuses in areas of
need. Mr. Segal said they hope to be an important and positive influence in the greater Denver area and a regional solution to a problem—the problem being that new immigrants often are not given the opportunity to learn English, he said.

Mr. Patterson asked what under-utilized North Denver sites they are thinking about.

Mr. Segal said that most of their students want to attend classes in the evening, so many DPS facilities and other facilities that function as classrooms are under-utilized in the evenings. They also are in discussions with community colleges, many of which have unused classrooms even during the day.

Mr. Patterson asked about the letters of community support to which they refer.

Mr. Segal said they have a thick binder of expressions of interest from people who want to attend, and they are gathering letters of support. They have about a half-dozen and are getting more every day.

Mr. Patterson said there are a number of complications when you mix the 22 year old adult with 15, 16, 17 year old kids. He asked for their help to understand how they would deal with those complications.

All of their students, Mr. Segal said, are there because they want to be there. Almost all of them are 16 years old and up and very mature people; most of them are immigrants whose life experiences have given them a level of maturity beyond their ages. He asked Jeremy Cooper if he wanted to explain how that worked in APS.

Mr. Cooper said that to assume that this program would work at all similarly to a standard conventional program would be confusing the issue of who their students are. As a teacher in this program for the past year and a half, he said there never once had been anything like a behavioral problem or any problem at all in mixed-age classrooms from 18 or younger to 60 year olds. Mr. Segal added once again that the program would be built around students under the age of 21, and when there is space in classrooms, they will allow adult students to attend some of those same classes.

Ms. Peña said she was intrigued by this school’s goal that 100% of its students would progress one year for each level and achieve fluency in three years. She asked if this was based on some research model that has worked elsewhere or what made them believe that fluency could be achieved in three years.

Mr. Segal said that goal is consistent with No Child Left Behind, they also have measured progress from the Aurora program to document that, and they have met those goals over the last three years. He said you could think of it as an immersion program that allows for rapid progression in English. Full-time students are spending 20 hours a week learning English, he said.

Mrs. Edwards said she was trying to get a sense of the student they would be looking to serve—it would be someone who would come to this country without
English skills, who had been educated in another country but probably didn’t get a diploma, probably hadn’t finished high school in Bosnia or Mexico, so they would be entitled to enroll in public schools up until the time they completed graduation requirements. If they are offering a comprehensive high school, what will be the measure of when that student can leave the school; how would they know when students are done, she asked.

Mr. Segal said that most of the students have not had any public school experience in this country, and many of them had an education through grade six or eight, some of them had no formal schooling. There was a wide diversity, which was why they are seeking K-12 designation, because they will need everything from the kindergarten through twelfth-grade curriculum. How do they know they are ready to exit? Part of that, he said, is tracking the English, and the other part is tracking the progress in the content areas. He said the English side is what they handed out here. The content area and the humanities will be delivered along with the English instruction so that by the time they have reached fluent English proficiency, they should also be at a level in history, civics, and economics that they would be ready to graduate, and he said they would hope to be able to use some of DPS’s end course assessments in those areas. The math and sciences they will not offer themselves. Students will take those through Colorado On-line School. They will have computer labs at their schools where they can take those, and they can receive that credit towards graduation.

Mrs. Edwards said the whole thing is very interesting. Somehow it feels like we are using PPOR to provide English Language Acquisition opportunity. It doesn’t take a genius to see the difference between a $300 grant and $6,000 PPOR, she said.

Mr. Segal said that Mrs. Edwards was right; this is an innovative funding stream for teaching people English and content areas as well. They are people who are not currently part of public education, but those under 21 have a constitutional right to public schools. Yet without detracting from their experience, they can also serve some people over age 21, Mr. Segal said.

Mrs. Gantz Berman said that, according to the materials they just passed around, it seemed they have about 150 students ready to start this year. She said she just tallied up the ages, and of the 150 students, 125 are 18 or older, and 21 are under age 18, which would make the case that Dr. Wartgow was talking about that this really doesn’t fit within the mission of what we would consider a K-12 education. It would fit much more into a community college situation. She said she expected a different balance in the student population than what she just tallied up.

Mr. Segal responded that the critical age for public education is 21, not 18. It is a requirement that DPS must provide free services to students who don’t have a high school diploma through age 21. He said they hope that that is the mission of DPS. He said they weren’t hiding it, that they have said repeatedly that many of their students are in the age 18 to 21 range. He said they believe, however, that they are every bit as entitled to a public education as other students.
Southwest Early College

Chris Gerboth introduced himself as a representative of the steering committee for Southwest Early College (SEC). SEC, as envisioned by the parents and teachers who have worked to put the application together, was intended to be a different model from the standard large high school environment of the two high schools that serve Southwest Denver, Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy high schools, he said. Their guiding principle was that it would be a school where every child would be known and known well by an adult, at least one adult. It would be a place where every student can enroll in the ninth or tenth grade and either will have earned college credit by the time they leave twelfth grade, or they are prepared to enroll in college immediately upon graduation. That was the focus of the program, he said, to ease the transition from ninth grade to the liberal arts core in the first two years of college. College courses would be offered at the campus under the existing Colorado State Dual Enrollment Law, which allows any student over 16 years of age to concurrently enroll in college-level courses with the permission of their school, with the tuition then being reimbursed by the school. Similar schools around the country are attracting a lot of attention right now, he said. In many cases, the other schools are graduating students in four years with both a high school diploma and an associate degree when they leave. In some cases, those programs are five years, depending on the student population of the school, he said.

In terms of their guiding philosophy, he said, they believe that they can build a school that would be an asset to DPS and would serve as a model for additional programs in the district. He said that they are very aware that from their particular area of town a number of high academic achievers are leaving to go to other school districts. Those are the students that they desperately want to grab and keep in DPS, he said. They know that there are bumps ahead, and they know from the experience of people on the steering committee how much work is involved in opening a school, but they also know, he said, that they are inviting a diverse student body and that every student who shows up opening day will leave either with college credit or prepared to go to college. They know that no student will move through the system unnoticed. Finally, he said, they know that they are not alone in this endeavor. From the beginning they have successfully engaged DPS staff, teachers, principals, and community organizations that are interested in the early college model, and they intend to continue in that same mode. As a charter school, they don’t see themselves as an island in the district, he said, but as an integral part of creating choice and excellence in Southwest Denver.

Mr. Gerboth said they have an opportunity to be part of a national movement from which they can draw on a lot of resources in terms of everything from best practices to keeping cohorts of students together when some are achieving and some are not.

And finally, he said, they have identified an exciting facility and are in final negotiations with Loretto Heights campus. As an extension of that, he said they believe they have created a financial model than can be very solid and sustainable so that they are not beholden to raise thousands of dollars every year just to keep the lights on. They
believe, he said, that they have found the critical mass and the right trade offs to actually make this thing work.

Mrs. Moss asked where they are in negotiations with Loretto Heights and if it looks as if that will truly be where the school is located. If not, she asked, are there other locations in Southwest Denver where the school can be located?

Mr. Gerboth said that they have engaged a tenant broker to act on their behalf and they are in the final stages of due diligence. They are hiring architects and everything to make sure that they are getting what they are paying for, because it is a sizeable chunk of money. They will have a couple of back-up plans, but they are very confident that those negotiations are going to conclude successfully. What they are paying for is the building that was the original St. Mary’s Academy, which was a high school, so it has lockers and stuff like that, and shared use of campus facilities including the cafeteria, athletic facilities, and library facilities.

Mrs. Moss said she also wanted to talk a bit about the teachers/professors. She asked how they would attract people who would teach a regular curriculum, and if they would cross over to be the college professor, or would they only use college professors for the college classes, and could they attract people who would want to do that on what she assumed would be a part-time basis.

Mr. Gerboth said that the model was just for grades nine and ten to have full-time faculty, and then the Community College of Denver would provide the instructors for college-level courses. However, he said, they anticipate that they also would attract faculty for the nine and ten program who are qualified as college-level instructors, that had at least a masters degree and teaching experience in the post-secondary field.

Ms. Peña said her concern is around enrollment procedures. As she read this, she said, they are giving preference to children of staff at the school and of the board of directors. In light of that, she wondered if they aren’t skimming off the best of the kids who are already going to Kennedy or Lincoln and would increase their graduation rates. How do you know that you aren’t attracting the tier that would be very successful if they were in a smaller environment in a program like yours? She asked how they would ensure equitable access to enrollment in the school and not just enroll students who are going to be successful regardless of whether they are choice into GW or already are successful at Kennedy or Lincoln.

There is a great deal of discussion with the State of Colorado about lottery procedures and things like that, Mr. Gerbold said, and to a large extent their hands would be tied as to how they assign priority. About the only thing they can do anymore is to carve out 10% for founding families and siblings. The rest has to be done by open lottery in order to qualify for a great deal of state or federal money, and that’s part of No Child Left Behind. What they plan to do, he said, is set a definite goal that 30% of the total enrollment will be students eligible to receive free and reduced lunch, which mirrors the demographics of the school community. They have, in fact, even before the school
opens, committed $10,000 to specifically market to meet that goal and bring that number up. The reason they are so concerned about that, he said, was that the school could fill entirely with Grant Ranch Elementary School eighth graders.

As for the equal access part of the question, Mr. Gerboth said schools based on this model in other areas of the country have been very successful with a wide range of socioeconomic students. It is the school’s mission to accept any student, whether they have passed through the recruiting system or the lottery, they will take an assessment of where that student is, and they will get them prepared for college.

Ms. Peña said her question is concerned more about a tenth grader at Lincoln, for example, who has been unsuccessful at engaging in the large school environment, but who might be more successful at SEC. How would they target them and pull them into your program, she asked.

Mr. Gerboth said there will be discussions with Lincoln and JFK, and that they have already corresponded with the principal at Lincoln. They are only three blocks apart, he said, so it would make no sense to operate exclusively of one another. They are going to work with counselors to set up an equitable process to identify those students who are struggling in the large school and might thrive in a small school environment.

Dr. Wartgow said that the district has been exploring similar types of schools and the situation in Southwest Denver. What other high schools are in the vicinity outside of DPS, he asked? He said there are Jefferson County schools near there that would be a potential market. What other choices are in the area for DPS students not really making it in their high schools?

The most common choice are Columbine, Bear Creek, and Dakota Ridge, which are all Jefferson County schools, but they do have some students going into Sheridan and some into Arapahoe County to Littleton Charter Prep. There is not a small-school alternative, however, those are all large schools, Mr. Gerboth said.

**Green Valley Ranch/Montbello Charter School**

Happy Haynes said that the vision they have for their charter school is a vision of one community stretching from Peoria on one end of Montbello to Picadilly on the other end of Green Valley Ranch and 38th to 56th Avenues; one community for planning purposes and for the purposes of their enrollment area. They have a vision of providing choice to this community, the first, they hope, of many public school choices in the area. They have a vision of a strong, solid academic program with high standards, strong parental and community involvement, and a commitment to diversity and equity, she said. She said they have a strong board that consists of mostly parents who are dedicated to and fully engaged in this program. She said they are full partners with Edison School, not just a footnote to their national program, and as a board, they are accountable to the community for the success of their school. She introduced David
Wilson, parent and vice president of the Green Valley Ranch Homeowners Association, who will talk about how they see the accountability in this process.

David Wilson said that since the inception of planning for this charter school, the community has had great involvement. During the process they have challenged and brought up different ideas of what would best fit Green Valley Ranch. They all came to the same conclusion, and that conclusion was choice. Edison had come up several times as an organization that could provide students with opportunities for a great education. During the board’s process, they determined steps to be taken for accountability procedures, and those include standardized testing, national testing models that are used in DPS, benchmark standards, and full public disclosure. The Edison model follows performance standards in five major areas—humanities and arts, mathematics and science, character and ethics; practical arts and skills, and health and physical fitness.

Mary Louise Lee Hancock, a parent in the community with a background in performing arts, said that she and her husband have two children, and they send their kids to Knight Academy. That is not in their community, she said, but what they have been looking for since their children were born are choices. The decision of the charter board to go forward with Edison was made not just because of timing, although the timing of a new school being built influenced the board’s decision, she said. Because the board did their homework and because of Edison’s existing track record in Denver, they were convinced that they would be good partners and that this would be an excellent first step toward providing a good opportunity and choices in their community, she said. The Edison curriculum most importantly provides quality education. Each child has the same teacher for two years, providing the opportunity to build strong relationships, she said. She values a well-rounded curriculum as Edison provides. It’s all about choices in their community, she said, and that’s what they are looking for.

John Smith, president of the Far Northeast Neighbors and publisher of the *Far Northeast Reporter*, said he has resided in that area for many years and is a retired DPS educator. They have 39,000 people who reside in the far northeast, and as the Board knows, they have one high school, two middle, and nine elementary schools, so there is a need, he said. Prior Boards of Education have not done the kinds of things that this Board has done, and they are very proud. He said their community is convinced that this Board is equally concerned about the far northeast as they are. As president of Far Northeast Neighbors, he said he is constantly talking to the people in the community. Twice a month they have meetings; they have a board meeting and then meet with the community as a whole. Two months ago, they had 305 people at the meeting, he said, asking what is going to be done about schools. The people are concerned. Everyone wants to know what is happening with their schools, what type of model will be set up, and he said he is convinced that this Green Valley Ranch/Montbello Edison Charter School is the kind of school the community needs and the community will support.

Dee Ferris said she has four children and has had several foreign exchange students live with her. She said after they moved to Green Valley Ranch, her twin sons started first grade at Marrama Elementary School. About half way through the year they realized
that one of them was not doing well at Marrama. The principal recommended that perhaps he needed to go to another school. She said she wasn’t even aware of any other school that would offer him what he needed, but the principal recommended the gifted and talented program (G/T) at McGlone. They put their son in that program, and it was the best decision they ever made for him. He stayed at McGlone through fifth grade, and his twin brother stayed at Marrama, each of them attending the school that was right for them, she said. When the boys went into middle school, her son that was in G/T at McGlone went to Smiley Middle School to continue on in the G/T program there, and again, it was not long before they realized that was not where he needed to be. At that time, she said, the High Tech Academy had started at MLK Middle School, which is where his twin brother was, so they moved him back there and he finished out his middle school career there with no problems at all and with wonderful results. She said her sons are now seniors at GW; one is fourth in his class and the other is 24th. The point of this story, she said, is choice—she had a choice, she had an option, she had someplace to send her son to get the education he needed. The boys are twins, but they are as difference as night and day, and the same school would not serve both of them. She said she and her husband did what they had to do to get each of those kids into the school that was right for them. She said she believes that the Edison Charter School in Green Valley Ranch will give parents an option that could be right for their child.

Kelly Lead with Oakwood Homes, manager of the project and facilitator of the board’s effort, spoke next. Mr. Lead said that this January the Board approved the involvement of Oakwood Homes in building this new and innovative building called a shared use facility complex, which is really a shared collaborative partnership among the school district, Denver Parks and Recreation, Oakwood Homes, the Town Center Metro District, and the Foundation for Educational Excellence. One of the things that they worked very diligently on in the development of this school was a model that would be flexible for evolving educational opportunities, he said. They worked with the staff at DPS to create a new K-8 model that would have a capacity of 750 students. The school would have three academies—K, one, and two; three, four, and five; six, seven, and eight—and that model provided an opportunity for smaller schools within a school. The building will accommodate not only a traditional school, but a charter school as well. Mr. Lead said that the building was under construction, they’re on time and on budget, and in July they would open this new facility to provide a great opportunity for kids.

Karen LeFever from Edison presented their perspective of the partnership. Ms. LeFever said that Edison School is five things: 1) a top performing school system in terms of test scores, parent satisfaction, safety, school culture, and resources; 2) a financially viable company; 3) a great place to work, a place for growth for teachers and children, a place for advancement and diversity; 4) a great partner; they want to help DPS reach its goals of student achievement; and 5) a valuable contributor to school reform. She said they are in 20 states, they have 180,000 kids in the traditional public school system, and as test results are coming in, it looks like they will have their best year yet—approximately 8 to 9% criterion reference gains across the system, which is impressive. At Wyatt-Edison Charter School, the average total gain since it opened, baseline until now, has been 12%, and that is four times the average gain in DPS,
second only to the district’s own Bryant-Webster School, she said, and they are quite proud of those results. Finally, she said that financially, as of last Friday, Edison could finally put it to bed that this is not a get rich quick scheme, because after 13 years Edison posted its first profit of $10.2 million. She said that Edison continues to grow and they are very much looking forward to another partnership in DPS.

Marshall Kaplan, said he wanted to talk about the citizen involvement process. They did a survey of 600, and it showed tremendous parent support for this project. Ninety percent of the parents in the Montbello/Green Valley Ranch community want the Board of Education to approve this charter school application. Between 70 and 80% of the parents in the right age group said they would enroll their kids in the Edison school if it were open in September, he said. One startling statistic stood out throughout the whole survey—between 10 and 20% of the parents in the area now take their kids out of the schools and put them into parochial or private schools or in another school in this district. That is a very important, because if they want to create a community, he said, they have got to bring those kids back. DPS is gaining a reputation for serving all of its kids, because the survey showed that parents think that schools are improving in the area. Mr. Kaplan said they also had three meetings of the citizens at which they reviewed all the charter and all the public school options, and after the final meeting they reached unanimous consensus that an Edison school was ideal for the area in the new K-8 school. He said they had a sustained subcommittee of citizens who helped choose their board, and once the board was chosen it was involved every day in editing the application and publishing what they were about in the Far Northeast Reporter. Mr. Kaplan said that the foundation that he is president of is committed to this school for the duration and for $250,000. It is a lifetime dream and part of the vision of one community. He said that this is a beginning, one school of many that DPS will be asked to provide in that area, and that this school will set the example for offering choice.

Rev. Guzman asked if this facility were not available to them, would they seek another site, or is the application for this charter dependent upon that particular site?

Ms. Haynes said that it is. At this stage, in terms of the time frame and the current finances, she said, it is dependent on that site.

Mrs. Edwards asked an involved parent to come to the mike. When you are talking about choice, when you want choice, is a charter the only way to obtain choice?

Ms. Ferris said that choice in far northeast is very limited, and she has to take her sons into GW every day. She said one of her daughters went to Montbello, but it wasn’t right for her sons. It’s a matter of parents getting their kids into a school that fits for them. It doesn’t have to be a charter school, but they need options, she said.

Ms. Peña said that obviously parents like them would find wonderful options for their children. Her concern, she said, is the other kinds of parents who live in their community and how their board will ensure that the school population will reflect the diversity that exists in the community.
The responder said that board members must be held accountable and they have to have measurements for that.

Mr. Patterson said he wanted to thank everyone for their efforts, because as another parent volunteer who is interested in education, he understood how much time it took. His questions concern budget, he said. He asked what “site income” means, what is that, and is it what parents must come to the table with?

Ms. LeFever said that charter schools are public schools, and public schools are free education for children. They assume that in negotiations with the district they will get the PPR that charter schools get in Denver, and the net site income is the part that will be returned to the company. All those other expenses there are the line items of how that supports the Edison program.

Mr. Patterson asked how their board would be elected in the future.

Ms. LeFever said the Wyatt board will be used as a model, and the current board will work from that and refine it as it makes sense for them.

Ms. Gantz Berman said that one of the things that would be motivating her as she looked at this application is the track record of Wyatt-Edison and how it compares to comparable schools as far as student achievement is concerned. She asked Dr. Eckerling to comment on that.

Dr. Eckerling said that, as Ms. LeFever pointed out, the district had schools like Bryant-Webster that have exceeded far beyond what would be expected from schools at that free-lunch level, and had even exceeded the performance of schools like Edison, and the district had other schools that also are exceeding what would be expected based on their free-lunch level, that he believes are starting to catch up to Edison. He said it would be a very fair statement to say, however, that Wyatt-Edison School does exceed the performance for schools in its free-lunch level. He said he would get that analysis out to the Board so that they can look and make the judgment for themselves.

**Highline Academy Charter School**

Jennifer Douglas, one of the founders of Highline Academy Charter School, presented a brief overview of the program. She said that they propose a smaller school setting, anticipating about 400 students in grades K-8, two tracks per grade level with about 23 students per class. If approved they intend to open next fall with grades K-6, and then add seven the next year and grade eight the following year. She said one of the key aspects of the program is the Core Knowledge curriculum. Another important aspect, she said, is a multicultural focus, because they recognize that East and Southeast Denver have a lot of diversity, and they would do everything possible to bring that diversity to the school and to have the curriculum reflect that diversity. She said Core Knowledge is a great starting point from which to build, especially with the groups of
students they would be serving. As an example, she said, they know there are several families from India that have filled out enrollment forms and they want to be able to supplement history studies of India with more study about India and the current culture. Likewise, Russian history and literature are an important part of the Core Knowledge curriculum, and there are a few Russian students who have signed up for the school.

Ms. Douglas said that another part of the multicultural focus is Spanish instruction, which will be taught starting in kindergarten all the way through grade eight. She said they wanted to take advantage of the capacity young people have for language and not wait until they are in middle or high school to start teaching foreign language. She said they plan to do ability grouping in math and language arts, allowing students who are strong in those areas to move ahead and also to prevent students who may struggle in those areas from getting left behind.

Ms. Douglas said they would have a longer school day, a slightly longer school year, a focus on character education, a uniform requirement for all students, and a scholarship fund set up so if families cannot afford uniforms that would not be a prohibitive factor. She said homework would be assigned at all levels, and there would be letter grades at all levels. Lastly, she said, they would encourage and require parent involvement as an important part of the success of the school.

Mr. James Griffin said he had spoken to the Board before as head of the Colorado League of Charter Schools but was at this meeting as a private citizen and parent. He said he would discuss two aspects of the charter. First, he would discuss the student numbers and outreach. As a group, a few months ago they began with a variety of steps of outreach to the community: posters, pamphlets and leaflets were distributed and posted at recreation centers, grocery stores, day care centers, preschools, churches, and other public places; a series of community outreach meetings were held beginning early in the summer; and a mailing was sent to over 3,000 families in the area. Since then, he said, they have received letters of intent to enroll from families representing 188 kids.

Mr. Griffin said that the usual rule of thumb is if they have half of the projected first year school enrollment when the school Board makes decisions on charter applications, the charter is in good shape. He said he feels very good about letters of intent representing 188 kids. Within those numbers are some concentrations at the earlier grades with kindergarten being heaviest and tapering off as it nears the older grades. He feels there are a couple of interesting numbers. One is that they asked people where they would be otherwise, and 30% responded at a private school. There has also been a healthy demonstration of interest from people out of the district, basically Cherry Creek, he said.

Mr. Griffin said there are a lot of people interested in the Core Knowledge curriculum. They have heard of it, they understand what it is, and it is something they want for their child. They understand the charter idea to a significant degree, that it is a choice and a way to deliver the program they want. He said there are a lot of younger families sitting on the fence, debating whether to live in Denver and attend DPS, or to move out of Denver or go to private school. There are folks that have special needs children and
have specific reasons because of experiences at their neighborhood school. He said there were a percentage of families with kids in the system that have run up against something that is not working for them. He said there are a few others things to mention: the K-8 school, smaller class size, and a smaller school are all popular; uniforms continue to show up as something people are interested in; discipline standards; and Spanish language instruction beginning in kindergarten and a consistent Spanish language program from kindergarten on is something that is appealing to parents.

Mr. Patterson asked if there was $1,000 for each grade level for activity fees in the revenue projections.

Mr. Griffin responded that that is a line item in the budget, and he understands what can and cannot be charged as student fees and what is within the law. He said that would be for field trips or extra fees that would be outside the school’s academic program.

Mr. Woodward asked the status of the possible location of the academy.

Mr. Griffin responded that in working with real estate agents a few sites have come up that are okay: one is very strong. He said there always are questions about affordability, tenet improvement costs, and whether those sites will be available in six months when the school can afford it. The good news is that the best site they have seen so far has been available for a couple of years. That site would be more on the central east side of the area. A few others are not of as a high priority, he said.

Mr. Woodward asked about the recruitment plan in terms of the diversity in the community, not including the Indian and Russian families already mentioned. He said the community had a substantial number of other minorities, and he feels the location would not be likely to attract those. He said the Board has a particular interest in a school that will offer a different kind of program and in knowing there will be an effort to have diversity. He asked what they would do to develop that.

Mr. Griffin said there is nothing the group can do at this early stage when they are just doing mass mailings. When they get commitments from the first 188 kids there would be more information. He said there was an outreach plan in place to get to more specific families. One part is narrowing the site focus to one that will give them a reasonable chance of making sure diversity is represented. As a location is settled upon, they would define a reasonable perimeter around that location and implement the outreach plan, which includes door-to-door recruiting and multilingual communications to families. A school administrator might be hired at what could be five or six months earlier than most charter schools do. It would be a high priority for that person to be on the recruiting trail as quickly as possible. He said they would appreciate the district’s support for a mailing to families in that perimeter, and they would be willing to pay for it, with the district’s cooperation to make sure it reached all families within the area.

Mr. Woodward asked if the mailings so far had included families within Glendale.
Mr. Griffin said they bought the mailing for zip codes within that area, and given the response from some of the Cherry Creek families, he would guess that they were.

Ms. Peña asked if the information collected on the 188 students asked for gender or ethnicity, and if so, could that be provided to the Board. She said that they have shared some pretty compelling evidence that the Core Knowledge curriculum is very successful in terms of achievement, specifically in Colorado’s fifty programs. She asked if there are other districts with a similar enrollment to Denver’s and could they share their achievement rate.

Ms. Douglas said that the best they could refer to would be the Oklahoma City study, and there is a summary of the results of that research in one of the appendices. She said that there is a good example in the school Pueblo, Caesar Chavez Academy. She has collected test data from the two years they have been open, and they have showed great gains. They have about 58% of their population in the free and reduced lunch program. In response to Ms. Peña, she submitted the sheet she had with this information.

Mrs. Edwards asked if Core Knowledge is currently offered in regular public schools as well as in charter schools. She asked if they have talked with any Denver public schools about becoming a Core Knowledge school, as opposed to starting a charter school. When Mr. Griffin responded that they had not, she asked if a traditional public school offered a quality Core Knowledge program, would that be attractive. She asked if there is a choice opportunity with quality Core Knowledge offered, if it were one model offered within the district—much like Montessori, dual language, and IB—would that be what these families are looking for?

Mr. Griffin responded that he believes the Core Knowledge curriculum does resonate with families. He also believes that being charter specific resonates with families because it has a connotation that there is a level of control over that program that ensures that the program will be implemented as planned. He said people understand that a charter school has a unique ability to implement a program precisely as they want it implemented, that they have the freedom and flexibility to do with their budget and personnel the things they need to do to implement that program and its mission.

Ms. Douglas added that people expressed many reasons for their interest in the academy, and Core Knowledge was one of them, but it is all the different things put together. She said it would be great if such a school could be created, but there are so many characteristics to be looked at, and the founding committee feels that all of them are important to make this school happen.

Mrs. Edwards offered a word of caution. People envision what a school is going to be and are excited about attending, because in their minds they designed the elephant a certain way. But when reality begins, sometimes the elephant does not look the way the people who conceived it think it should look.

Ms. Gantz Berman said that that concluded the charter school presentations.
D. Recognitions

1. Ms. Gantz Berman said the Board is extremely proud of Donna Wittrock, Executive Director of Food and Nutrition Services, and she asked Andre Pettigrew, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources to do the honors.

Mr. Pettigrew said that last July he attended the 57th Annual American School Food Services Association meeting. He represented the Board because Ms. Wittrock was being installed as the 57th president of the association. He was impressed that there were over 8,000 attendees at the convention, by the level of respect and recognition that Ms. Wittrock gathered from her peers. He learned that Ms. Wittrock started in the district in 1976 as a substitute food service worker, parlayed that career to become the head of DPS food services, and now has become the national chair for all of the school associations for food services.

Ms. Gantz Berman said that Ms. Wittrock is featured on the cover of the national publication for the American School Food Service Association. On behalf of the Board, she presented Ms. Wittrock with a plaque commending her on her achievement. She asked Ms. Wittrock to speak to her goals as president of a national association and about some of the things going on in food services in Denver.

Ms. Wittrock said she has been humbled by this recognition. It was very special to have Mr. Pettigrew at her installation—he participated and read a letter from Ms. Gantz Berman—and this sent a strong message to the organization about the support of the Board and superintendent. She ran against a gentleman from Pittsburgh who is well known in the business, and 55,000 members of the association elected her.

She said that she will give the Board a brief overview of her plan of action, but basically her passion is that those who work in the school food service programs are an integral part of education. She says that sometimes her staff feels they are there to prepare the food, clean up and go home, but she tells them they are so much more in the life of a child. She said the statement, “A hungry child cannot learn,” is so true. She feels school meals are a very important link to literacy, and that is what she plans on championing this year. She also believes in professionalism for all those who work in food services.

Ms. Wittrock said her position as president of the organization is an honor for her and will afford her many wonderful opportunities and experiences. She said she also looks at what would come back to the district because she feels it presents the opportunity for the district to be a part of cutting edge efforts, projects, and pilots that will help advance health, well being, and nutrition for children. She thinks this is an opportunity to showcase what the district is all about. She said that DPS is thought of as a premier school district and a premier school food service department around the nation. She hoped the Board saw the “Unwrapped” segment filmed at Archuleta. Another food
channel program will be taped at North in a few weeks, and Peter Jennings is doing a story on the American diet and will interview her and do some taping in schools.

Mrs. Edwards told Ms. Wittrock that the Board was proud of her and the honor she was bringing to herself and the district. She said she had heard the district described as a cutting edge district, but had not applied that to the kitchen and food preparation. She offered her congratulations and appreciation.

2. History Day

Rev. Guzman said it was an honor to present a team of five students from West High School who placed first, for the first time in the history of the DPS, in the Senior Group Performance category at the National History Day Competition. She said the theme for the 2003 History Day was Rights and Responsibilities in History, and the students performed an entry that was titled Voices from Sand Creek. In order to qualify to participate at the national level, where they competed against 78 other teams, the students first had to make it through the Denver and Colorado competitions. She said that the students would perform their winning entry, and following that the Board would make some presentations.

On behalf of DPS, she presented a trophy saying National History Day Championships, First Place, West High School, 2003, which listed the student’s names: Chris Apodaca, Pablo Moreno, Christian Orozco, Andrew Ramirez, and Blanca Trejo.

Rev. Guzman told Barbara Allen, teacher at West High, that the Board was proud of her as well, because behind every successful student is a successful teacher.

Rev. Guzman said the Board also wanted to recognize and congratulate Ed Glassman, teacher at Denver School of the Arts, as the recipient of the Richard Farrell Teacher of Merit Award at the National History Day competition. She said that the annual award was given to one teacher in the nation for innovative teaching within and outside the classroom.

Mr. Gantz Berman congratulated the students and teachers. She said she wanted to mention that Barbara Allen had coached teams for fourteen years and always has outstanding teams that do well. She said Ms. Allen is a tribute to the district.

II. Board Member Reports

A. Student Board of Education

Mrs. Edwards introduced members of the 2003-2004 Student Board of Education. She said that there are two students representing each of the Denver high schools, the Career Education Center, and Denver School of the Arts, who are selected to represent their schools on the Student Board of Education. She said some of the students were
involved in other activities and not able to attend. It has been her honor to work with the Student Board of Education for a number of years, she said. She said they meet monthly, discuss topics of interest to the district and to students. One of the things they did last year was to have a clothing drive at each of their schools to collect stylish clothing for high school age students. She said she had invitations to the grand opening of the districts store at Cole Middle School where homeless students in the district could obtain free clothing.

Mrs. Edwards said they were honored to have Judge Robert Patterson present to swear in the students and then asked the students to introduce themselves. The members present from the Student Board were: Cassandra Archuleta, West High School; Meghan Hartivgson, North High School; Katy Duncanson and Annie Guo, John F. Kennedy High School; Caroline Steed and Robyn Latson, East High School; and Helen Kassahun and Scott Frank, George Washington High School.

Mrs. Edwards thanked the two staff liaisons, Karen Higel and Troy Garner, who coordinate the activities of the Student Board of Education.

B. Financial and Student Achievement Report

Ms. Gantz Berman introduced Mr. Rudy Andras, an economist with RBC Dain Rauscher. She said Mr. Andras compiled very interesting information about the property tax implications of the proposed bond and mill levy and research about student achievement in the DPS.

Mr. Andras said that one of the things he has prepared for the district looks at student achievement and is a replication of one he did last year using CSAP results for elementary schools in Colorado. He has looked at all third, fourth, and fifth grade tests for last year and this year and grouped them by free and reduced lunch pupils. He said it is significant that not only is the district moving in the right direction with respect to test scores, it is an urban school district that is doing it. It gives the administration, teachers, and parents some satisfaction that things are moving in the right direction.

Mr. Andras presented a slide that showed membership in unsatisfactory schools and a significant decline in the number of DPS students enrolled in unsatisfactory schools from 2001 to 2003.

The second chart showed a comparison of Denver to national peers. He said that school districts across nation face the same challenges as DPS. He said it is important to understand not only how DPS fits in with other Colorado school districts, but how DPS fits in with national peers. He said the chart depicted the achievement gap, and shows that as free and reduced lunch counts go up the performance on CSAP goes down. He said DPS has a high concentration of free and reduced lunch students, and he looked at how DPS performed relative to similar types of schools. He said there are a host of DPS schools that out perform peers when looking at that statistic.
Mr. Andras said the third chart showing statewide information was heartening to districts like DPS. He said in comparing 2002 to 2003 performance there is a greater incidence of increase in student achievement on the seven CSAP tests from third to fifth grade at the higher free and reduced lunch schools. He feels this is closing the learning gap, and Denver is doing a better job than the rest of the state.

Mr. Andras said that he analyzed how the district did against its peers. He said 38 DPS schools had a positive gain relative to their peers. Of those 38 schools, 33 schools had a positive gain versus their free and reduced lunch peers, but started lower than their peers. He cited examples of schools that have moved to and stayed at the top: Bryant-Webster, Columbine, Castro, Barrett, and others who are making significant gains versus their peers.

The last chart looked at the improvement in mean scale scores. He said in looking at elementary schools, growth could be seen in mean scale scores, student achievement, and the number of schools that moved to proficient or advanced and moved past their peers.

Dr. Wartgow said that the chart showed growth in every demographic subgroup, and that is significant. He said he was very pleased because no one was being left behind. He said it is a real credit to the teachers, principals, and area superintendents.

Ms. Gantz Berman thanked Mr. Andras for his interesting analysis. She said that, as an economist, he would be a good person to ask a question. She said the district is going for a bond and mill levy election in November, and they are often asked why the district needs additional money, given that Amendment 23 was passed a few years ago. She asked if he had any thoughts regarding that.

Mr. Andras said most people do not understand that the amendment was an incremental increase in funding for schools, that it was not all going to occur at one time. He said DPS, through the 1% mechanism, has received over the last three years about $3 million of additional funding, and that DPS will continue to receive incremental increases. If the district has any large initiatives like those proposed in the mill levy override, they must go back to raising dollars.

Mrs. Edwards said the purpose of Amendment 23 was to help public education catch up from the years when funding fell below the inflation rate. Basically, it was to help districts to keep doing what had been done with adequate funding, and anything beyond that would call for a mill levy. Mr. Andras agreed, and Mrs. Edwards asked for his perspective on why the district’s $310.8 million bond was not a tax rate increase.

Mr. Andras said that DPS had experienced a significant increase in assessed value over the past few reappraisal cycles for all classes of property. Over that period of time, the district had a constant levy for debt service. That levy would stay in place at exactly the same level. The assessed value generated additional monies in the bond redemption fund to be used for current or future debt service, and the district had a choice. A portion of bond redemption monies would be used to pay some of the future debt
service at the same 5.999 mils. He discussed residential properties in the district and said if there was a rate of increase in the value of a house, it was exactly offset by the decline in the residential rate, which meant tax bills were raised zero.

III. Superintendent’s Reports

A. West High School Small Learning Communities

Mr. Dave Debus, Assistant Area Superintendent for Northwest, said that several years ago, under the direction of Dr. Irene Jordan, West High School launched a small learning communities initiative and it developed into the program that would be presented. He said that under the leadership of Angela Bodenhamer, principal, and others, this program has really taken off. He congratulated the students from West for the tremendous effort they made.

Ms. Bodenhamer said there are some exciting things going on at West. They have some outstanding students, and they are working on making West one of the best high schools in DPS and the nation. She said the redesign started about seven years ago by looking at research on taking a large high school and breaking it into smaller learning communities, and research on why that would be beneficial to students.

She introduced members of the leadership team working on the redesign: Anita Gonzalez Clem, assistant principal; Richard Chainhalt; Mario Giardiello, and Dawn Nudell. Mr. Chainhalt and other members spoke to various aspects of the presentation.

Mr. Chainhalt said that West is a school that at one time had been called by the state an unsatisfactory school, and that is why they began the process seven years ago. He said they visited schools and found that personalization, the ability to team teachers, and the ability to get students active in their learning brought results. In 2002 they received a $500,000 Department of Education grant, the only school in Colorado to do so, and one of 90 nationwide. They are now in the second year of implementation and will report on that, where they are now, and where they hope to be in a year.

They explained the money that had been gathered from other sources, three of them being the Department of Education grant, planning money from the Colorado Small Schools Initiative, and Title I. They said that in year one, they trained teachers, made visits to schools, created a math lab, paid for teachers, and paid for a site license in math for the Cognitive Tutor. In year two, they used their money for a writing lab, obtained eight teachers, a library and technical supplies. This year, they have a literacy coach and a math coach.

They said the program provided opportunities to develop a freshman learning community, which had four houses. Last year, all freshmen had an advisory period that was used for instructional opportunities and community service; this year they were able to provide only one semester.
This year began the phase two design, and they are working on their phase three design, and plan to have it firmed up by the end of the first semester. They are looking at three models. One model is to have grades 9-12 houses. Another would have ninth grade houses, and grades 10-12 career academies. The last model would have ninth and tenth grade house, which they have now, and then have grades 11-12 career pathways. For many years the Center for International Studies has been a magnet program at West High and that is a model they have successfully used.

They said they have a strong professional development team, a literacy coach, a professional developer focused on literacy, and PBC coach working with literacy. They work with teachers to use the same models and elements as the literacy studio program, including using writer’s notebooks, modeling, and the whole workshop model. West High had two teachers who are national trainers for the Carnegie Learning curriculum They started with training teachers in the Carnegie algebra and geometry programs. All students are being exposed to the Carnegie learning program. The West staff demanded that Carnegie provide the information in Spanish so the students are not just learning mathematics, they are learning English terms that can be used as they transition into using English throughout their education.

In addition to math and literacy, they have a strong commitment to science and social studies curriculum and students are encouraged to take four years of each. They have many student support services, including student advocate, peer leaders, and student action teams. With the redesign, they felt it was important to focus on professional development. They have coaches for literacy, math, and professional development, as well as community consultants from the Public Education Coalition.

Mr. Chainhill completed the presentation by saying he has never been so excited by a program. He said they have visited many places, and they are now being visited as a lab school. He said he feels that West High School aligns with the district’s forward thinking, and that they are looking forward to seeing the benefits of the program.

Mrs. Edwards commented that they have created a small school environment at West High School, and at Manual they have created small schools by dividing into three sections. She asked if they could briefly compare and contrast the rationale.

Mr. Chainhill responded that the basic difference between the two schools is by model and timeframe. Manual selected a model that was three separate, autonomous schools that would be employed within one year. West High selected a model that has three phases over a three-year period and divides the school into small learning communities.

Ms. Gantz Berman thanked the West High group for their presentation. She said that she knew some people were here to hear the presentation and discussion on parent involvement. She said the Board would break for dinner and then probably do that piece upstairs, so she thanked those people for their patience and invited them upstairs.
IV. **Consent Agenda**

Assistant Secretary Jacquie Lucero read the consent agenda items by number and sequence, in accordance with consent agenda procedures. The following items were removed from the consent agenda and held for discussion:

IV-E-1 Resolution – Adding Section 117, Earned Service

IV-E-2 Resolution – Amending Section 40.50, No Benefits Payable During Certain Periods of Employment

IV-E-3 Resolution – Adding Section 115, Limitation Regarding Certain Periods of Service

IV-E-4 Resolution – Adding Sub-Section 70.89, Annual Retirement Allowance Adjustments

The following items were included under the consent agenda:

A. **Board of Education**

1. Minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 7, 2003 – It was recommended that the Board of Education approve the Minutes for the Regular Meeting of August 7, 2003.

B. **Administrative Services**

1. Human Resources

   a. Personnel Transaction Report – It was recommended that the Board of Education approve the Personnel Transaction Report. A copy of this report is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix (03-18), IV-B-1a.

   b. Agreement between the Denver Public Schools and the Association of Buildings and Grounds Workers – It was recommended that the Board of Education approve the Agreement between the Denver Public Schools and the Association of Building and Grounds Workers. A copy of this report is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix (03-18), IV-B-1b.

2. **Facility Management**

   a. Final Settlement - It was recommended that the Board of Education approve the Final Settlements for Contracted Services as described on the attached schedule. A copy of this report is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix (03-18), IV-B-2a.
C. **Budget and Finance – Financial Services**

1. **Designating Eligible Public Depositories** - It was recommended that the Board of Education adopt a resolution updating the list of eligible banks and saving institutions, as determined by the State Division of Banking and State Division of Financial Services, in which the school district and schools may deposit funds. A copy of the resolution is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix (03-18), IV-C-1.

D. **Student Services**

1. **Individual Athletic Passes** – It was recommended that the Board of Education approve a motion that revises the 2003-2004 fee structure for the Department of Athletics to make Individual Athletic Passes available for the entire school year. A copy of the motion is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix (03-18), IV-D-1.

A motion was made and seconded that the consent agenda be approved. A roll call vote was recorded, and the motion passed unanimously.

**DISCUSSION AGENDA**

Mr. Woodward said that the held items all relate to changes that are being made to the DPS Retirement and Benefit Plan. They are all done in anticipation of the merger of the DPS Retirement System into the Public Employees Retirement System (PERA). He asked if Dave Stella, the executive director of the retirement system, could explain these so we can all understand what we are involved with here.

Mr. Stella said he would try to make his remarks as straight forward as possible. These four items were adopted by the DPS Retirement System’s board of trustees on September 8th, and they are recommending these changes to the retirement plan. Mr. Stella cautioned that these would not be the only ones that the Board would be seeing. As they go forward with the negotiation and merger process there may be other changes that will facilitate that merger. This is a $27 billion merger, he reminded the Board, and it is a little complicated.

The four items before the Board are to facilitate the merger, but in addition to that, simplify the plan for members next year before the merger.

Number one means that, as of January 1, 2004, each active member will receive the greater of active or accredited service, and that service shall be called “earned service.” Right now, members have both what is called active service and accredited service on their records. Active service determines their eligibility for a benefit; accredited service determines the amount of the benefit. What they are proposing is that that service be merged into one service to be called earned service. There is a minor cost to that because in some cases it does add service to certain members. The cost is .05% of payroll, a very small amount, and it will not be seen in
the contribution rate because it will not actually be included in the contribution rate until after the merger. It is a later cost that will be included in the merger cost calculations, he said.

The second item is a requirement that is imposed on DPSRS covered employees who retire and then return to work for the district in a part-time capacity. That would require a break in service of at least 30 days. That’s been a policy, but it’s never actually been in the plan. We are proposing that that be included in the plan to comply with the IRS requirement that there be a bonafide termination of employment.

The third item is a provision that would prevent a member from purchasing service in our plan when they’ve already purchased that same service for a benefit in another plan. It is basically an anti-double dipping provision.

The last item is conditioned upon the merger of DPSRS and PERA, the date for the final cost of living adjustment, which we call an annual retirement allowance adjustment, is set for December 31, 2004, instead of the normal distribution, which would occur on the end of January 2005. That date is moved back because the merger will occur on January 1, 2005. In addition, that allowance would be set at either the amount that we ordinarily pay, which is 3 1/4% of the member’s benefit, or 3 _%, which is currently the PERA adjustment amount. It would be the greater of those two amounts on that date.

Mr. Stella said that those are all positive amendments that will help members and help facilitate the merger. Mr. Woodward clarified that the amendments would not result in any reduction of the rights or benefits of any retirees or future retirees.

Mr. Woodward moved the adoption of resolutions as follows:

E. Denver Public Schools Retirement System

1. Add Section 117, Earned Service – It was recommended that the Board of Education adopt a resolution to add Section 117, Earned Service, to the Retirement and Benefit Plan of the Denver Public Schools Retirement System effective January 1, 2004. A copy of the resolution is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix (03-18), IV-E-1.

2. Amend Section 40.50, No Benefits Payable During Certain Periods of Employment – It was recommended that the Board of Education adopt a resolution to amend Section 40.50, No Benefits Payable During Certain Periods of Employment System effective January 1, 2004. A copy of the resolution is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix (03-18), IV-E-2.

3. Add Section 115, Limitation Regarding Certain Periods of Service – It was recommended that the Board of Education adopt a resolution to add Section 115, Limitation Regarding Certain Periods of Service to the Retirement and Benefit Plan of the Denver Public Schools Retirement System effective January 1, 2004. A copy
of the resolution is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix (03-18), IV-E-3.

The motion was seconded. A roll call vote was recorded, and the motion passed unanimously.

V. **Old Business**

There was none.

VI. **New Business (Information)**

A. **Financial Services**

1. Statement of Revenue Allocations, Appropriations, Commitments, and Expenditures for the Period July 1, 2003, to August 31, 2003 – The Board will hear a status report of year-to-date revenues, expenditures, and interfund transfers for each fund as compared to the current-year budget and as compared to the year-to-date budget for the prior year. A copy of that report is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 03-18, VI-A-1.

B. **Student Services**

1. Expelled Students Report – The Board will review a report on the students who have been expelled during the past month. A copy of this report is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 03-18, VI-B-1.

Dr. Wartgow said Dave Stella has announced his December resignation as executive director of the DPS Retirement System to return to Wisconsin. He said that Dave has been with the district for two years and has provided incredible leadership in putting this merger together. As has been mentioned, this is a $27 billion merger, perhaps one of the largest mergers in the history of Colorado, including corporate mergers. Although he has only been here for a short time, his legacy of leadership in merging these retirement systems will have a lasting and positive impact on DPS for the foreseeable future. He said they just wanted to thank Dave for an outstanding job.

VII. **Adjournment**

Ms. Gantz Berman adjourned the meeting at 7:21 p.m.

Susan G. Edwards, Secretary
Board of Education