I. Call to Order – 5:00 p.m.

A. Pledge of Allegiance

B. Roll Call

President Lester R. Woodward called the meeting to order at 5:40 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.

II. Board Member Reports

Mr. Patterson said that he recently attended the Fourth Annual C/SAT Conference by Safe and Drug Free Schools in Breckenridge, and commended John Leslie, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services; and Gene Jacquez, Program Manager, for a wonderful conference. The conference training sessions focused on the social/emotional issues that students face everyday and how children need safe activities in their neighborhoods.

Ms. Berman announced that the Commission on School Nutrition and Physical Activity will hold a public hearing on September 28, 2004, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., in the auditorium at East High School. The Mayor, the Superintendent, and members of the Commission will be in attendance. She said anyone who is interested in discussing how to improve school nutrition and school activity is welcome to attend and speak. Please call 764-3211 to sign up to speak.

III. Superintendent’s Reports

Dr. Wartgow commented that the school year is off to a good start and congratulated everybody for their hard work.

IV. Consent Agenda

Assistant Secretary Jacquie Lucero read the agenda items by number and sequence. In accordance with Consent Agenda procedures, the following items were removed from the Consent Agenda and held for discussion:
IV-A-1 Resolution to Recommend the Reauthorization of the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District and Extension of the Mill Levy Funding in 2004

IV-B-1c Motion to Ratify the Tentative Agreement between the Denver Public Schools and the Denver Classroom Teachers’ Association

IV-B-1d Motion to Approve the New School-Based Administrator Evaluation Form, per C.R.S. 22-9-101

IV-C-1 Action on Dual-Language Program at Bryant-Webster Elementary School

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

B. Administrative Services

1. Human Resources

   a. Personnel Transaction Report – A copy of this report is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 04-21, IV-B-1a.

   b. Action Concerning the Opinion and Recommendation Award of Arbitrator Francis Quinn in the matter of the Arbitration between the Denver Classroom Teachers’ Association and School District No.1, in Case No. 77 390 00416 03 A copy of the Recommendation is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 04-21, IV-B-1b.

DISCUSSION AGENDA

IV-A-1 Resolution 2907 to Recommend the Reauthorization of the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) and Extension of the Mill Levy Funding in 2004.

Ms. Berman read Resolution 2907 in support of the renewal of the SCFD district this November. She said that this multi-county area tax supports Denver’s cultural institutions, which benefit district students and families, and makes Denver a vital community.

Ms. Berman moved adoption of the resolution. Mr. Patterson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. A copy of this report is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 04-21, IV-A-1.

IV-B-1c Motion to Ratify the Tentative Agreement between Denver Public Schools and the Denver Classroom Teachers’ Association
Mrs. Moss said that the teachers of this district work very hard, sometimes in difficult conditions, to improve the academic achievement of all our children. She does not believe that they could come up with any contract or agreement which would ever adequately pay district teachers for what they do. She is thankful that we were able to come to an agreement and move forward into another year in partnership with the Denver Classroom Teachers’ Association. She expressed her appreciation to all district teachers for the incredible job they do for our kids.

Mr. Hoyt said that for the second year in a row it has been a tough budget year, with several employee groups taking outright cuts. He said that in context of what has happened with every other employee group, teachers should realize that they truly are respected and appreciated in this district.

Ms. Berman also expressed her appreciation to district teachers. Unfortunately, she added, the tentative teacher’s agreement includes a significant salary cut for substitute teachers. She said that earlier in the week she had had the opportunity, with Mr. Woodward, to attend a meeting with substitute teachers. At that meeting, a commitment was made to include substitute teacher pay in next year’s market study of teacher salaries in the Denver metropolitan area.

Mrs. Moss moved adoption of this motion. Ms. Berman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. A copy of this report is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 04-21, IV-B-1c.

IV-B-1d Motion to Approve the New School-Based Administrator Evaluation Form, per C.R.S. 22-9-101

Ms. Berman moved to table the motion to approve the new school-based administrator evaluation form until the September 23, 2004, Board of Education meeting.

Rev. Guzman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. A copy of this report is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 04-21, IV-B-1d.

IV-C-1 Action on Dual-Language Program at Bryant-Webster Elementary School

Rev. Guzman said that Board members and district staff have always been supportive of strong, creative, academic programs, such as this program. She said that Bryant-Webster families are very proud of their school and have worked extremely hard for an opportunity to bring their English-speaking and Spanish-speaking children together. She stated she was honored to make the motion to approve the Dual-Language Program at Bryant-Webster.

Ms. Peña said that she also was very pleased that the decision has been made to honor the community input of Bryant-Webster. This program, with the support of the neighborhood and the community, will attract new enrollment to this already academically-successful school. Board members will continue to discuss issues at Academia Ana Marie Sandoval and Fairmont Elementary School so that all three dual-language schools have a healthy, thriving population that continues to draw new enrollment and significantly improves academic success.
Mr. Woodward acknowledged the strong support that the Piton Foundation has provided to Bryant-Webster. The Piton Foundation has focused its efforts, helping Bryant-Webster achieve their high level of achievement and has also committed to provide program training for Bryant-Webster teachers. He thanked the Piton Foundation for its support and the community members for their hard work and inventiveness.

Rev. Guzman moved adoption of the motion. Ms. Berman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. A copy of this report is appended to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 04-21, IV-C-1.

V. Old Business

There was none

VI. New Business

There was none

The Board recessed at approximately 6:05 p.m., for dinner and further Work Session. The Board reconvened at approximately 7:09 p.m.

VII. Public Comment (First Thursday of Each Month)

Youth and Militarism

Erin Durban and Sarah Bardwell, from the American Friends Service Committee, discussed the biased military draft of students of poverty and the opt-out option of the No Child Left Behind Act. A copy of the information they presented and their request for action is attached to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 04-21, VII-1.

In response to Mr. Patterson’s question on how the district handles opt-out notification, Ethan Hemming, Manager, School of Choice Office, said that in November the district mails notifications to the home address of juniors and seniors who are eligible to opt-out under the law. This information is collected and then, for those who request it, their names are removed from the file.

Joan Goettelman, President of the Denver Public Schools Retired Employees Association (DPSREA), said that DPSREA has 5,142 members. The DPSREA Foundation, funded entirely by donations from DPS retirees, awards ten $2,500 scholarships to graduating DPS seniors. DPS retirees spend an inordinate number of hours volunteering in the schools. She thanked the Board for their continuing support of health and life insurance benefits for retirees.
Substitute Teachers Pay Decrease

Lance Ballew said that he has been a DPS substitute teacher for ten years, and that the proposed one-third cut in salary is unprecedented in any professional service. This cut will decimate a substitute pool that is already stretched during vacation periods, with substitute teachers going to other districts for better pay. At this pay rate, a 34 percent pay cut, substitute teachers will be paid ten dollars an hour. He checked the district’s budget and found that paraprofessionals are paid $10.60 an hour.

Deann Minner said she has a BA and a Master’s degree in English and has been a DPS substitute teacher for 15 years. She said that the letter which substitute teachers received from the district about the pay reduction lied. It said that the new rates are comparable with other metropolitan area districts, but that is not true. The new rates are not comparable or competitive with other metropolitan districts. She surveyed 13 metropolitan districts and only three paid this little, and those at the bottom offered sliding scales that reward substitutes with higher pay the more days they work. The message this pay cut sends to substitutes is that DPS does not value them, that they are second-class employees, that substitute teachers are merely babysitters and that they deserve babysitters’ wages.

Vicki Phillips said she has been a substitute teacher for five years, is a parent of two DPS students, a wage earner for her family, and a dedicated teacher who is sought out for her professionalism, dependability, and exceptional ability to teach any lesson. She said to learn that her salary will be cut 33 percent a month, after she signed an agreement with DPS and shortly before school begins, is unjust and shady. She will lose approximately $3,000 in yearly income because of this pay cut. Substitute teachers, especially the qualified and talented, cannot work for babysitting wages.

Mr. Woodward said that the proposed teacher contract calls for a combined DCTA and administration salary study next year, and we have made the commitment to include substitute teacher salaries in that study. He said that Board members are not pleased about this cut, but it became necessary in order to reach a final agreement with DCTA. He added that all he can do is apologize for the shortage in funds that resulted in this very difficult situation. Substitute teachers still need to be thanked for the work that they do; they do it well; and they are important to the district.

Restrictions on Public Comment

Jeanne Price, a parent, said that the only reason she attended tonight is to defend her right to return someday. This proposed policy change will gut the public comment session by making it less convenient and difficult, if not impossible, for parents to appear before the Board. The provision to limit issues discussed to items on the Board agenda is impossible since the Board agenda is not posted in a timely fashion. There are many other problems with this, and as soon as you adopt this and “put a lid” on comments here, it will trickle down to every Collaborative School Committee in this district. If parents are not allowed to talk, we will be outside with placards and posters of protest.
Ms. Berman thanked Mrs. Price for her comments and said that she had brought up some good points. She said that the Board is aware that we cannot expect the public to comment on agendas if they are not posted in a timely manner, so that will be addressed.

Leo Smith said he is opposed to the proposed restrictions on public comment for several reasons. First, these changes foster the perception that this Board is isolative, elitist, and quite frankly, arrogant. With oversight of a half-billion dollar budget and making decisions that affect the families of Denver and their children daily, Board members should be anxious to receive public input. These restrictions seem to say that the average person is only worth two minutes of the Board’s time. Furthermore, the Board is not even willing to tell them when they should be here to speak. They are to come into this room and sit here, “hat in hand,” until all other business is finished, then they will be allowed to come before the Board. That is totally unacceptable. These restrictions are counter productive to the district goal of increased enrollment. If parents are not allowed to speak or feel that they haven’t had a fair hearing, they will leave this district with their children and they will tell their friends and neighbors to do likewise.

Ms. Peña said that she appreciated the fact that this is an important public forum for anybody to talk to the Board; however, she has found in her year on the Board that the more effective modes of communication are e-mails and phone calls. Board members visit schools on a regular basis; they are very involved in revitalization efforts. The public hearing is just one mode of communication. She feels that the other options for interaction are much more effective. She said she is aware that many people do not have e-mail or access to the internet. People can call Board members and request to meet with them. Board members try to be accessible, but she feels it is more effective to attend local neighborhood forums.

Mr. Smith said that many times people feel they need to be able to come before the Board and bring something to the public. Many people are uncomfortable with e-mail or other kinds of written communication. They feel they need to personally “look you in the eye” and explain the issue. It is very important for the television audience to see that the Board is responding to the public and not just doing everything upstairs in their “Olympian solitude on the seventh floor.”

Don Gripenbaw, representing the Denver’s District School Improvement and Accountability Council (DSIAC), said that it is DSIAC’s state mandated role to advise the Board when they feel a situation is detrimental to the district, such as the proposed policy changes. A copy of his comments are attached to the minutes of this meeting as Appendix 04-21, VII-3.

Ms. Berman said that other public bodies, such as the Denver City Council, limit topics to particular issues. Thus what has been proposed is not unusual for public bodies. The Board’s main responsibility is to review, revise, and make new policy. Board members are open to public comment; they just want to make sure that the public comment is relevant to the work that they are doing.
Selina Landes said that for the past five years, she has been a member of Aurora’s District Accountability Committee, which is equivalent to DSIAC. She has worked with the administration and cabinet to improve relationships between the schools, administration, staff, and parents. Parents can and do help a school district to be successful in all areas. The proposed changes set up barriers for students, parents, and community members. The changes will force students, parents, and community members to go elsewhere to get answers, which may or may not be limited to the news media. As Board members, you were elected by the community because they felt they could trust you and you would listen to their concerns on any matter, at any time.

Mrs. Moss said that she has spent a considerable amount of time thinking about the proposed policy changes and she is deeply concerned that many people perceive the changes will close out the public. She agrees with a statement made previously that the Board’s challenge is to figure out how to communicate with their constituents, their partners in education. The mandates within No Child Left Behind Act are to include parents and the community to increase student achievement and she is not sure these changes will help them achieve these goals. She said that her commitment over the next two weeks is to continue to look at this proposal and consider the fact that we really need our constituents as partners.

Mr. Patterson said that they must find a way to be more pro-active in explaining the vision and direction of the district early enough in a process to form alliances with different stakeholders, whether they be parents and students or the business or foundation community. Board members, the Superintendent, and Cabinet have had long conversations trying to set a real clear vision of core values and to decide where we want this district be in five, ten, fifteen years. He would like to see public comment be pro-active rather than reactive, and to find a way to get that comment early enough in a process that it is helpful in setting a course and a direction for the district.

Construction of New Schools Under Bond and Project Labor Agreement

Neil Hall, from the Colorado Building Trades Council, thanked the Board for their vision and Mike Langley, Executive Director of Facility Management, and his staff for meeting with them. He said the building trades council and the Denver Public Schools have a long history and now a relationship through their apprenticeship training program at Emily Griffith Opportunity School.

Leslie Moody, President of the Denver Area Labor Federation, thanked Mrs. Moss, Ms. Peña, Mike Langley, and Sharon Gonzales, HUB Coordinator, for their participation in the summer education program which they provided. She said they are very excited about the opportunity to move forward on a pilot project to impart knowledge regarding how their union apprenticeship programs work and how they partner with the schools.

Rev. Guzman thanked them for the opportunity to be involved in the process, especially in regards to the apprentice program. She said she is very supportive of the work done and looks forward to building a project labor agreement.
Mrs. Moss said she had found this process productive. She said she wanted to extend her thanks for the work that the labor community did for the district during the mill levy, with union members walking door-to-door to deliver our message. She said that she appreciated all the information and effort they extended.

Mr. Patterson expressed his thanks for their willingness to converse and to answer questions, and said he appreciated all the work they put into moving forward in this effort.

Cole Middle School

Tonya Hope said they were speaking as members of the Cole Middle School Conversion Committee for the Metro Organization for People (MOP), and had come to ask the Board to consider submitting an application to operate Cole as a charter school.

Elsie Mendoza, seventh grade student at Cole Middle School, said she is a member of the conversion committee that has been working for three years on plans to improve Cole. Last April, 130 people met with Cole’s principal to discuss ways to strengthen the reform plan. She said they are all working hard to improve Cole and make it the best it can be. They are hoping that DPS will continue to support them.

Tony Limon, parent, said that there is much evidence that the Cole Middle School reform plan is working, which is why they came to request DPS to present a charter application. He said they do not want, in any way, shape, or form, to lose their neighborhood school; they need options for their children.

Ms. Berman expressed her appreciation for their support and pride in Cole. She reviewed the process and timeline for the conversion of Cole. A committee has been established by the state to review the applications submitted to operate the charter. This committee includes: Kevin Patterson, Board representative from the Cole area; Erlinda Moreno and Eddie Simon, Cole parents; Kathy Bougher, Cole teacher; Craig Foreman, middle school teacher from a school rated “excellent” by the state; Sally Stanley, middle school principal from a school rated “excellent” by the state; Jerry Duran, a Cole area businessman; and the Commissioner of Education, Bill Maloney or his designee. The committee will have its first meeting next week. Proposals are due to the state by September 15, 2004. The review committee will review the proposals and make their recommendations to the State Board of Education. The State Board of Education will then decide who will operate the charter. She said that at this point in time, the district is not considering submitting a charter application.

Mr. Patterson thanked Ms. Mendoza for representing Cole students extremely well and said that they had demonstrated the enormous support, pride, and resolve of the Cole community. He reiterated that DPS will support Cole in whatever fashion it moves forward.
Dr. Wartgow thanked them for coming and being great representatives of Cole. He also reiterated that the Denver Public Schools are not going to walk away from Cole, no matter what may happen through the charter conversion process.

Lauren Martens, an Academia Ana Marie Sandoval parent and member of the Northwest Parents for Excellence, spoke regarding the Dual-Language Program at Bryant-Webster Elementary School. He thanked Board members for their initial support for the dual-language Montessori program at Sandoval and the dual-language program at Bryant-Webster. He said that the Board’s willingness to work with the community and support the community’s vision is appreciated and that that partnership has led to a great program. Dual-language programs have many benefits. They bring together kids from diverse income levels in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

VIII. Adjournment

Mr. Woodward adjourned the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

Michelle Moss, Secretary
Board of Education