I. **Call to Order – 5:00 p.m.**

A. **Pledge of Allegiance**

B. **Roll Call**

President Elaine Gantz Berman called the meeting to order at 4:58 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, and Mr. Lester Woodward. Mr. James Mejía was absent and excused.

C. **Recognitions**

1. **DPS Jump Rope League**

The following members of the DPS Jump Rope League performed for members of the Board of Education and the audience: Alexis Bartholomew, Corisca Perkins, Claire Morrow, and Kendra Montoya of Montclair Elementary School; D’Andre Manns of Hill Middle School; and Ben Morrow of Morey Middle School. Eric Larson, Montclair teacher and DPS Jump Rope League Coordinator, explained the various routines done by the students and how they fit into rope skipping competitions on a local and statewide basis.

Mr. Larson explained that there are 560 boys and girls who participate in the Jump Rope League, and that the students come from 17 elementary schools and three middle schools, and that the League runs from November through April. Competitive jump rope, he said, consists of both single rope and double dutch skipping events, and follows rules and regulations set by the International Rope Skipping Organization. He explained that a citywide competition was held on April 13, 2002, at Manual High School, and included 14 events.

Mrs. Moss thanked Mr. Larson for his work and explained that he is the person responsible for coordinating the annual rope skipping competition. Additionally, she said, he conducts a rope-skipping clinic early in the season to assist children in learning tricks to develop into routines, and to help instill in them the confidence they need to compete and perform in front of an audience.
VI. **New Business**

A. **Information Only**

1. **Educational Outreach Program**

   Ethan Hemming, Research Analyst for the Department of Research, Planning, and Special Programs, said that the goal of the Educational Outreach Program (EOP) is to provide services to homeless children in the district, through in- and after-school services at some district elementary and middle schools. Another goal, he said, is the reduction of barriers to education faced by homeless children through the intervention of EOP program staff and liaison. He explained that the EOP has served homeless children in Denver for thirteen years and that, through the 2001-2002 school year, the program has been present in four elementary schools and one middle school; during the 2002-2003 school year, the program will expand to provide services to eight elementary schools and two middle schools.

   He stated that EOP after-school programs are provided at the elementary school level and include tutoring services, nutritious snacks, and recreational activities. Another important aspect of the program, he said, is the attention to social services needs of the children, such as providing clothing, if needed; transportation assistance in the form of tokens for public transportation; referrals to mental health services. He said that the middle school program does not include after-school activities, and has a more intense focus on the social services aspect.

   Mr. Hemming referred the Board to Tables 1 and 2 in the report, which show the schools in which services are provided, and how the program is funded, respectively. The program, he said, is funded primarily through Title I, and a smaller federal grant; other grants have been applied for and the program liaison works extensively to raise funds at the local level. He said that the October 2001 pupil count revealed that there are approximately 670 homeless children in the district, which he feels is likely an underestimation of the true scenario. During the current school year, he said, the EOP serves approximately 485 homeless students, or nearly 75 percent of identified students.

   He said that new legislation had been passed at both the state and federal levels geared to assist the homeless, but that that legislation would not have a great impact on the program because it was already in compliance with the new guidelines. The new guidelines require that the district:

   1. Appoint a homeless liaison.
   2. Keep homeless children in their school of origin, to the extent possible.
   3. At the request of parents, provide transportation to ensure Provision #2.

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* This agenda item was taken out of sequence.
4. Facilitate the enrollment of homeless children, even if standard documents are not available.
5. Obtain records from previous schools.
6. Provide free lunch with standard documentation.
7. Ensure equal opportunity and access.

Mr. Hemming said that, over the past few years, the EOP has consolidated its funding, become more efficient at managing its funds, and has obtained a full-time liaison in Kim Micelli. During that time, he said, service to homeless children has become more extensive and of higher quality. He said that there are also increased efforts to identify homeless children and monitor progress made by those served through the EOP Program, with the help of a database designed in cooperation with the Department of Assessment and Testing.

John Parvenski, President of the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, said that high rates of mobility often hinder the education of homeless children. Prior to becoming homeless, he said, residents of homeless shelters lived in, on average, ten different places in the previous twelve months, including the homes of relatives or friends, or in inexpensive hotels. He said that it is vital that everything possible be done to ensure that homeless students are able to stay in their schools of origin, even if circumstances dictate that the families relocate in another school attendance area.

He said that he does not favor separate educational facilities for homeless children and, in fact, such action has been rendered illegal by federal law. However, he said, additional social services are needed for these children and coordination with homeless shelters and transitional housing programs should be established to avoid confusion or duplication of efforts. He praised district schools for implementing after school activities.

A copy of the report entitled *Educational Outreach Program* is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 02-08, VI-A-1.

2. **Civil Rights Commission Report**

David Zaterman, Chairman of the Colorado Civil Rights Commission, said that about 19 months ago, a group of students appeared before the Colorado Civil Rights Commission with allegations of disparate treatment in Denver Public Schools. He said that the Commissioners heard their complaints and came up with a plan they hoped would be constructive to the district and the community at large by investigating the allegations and analyzing them with the aim of presenting a proposal to the district suggesting ways to remediate the problems.

He introduced Dr. Robert Wintersmith, Project Manager of the Civil Rights Commission Task Force, who said that the Task Force represents a very unique effort because of the broad based constituencies involved in the process, including
representatives of all district employee groups, parent groups, and students; as well as interested and invested members of the community. Dr. Wintersmith said that educational issues should be brought forward and made one of the highest priorities on both the state and national levels. With the comparatively easy generation of data, he said, disparities in education should be readily identifiable, and efforts must be made to positively impact that disparity.

Dr. Wintersmith stated that one of the Task Force’s initial responsibilities was to select a chairperson, and that two people were chosen as Co-Chairs: Alice Langley, President of the Black Education Advisory Council (BEAC), and Willie Anthony, citizen representative.

Ms. Langley said that she was pleased to be a part of the Task Force representing African American students who are struggling to get a quality education in Denver. She said that many diverse organizations became actively involved in this research-based assessment of disparity in Denver, and that she has never seen such a study in her more than 30 years as an educator and educational administrator. She said that she has been part of organizations that have submitted plans to improve the quality of education for children of color, but that she had never contributed to a report that seemed certain of the organization’s ability to ensure real educational reform or that provided any real answers to the challenges faced by students of color. However, she said, the petitions submitted to the Civil Rights Commission by students of Manual, Montbello, East, and George Washington High Schools gave the community an opportunity to look at Denver’s schools and determine the causes of the disparity that exists and keeps African American children from learning. She said that the research involved in creating the Civil Rights study dispelled many longstanding myths regarding the education of children of color and has disproved many of the excuses that have been presented over the years to support those myths. Relevant information has been gathered, she said, and proven records and best practices are presented in the area of increasing student achievement for African American students.

She said that the Denver Dozen, a list developed by Dr. Oscar Joseph, identified and summarized emerging common themes or variables encountered by students of color, based on a thorough review of all relevant literature regarding the achievement levels of African American students. The twelve themes that have emerged throughout this research, she said, are ways to engage African American children and close the achievement gap. She said that the purpose of the Denver Dozen is not to place blame but, rather, to gain the involvement and engagement of many constituencies to work together to make a positive impact on the educational lives of children. The solutions have been laid out, she said, and it is up to the community to act upon them. She urged the Board and the school district not to turn a deaf ear or a blind eye to the Task Force’s recommendations, and to come together as one body with one single goal—to provide the very best in education to all children in Denver, but especially for African American children who have been left behind for too long a time. The Task Force, she said,
is committed to working with the district to overcome the obstacles that have hindered children of color from getting a quality education.

Dr. Wintersmith announced that, on May 30, 2002, in the Space Theater of the Denver Center for the Performing Arts, the Civil Rights Commission would sponsor a community symposium, at which time representatives would present the complete research, strategies, and findings of the Task Force. He said that it is important to remember that, as with all good research, the research presented in the Task Force’s report could be replicated in any community and with every ethnic group.

He introduced Dr. Oscar Joseph and said that, in the short time he has known Dr. Joseph he has been impressed by his work and heartened by his friendship. He said that Dr. Joseph’s analytical skills, deeply grounded knowledge, and understanding of urban education issues had been indispensable to the Task Force.

Dr. Joseph said that there are children in every community who have been neglected, and who are in need of care, encouragement, and uplifting. He recalled the story of an African American woman named Mary McCloud Bethune, who sold all of her worldly possessions, bought a home, and converted it to a school. To pay the bills, he said Ms. Bethune sold baked goods on the side, and she did these things because she believed that education is necessary to sustaining life. He said he tried to conduct his study with the same kind of commitment, giving, and dedication to education.

He praised the 428 students who participated in the study, who gave of their own stories so that others could have a better understanding of how to educate all children. He expressed hope that the study would usher in a new era in urban school reform for the Denver Public Schools. He quoted philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who said: “Educators should prepare children for the opulence of life.”

Dr. Joseph stated that his educational background prepared him specifically to work in urban education situations and that he has learned to “teach to the life of the students,” to help them identify with their own educations. If this is done, he said, tests given to measure achievement would take care of themselves. He said that, as a graduate of Montbello High School, he feels as if his education prepared him for his life and enabled him to apply to do undergraduate work at Northwestern University and receive his doctorate from the University of Illinois/Chicago. His teachers at Montbello, he said, understood the importance of his “life journey” first and foremost, and treated standardized testing as secondary to that life journey. He stated that children are going to have to live their lives for a long time after they stop taking standardized tests and that education must prepare them for it.
Dr. Joseph said that the study is a blueprint for educating children of color, that it is defensible, fair, and just. The next step, he said, is to conduct a four-year pilot program that takes the salient variables and weaves them into the district’s curricula. He proposed that the study begin involving, on a voluntary basis, African American students entering with the freshman class in the fall of 2002. He expressed hope that such a pilot could be conducted and said that he looked forward to sharing positive results with the Board in 2006—statistics and student products that demonstrate the fact that teachers have improved their practices and principals who understand what it means to take children who were lost and place them on the track to success.

Dr. Wintersmith said that he has attended many of the Task Force meetings and that it has been very rewarding to see so many people from different segments of the community becoming involved in, and showing concern for, the education of children. He expressed hope that the Civil Rights Commission and the district could work in tandem to improve the quality of education for all children.

Mr. Patterson thanked the representatives of the Colorado Civil Rights Commission for their presentation. He said that it is imperative that the district sincerely and honestly address the gap between higher- and lower-performing children so that all children have the opportunity to learn and succeed. He stated that he looks forward to reading the Commission’s report in more detail, as well as participating in conversations and dialogues with Commission members to obtain feedback, input, and strategies.

The increased emphasis on accountability, he said, changes the district’s emphasis and, instead of focusing so much on inputs to the educational system, there is a stronger focus on outcomes. He said that more and more, recent studies have shown that the surest way to achieve positive outcomes is for educators to forge positive relationships between schools, students, parents, and teachers—to create a team approach to education.

Dr. Wintersmith said that when the study was first proposed, it was suggested that Hispanics and other students of color be included in it. He said that he decided that, given the vast array of cultural differences between peoples of color, the study would be more accurate if focused on one ethnic group—African Americans—and the issues specific to that community. The Civil Rights Commission, he said, is concerned with the broader implications of education for all students in the Denver Public Schools; however, they believed that it would be better to focus on one group and present an accurate picture of their educational needs.

Mr. Woodward thanked the people involved in the Civil Rights study and said that he was very appreciative of their efforts. He said that, since the Board had just received the report, it was obvious that they hadn’t had time to do more than browse through it, rather than being able to give it an in-depth perusal. He said...
that the report appears to be focused on education at the high school level, and asked whether the concepts in the Denver Dozen also apply to children in elementary and middle schools.

Dr. Wintersmith replied that the study was initiated following accusations by a group of African American students of disparate treatment in some district high schools. As a result, he said, Civil Rights Commission representatives felt that it was appropriate to focus on issues brought up by those students and, therefore, the report targeted those issues only on the high school level.

Dr. Joseph said that the study began with an extensive study of all of the known current literature regarding educational disparity and found that most of the subject matter covered education on a kindergarten through grade 12 basis. He stated that he based the Denver Dozen on consistencies found within that literature and that many of the concerns raised in the Denver Dozen are found across the scope of education, without regard to students’ ages or grade levels.

Superintendent Jerry Wartgow thanked the representatives from the Civil Rights Commission for the cooperative, honest spirit with which the study was undertaken. Upon first meeting with Commission representatives, he said, the district staff stated that they needed help from the Commission, and that they looked forward to working with Commission and to their participation and analysis. He assured the analysts that he and the Cabinet would read the report with careful consideration and would have it sent to high school principals for their perusal. He stated that he would contact the Civil Rights Commission Office in the near future for next steps and follow-up. It is apparent from the report’s thoroughness, he said, that a great deal of time and effort were put into it, and the district needs that kind of comprehensiveness and clarity when analyzing areas that are problematic and require additional attention.

He referred to the district goal of setting high expectations of students and said that, by extension, those expectations are extended toward faculty, staff, administrators, parents, and community members. The other two goals, he said, are to improve the performance of all students and to close the gap between better- and poorer-performing students. Research compiled over the past ten years, he said, has demonstrated that the problem has increased, despite efforts to address it. He stated that the only hope of eliminating the achievement gap is to educate all students and help them develop to their fullest potential. The study, he said, is an excellent place from which to start, as it targets all three of the district’s goals.

Mr. Patterson said that he neglected to thank the people who really initiated the study, Students For Justice, a group of high school students who had the courage to speak out for what they believed was right and for what they wanted in the area of educational opportunities. He cited Thomas Jefferson’s statement about the
purpose of public education being to turn out the best citizens, and said that Students For Justice exemplified that sentiment.

He said that he also agreed with Dr. Joseph’s opinion that CSAP tests—or any other single assessment tool—are not the only indicator of student achievement or progress. He said that CSAP scores are an important piece of a much larger puzzle that includes other important pieces such as attendance rates, dropout rates, mobility rates, and others. There is a lot of talk, he said, about educational reform at the elementary school level, for children just beginning their educational experience; there is also much discussion around high school reform, as students prepare to leave the public school system to embark on their postsecondary educational careers. However, he said, no one speaks a lot of educational reform at the middle school level and that, to him, the current system seems to be “growing high school dropouts in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade.” He said that serious consideration must also be given to children in that age group and bridging the gap between successful elementary school educational experiences and high school.

Ms. Gantz Berman said that this report was coincidentally presented on the same day that the State of Colorado released the CSAP test scores for third grade students across the state. She said that the CSAP report indicated that, in 2000, 39 percent of third grade African American students who took the test were graded at or above “proficient”; in 2001, that number increased to 45 percent and, in 2002, that rate increased to 47 percent listed at or above “proficient.” She acknowledged that those rates are not as high as the district would like, but that they do reflect good and steady progress over the past three years. She expressed the hope that the district, working from the recommendations contained in the Civil Rights Report, would be able to close the achievement gap at a much higher rate. She said that that was a top priority for the Board and recalled Dr. Wartgow, during his interview process for the position of Superintendent, stated that closing the achievement gap was a primary concern for him.

She thanked the Civil Rights Commission representatives for the time, tremendous effort, focus, and resources that they put into the report. She assured them that the Board would give their report the careful consideration it deserves.

A copy of the report entitled A Research-Based Assessment of the Disparity in Educational Achievement Between Black and White Students: A Comprehensive Review of Contemporary Knowledge is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 02-08, VI-A-2.
BOARD PRESIDENT’S COMMENTS

Ms. Gantz Berman informed the audience that Rev. Guzman had left the meeting for the evening because she was being honored at the Cumbres dinner, at which she would serve as the keynote speaker. Cumbres, she said, is an organization that provides scholarships to first-generation Latino students who are planning to enter college.

She welcomed Gully Stanford, First Congressional District representative to the State Board of Education, who was in attendance at the meeting.

I. Call to Order (Continued)

D. Approve Agenda

Mrs. Moss moved that the Board of Education approve the agenda for this meeting. Mr. Patterson seconded the motion. A roll call vote was recorded as follows: voting “aye,” Ms. Gantz Berman, Mrs. Edwards, Mrs. Moss, Mr. Patterson, and Mr. Woodward. Rev. Guzman and Mr. Mejía were absent and excused. The motion was declared duly carried.

II. Board Member Reports

There were no reports.

III. Superintendent’s Reports

A. Appointment of Principals

Dr. Wartgow said that, as reported at the last meeting, progress continues in appointing principals to fill vacancies at several schools. He introduced Ricardo Concha, Southwest Assistant Area Superintendent, to announce one of the new principals.

Mr. Concha said that Richard Gonzales was chosen to be principal of Knapp Elementary School. Mr. Gonzales, he said, comes to Denver from Austin, Texas, where he had served for five years as a principal in the Austin Independent School District.

Mr. Gonzales greeted the Board and said that he looked forward to working in the Denver Public Schools. He said it was his understanding that the district would be working with the Institute for Learning as a means of improving student achievement, and he said that the Institute had helped him and his staff in Austin make significant gains in student achievement across the board, within all socio-economic and ethnic groups. In the Texas school where he was principal, he said, the student population was very diverse and that it was expected that the results of
statewide assessments would be very positive, with increases in all categories. He said that, when he decided to leave Texas, he was recruited by a number of school districts across the country and that he was most impressed by the Denver Public Schools.

On behalf of the Board and the district, Ms. Gantz Berman welcomed Mr. Gonzales to Colorado.

Dr. Wartgow echoed her sentiments and said that district staff would endeavor to make him feel at home in his new city. He said that more principals would be introduced at the meeting on May 16, 2002. Given the caliber of the new principals, he stated that he was very optimistic about the future direction of the district and its ability to meet the goals and objectives that have been set.

IV. Consent Agenda

Assistant Secretary Jacquie Lucero read the agenda items by section and number. Board members did not request that any items be held for discussion.

Mrs. Edward moved adoption of the consent agenda, and Mr. Woodward seconded the motion. A roll call vote was recorded as follows: voting “aye,” Ms. Gantz Berman, Mrs. Edwards, Mrs. Moss, Mr. Patterson, and Mr. Woodward. Rev. Guzman and Mr. Mejía were absent and excused. The motion was declared duly carried.

The following items were approved under the consent agenda process:

A. Administrative Services

1. Facility Management

   a. Final Settlements – It was recommended that the Board of Education approve the Final Settlements for Contracted Services. A copy of this report is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 02-08, IV-A-1a.

   b. Construction Contract for the Stapleton Elementary School Phase 2 Project – It was recommended that the Board of Education approve the Construction Contract for the Stapleton Elementary School Phase 2 construction project and the firm of Pincard Construction to act as the construction manager for the project, with the authority to award purchase contracts to vendors. A copy of this motion is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 02-08, IV-A-1b.
c. **Architect Selection for the 2003 Phase Corridor Return Air Project for Seven Schools** – It was recommended that the Board of Education approve the architect selection for the 2003 Phase Corridor Return Air Project at seven district schools. A copy of this motion is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 02-08, IV-A-1c.

d. **Architect Selection for the 2003 Chiller Repair Project at Wyman and Valdez Elementary Schools, and the Career Education Center** – It was recommended that the Board of Education approve the architect selection for the 2003 Chiller Repair Project at Wyman and Valdez Elementary Schools, and the Career Education Center. A copy of this motion is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 02-08, IV-A-1d.

2. **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 02-08, IV-A-2a.

**RECESS AND RECONVENE**

Ms. Gantz Berman called for a recess at 6:12 p.m. and reconvened the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

**RECOGNITION**

**Columbine Elementary School Choir**

Judy Hill, teacher at Columbine Elementary School, said that she and the children of Columbine wished to share with them a celebration of the global community. She expressed her pride in the students’ accomplishments and said that they were happy to be able to present their talent to the Board and the audience.

The children spoke of the greatness of individual cultural heritage, but said that, regardless of that heritage, all people should be honored and respected as human beings. They sang songs entitled “One Big World,” “This is the Only World We’ve Got,” “I Can, You Can,” and “Look to the Future;” they did several recitations about people working together to make the world a better place.

Ms. Gantz Berman thanked Ms. Hill and her students for their outstanding performance.
VII. Public Comment – 7:00 p.m.

Gloria Semien, parent of a child attending Morey Middle School, said that she is concerned about the plan to extend the school day by fifteen minutes beginning in the 2002-2003 school year. She said that that fifteen minutes actually adds up to much more in real time, taking into account changes in transportation, for which her son is eligible because of his enrollment in the Highly Gifted and Talented Program. She said that, under the current schedule, transportation has already proven unreliable, and that it would be worse if the plan to begin Morey’s school day at 7:40 a.m. were followed through. She showed a copy of her son’s bus schedule, which has its first pickup time at 6:38 a.m., meaning that many middle school aged children would be getting on buses before it was light outside. Another problem, she said, is that many schools do not allow students to enter the building prior to the beginning of classes, so those who are transported to school and arrive nearly an hour before the doors open, must stay outside regardless of weather conditions. She said that she chose to take her child to school herself when she found that, on his route, he was first dropped off at Hallett Elementary School to be picked up by another bus and taken to Morey, and that the staff and principal at Hallett stated that they would not assume responsibility for the safety of middle school students waiting there, because they do not attend Hallett.

She said that she rode the bus to and from school with her son one day and questions the equity of the transportation system. She said that children of color were the first children on the bus and the last ones off, and often spend in excess of an hour on the bus each morning and afternoon.

Judge Dana Wakefield, said that he is not speaking on behalf of the justice system, but rather in his capacity as a parent of two children attending district schools, his individual capacity in relation to the Denver Juvenile Justice Integrated Treatment Network, and in his capacity as host of the Geraldine Thompson Project, which works collaboratively with many community groups to address student attendance issues. He said that he comes in contact with social work staff from the Denver Public Schools in each of those capacities and that he wished to express to the Board that the district has assembled a brilliant staff with great expertise in their fields, who make his job easier.

Judge Wakefield said that there would be representatives from the Department of Social Work Services who would speak about the importance of social workers from an internal perspective, but that he wished to address the impact of social workers on outside agencies and the court system. Social Work Services, he said, provides an outstanding liaison service between the district and large, and often cumbersome, outside agencies; and they provide invaluable expertise related to juvenile matters. He said that eliminating social workers would cause many problems in the district, such as lower school attendance and higher truancy, which would, in turn, cause more of a burden on an already overtaxed juvenile justice system and, ultimately, have a negative effect upon the entire community. Social workers, he said, provide a valuable link between the district and the Department of Human Services by identifying children who are experiencing problems, individually and as members of a family, and are very successful in diverting
those families from the court system into appropriate services, thus keeping them from becoming entangled in a never-ending battle with the court system. He said that the entire community benefits from the fine work that is done by Denver Public Schools social workers.

He stated that he understands the constraints of the district’s budget, but that keeping the Department of Social Work Services intact would be money well spent.

Debbie Reinberg stated that she is the newly appointed Executive Director of the Colorado chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, but said that she is speaking as the stepparent of two children who have both had effective interventions from school social workers. She said that her stepdaughter, a seventh grader, is a good child who works hard, sometimes gets frustrated, is able to make and keep friends and is well thought of by her teachers. However, she said, a few months ago, she received a phone call from the parent of one of her stepdaughter’s schoolmates, who told her that her stepdaughter was overheard speaking of plans to harm herself. She said that her husband did not readily believe that his daughter could be entertaining such thoughts, but the following morning, she called the social worker at her stepdaughter’s school, who visited with the girl within a matter of just a few hours. The social worker called her right back, she said, with news that she did not feel there was cause for immediate concern, but that she did feel that the child would benefit greatly by seeing a counselor to talk about a number of issues, such as low self-esteem, shyness, and family issues. She said that a game plan was formulated and that the social worker continued to monitor her stepdaughter at school, to ensure that she was faring well, especially within the rigorous International Baccalaureate Program. She said that, although her stepdaughter has chosen to leave that program, there has not been any further talk about harming herself.

She said that her stepson has been helped by social workers at both his middle school and high school. A very intelligent, though troubled child, she said, he has recently been diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder and other related mental problems. She said he lacks social interaction skills, has few friends, and has had very poor grades due to his inability to focus on class work or assignments. The social worker at his high school, she said, recognizes his troubles and is personally able to witness daily patterns that may be destructive to him, and is able to bridge the gap between family and school by understanding the school environment and addressing issues accordingly. She said that the social worker has made excellent suggestions that could benefit her stepson, such as getting him involved with other students with special needs so that, by acting as a peer mentor, he might be able to gain some of the self-confidence that he currently lacks. The social worker, she said, was also instrumental in recommending alternative schools that could provide a better chance of success for him. She said that the social worker took the time to understand her stepson’s needs and to find viable alternatives for him within the school system, giving him his best chance to succeed.

Joe Waldon, social worker at Martin Luther King Middle School, said that his group is seeking the assistance of the Board of Education in saving 17 social worker positions in danger of being cut due to budget constraints. Over the past few years when such cuts
were possible, he said, staff from the Department of Social Work Services has been able to secure grant funding to continue providing necessary services in district schools, and has enabled the department to have a full-time social worker in each middle school and to fully implement the district’s successful Truancy Reduction Project. He said that the funding for that project, and several others, ends at the end of the 2001-2002 school year, and department staff has, so far, been unable to secure other grant funds despite aggressive attempts to do so. Therefore, he said, it is up to the Board of Education to keep the funding for the 17 endangered positions and the valuable services provided to many district students.

Mr. Waldon said that he is cognizant of the fact that the district has limited funds and that sometimes budget items must be cut in order to be able to continue providing other valuable services. District social workers, he said, enjoy the collaborative relationships they have forged with nurses and psychologists in the district, and they do not wish to risk losing any of those positions, either.

He said that a common perception of social workers is that they work only with the economically underprivileged and socially maladjusted, or that they merely make child abuse reports to the Department of Human Services. He said that, while social workers do work intensely with children and families who meet those criteria, they do so much more than that. Their primary function, he said, is to make students available to learn, and they do that by being involved in violence prevention, bully proofing, life and social skills training, and crisis intervention on an individual and schoolwide basis. He said that social workers also involve themselves in suicide assessment and intervention plans, teen pregnancy prevention and support, anger management, character education, attendance improvement, and grief and loss counseling.

Social workers, Mr. Waldon said, offer continuous consultation to classroom teachers regarding behavior management. He cited findings by the Colorado Education Association that proffered that the number one reason teachers leave their profession is a lack of support from school administration in the area of behavior management.

Mr. Waldon said that social workers are also heavily involved in special education staffings and the development of Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Much of their work, he said, involves developing working compacts with the stakeholders of the district, namely the parents of students in district schools. He said that they also serve as liaisons between numerous community agencies including the Mental Health Corporation of Denver, the Denver Department of Social Services, the Denver Police Department, and juvenile probation agencies.

This year alone, he said, social workers have helped students and faculty deal with the national and worldwide crisis of terrorism. On the local level, he said, social workers have met the task of intervening around sexual assault and harassment of students, as well as murder/suicides in neighborhoods near schools.
To give an idea of the impact of possible cuts to the social worker force, Mr. Waldon stated that the 17 social workers that could be cut served 2,203 students in the month of February 2002 alone. If those positions are cut, he said, it could be expected that in excess of 2,200 students per month will go unserved in the district.

He said that social workers support, and are integral to, the district’s goals of setting high expectations for students and parents, increasing the academic performance of students, and closing the gap between poorer- and better-performing students. On that basis, he respectfully requested that district funds be allocated to fund positions that were previously funded by grants.

Valene Raymer, social worker at Horace Mann Middle School, said that there are children attending schools throughout the district who are there solely because of the efforts of the school social worker. There are parents accessing services, she said, coming out of isolation and into a world of opportunities, and there are communities building stronger alliances because of the school social worker.

She said that events occur in the lives of children and families with which they are sometimes unable to cope without support and assistance, and it is in the best interest of those children and families, and the schools of which they are a part, to give them true opportunities to achieve what they hope is possible. The district’s mission states that all children will be served, she said, and to do that, the needs of all children must be addressed.

Ms. Raymer said that children have two basic needs in order to achieve academically—to know that they belong and that they are capable. However, she said, children cannot be made to care about education when their lives are falling apart, and they need help putting their lives back on track before they can meet educational standards or district goals. She said that she works on a daily basis with children and families struggling to understand their world; they want more for themselves, but do not believe that more is possible because they are incapable of overcoming the mounting barriers to their success. Children oftentimes do not know exactly what they need, she said, but they know when they are not getting it and, as a result, they act out and bring punishment upon themselves, adding to the weight of what is already wrong with their lives. She said that it is the job of school social workers to help those children find a way out by identifying and valuing their needs.

She said that it is incumbent upon the district to help children understand that, while life can be difficult, obstacles are not insurmountable, and to do that, it is imperative that doors for communication and assistance remain open to them. It is the job of school social workers to ensure that those doors remain open, she said, and to help children and families work within the system to take advantage of the opportunities that are there for aide and comfort.

Ms. Raymer said that she listens to the stories of children and families, and that those stories move her to care, understand, and fight for those families so that they can have the
chance they deserve. She said that children deserve more than what they will get without a social worker in their building, and that many of them will not be able to overcome the odds already stacked against them unless they have assistance. If 17 social worker positions are eliminated, she said, there will be children walking the streets of Denver when they should be in school; there will be children with unidentified and untreated mental illness; and there will be children expected to deal with extreme family chaos without support. She said that these children would lose another extremely important opportunity in a world where so many opportunities have already been lost.

Raquel Medina said that she has an eight-month old daughter and has attended the Florence Crittendon School for the past year, and that she is speaking on behalf of the students of that school in saying that the district should continue to fund the social worker positions. She said that teen mothers face many difficulties, such as finding the resources to feed and clothe their children, employment, transportation, and family issues. Social workers, she said, help them overcome those problems, as well as helping them learn to make good life choices for themselves and their babies.

She said that her primary goal is staying in school so that she can serve as a good role model for her daughter, and that she hopes to instill the importance of education in her child. She said that without the assistance of her school social worker, remaining in school would be much more difficult.

Erni Banks, district parent and teacher in training, urged the Board to support district social workers. She said that bad things can happen to any child or family, as they did in her family a while ago, and she found herself not knowing who to turn to for assistance or how to obtain it. She said that she called her children’s school with questions and was directed to the social worker, who was caring and understanding, and who provided moral support and resources. The social worker, she said, concerned himself with her family and became almost like family himself. She said that, because of the overwhelming nature of her family’s problems, her child had lost the will to learn. The social worker, she said, talked to her son about things her son did not feel comfortable discussing with his mother and, because of this attention and concern, her son regained confidence in himself and was named Student of the Month at his school in March.

She said that thousands of students in the district face what they feel are overwhelming problems and she urged the Board to fund the social workers who can help those children find their way back to the educational system. These children, she said, are the future of the world and many will be lost without the assistance of social workers, and they will have lost the opportunity to be all that they can be.

Richard Hayes, social worker at Henry Middle School, said that he was present to represent a number of district social workers that could not attend the meeting. The loss of seasoned social workers, he said, will affect the newer social workers to the district, and will negatively impact social work services. He said that social workers bring to the table a wealth of experience and expertise from a variety of social work delivery systems, addressing the needs of students, families, and schools. Loss of social workers, he said,
will mean the elimination of opportunities for new social workers to benefit from the experiences of those more seasoned, as well as the loss of the ability of teachers to consult with social workers for their own benefit and the benefit of the children they teach. Ultimately, he said, the loss will impede the district’s abilities to live up to its goals, objectives, and mission.

Currently, Mr. Hayes said, social workers are present in every district middle school, but the proposed plan to eliminate 17 social workers would mean that one school, with a membership of 475 students, would not have any social worker, and the remaining middle schools would have their social work time greatly reduced. Social workers, he said, collaborate with community-based service agencies, such as the Denver Department of Human Services, the Mental Health Corporation of Denver, Catholic Charities, and many others. He said that representatives from the Denver Department of Human Services have stated that the loss of district social work services would greatly increase their caseloads, and impede their ability to effectively serve the people of Denver.

Pat Sandos, principal of Skinner Middle School, said that he has worked as a principal at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, and that he has worked with some of the most exemplary social workers in the state. He said that he has had first-hand experience with the work that social workers do on a daily basis for the benefit of children, and with the responses they get from those children, who come to trust and care for their social workers. Social workers, he said, are critical to the educational mission of their schools because of the services they provide and the problems they address; without social workers, many of those problems would have to be taken on by teachers, thus removing them from their primary function of instructing children. He said that the problems must be addressed one way or another if children are to be able to attend to learning, and social workers have the expertise to do so and teachers do not.

He said that the Truancy Reduction Project has yielded significant gains at Skinner, locating children who would otherwise have slipped through the cracks and getting them into school where they belong. The success of the program, he said, is primarily due to the tireless efforts of social workers, who go out into the community and physically locate these children in homes and places they go to avoid being found.

Mr. Sandos said that he understands the issue of budget constraints, but urged Board members to find a means of saving money that does not involve people who actively touch and change children’s lives on a daily basis.

A copy of letters from several social workers urging the Board to fund the 17 social worker positions is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 02-09, VII-A.

Mrs. Edwards thanked those who spoke on behalf of the social workers for painting such eloquent pictures of the impact they have on the lives of children in the district. She said that she has long been concerned with how the district and its employees can meet the multitude of extreme and diverse needs of the thousands of children who attend the
Denver Public Schools. She said that the Board is aware of those needs and of the services provided by district social workers. For a long time, she said, it was hoped that partnerships could be formed with various governmental agencies and private foundations to work in tandem to provide these much needed services because the educational system is not provided adequate resources to both educate children and see to their emotional and social needs. One of those partnerships is ending this year, she said, but the needs remain and grow with every year, as the district needs more social workers, nurses, psychologists, teachers, and paraprofessionals to meet them.

Mrs. Edwards said that she has been with the Board through eight fiscal years and that, while funding increases, it does not increase proportionately to the needs of the children, and that she does not see a ready solution to the problem. District staff, she said, would be participating in ongoing budget discussions, and the issue of social workers would be part of those discussions but that it is important to remember that providing funding on one area must take funding away from another area, and that all of the areas impact the education of children. She said that she is confident that district staff and her fellow Board members will come up with fair and equitable ways to address the problems and needs of children as well as possible given current financial constraints.

She expressed her sincere gratitude to social workers in the Denver Public Schools for their ability and willingness to touch the lives of the students they serve and for making a difference for children and families. She urged them to offer any suggestions they have to Board of Education members, who are aware of, and sympathetic to, the needs of children but who are short on answers to the problems.

In response to a request from Ms. Gantz Berman, John Leslie, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services, gave an overview of the situation and the status of the Truancy Reduction Project. He explained that the project is faced with the elimination of two major funding sources; funding from the Mayor’s office ended in August 2001—but the district was able to absorb amount—and federal grant funding from the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative. The Safe Schools grant, he said, was not lost due to any faults within the district’s system but rather because it was only a three-year grant and the funding period is coming to an end. He said that there might be some carry-over money from that grant and that it is allowable that the district use it to keep funding the program, but that amount would not be sufficient to fund the program for an entire year at its current level. He said that the proposed budget includes a $300,000 allocation for the project in an attempt to keep funding truant officers and paraprofessionals working within 11 of the 13 middle schools currently involved in the project. Some of the schools, he said, are choosing to use some of the regularly allocated funds to purchase more time for school social worker time, while others are using other legitimate forms of funding for social workers, such as at-risk funding, so that they might sustain the types of efforts that were described by the speakers.

Mr. Leslie said that it is also important to remember that the district’s General Fund includes funding for specialized services and that the amount allocated is growing annually by virtue of Resource Allocation Methodology (RAM) formulas, and that there
would be 11 more specialized services personnel positions in 2002-2003 than in the current year, although he was not certain how many of those positions would actually be social workers, as schools may make such determinations for themselves.

Mr. Leslie stated that Dr. Irma Anthony, Program Manager of Social Work Services, and her staff have been making every effort to write and submit grant applications, solicit funds, work with community groups, and form networks to seek out funding and support for the Truancy Reduction Project. The project, he said, has made a significant impact on attendance at the participating schools, and grade point averages rose for a large proportion of students participating in the program. He said that most middle school principals would give support to his statements, which is why so many of them are willing to use resources formerly earmarked for other projects to purchase more social worker time.

He stated that, as eloquently as the speakers defended social workers, he believes that they still underestimated the work they do and the value of the services they provide. Social workers, he said, get students into schools and into their seats so that they are in position to receive instruction. Without social workers, he said, even the best teachers would not be able to do their jobs as efficiently or well.

Ms. Gantz Berman thanked Mr. Leslie for the information and clarification on the status of the Truancy Project. She said that she does not believe that any Board members have the slightest doubt about the value of social workers in the district or how competently they perform their many tasks. Specialized services personnel, she said, perform functions within the district that other people simply are not trained to fulfill. She expressed confidence that district personnel would find creative means of funding these important positions, and appreciation to the district’s social workers for their devotion and commitment to the students of the Denver Public Schools.

Frank McLaughlin, representing Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1563, said that association members had hoped, following their appearance before the Board at the April public hearing, that the message would have been brought to the Transportation Department’s management team that the provisions of the ATU contract must be adhered to. He said that the contract was negotiated and agreed to by both sides, and that it is not difficult to understand; yet it is completely disregarded by management representatives.

He cited statistics from one day during the week prior to the Board meeting showing several examples of violations to the contract and to the Transportation Department’s own handbook, especially in the areas of extra work assignments and overtime pay. He said that, week after week, drivers who already have more than the average number of hours on the clock are allowed to drive extra excursions—which is in direct violation of the department’s own rules—while other drivers who are equally in need of more hours, are not allowed to take these trips. Other violations, he said, include the handling of routes run by relief drivers. He said that management authorized these violations to the rules in the handbook without any repercussions to them; however, if a driver were found in violation of the rules, it would be considered grounds for termination.
Kirk Peffers, former Vice President of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1563, said that he generally does not feel comfortable airing his problems in a public arena, but that he feels that violations of a negotiated contract should be made known to the people who can work to stop them. He said that he has been a full-time bus driver for the district for 28 years, but that he had to retire as a result of on-the-job stress and bad working conditions that never seem to improve. Upon retirement, he said, he had not expected a gold watch, but had expected to be treated with some deference and dignity after his many years of service. He said that one of the things he had expected was that the district would extend forward his retirement date by a time equal to the number of sick days he had accumulated, as happens for other district employee groups and for certain other members of the ATU. However, he said, he feels that this benefit was denied to him in retaliation for his service as Vice President of the association, and is a capricious change of past practices—a violation of due process.

Mr. Peffers said that the district needs a firm Board policy regarding the disposition of unused sick leave at the end of an employee’s career. Ms. Gantz Berman replied that the district has such a policy and that if Mr. Peffers feels that he was treated unfairly in that regard, he should speak to André Pettigrew, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources.

Bill Moland, representing Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1563, said that during the last Board of Education election, representatives from ATU and other district bargaining groups met with every candidate on the ballot. During those meetings, he said, each candidate was asked how he or she felt about the right to strike and about the issue of binding arbitration. He said that those questions were posed so that the candidates would understand the powerlessness that the ATU membership has felt for many years. He said that the responses from the candidates indicated that there was some interest in trying to formulate some sort of right to strike policy and binding arbitration policies. He said that he wanted to ask if the new Board members still feel the same and if other Board members share those sentiments. He urged the Board to consider incorporating those aspects into future agreements with district bargaining groups.

He said that, when the teachers went on strike many years ago, a judge in the case issued an opinion that all public employees have the right to strike. If that is true, he said, he would like to know why Board of Education Resolution 2056, as amended, has never been modified to reflect the right to strike.

Mr. Moland presented the Board with a copy of the section of the ATU agreement dealing with maintenance employees and the bid process for open positions, a copy of which is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 02-08, VII-B. He said that it is his understanding that all positions in the maintenance department would be put up for bid on the first days of May and November, and that the bid process would be completed within a ten-day period from the date the positions were posted. After the bid process is completed, he said, the district has the right to make assignments based on skills needed for the position and seniority of the applicants. He stated that his first
objection is the fact that positions have not been put up for bid on the dates indicated. He then indicated a communication he received from a transportation management official who stated that it was management’s understanding that “management can place employees on a shift prior to posting the preferred shifts list because of skills, district needs, etc.” Mr. Moland said that that was not his interpretation of Article 10.2.2 of the agreement and asked for clarification of the issue.

He said that he discussed the matter with Mr. Pettigrew who agreed that it would be fair for him to bring the subject up before the Board to illustrate some of the differences between transportation management officials and employees.

Jean Price, parent representative on the Collaborative Decision Making (CDM) team at Bromwell Elementary School, thanked the district for its continued support of creative problem-solving competitions, such as Destination Imagination. She thanked Becky Muggli, Destination Imagination Coordinator, for her hard work; and Mrs. Moss and Irene Martinez-Jordan, Southeast Area Superintendent, for attending the recent Destination Imagination Regional awards ceremony. She said that she is the Team Manager for the Bromwell Enigma Destination Imagination team, which is representing Denver Public Schools at the World Finals in Tennessee in late May for the second year in a row.

She said that the Bromwell team is made up of children who simply enjoy coming together to solve challenges. The biggest challenge, she said, was learning to work together as a team, and the children, aged nine to eleven, earned perfect teamwork scores from many judges at both the regional and state competitions.

Ms. Price said that she wished to discuss the lack of accountability plans for CDMs, and the fact that conditions are not set forth should a school governing body begin to run amok. She said that she has been a parent representative on the Bromwell CDM for three years and that, over the past year, she has been verbally harried repeatedly by one of the CDM Co-Chairs because she brings a tape recorder to the meetings. These incidents of hostility, she said, have created an immense tension and bad atmosphere in the group, and she has tried for nearly a year to arrange a meeting with that individual to work out the differences between them. She said that she finally arranged a meeting in February, that the meeting was canceled without any notification to her, and that the CDM Co-Chairs notified her a few days later to ask for her resignation from the CDM, without giving any reasons for that request. She stated that she was stunned by the request because, prior to that notification, there had not been any indication that concerns had escalated to such a high level, nor had anyone attempted to work out the differences in a collaborative manner. When she refused to resign, she said, most of the CDM members boycotted the next meeting, and one of the few who did not boycott read a statement that said that the boycotting members would continue to do so until Ms. Price resigned; the meeting was adjourned without giving her an opportunity to defend herself.

She said that she appeared at the next meeting, and that fellow CDM members refused to discuss business because she was present. The business at hand, she said, was the
school’s budget, which was due to be turned in to district administrators within the next 48 hours. She said that the agenda for that meeting included a topic about changes to the CDM bylaws, and that she and the other parent representative had not been given any information about the topic or any proposed changes to the bylaws, although the other members who favored Ms. Price’s resignation had obviously been provided with materials well in advance of the meeting. The proposed changes to the bylaws, she said, included a provision limiting all Bromwell parents to serving a single one-year term on CDM per lifetime. She said that, currently, parents serve staggered two-year terms with an opportunity for reelection. The provision, she said, does not limit the terms of teacher, community, classified, or business representatives, nor prevent them from being reelected.

Ms. Price said that this is clearly a case of one interest group, the parents, having less accumulated knowledge about district issues than others; this change to Bromwell’s CDM bylaws would further limit the ability of parent representatives to obtain needed information, and all continuity of parent representation would be lost each year. She said that the ultimate goal of the proposed changes to the bylaws is total control of the CDM and repression of parents’ voice. The proponents of the plan, she said, state that the reason behind the proposal is that the slate would be wiped clean every year and that there would not be any residual carryover issues or personality conflicts from one year to the next. She said that that opinion implies that parent representatives are the only ones who cause conflict on the CDM, and that every Bromwell parent should be highly insulted by that assumption. There are no other district schools, she said, that limit parent participation on the CDM in such a manner.

The inequity of this proposal, she said, is staggering, as is the message behind it. Another part of the proposal, she said, is that the parental limitation of one term per lifetime be made retroactive, which is clearly an attempt to unseat her in the middle of her term without having to go through the risk or bother of a recall. She said that most of the Bromwell community, outside of CDM members, is not aware of this situation, or any CDM matters from the last four months because CDM minutes have not been published since January.

Ms. Price said that she was hesitant to bring up this subject in a public forum because it casts Bromwell in a bad light, but that the situation did not offer her any other kind of recourse because her fellow CDM members refused to listen or participate in collaborative discussion. She said that she has even faced criticism for appearing before the Board, as if she does not have the right of any other citizen in the city.

She said that she has attempted to get help in this matter from the Community Relations Office, the district’s legal counsel, the Area Superintendent, and several members of the Board of Education. As the situation unfolded, she said, she had hoped that someone from district administration would step in and tell the people seeking to limit parent participation on the CDM to stop their non-collaborative behavior. She said that Dr. Jordan has tried to help, but that CDM members refuse to attend a meeting to resolve the
issues; Aaron Gray, Director of Community Relations has offered to mediate the situation, but CDM members have not responded.

Ms. Price said that if children of nine and ten can learn to work together the way that the Bromwell Destination Imagination team has done, adults should be able to do so as well. The reason that the CDM is not acting collaboratively, she said, is that there are not any consequences for not doing so. She said that an accountability plan must be developed that deals with situations such as the one she is facing.

She said that every time she tries to speak on behalf of parents who want to raise the bar for all children—even the high achieving ones—she is labeled as negative. She said that she suspects that part of the reason the CDM asked for her resignation is the issue of homework, as she had brought up the fact that a number of parent constituents came to her with concerns about homework at a particular grade level. Some teachers, she said, feel that matters that affect only one grade level should be considered personnel matters because they clearly deal with only two or three individuals. She said that she does not share that opinion and has reason to believe that the Denver Classroom Teachers Association also disagrees. However, she said, the issue was never discussed or debated; rather, she was simply “voted off the island” by the CDM.

Ms. Price said that the CDM members fear that, with the overwhelming support that she received in her landslide election, they would have difficulty finding support to oust her from the CDM, and that is why they are trying to amend the bylaws. However, she said, the change to the bylaws would have lasting ramifications and, ultimately, would weaken parent participation in the decision-making process for years to come. She said that if she was mistaken about the homework situation that started the problem, she would gladly admit that if someone would explain it to her; but the CDM members refuse to talk to her or discuss anything resembling resolution to the differences between them.

She said that limiting parents to one-year terms on the CDM is discriminatory and can significantly weaken the parent voice because, if the rest of the CDM knows a parent representative is only going to be on the team for nine months, they can freeze that member out of significant discussion or decision-making. She said that most schools with high levels of achievement also demonstrate high levels of parental involvement. At Bromwell, she said, there is increasing evidence that parents are looked upon as second-class citizens, and the treatment of their elected representatives to the CDM is further proof of that sentiment. She urged the Board to consider her situation as they look to making changes in the collaborative decision-making process because all parents in the district deserve better treatment. Parents, she said, have much to offer, including sound suggestions for improving student achievement, and if they cannot be heard in their children’s schools, it is certain that more of them would be appearing before the Board of Education.

Caroline Schomp said that several years ago, she served as Chairperson of the Gilpin Extended Day CDM several years ago and that her sister chaired the Bromwell CDM four years ago. She said that her child was a student at Bromwell until last year, and that
her niece still attends the school. She said that Bromwell is considered a “jewel in the crown” in the Denver Public Schools, as it has high test scores and a state rating of “excellent.” Most days, she said, there are parent volunteers working diligently in many areas of the school; parents have won the past two district “Volunteer of the Year” awards, and have raised thousands of dollars per year for extras for the school. However, she said, behind all of that, the community has some problems with a lack of cooperation and collaboration, and some very serious problems communicating among themselves with thoughtfulness and respect.

Caroline Schomp said that the Board and district staff are currently in the process of examining the collaborative decision-making process and site-based management within the district. The process, she said, has not worked at some schools due to a lack of parental interest and involvement and even at schools with plentiful parental involvement, it is not always easy to find parents to make the kind of long-term commitment needed to be part of the CDM.

Given that background, she said that she finds it ironic that a parent who has gone out of her way to be caring and involved should face the kind of opposition that Ms. Price has encountered. She said that the CDM seems to be maneuvering Ms. Price’s position on the CDM because they feel threatened by what they perceive as her over-involvement, presence, and attentiveness.

Kiki Schomp, Bromwell parent and former CDM chair, said that it is easy, but too facile to dismiss Jeanne Price as a difficult parent. Ms. Price, she said, was elected twice by Bromwell parents to be their representative to the CDM, and has diligently pursued what she has considered her job. She said that Ms. Price has faithfully brought forth issues and complaints from Bromwell parents to the CDM, and often these parents were too intimidated or afraid of repercussions to bring the matters forward for themselves. Believing that Bromwell is an excellent school, she said, Ms. Price still seeks room for improvement and has worked actively toward it.

Kiki Schomp said that she feels that Ms. Price can be given credit for helping create a Gifted and Talented education policy, a safety task force, a character education program, a uniform homework philosophy and practice, and a uniform explanation of report cards in the intermediate grades. She said that Ms. Price was also involved in writing a learning guide for parents so they could understand what their children were learning and how they could be helpful in the process, in formulating a uniform policy on job postings, a voice-mail response policy for building staff, and distributing Bromwell’s 2002 Excellent School Cash Award to teachers as a bonus. To make the CDM more efficient, she said, Ms. Price pushed to revise the bylaws; to be more accessible and responsive to parents, she worked for fair election policies and practices. This is the parent, she said, who is being charged with “bringing down school morale which, in turn, is affecting overall school performance.”

She said that Ms. Price had certain expectations when she was elected to the CDM—that there would be an honest and open dialogue; that a complete and accurate record would
exist of what was said and done in meetings; that the meetings could be scheduled at
times that were convenient for working parents who wished to attend or participate on
CDM; that agendas and complete minutes would be disseminated in a timely manner, so
the school community would know what was going on; and that public information
would be easily available to her and to all parents. Ms. Price, she said, wanted
Bromwell’s CDM to operate in an open and businesslike fashion, parents’ voices to be
heard and attended to, money raised by parents to be spent as indicated they would be
before the funds were raised. She said that what Ms. Price wanted most of all was that
the quality of education available at Bromwell to be constantly examined and improved.

Caroline Schomp said that Ms. Price and her ideals have faced opposition every step of
the way. She said that in the years she has worked with Ms. Price on various committees
and projects, they have not always agreed on issues or seen eye-to-eye on how things
should be accomplished. However, she said, they have always maintained an open
dialogue between them because of their mutual respect for one another’s honesty and
integrity. She said that Ms. Price often displays honesty that borders on abruptness, that
she does not sugarcoat opinions; and that, as a former consumer reporter, she comes into
situations prepared, armed with all the facts and figures she needs to make her point.

Kiki Schomp said that Ms. Price is not a cheerleader, but is a “tough customer” and that
her fellow CDM members do not like her because she makes them stick to the issue at
hand, holds them accountable for things they agreed to do, asks for real facts and figures,
and balks at sloppy policy-making and sloppy record-keeping. However, she said that, in
the eyes of the Bromwell CDM, Ms. Price’s biggest sin is that she says that Bromwell is
good, but not good enough, and that it should be improving instead of standing still.

Caroline Schomp urged the Board to take these facts into consideration when making
decisions about the future direction of collaborative decision-making and site-based
management in the Denver Public Schools. She asked the Board to demand that the
Bromwell CDM accept Rev. Gray’s offer of mediation by the Community Relations
Office and make them do what their title says that they must do—collaborate.

Mrs. Moss said that, in her opinion, the Bromwell CDM is spending much more time on
personal issues and grudges than they are in attending to the needs of children, which is
the primary function of the team. She said that her greatest concern is the fact that the
two most important functions of the CDM—developing a working budget and a school
improvement plan—are being set aside because the team members cannot figure out a
way to get along with one another. When such situations occur, she said, it is the
children of the school who end up the losers in the battle.

She said that she began her involvement with educational issues as a CDM member at
Sabin Elementary School, and that they attempted to put a policy in place for their group
that explained how to deal with an individual who did not seem to be able to work in
concert with the rest of the CDM. She said that they were told, at that time, that a policy
like that had to be developed and implemented on a districtwide basis, and wondered
whether the Bromwell CDM could take such an action by amending their bylaws to pose restrictions on parents.

Caroline Schomp replied that there is a policy in place at Bromwell—one that Ms. Price helped create—to address removal of a CDM member who was deemed unable to work collaboratively with other members. However, she said, that policy requires that the matter be made public and taken before the entire school community, and the group pushing to amend the Bromwell CDM bylaws hopes to avoid that because they know that Ms. Price would not be removed from office if the real facts were known. She said that this is a case in which agreed upon rules have been jettisoned so that petty squabbling can continue. It is counterproductive, she said, and is diverting the school and CDM from ensuring that the school is running smoothly and in the direction it should for the benefit of the children.

In response to Ms. Gantz Berman’s request that he address the issue, Rev. Gray said that he is very concerned about what is happening among members of the Bromwell CDM. He stated that he wished to clarify that there are schools who have declared that membership on their CDM is a one-year term, but that schools that have chosen to do so have done it because of difficulty in getting parents to commit to a two-year term. Regarding the issue of bringing problems before the CDM Improvement Council (CIC), he said that CDMs may bring matters before the CIC for an impartial opinion, but that the CIC does not have the authority to force a decision upon an individual school CDM. Instead, he said, the CIC would work to find the most appropriate mediator, acceptable to all parties, to render an opinion in the matter.

Rev. Gray said that it is relationships that are at stake in the Bromwell matter. He said that in the time that the Community Relations Team has been together, there have been many instances of CDMs requesting assistance with an aspect of their operation and, when Team members arrive, they find that the problem is often not the same as perceived by the CDM. Generally, he said, problems that seem to be one thing are really the result of people who can’t get along and, in response, the Community Relations Team tries to work with the group around relationship building, teamwork, and collaboration, with the idea in mind that what is most important is the lives of children. In Bromwell’s case, he expressed disbelief that changing the bylaws would do anything to solve the problems the CDM is facing. He said that laws do not change people and that only in finding common ground will there be an opportunity for healing among the participants.

He said that he has proposed finding an outside mediator for the Bromwell CDM situation because he and the other members of the Community Relations Team have become too involved in the situation themselves to be able to render an impartial opinion. A federal mediator, he said, has agreed to intervene should Bromwell CDM members accept the offer of mediation. He said that it is not inappropriate to be concerned about the Bromwell CDM because it has become dysfunctional and could affect service to children at the school.
Ms. Gantz Berman said that the Board needs to discuss and consider the matter of the Bromwell CDM. Existing as a decision-making body is not always easy, she said, and there have been past incarnations of the Board of Education whose members did not get along and rarely agreed, and that even the disagreements are reflections of democracy in action. She expressed hope that the CDM would open itself to offers of assistance and mediation made by district representatives.

Kurt Starr, representing the District School Improvement and Accountability Council (DSIAC), stated that the Council is mandated by state law with the responsibility of reviewing school improvement plans. He said that the group elected to conduct a review of the 21 district schools that had been rated “unsatisfactory” by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE)—ten elementary schools, five middle schools, five high schools, and one charter school. These reviews, he said, were conducted during the month of March 2002 and undertaken by a subcommittee of the Council with the agreement that each plan had to be reviewed by at least three different people, and oftentimes by many more than that. He said that, following the reviews, the individual reports were compiled and compared and in cases in which reviewers had significantly differing opinions, the subcommittee discussed those plans until a basic agreement was reached regarding the plan’s quality.

He stated that, early in the winter, members of DSIAC spoke with Wayne Eckerling, Assistant Superintendent for Research, Planning, and Special Programs, and expressed the opinion that school improvement plans, as presented in the past, were not really plans, and that the software that was being used to develop them did not encourage discussion or consideration, because it allowed schools to “point and click” from a menu of preset options. DSIAC members, he said, felt that each school needed to gather their decision-making body to participate in discussions to develop a school improvement plan that tailored to the needs of their school, taking into account their weaknesses and ways that they would address them. He said that Dr. Eckerling listened to DSIAC concerns and saw to it that schools were instructed to do as the Council members suggested, and Dr. Eckerling provided very specific guidance about what each area the school improvement plan was to address.

Mr. Starr said that, for the most part, the CDMs did a very good and thorough job, and that there seemed to be much more stakeholder participation than in school improvement plans from previous years. He said that some of the plans also indicated collaboration among feeder schools to develop plans that provide educational continuity.

He presented the following DSIAC recommendations regarding the school improvement process:

- **It must be made clear that school improvement plans are three-year plans:** Many first drafts of plans did not go past the first year of the plan, which does not allow sufficient time to enact change. The plans should be “living documents” and pliant enough to make changes, but they must cover a three-year period.
• **Plans should prioritize, define, and provide a few specific measurable strategies for the entire plan:** He said that some first drafts of plans included too many strategies to be feasibly implemented, did not include the cost of implementation, and relied on the same staff members over and over to oversee implementation. Keeping the number of strategies manageable makes it easier to discover which of them are working well, and which need retooling.

• **Schools need to provide detailed instructional plans for each school identifying the current instructional program:** Schools should do an educational inventory prior to beginning the school improvement planning process to determine which current strategies are working and which are not. The elements that are working should be retained and improved if possible; those that are not working should be discarded, and other strategies developed to take their place.

• **Clarification is needed if programs are used schoolwide or if different programs are used at different grade levels:** Some improvement plans appeared to be employing more than one program to address a strategy. If different programs are used at different grade levels, that must be made clear in the school improvement plan.

Mr. Starr said that there were many other DSIAC recommendations but that, in the interest of time, he would present them to the Board in writing for their consideration. He presented a memorandum from the DSIAC membership, a copy of which is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 02-08, VII-C.

Mrs. Edwards asked if the DSIAC review process allowed any opportunity for feedback from schools after their plans were reviewed? Mr. Starr replied that their review process did not have sufficient time to allow for dialogues between DSIAC members and individual schools at the time of review. However, he said, written reviews and comments about each plan were kept on file and DSIAC members would be willing to discuss their reviews with school representatives, should they so desire.

Mrs. Moss said she wished to express her thanks to DSIAC representatives for the amount of time and careful consideration they put into reviewing school improvement plans. As Board liaison to DSIAC, she said, she is aware of the work that went into developing the rubric used during the review process, and then proceeding with the reviews and writing reports for each school and a collective report for the Board. She said that DSIAC is made up of enthusiastic members who truly desire to see improvement in the school system, and that the district is fortunate to have their service.

Mr. Patterson said that he has served on the Citizens’ Budget Task Force for a number of years and that, for a long time, they have discussed the possibility and the advantages of multi-year budgeting. However, he said, multi-year budgeting cannot be accomplished without multi-year planning so, on that basis, he is very much in favor of compelling schools to submit three-year plans. He said that it is time for the district to get beyond
short-term, quick fix budget planning because the budgetary problems facing the district were not created in a year. He thanked Mr. Starr and the other DSIAC members for the time and effort put into their review and recommendations.

In response to a question from Mr. Woodward, Mr. Starr said that state law mandates that the DSIAC must review school improvement plans, but does not require that a report be given or action be taken. He said that DSIAC members felt that a report should be prepared and feedback given as to what was good and bad in the plans.

Mr. Woodward stated that the report reflects the time put into the effort and the careful consideration given to the recommendations, and that he felt that the recommendations would be very helpful to the people responsible for developing and implementing the plans. He said that the review process and acting upon the recommendations should become outlined in procedure on an annual basis so that the efforts of DSAIC membership can be put to good use.

Dr. Wartgow added this thanks to DSIAC members for their thoughtful consideration and constructive comments. He said that it is important to help schools understand that the planning process is important, that people are reading the plans, and provide support in their implementation. It is a major priority, he said, to ensure that school improvement plans are aligned with other plans in the district and move forward efficiently. He stated that it is the collective intent of the Cabinet to make the school improvement planning process meaningful and form a basis for measuring progress from year to year.

A copy of the DSIAC report and recommendations is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 02-08, VII-C.

VIII. Adjournment

Ms. Gantz Berman adjourned the meeting at 9:12 p.m.

Susan G. Edwards, Secretary
Board of Education