

## DCSD BOE Meeting 02212012

In these notes, I try to capture as many speaker names as possible. At this meeting, I could not see the speakers and could not hear some names. The room was crowded and latecomers had to remain in the hall. During public comments, it was revealed that some attendees wore red shirts to show support for vouchers and some wore black shirts to show support for the board. This was obviously in opposition to the teachers who wore blue shirts at the last meeting.

### Student and Staff Recognitions

#### Financial Update

[I captured some of finance discussion with explanation of “unassigned” funds. I do not guarantee the accuracy of this data. See DCSD website.] Compared to other schools DC fund balance is lowest. Governor’s revised budget did not include figures for student growth—9000 in state; 2000 in DC. Plans are to distribute growth money (about \$124 per student) evenly rather than by number of new students in the district. There is a 9% increase in PERA. And \$11.7 that needs to be paid back to reserve fund. 2012 K-12 \$5.2 billion budget. Risk include undecided Senior homestead act. Will take \$100 million from General Fund. In June, 2010, district was asked to send back \$9 million. New allocations are based on a worst-case scenario. K-5, \$50 per student reduction; middle school, \$100 per student reduction; high school [not stated and could not see slide show]. Budget is up due to medical, utilities, and substitute teachers. No salary reductions. Reserves: 5% TABOR; add 1 percent each year; Board increased by 3%. 2008/2009 Unassigned \$12 million TABOR reserve. Former finance office decided to get a letter of credit. Credit rating was AA [down a bit from AAA] still good for letter of credit. Sold \$710,000 in bonds. [Story continued.]

Carson: Douglas County has highest performance in the state. I was in schools on Wednesday. Talked to [staff/students/parents]. We have an incredible school district... Amazing... Beacon... First Charter schools... Don’t overbuild... Incredible staff... Teachers winning awards daily... National Apple Award winners... National Merit Scholars... HS website for student advisory group... <http://www.studentvoicesdcsd.com/> 15,000 HS students... Students feel the crunch of the reduced budget. S.M.A.R.T.

#### Public Comments opened by John Carson:

Start off by thanking teachers and staff. DCSD is the most transparent on budget. Choice program offer best fit. Want to pay for professionals--not union wage--based on meaningful results. Need to fight the “old guard” and disinformation. Don’t want school to spend dollars just to spend them. Want to avoid teacher furlough days. Keep emergency funds. Allow schools to budget autonomously. They increased reserve funds.

Gerken: See February 10, Denver Post. DCSD bond rating is still high. The strong bond rating is based on reserves. Increased reserves \$26.8 million unallocated.

Carson: I believe we will bottom out in 2013. Then we can start pay for performance. John read the rules for public comment.

**Boy Scout David**, working on merit badge: Talked to Carson earlier about the budget. Had no more questions. John said he was an Eagle Scout and encouraged David's mother to make sure David made it to Eagle Scout.

**Katherine Vitale**: Thank you for your hard work. Excellent... Exceptional... available to parents... So accessible... Town halls... Social media... site answers. Request that negotiations with teachers' union be open to the public. Unions should want what is best for kids. Keep parents in the loop.

**Karin Piper**: <http://www.parentledreform.org/> Honor families... Concerned about growing tension between BOE and teachers' union. Don't point fingers. We are parents. Closed doors are not good. Need transparency. Parents should see the bargaining process including terms of employment. ... want open negotiations. Sign our petition to support open union negotiations.

BOE Response

Carson: The Board will consider open negotiations.

Piper: It would be of mutual benefit.

**Becky Barns**: There have been many rumors: hoarding money... Tonight I heard Bonnie [explain the budget]. Dr. Fagan has a blog. The official position is not on the district site. A small group has declared war on the Board. Keep the rumors out of the classroom.

**David Gill**: Keep communications open... Don't trust to special interests.

**Bess**: I am a concerned parent...a student of the district...not an employee. See Mark Baisley [DCGOP Chair] comments... I offer food for thought: sides have been taken; political. Where are the adults? Key players need to meet. Do a Q&A. Reserve held amounts: 5% + 3% + 1%. Why do we have a 1% contingency reserve? \$21 million was never used. What criteria do we use to approve 1% or 3%? Why is this money in "unassigned" rather than a "line item"?

BOE Response

Carson: We don't know what the budget is for this year. If we have extra dollars we will move them to classrooms.

Bonnie: Parts of the "unassigned" include building fund balance, stimulus funds, over-budgeted funds and vacancy dollars. We are working on adding line items.

**Wendy Vogel**: I would like some clarification on communication regarding collaboration vs. competition between charter schools and public schools. Competition doesn't work. [Several people around me who believe that competition does work shook their heads at this comment.] We [charter and public schools] need to work together.

BOE Response

Larsen: I have been visiting schools. Good point. Recognition... Apple Awards.  
Listening Tour.

Richardson: Thanks Wendy. There is tension between public and charter schools.  
Need to collaborate. Need to value and reward collaboration. Can be managed...  
Share best practices. Invites thought.

Carson: Value all schools. All my children go to public schools. But support other  
parents' right to send their children to other schools with their tax dollars.

**Kathy Dorman:** I am here to speak for my students. In my school, students are  
angry a the lack of "choice." Students [seniors] are being limited to 5 classes next  
year. They now have 7 seven classes. Seniors should be challenged. Need fine arts.  
PE, and business classes.

BOE Response

Dr. Fagen: We have put together a zero based budget. We are asking students to tell  
staff what they want to take next year. Some class sizes have increased to 52 and 46  
students where you can't walk through the class. We are taking "course requests".  
Can't afford to provide all classes. [The district will provide the classes based on  
demand – or prioritize the classes based on demand.] If situation improves... Can  
change initial schedule... Add more later... What will work at each high school...  
Some want 8 classes... Have to take into consideration "rigor."

Gerken: We reduced graduation requirements.

Kevin: I heard that all schools were restricting classes. Freshmen max 7, sophomore  
max 6, senior max 5. [Audience replied "no." Apparently, this was not true.]

Gerken: Class choices are up to the school. Need to drive down class size reach a  
happy medium.

Students sitting with BOE: Band classes can hold 50 students.

Gerken: We may add more learning and math labs to help offset class sizes. It's up to  
the school.

Richardson: We don't want to use "central command & control." Let those closes to  
the customer make cases.

**Cheryl:** What is being done for local schools? We are losing "choice" in  
neighborhood schools. Limiting choice in schools. Principals are "forced" to make  
these cuts. Students are loosing choice/electives. Bring choice back.

**Laura:** I have been researching the General Fund Balance. I know a language arts  
teacher with 185 students. She grades 185 papers. We increased unassigned funds.  
It grew over \$30 million. According to Post, from 2010 to 2011 grew from \$46 to  
\$66 million.

BOE Response

Dr Fagen: [Restated what was said at the being of the meeting.] One-time money...  
\$6 million ... won't grow ... allocation ... bring down.

**Kelsey:** This is my first meeting. Give all teachers a raise. I voted against bond and  
mil levy increases. Issues were all about philosophy and priorities.

**Berry Clark:** BOE is doing a great job. Standing up for teachers. Should become non-union. I support the scholarship program. It provides many opportunities.

BOE Response

The notion that the voucher program is illegal is still not final. Can go to State Supreme Court and even the U.S. Supreme Court.

Richardson: The problem is the Blaine Amendment. Use of tax dollars must remain non-sectarian. The Blaine Amendment was directed at Catholic [schools].

**Andrea Basante:** I am an art teacher. I have taught 6000 students. Being called “old guard” does not sit well. DU... wrote a course. That is what experience I bring. The union is a base I can count on. It seems we are in a competition to get in the last word. Need to use... to communicate. Need to put 80% into human resources.

BOE response:

Carson: Politicians don't like what we do. The [union] survey was never given to the Board. Survey was leaked to paper with malice. [See EdNews

<http://www.ednewscolorado.org/2012/02/22/33619-dougco-factions-don-different-colors>]

**Donald Joiner:** I am a former employee. I worked in Human Resources. Public engagement is out of control. I agree with Andrea. The district has changed. Governance is now top-down. Board and Superintendent are isolated from outside. I just heard about changes. Present Board is driven by political ideology and not student needs.

**Kristina Braun:** To the “choice crowd”—Parental choice is served well by public schools. Kristina knows of a student that was “disinvited” from a charter school for low grades. This hurt students’ moral. Kristina told student that he/she always welcome at public school. Kristina came from a dysfunctional family and was raised by public school teachers. Now she serves as a teacher. For the best public education choose public not choice. “Choice” is where failing Districts are. The question is not choice, but who believes in public schools.

BOE Response

Condescending remark from Carson: All Charter schools are public.

**Father:** I could not find 2 quarters of state required reports on your website. Can't tell if carry forwards are accurate. We need more than once a year reporting. Need more transparency.

**Pam:** Thank you for stirring in the right direction. PR wars... provide answers and opposition asks more questions... still hasn't produced results... bust the union and don't confuse support for teachers as support for unions. [It is interesting that while the district has great praise for teachers, it doesn't trust their choice to belong to a union.]

Students Jenny & Jake Venture Finalists – Spoke to audience

**Jenny:** We are advocates for students. When will cuts stop? Charge for buses. Cut graduation requirements. Provide incentives... must invest in students. Now have larger classes and fewer classes combined with "credit cuts."

**Jake:** Charter schools are profit-making [institutions]. Education is a moral obligation. Schools are segregating students with a below 3.5 GPA. College requires 4 years of math. Don't lower standards. School is not a business. We are educating leaders. Efficient... Knowledge... Last cut... Teachers are disenfranchised. Democracy requires education. Trust and obligation not segregation and lower standards.

**Tiffany Vaughn:** Red Shirts for choice. Lower standards are affecting student moral in middle school. The grading philosophy in middle school should be the same as high school. If district went to Junior High model, it would save money. Cresthill is restructuring classes. Rooms have problems. We need to start changing the system. Students are writing letters.

BOE Response

Larsen: We would like more information on Middle School vs. Junior High models.

**David DiCarlo,** Wickerdale Walkers [how many belong to this organization? See David's BLOG comments on <http://www.parentledreform.org/>] Wearing black shirts to show support for BOE and fiscal responsibility. Redistributive fiscal responsibilities contribute to fund-union fund. Politics is a part... tell the truth. "At last meeting someone yelled out that this is what Democracy looks like. Well this is a Republic looks like."

**Diana Oakley:** Her son received a scholarship to go to Humanex (which Diana did not have to pay back) Her son reports, "I'm loving it. Just like McDonalds."

**Gary Colly:** Dysfunction in the home is caused by parents. Dysfunction in the district is caused by BOE. Election of board... support for choice. Disinformation from both sides... touting positive relationship with teachers/union. Hurting teachers/teachers commitment to kids. Time to take ownership

BOE Response

Carson, Richardson and one other man on the board (identified himself as a lawyer) more or less attacked Gary: We have never had this kind of engagement at these meetings. Now great. We talk to you all the time and sometimes we get good input. Now you accuse us of being dysfunctional. Who do you represent, Gary? You wear an organization ID badge, but who are your members? Do you have contribution from former members? [Remarks were cut off by the audience.]

**Charcie Russell:** I represent a group. [Charcie on the Board of Great Choice Douglas County <http://www.greatchoicedouglascounty.org/>] I was on the "Choice Task Force." I appreciate the Board ...visits to school ... extraordinary. Thanks for fiscal responsibility and bond rating. We elected you... behind scholarships. Latest court ruling in Indiana on choice is good news.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/14/indiana-school-voucher-lan\\_1206364.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/14/indiana-school-voucher-lan_1206364.html)

**Mike Parsons**, HS Teacher [Spoke to Audience]: What a fine mess... public engagement, visiting schools is derisive tool. ...Board condescending attitude... using corporate speak... calling students customers and clients, referring to “efficiencies.” Equating class cuts to corporate cuts.

**Kally**, Teacher: Keep teachers in the classroom. 32 to 35 students reduces the time per student. Our classes have a significant number of students with special needs. Reduce class size.

**John Stoddard**: I support school choice even though I have two in public schools. We have quality schools. ... school choice partners ...OK for parents to send children to schools based on political indoctrination or moral views. Voted overwhelmingly against those against choice. Right on track.

**Kevin Lueng**: Thank you. Your job is not easy. Wearing black and red to show alliance to one political view or another is not good. We are supposed to work for kids. After you are elected you are supposed to represent all people and 60,000 students. We need to raise \$150,000 for public education. Romney said that, “Failure to educate is a violation of civil rights.” We have \$66 million. Need to help poor vs. keep for ourselves.

BOE Response

Larsen: Attempted to ameliorate earlier comments to Gary Colley. Suggested a master schedule; want to hear from stakeholders.

5-minute break. I left.