

Let's give established procedures for school innovation a chance

By Kim Ursetta

Rocky Mountain News Speakout

Saturday, December 22, 2007

The Denver Classroom Teachers Association applauds the teachers, administrators and staff at Bruce Randolph School for their commitment to quality education and the progress students there have made. It is an outstanding example of what can be achieved by focus, shared commitment to instructional goals and a willingness to go the extra mile for students.

We are committed to work with our members at Bruce Randolph and elsewhere to do the things that must be done to offer all Denver students a world-class education. We have long been committed to taking a fresh look at policies and practices that are obstacles to innovation and student success.

DCTA is a nationally recognized leader in education reform and improvement - most notably in our work with ProComp, designed to find ways to encourage the best performance of all teachers. In addition we have supported major changes in the contract between DCTA and the Denver Public Schools to eliminate barriers and allow flexibility.

The negotiated agreement includes a process granting flexibility to schools interested in trying new things. In addition, we have provisions that allow us to meet and reach agreement at any time to work out changes in the contract. We supported these provisions because we are committed to change and improvement. And we believe they provide the framework for bringing about the changes proposed in Bruce Randolph's "Professional Autonomy Agreement."

Many of the issues raised by Bruce Randolph's staff are at the heart of DCTA's reform agenda. We have been working at the individual school level, with the district and with the community to address vital issues, including:

- **Time to teach.** DCTA is deeply concerned about time issues - especially as they relate to administrative, paperwork and test prep burdens that take from teachers' time with students.
- **Transfer policies.** DCTA is working with DPS to develop a comprehensive review and revision of transfer policies with the goal of ensuring that all Denver public schools have qualified, committed and caring teachers.
- **Compensation.** The landmark ProComp proposal - developed over many years with substantive research to support it - is designed to encourage best practices, including setting performance goals, encouraging professional development, and rewarding individuals for meeting significant challenges.

In our work with the district, we have identified specific challenges and proposed specific solutions. At the same time, we recently set forth a set of reform proposals, "Promoting School Success," that were developed by teachers districtwide to address key barriers to progress in key areas, including student discipline, student promotion and student learning conditions. We will

continue our work to address these issues through negotiations, board policy, legislation and working with parents and community members.

DCTA is willing to take whatever time it will take to work with Bruce Randolph through the established waiver process. It has worked for the Career Education Center, Bromwell Elementary and other places where we have worked collaboratively to identify and eliminate barriers.

DCTA is on the cutting edge of reform because we are willing to work with innovative staff, like the one at Bruce Randolph, to make sure that we make Denver Public Schools great for every child. Let's give existing processes time to work.