

**DAC / District Accountability Committee
Meeting Minutes**

Date: October 28, 2014
Wilcox Building, Board of Education Room
6:30 PM – 8:30 PM

Call to Order and Roll Call:

Chris Cingrani - Chair & Voting Parent
Barb Cousins - Vice Chair and Voting Parent
Sandra Brownrigg - Recorder & Voting Parent
Ron Booth - Voting Community Member
Brian Wetterling - Voting Parent
Jean Medberry - Voting Parent
Michael Holmes - Voting Parent
Ted Knight - Non-Voting Staff Liaison
Meghann Silverthorn - Non-Voting BoE Liaison

Absent

Mark Harrell - Voting Principal
Judi Reynolds- Non-Voting BoE Liaison

General Meeting:

1. Roll call by recorder. The September 2014 meeting minutes were approved with no changes. They will be posted onto the DCSD DAC website page by Dorinda.
2. This was a joint meeting with the Fiscal Oversight Committee (FOC) to discuss the DCSD budgeting process. FOC members in attendance included Mary Wild, FOC chair; Dave Huscek; Phil Smith; Jack Christiansen; Justin Carter; and Don Mitchell.
3. Personnel in attendance from DCSD included Ted Knight, Assistant Superintendent, Elementary Education; Dr. Steve Cook, Assistant Superintendent, Secondary Education; Bonnie Betz, Chief Financial Officer, and Scott Smith, Director of Budget.
4. Chris Cingrani discussed ways he intends to expand feedback from, and interaction with, SACs, including comment cards for the liaisons who attend DAC meetings and a survey to SACs to find out what topics they would like covered in future DAC meetings.
5. The committee is starting interviews for our open positions next week. We've had 22 parent candidates and two teachers. We expect to recommend candidates to the Board of Education at their November 18 meeting. Assuming they are approved, the new members will take their seats at our December meeting.
6. **Budget presentation:** Scott Smith presented an overview of the budgeting process for DCSD. The presentation included the budget process; the importance of SAC guidance to schools and principals; where to find more District budget information; and how the Long Range Planning Committee interacts with the SACs.

DCSD personnel then answered questions and listened to commentary from the large audience of DAC liaisons and other community members in attendance.

7. Bonnie Betz, CFO, stressed the role that site-based budgeting plays in District strategy. Decisions made closest to the students are the best decisions. SAC members may decide they, along with school staff can best make budget decisions. SACs may opt to do a loop out – a survey - to assess priorities.

8. It is a statutory requirement for DAC to recommend school board priorities for spending school moneys.

9. Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) members are supposed to go to the SAC meetings and schools to get input for long range planning. Capital needs grow \$35 million per year. There are \$275 million in improvements needed in the next five years.

10. For matters of safety, the District pays for capital improvements. For matters of programming, the school either needs to pay for it or request District Innovation dollars through the annual budget.

11. There are significant, ongoing challenges presented by the budget calendar and the Legislature’s fiscal planning process. *Example:* Colorado measures student attendance on October 1 each year. The schools have to forecast it the previous April. Principals have the ability to request changes.

12. There is a forgiveness factor on forecasting for schools based on size. Smaller schools: if the actual attendance is less than forecast, the school does not need to pay back allocation for the first four students. Larger schools, because of economies of scale, must repay allocation for any shortages of more than two students.

13. DCSD encourages SAC members to get involved in the budget now. Obtain input from community members on priorities now in order to include it as part of next year’s budget.

14. All schools have access to several types of funding: SBB, principal discretionary funds (donations and fundraisers) and, where applicable, full day kindergarten. Anything that is carryover stays in those funds. SACs should make sure they’re including all fund sources, not just SBB, in budget discussions.

15. **Questions & comments included:**

➤ *Q. What are “innovation dollars?”* They are awarded for schools that want to create something new and valuable for students.

➤ *Q. Can you explain the prioritization for innovation dollars?* The first question is whether the school is asking to fund a maintenance issue or true innovation. *Example:* Meadowview successfully proposed an art program they mapped out over three years. It showed how the district could seed the money and they could take it over after three years.

➤ *Q. How many schools have applied?* A. Five or six at elementary, two or three apiece at middle and high school level.

➤ *Q. How many were approved?* A. We approved \$2.1 million in one time moneys, mostly at the high school level. *Examples:* the Mosaic program at Castle View and funding to shore up Ponderosa.

- *Q. Are the innovation dollars available to charter schools?* A. No. Charter schools are totally different. The District is basically a fiscal agent for the charter schools. The budget video is only for neighborhood schools.
- *Q. Do you have to become an Innovation school to be eligible?* A. No. These are grants.
- *Q. How do we apply for innovation dollars?* A. We ask the school to put together a short request, working with FOC. The District prioritizes those requests. In the SBB workbook, there is another tab where the school can make those requests.
- *Q. What are the stakeholder groups you're talking to? Are they private investors?* A. No, they are community members. We are presenting how school financing works to community groups like Douglas County Economic Foundation, elected officials, and Kiwanis, for example. We are asking for feedback. We want to create bigger meetings at our high schools where we can invite those groups to participate.
- *Q. Is the feedback you're seeking from these groups the same as the upcoming survey you plan to send to parents, stakeholders and so on?* A. No. The District is talking with these groups about ideas for identifying and funding capital needs.
- *Q. When are you taking your findings back to the board?* A. Spring and early summer. You should see info coming from LRP to the schools soon. Chris has been contacted to help with that. Meetings will be at schools with auditoriums and all are welcome.
- *Q. I've been to two SAC meetings at middle schools and there were no board or voting members present. How can SAC give recommendations when there are no voting members present?* A. If a SAC is struggling, they can enlist the directors' help. It isn't a requirement that board members attend meetings.
- *Q. Doesn't the DAC have the responsibility to ensure that SACs are productive working groups in the community?* A. The DAC wants to increase communications between the SACs and the DAC. In addition to our specific statutory responsibilities, we want to better understand what the SACs are looking for. We want more mindshare and collaboration, to increase communication and get the feedback loop if there is a need for a DAC member to come to a SAC meeting we can arrange that.
- *Q. How does a school work with the District to address an issue related to safety?* We are proactively out in the community but if the principal identifies a need, they contact us. There is a lot of ongoing communication between the principals and our operations teams.
- *Q. Would it be better to change the name of "innovation dollars" since there is some political controversy around the "Innovation" label?* That feedback will be taken back to the leadership team.
- *Q. What is the difference between a mill levy and a bond? Are these on the table to fund these?* A mill levy override is when we elect to increase our property taxes. A bond is to provide funding for a specific project. The District is not yet discussing either option.
- *Q. Who owns getting community feedback?* A. No one owns ensuring or spearheading that feedback. That's why there is so much variance.

- *Q. What could we do to ensure we get more people involved in that process? A.* Something as simple as varying SAC meeting times and dates may help SACs reach different constituencies: one meeting at night, the next in the afternoon. The principal at the school is the one to spearhead this because they are the one who knows whether they are getting sufficient information from the community.
 - *Q. How does the District fund unexpected occurrences? For example, if Ponderosa and DCHS were hit by a hailstorm and needed new roofs. A.* There is a 1% contingency fund to address any unexpected issues.
 - *Q. How does the District allocate/fund salaries? A.* Every person is funded at an average salary. Salary increases are funded based on what we think we will have available in the coming year. Compensation increases were 3% on average and up to 6%.
 - *Q. But I heard those were one time increases. A.* Last year, there were two components, \$300k were for the teachers who were maxed out. If they were highly effective, the raise was a bonus. The average ongoing raise was 3%. In 2013-14, all will be ongoing. In 2014-2015 \$9.7 million will go to ongoing salary increases. \$300k to one time bonuses.
 - Q. Does the LRP committee take charter schools into account? A.* They are part of the District's master plan. They are broken out so you can see by school by year and by component. We built most of our buildings from bonds. Charter schools are required to fund their buildings based solely on the dollars they get from the legislature.
 - *Q. Does the money we receive from the state go into capital spending at all? A.* Not unless we choose to do it. If we choose, it is in our general fund so we can spend it on anything related to education. But that takes away from serving other educational needs.
 - *Q. Will opting out of CMAS affect the district and the schools financially? A.* Is there a direct financial impact? No. But if a school has greater than 5% absence and it declines in its overall performance rating, it could end up dropping from a performance rated school (the highest) to a priority improvement school or a turnaround school. The state can force the school to hold back part of your funds and allocate them in ways other than how you originally intended.
 - *Q. What if we did one week a year that all schools focused on getting that feedback? A.* We (the District) could offer a work session and some guided work through a budget session and invite the SACs to participate. Or, we could arrange for a guided work session through Budget 101 and offer breakout sessions by feeder.
16. Next month's meeting, the DAC Fall Forum, will be at Cimarron Middle School in Parker, Colorado from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Related links:

The DCSD Budget and Accounting department website:

<https://dcsdk12.org/financial-services/budget-accounting>

Resources for SACs, including the current by-laws and best practices suggestions:

<https://www.dcsdk12.org/district-accountability-committee>

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:40 pm.

Sandra Brownrigg Recorder.

Handouts at meeting:

- ✓ Agenda
- ✓ PowerPoint by Scott Smith (not paper version)

October 29, 2014