

**DAC / District Accountability Committee  
Meeting Minutes**

Date: April 14, 2015

Wilcox Building, Board of Education Room  
6:30 PM – 8:45 PM

**Call to Order and Roll Call:**

- Chris Cingrani, Chair/Parent Member
- Barb Cousins, Vice-Chair/Parent Member
- Sandra Brownrigg, Recorder/ Parent Member
- Ron Booth, Voting Community Member
- Mark Harrell, Franktown Elementary school principal
- Kim Kibort, Parent Member
- Deborah Lynch , Voting Teacher Member
- Brandy Nath, Voting Teacher Member
- Amy Pfister, Parent Member
- Brian Wetterling, Parent Member

**DCSD Staff and Board Members**

- Kathy Brown, Parent Liaison
- Bonnie Betz, Chief Financial Officer
- Steve Cook, DCSD Assistant Superintendent, Secondary Education
- Dr. Jason Germain, Chief Student Advocacy Officer
- Ted Knight, DCSD Assistant Superintendent, Elementary Education
- Tom McMillen, Director of School Choice
- Judi Reynolds, DCSD Board of Education Representative

*Absent*

- Michael Holmes, Parent Member
- Jean Medberry, Parent Member
- Jerry Hargrave, Parent Member

**General Meeting:**

1. **Roll call by recorder and confirmation of quorum.** The March 2015 meeting minutes were approved with no changes. They will be posted onto the DCSD DAC website page by Dorinda within a day or two of the meeting.
2. **Proposed Code of Conduct:** DAC Chair Chris Cingrani distributed a draft of a proposed code of conduct for the DAC. The intent of the code is to promote responsible behavior and, once discussions are held and decisions are made, ensure clear and consistent communication from the committee as a whole. In response to questions from committee members, Cingrani emphasized that the code is not intended to stifle free speech from individuals on the committee. A spirited debate

ensued as to the need for such a code, its purpose, effectiveness, and the wording the current draft included. The committee voted unanimously to table the code for further discussion and review, including revisiting next month.

3. **Bylaws:** Cingrani also distributed proposed changes to the DAC bylaws and the SAC bylaws. The committee unanimously approved changing the DAC bylaws so terms begin on June 1 instead of October ([see page four of the revised DAC bylaws.](#)) They also approved language modifying the DAC liaison role in the SAC bylaws ([see page six and page eight of the draft of the SAC bylaws.](#)) *Note from DAC recorder: because the drafts have not yet been finalized, they still contain language referring to the codes of conduct. That language was expressly not approved by the DAC committee.*
  - a. **Action item:** Chris will send the info out to our email list and gather feedback for the May meeting.
4. **Forum feedback:**
  - a. Cingrani discussed lessons learned from the forum, including SAC 101 not being a last minute event; working with Parent U to co-host an outside event; and doing more training.
  - b. Cingrani also discussed the variety of ways the DAC is seeking to communicate: WebEx, conference calls, Facebook, and so on...
  - c. Barb Cousins, vice chair, was very supportive of training and improving the exchange of information.
  - d. Agreement: if we can get schools to be consistent, to do what's best for their schools and culture, that's progress.
5. **Charter school evaluation process** Tom McMillen, Director of School Choice, discussed [the 90 day process the District goes through when evaluating charter schools](#). This process is set forth in statute. Two members of the DAC participate. [Three schools have applied this year:](#) John Adams (grades 9-12;) Parker Performing Arts Academy (K-12;) and Milestone Academy (K-10 to start; eventually K-12.) John Adams and Parker Performing Arts have both applied twice before. Schools can only apply three times. They are evaluated based on a statutorily defined set of requirements: curriculum; governance; and budget. They are not evaluated on whether the neighborhood school is at capacity. The office then presents the data to the Board for approval or denial. If denied, the charter has the option to appeal to the state.
  - a. Audience members expressed a wide range of concerns during a contentious question and answer session. These included not getting enough notice from the charter organizers for community meetings; the appearance of greater demand for charter schools than actually exists because of parents who add their children to multiple charter school waiting lists; and some concerns about one of the applicants, who has some history in the local educational community.
6. **Special Education Funding** Dr. Jason Germain and Bonnie Betz [gave an overview of funding for special education, including the backfill process](#). Dr. Germain stated that the number of students classified as in need of special education will rise from 6,416 in 2014 to 6,900 in 2016. Full time employees will also rise, from 872 to 941. Caseloads are 25 students per instructor for moderate needs (mainstreamed); 25:1

speech (caseload). Significant needs student caseload is 12:1 in elementary and 15:1 in secondary.

a. **Funding and hiring challenges include:**

- i. 504 plans are unfunded mandates.
- ii. The funding we receive from the state and federal government is not enough to meet the FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education) requirement.
- iii. At the state and district level, we must maintain or exceed a certain level of funding each year (the MOE, or Maintenance of Effort.)
- iv. EA positions are incredibly difficult to fill, from very small candidate pools.

In 2009, we had a one time infusion of funds, [ARRA, \(American Recovery and Reinvestment Act\)](#) which we used to fund Educational Assistants. Those funds were not supposed to be used in ways that required ongoing sustained funding. Yet we hired EA IIIs and moderate needs teachers, then used discretionary funds from our site-based budgets to fund those roles. If we raise our MOE, we put the district at risk of further reduction of federal funding. So, we are trying to bring our spending into compliance with our MOE and the overall MTSS (Multi Tier System of Support) model.

b. Audience question and answers included

- i. *Does the aide receive credit for the job duties he or she performs when serving as a special needs assistant?* Answer: yes.
- ii. *Have you considered a central budget to give schools the money they've lost?* Answer: They have not lost money. The ARRA was a one-time stimulus package approved by Congress. Once that money was gone, it's gone. It's not in anyone's budget, anywhere, every year.
- iii. *It's not fair that charter schools don't have to have special needs programs.* Answer. All charter schools pay a tier 1 charge in support of special needs programs across the district. All provide programs for children with moderate needs. Though none currently provide services for severe special needs, it would be irresponsible to force a program on a school that does not have a sufficient number of students to populate it.
- iv. *Kids are being taken off IEPs against parental wishes.* Talk to the teacher, the department, the school, the district. DCSD will work with you to make sure your child's needs are being met.

7. **IEP Presentation:** Barb Cousins gave an update on a recent DCSD presentation she attended. Cousins has an interest in a variety of designations and categories which include gifted and talented, special education and the autism spectrum. She went to a presentation on *Understanding what an IEP Is*. She counted over 100 people in attendance. Cousins said, "It was wonderful: specifically targeted to understanding

what these designations are. We need to have more of these offerings. They are working.”

8. **Open Discussion:** The open discussion period took place throughout the meeting. Each topic on the agenda generated a substantial number of questions and answers.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm.

*Sandra Brownrigg Recorder.*

**Handouts at meeting (available online):**

- ✓ Agenda
- ✓ Minutes
- ✓ Handouts

4/14/15