

## DAC Meeting Minutes

PSD Boardroom

Wednesday, February 19, 2025

6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

### **Present**

Meghan Archuleta	Ashley Barrett	Stephanie Cotton-Maceta	Adam Cronk
Erica Daniell	Jess Ellis Hagman	Tena Green	Jodi Quass
Marybeth Rigali-Oiler		Ian Rutherford	Susan Sasson
Scott Schoenbauer	Mark Strasberg	Michael Werner	Joe Zappa

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Dwayne welcomed the committee members.

### **Approval of Minutes**

The committee approved and seconded the January 15, 2025, minutes as amended.

### **Preview Meeting Design and Announce BOE Approval – Ashley Barrett**

#### **Annual Monitoring Report – Dwayne Schmitz**

Dwayne provided an overview of the monitoring report, explaining its purpose and how it informs the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) and the strategic plan. The monitoring report offers a high-level annual review of data to assess progress on priorities and guide decision-making. This accountability cycle helps determine whether significant improvements are being made.

#### **Strategic Plan/UIP/Budget – Dwayne Schmitz**

Dwayne clarified that the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) and the strategic plan are separate documents, though efforts are made to align them. This group's primary responsibility is to provide input on the UIP.

Dwayne discussed budget constraints the district is facing, leading to the elimination of 11 district office positions and about 40 extended contracts for the 2025-26 year, impacting over 50 employees at the district offices. Ongoing negotiations on employee agreements should be concluded in May, and if compensation agreements exceed the budget, further staff reductions may be required. Efforts will be made to minimize impacts on schools, prioritizing district office cuts.

Dwayne also addressed uncertainties surrounding federal funding, particularly Title funding, which supports programs for students in need. With shifting priorities, the district is less confident in relying on these funds next year. To manage financial risks, the district maintains reserves, ensuring fiscal responsibility.

Schools are funded through a student-based budget process, meaning any financial adjustments will primarily impact schools through this framework. Despite financial challenges, the district remains committed to strategic priorities, focusing resources on key areas while making necessary reductions.

#### Committee discussion/feedback:

- A participant praised leadership for addressing staff during a difficult time. They also emphasized the need for the community to better understand budget constraints, noting a disconnect between expectations and financial realities. A discussion at a DAB meeting highlighted misconceptions, such as calls for PSD to cover childcare costs due to schedule changes. The speaker expressed hope that greater awareness would unite the community around student needs rather than fostering an "us vs. them" mentality.
- A participant raised concerns about the district's budget cuts, questioning whether reducing high salaries at the district office was considered as an alternative to eliminating positions. They noted that public salary information fuels frustration among parents who perceive top salaries as excessive. They suggested that addressing this issue openly with the community could help provide clarity and reduce misunderstandings.
- District leadership is prioritizing fair compensation to attract and retain talent while managing budget constraints. Instead of across-the-board salary reductions, the focus is on strategic cuts, particularly at the district office level, without compromising essential services. The cabinet is shrinking, with departing positions not being refilled, and responsibilities are being redistributed among remaining cabinet leaders. It was shared that one of the 11 district office staff being cut in the 2025/26 budget is a Cabinet member (CIEO position reduction as of December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025).
- New principals are receive guidance through a mentorship program with ASOs to navigate budgeting effectively.

#### **ICAP Implementation/ASCENT Rules and Funding Changes – Tanya Alcaraz**

Tanya discussed the new legislation that passed in November that updates standards for the Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP), aligning them with state requirements for college and career readiness. Before reviewing the upcoming changes, a document outlining the district's current ICAP content was shared for feedback.

Current ICAP implementation includes structured content, standards, and lessons, supported by an electronic platform called Xello, replacing traditional paper portfolios. Starting in fifth grade, ICAP focuses on career exploration beyond common professions, introducing students to diverse career options. Middle school content integrates social-emotional learning (SEL) skills, time management, and study skills, while high school lessons are aligning with college and career readiness. This tier-one, district-wide approach ensures every student experiences a foundational ICAP curriculum, with additional enrichment opportunities available.

The new legislation proposes that students start developing their ICAP (Individual Career and Academic Plan) by 9th grade, with encouragement to begin in middle school. The plan will cover four main categories: individual and self-awareness, career exploration, academic success and planning, and post-graduation planning. The district is piloting the Xello platform for 5th-grade students, and by the 2025-2026 school year, there will be an updated implementation plan for all schools to ensure a coherent and aligned process.

The district is focusing on involving administrators, counselors, work-based learning coordinators, and other key staff to ensure the successful integration of career planning and financial literacy across all grade levels. Additionally, gifted and talented students will integrate ICAP goals into their ALP (Advanced Learning Plan), housed in Xello. There will also be a review of how to make these career conversations more meaningful for students.

Committee discussion/feedback:

- This is the first year implementing the program for 5th-grade students. Counselors, along with some high school students, will be delivering the lessons.
- The delivery of ICAP lessons varies across middle and high schools. While counselors may be involved, implementation differs by school. Lessons may be delivered by advisory teachers, elective teachers, or during dedicated classes.
- All students have a Xello account.
- This year marks the beginning of a more structured ICAP experience, putting the district ahead of recent legislative changes.
- A universal program for all 8th graders includes a visit to Colorado State University in October, where students explore two career pathways, one of their choice and one selected for broader exposure. This initiative emphasizes career exploration, recognizing that student interests evolve.
- To help 8th graders navigate the overwhelming high school course selection process, the district integrated their career interests into course planning. After visiting career pathways at CSU, students were asked which classes they would like to take in fields like computer science, engineering, or JROTC. These courses were added to their course planner, and parents were invited to create a Xello account, allowing them to view their child's career interests, college preferences, courses, and grades. This is where family engagement becomes essential.
- The district conducted an audit of Xello profiles and found that only 85 out of 2008 students had no information in their accounts. These students' details were sent to counselors for follow-up.
- The 8th-grade College and Career Day, now in its second year, has improved based on feedback from the first year. This year, the program aimed to better connect with families, and around 800 families created Xello accounts to view their child's information. This took place in January.
- Xello can be accessed through the Quicklinks in Parentvue. There are also links available on the Future Ready and PSD websites.
- Training families on the Xello platform has been a gradual process, especially since the adoption of the platform coincided with COVID. This year marks the first time the district feels confident that many students are familiar with logging into Xello. Different schools have approached family training at their own pace: Kinard Middle School hosts information nights for parents, while Lesher Middle School incorporates Xello into student-led conferences, where students present their learning.
- This information stays with students, allowing teachers to review their portfolios, which may include writing samples, test scores, and photos of student projects. Schools are implementing Xello in various ways, and two sessions were held this year to help families learn about Xello and create profiles.

- The district plans to standardize its approach moving forward. The goal is to improve implementation with consistency across all grade levels and schools, ensuring a coherent experience for students. This effort is aligned with newly finalized rules and standards, and the district is focused on developing a strategy that adheres to these updated guidelines in the coming months.
- The district has developed specialized approaches for two key student subgroups. For multilingual learners, a Future Ready ELD course provides personal financial literacy credit while students engage with ICAP tutorials. Family liaisons have been trained to use Xello to support these families. For students in Integrated Services, the district is revamping the study skills course, integrating ICAP standards and executive functioning lessons, like time management and teamwork, to offer additional support. The district is also aligning ICAP standards with transition IEPs at the high school level, ensuring students complete career and interest assessments to guide their future career paths.
- It would be helpful if case managers were trained on how Xello integrates with Synergy. Case managers are often the first point of contact for students, and if they are not familiar with this system, it could lead to missed opportunities.
- It was suggested that sending an introductory letter to parents, in Friday Folders, particularly first-generation college families, could help them understand and support career exploration. This letter would clarify any confusion about the program and promote parental involvement in their child's career development.
- The financial literacy standards currently exist within the Colorado Academic Standards for social studies. High school students are required to complete a course that covers personal financial literacy standards to graduate. Some districts are integrating financial literacy into economics classes as part of a broader economic education. PSD is working to ensure personal financial literacy standards align with the new ICAP framework. Additionally, legislation may soon require all students to complete a financial literacy course in grades 11 or 12, along with submitting a FAFSA for federal financial aid. The goal is to provide students with the necessary guidance to make informed choices and prepare for their future while offering flexibility for their educational paths.
- The workload of counselors is a concern, as they have many responsibilities. To avoid overburdening them, the district is being intentional in involving a school-based team, ensuring that it is not solely the counselor's responsibility. Counselors were asked for input on how to approach this process, and while they initially considered doing it during summer institute, they preferred the structure that had already been created. The team values counselors' input, as they are key players in the implementation.
- When students transfer into the district, Xello ensures they aren't overwhelmed. They will only see grade-level appropriate content, although they can catch up on missed lessons if desired. Regionally, districts in Northern Colorado, including Windsor and Thompson, are aligned and using Xello, which allows for easy transfer of information. Xello also connects students to local businesses for job shadows, internships, and apprenticeships, with vetted businesses. Students can export their portfolios as PDFs or share a view-only link, similar to LinkedIn, which employers can use to review their resumes and other information.

- The district is working on adopting a district-wide social emotional learning (SEL) curriculum as part of its strategic plan. While schools currently teach SEL competencies, there is no unified curriculum or consistent approach across schools. The district is considering an RFP process for selecting a curriculum and plans to implement it next year. SEL is currently taught in varying ways across schools, often depending on the individual school's approach. The district aims to standardize the SEL framework while allowing flexibility for local needs.
- The ASCENT program is an initiative that supports students who earn college credits while still in high school. If students complete 9 college credits during their high school years, they can participate in this program which allows for one tuition free year at FRCC. The program is part of a broader effort to enhance postsecondary workforce readiness and is backed by PSD's investment in changing the financial model and funding for such programs.
  - Additionally, there is a shift in funding models, where the focus is on incentivizing students to complete specific milestones, like 12 college credits, industry certifications, or work-based learning experiences, which will be rewarded with additional funding for the district.
  - The funding for the ASCENT program and related initiatives comes from state funding, with the program costing \$18.8 million at the state level. PSD has 250 students participating in the program, which has grown since its inception in 2009, with more money and slots allocated each year. However, due to a budget shortfall, there are discussions about eliminating or reducing funding. The state provides financial incentives when students pass industry certifications and supports concurrent enrollment expansions. Additionally, the program allocates \$15,000 per year to help pay for teachers to gain certifications to teach specific courses.
- Tanya discussed monitoring the legislative tracker, anticipating potential bills in the next four weeks. There are currently 250 students waiting for changes, with plans already in place. Parents and stakeholders were asked to advocate with legislators to ensure the restructuring, if it happens, accommodates students who have already made plans. Tanya also mentioned the P-TECH program, and the need for a year of support for students in the program, especially those who began as freshmen.
- The distinction between concurrent enrollment (tuition-free for students) and dual enrollment (where students pay for some college courses) was clarified, with concurrent enrollment being widely available to high school students. There's ongoing discussion about expanding concurrent enrollment definitions to include more options, such as CU Succeed, which currently has a cost but could become tuition-free if the legislation passes.
- Tanya discussed the expansion of the Colorado Promise tax credit, which provides a tax credit for families earning under \$90,000 per year. The credit is sufficient to cover two years of college. Additionally, financial aid and Pell Grants are offered, and students are encouraged to accept these awards. There is also a program for McKinney-Vento (homeless) students to access free mileage credits. For students continuing at institutions like Front Range or Aims, tuition costs around \$7,000 per year, and families are being kept informed to help with planning and preparation.

- Emails about Future Ready events and workshops are being sent directly to parents and families, especially for specific grade levels. Tanya will check on student-specific communications as well, noting that while the parent communication is in place, she will verify if students are also receiving the messages.

**Consent Agenda Item – Open DAC Seats for the 2025-2026 School Year**

There will be four open District Accountability Committee seats open for next year.

1. PSD Elementary Administrator
2. PSD Teacher
3. PSD Classified Employee
4. Parent of a minority/diverse student

**Closing**

The next DAC meeting will be April 16, 2025, JSSC Boardroom, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

**Adjourned**

**Parking Lot Items:**