

DAC Meeting Minutes

PSD Boardroom

Wednesday, January 15, 2025

6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Present

Meghan Archuleta	Clare Barquero	Ashley Barrett	Stephanie Cotton-Maceta
Adam Cronk	Erica Daniell	Jess Ellis Hagman	Tena Green
Jodi Quass	Marybeth Rigali-Oiler	Alicia Romero	Ian Rutherford
Susan Sasson	Michael Werner	Joe Zappa	

Welcome and Introductions

Dwayne welcomed the committee members.

Approval of Minutes

The committee approved and seconded the November 20, 2024, minutes as amended.

Preview Meeting Design and Announce BOE Approval – Ashley Barrett

Dyslexia Support in PSD and Three-Year Plan Feedback Session – Shaunda Stahl, Julie Woolner

Julie Woolner and Shaunda Stahl co-presented a session focusing on dyslexia, literacy, and instructional strategies. Julie and Shaunda serve on the Curriculum and Instruction team, emphasizing the integration of dyslexia support into core instruction. The purpose of dyslexia learning is to elevate awareness of its definition, characteristics, impact on learning, and social-emotional health while empowering all staff working with students.

Key points discussed include:

- The formation of a dyslexia core team and the launch of a three-year professional learning plan starting in fall 2024.
- Shifting from intervention-based approaches to embedding dyslexia support within core instruction.
- Community outreach efforts and collaboration to ensure alignment and system-wide impact.
- Professional learning opportunities for educators, including tier-one and intervention strategies.

The discussion emphasized the district's systemic approach to dyslexia support, focusing on collaboration, training, and applying the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework to both students and adults. Key highlights include:

- **Parent Engagement:** A shift from merely informing parents to making them equal team members in decision-making. Recognizing parents as experts on their children ensures collaborative planning and informed next steps.
- **Dyslexia Awareness:** Training efforts aim to elevate understanding of dyslexia as a neurobiological, language-based disorder with a genetic component. The professional development underscores its coexistence with other conditions and the importance of early intervention.
- **Layered Professional Development:**
 - **Universal Training:** Provided to all K-5 teachers, focusing on foundational knowledge of dyslexia and equitable instructional practices.

- Targeted Training: Delivered to specialists like reading instructors, incorporating universal training plus targeted interventions.
- Intensive Training: For those working with the most impacted students, building on universal and targeted content to address specific needs.
- MTSS Framework for Adults: A novel application of the MTSS philosophy for professional development. Training is tiered, data-driven, and aligns with roles, mirroring the framework typically used for student support.
- Secondary Preparation: Early efforts to introduce dyslexia-related concepts to secondary staff across all content areas (e.g., science, math) aim to prepare them for more specialized professional development in the coming years.
- Focus on Early Intervention: Elementary staff training prioritized closing learning gaps quickly, with plans to build foundational knowledge for secondary staff to support broader systemic changes.

Committee discussion/feedback:

- Dyslexia identification and support: Dyslexia falls under the "Specific Learning Disability" (SLD) category in Colorado, one of 13 eligibility categories. Within SLD, there are eight areas of focus, with three foundational areas for reading: phonological awareness, phonics, and basic reading skills.
 - Root Cause Analysis: Dyslexia indicators are often tied to basic reading skills, with fluency and comprehension being secondary effects, not root causes.
 - For students meeting grade-level benchmarks in phonological skills, fluency could become the focus, though initial support remains foundational.
 - Support Frameworks: Discussions centered on how dyslexia-related needs are addressed between elementary and secondary levels. Consideration of data analysis to understand support allocation and effectiveness across tiers.
 - Intervention Considerations: Approximately 20% of students may require additional support, potentially through IEPs, 504 plans, or universal applications of support. Emphasis on tailoring support to individual needs rather than being tied to a specific program or location.
 - Next Steps: Explore data for a deeper understanding of needs and effective practices. Develop strategies to ensure comprehensive support across educational levels.
 - Additional Notes: Need to address gaps between elementary and secondary levels. Importance of universal applications and targeted interventions to serve diverse needs effectively.
 - The team will review data to determine the percentage of students with dyslexia at both the elementary and secondary levels.
 - Dyslexia exists on a continuum, with support varying based on students' individual needs and data. Some students may not require intensive interventions but still benefit from targeted support across different layers.
- The discussion emphasized the importance of educating parents and the broader community about dyslexia and effective strategies to support all students. This effort extends beyond students with dyslexia or reading difficulties, as the strategies

benefit all learners. There is a need for foundational education and awareness to create a broader impact.

- The discussion highlighted the genetic component of dyslexia, noting that students with dyslexia may have parents with similar challenges. This raises the importance of structuring outreach and communication in accessible ways, such as reducing text, using videos, incorporating more whitespace, and ensuring content is user-friendly for parents who may struggle with reading. The need to balance accessibility improvements with practical website updates and email communications was also discussed.
- The discussion emphasized the importance of educating parents about the screening process, such as DIBELS, to prepare them for assessments and potential findings. Clear communication before testing can help parents understand its purpose and reduce surprises if concerns arise. Suggestions included providing early notifications, involving classroom teachers in outreach, and systematically improving how data and results are shared with families. This approach aims to reduce anxiety for both students and parents while fostering collaboration.
- The discussion focused on the importance of addressing both family engagement and the mental health impacts of dyslexia. Early challenges, such as difficulty with letter recognition, can evolve into more significant social and emotional issues as children grow older.
 - Suggestions included enhancing resources on the website to address these mental health components and providing age-specific guidance for families and educators, from early childhood through adolescence. Professional development for counselors and educators should integrate strategies to support the emotional well-being of students with dyslexia. Collaboration across areas of expertise was emphasized to ensure a comprehensive approach.
- Offer clear guidance for parents on identifying early indicators of learning challenges, such as dyslexia or math-related difficulties. It emphasized making such information accessible on websites, tailored to different developmental stages. The discussion also touched on the importance of addressing broader learning challenges beyond dyslexia and providing actionable insights for parents and educators.
- Ensuring the emotional and social well-being of students, particularly those with learning challenges like dyslexia. One concern raised was the importance of properly training substitute teachers, especially regarding accommodations for students with specific needs. The lack of adequate preparation for substitutes, particularly around understanding student challenges and managing classroom dynamics, was highlighted as a gap. Suggestions were made to improve training for substitutes to better equip them to handle diverse student needs and create a more supportive classroom environment.
- Maintain ongoing discussions and continue efforts to enhance dyslexia support, focusing on personalized strategies, collaborative practices, and a commitment to continuous improvement.
- Personalized Approaches: There was discussion about the variability in programs like Orton-Gillingham (OG) and the importance of matching specific strategies to

individual student needs. Programs must consider factors such as multisensory approaches and writing challenges.

- Focus on Data: Targeted and intensive strategies require interpreting key metrics (e.g., slope lines, four-point rule) to evaluate program effectiveness, emphasizing both the program's structure and the individual student's needs.
- The discussion distinguishes between screening, diagnostics, and clinical diagnoses, especially in the context of dyslexia. Screening is a quick process to identify students who might need further evaluation, while a diagnostic assessment is a deeper, more time-intensive evaluation that looks into specific areas like reading strengths and weaknesses. In the educational setting, dyslexia is not diagnosed clinically, but instead, educators identify the specific challenges students face based on educational criteria. The conversation also touched on the importance of understanding that every student with dyslexia may have different needs, and diagnostics help guide tailored educational interventions.
- Feedback and Collaboration:
 - Personal experiences with dyslexia were shared, reflecting both challenges and appreciation for progress made in the district's approach.
 - Participants noted that discussions about dyslexia were previously limited, and the recent openness represents significant progress.
- The goal would be to transition to a universal support model within schools to reduce reliance on outside tutoring, with the goal of training interventionists to deliver high-quality instruction directly in the school system.
- Family Engagement: Suggestions were solicited for family engagement strategies to better address the needs of students and their families.
- The team recognized the importance of ongoing feedback to address overlooked areas and enhance long-term strategies.
- The inclusion of early childhood education in discussions and the acknowledgment of progress in addressing dyslexia were viewed as positive developments.
- The importance of maintaining a commitment to ongoing collaboration and continuous improvement.

Diversity and Inclusivity Parameters/Protocols that Guide PSD Staff – Dwayne Schmitz

Dwayne highlighted two additional areas, beyond dyslexia, where the DAC could provide valuable feedback and support to other groups.

- **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)**
Sensitive topics, such as those in honor choir or class text selection, are a nationwide conversation. The district has policies and a dedicated group to inform and guide PSD regarding related policies and practices. There is an opportunity to explore community engagement for further clarity. This could include involving external experts and PSD staff to review and inform current practices, guidelines, and policies.
- **Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP)**
A recent change in state law regarding ICAP (Individual Career and Academic Plan) is designed to help students explore their interests and passions. To implement this

effectively, additional guidance is needed. Engaging parents is essential to ensure families have access to the information and resources they need to support this process.

Family Engagement Policy Update – Clare Barquero

Clare will update the DAC on the Family Engagement Policy next month.

Family Engagement Topics – Clare Barquero

Claire went over the Family, School, Community Partnerships (FSCP) program and asked for feedback from the DAC.

The committee members selected partners to discuss their impressions of Family, School, and Community Partnerships within the district and/or other districts.

- It was noted that the impact of these partnerships varies depending on the school, grade level, and overall alignment across schools. The approach should be consistent but adaptable to the unique needs of each school.

The DAC provided feedback on the desired district standards for FSCP.

- Proactively reach out to parents when students begin to fall behind academically, ensuring early intervention and consistent communication with families.
- Parents may prefer to be informed before a body of evidence is established regarding academic struggles.
- Emphasize a "whole child" approach to ensure families feel heard and supported.
- Assumptions: Parents need to be informed about discussions taking place at schools.
 - Hold a monthly town hall to ease students and provide an opportunity for them to ask questions.
 - Offer parents a chance to ask any questions in an open setting.
 - Implement a PSD 101 session with all departments to provide parents with a space to ask questions.
 - Explore ways to create accessible opportunities for parents to participate during the school day, while maintaining equity, especially for working parents.
 - Utilize parent groups for engagement and support.
 - Leverage technology, handbooks, and in-person communication to facilitate these efforts.
 - Consider renaming the PTO to a "Parent Resource Group," positioning it as a resource hub rather than a volunteer-based organization.
 - Discuss how to communicate mental health information to families, including determining trusted sources, what parents are informed about, and how to handle sensitive topics.
- The discussion on this topic will continue at the next meeting.

Closing

The next DAC meeting will be February 19, 2025, JSSC Boardroom, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Adjourned

Parking Lot Items: