

WJMS ACCOUNTABILITY MINUTES

January 2018

Date | 1/8/2018 | Meeting called to order by Sara Miller

In Attendance

<input type="checkbox"/> Jennifer Baker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Becky Brown	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Beth Bunchman
<input type="checkbox"/> Dan Cohan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steve Cox	<input type="checkbox"/> David Fennimore
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sara Gilloth	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Melissa Gutierrez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kim Halingstad
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Salesa Hancock	<input type="checkbox"/> Diane Lowry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Patti MacLennan
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mika Melvin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sara Miller	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clara Mizenko
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Janet Moore	<input type="checkbox"/> Paul Pinarretta	<input type="checkbox"/> Shea Robinson
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mya Sapien	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> John Seevers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kristy Sjogren
<input type="checkbox"/> Kyle Stielow	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tammy Story	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heather Swegle
<input type="checkbox"/> Lynn Westfall	<input type="checkbox"/> Bridget Williams	

Approval of Minutes

The November minutes were posted to the school website and distributed via e-mail. There was no vote to accept the November minutes.

Principal's Report

Becky Brown and Kim Halingstad jointly delivered the principal's report. They began with staff update items:

- Emily Wiechec will be returning from maternity leave on Friday, January 12.
- We are in the process of hiring a new paraprofessional for the position that became open with Janice Jones' retirement.
- Becky Brown is retiring at the end of this school year. Dan Cohan will be at the February accountability meeting to discuss the principal selection process.

The staff had two great days of professional development, one in our building on Thursday and around the district on Friday.

We are preparing for the School Showcase next Wednesday, January 17. The new format will have families visit stations with a passport. Details will be communicated in the next few days.

Registration for the 2018-2019 school year starts with our current eighth graders; Conifer High School counselors will be visiting our eighth grade social studies classes on January 16 and 17, then returning to collect completed paperwork on January 22 and 23. We will be visiting our feeder schools with sixth grade registration at the end of January. Registration for our current sixth and seventh graders will follow. It was asked if we have dates for 5th grade math testing set; no, but please plan on them being around late April. We are having vertical conversations with elementary and high school stakeholders about streamlining that process.

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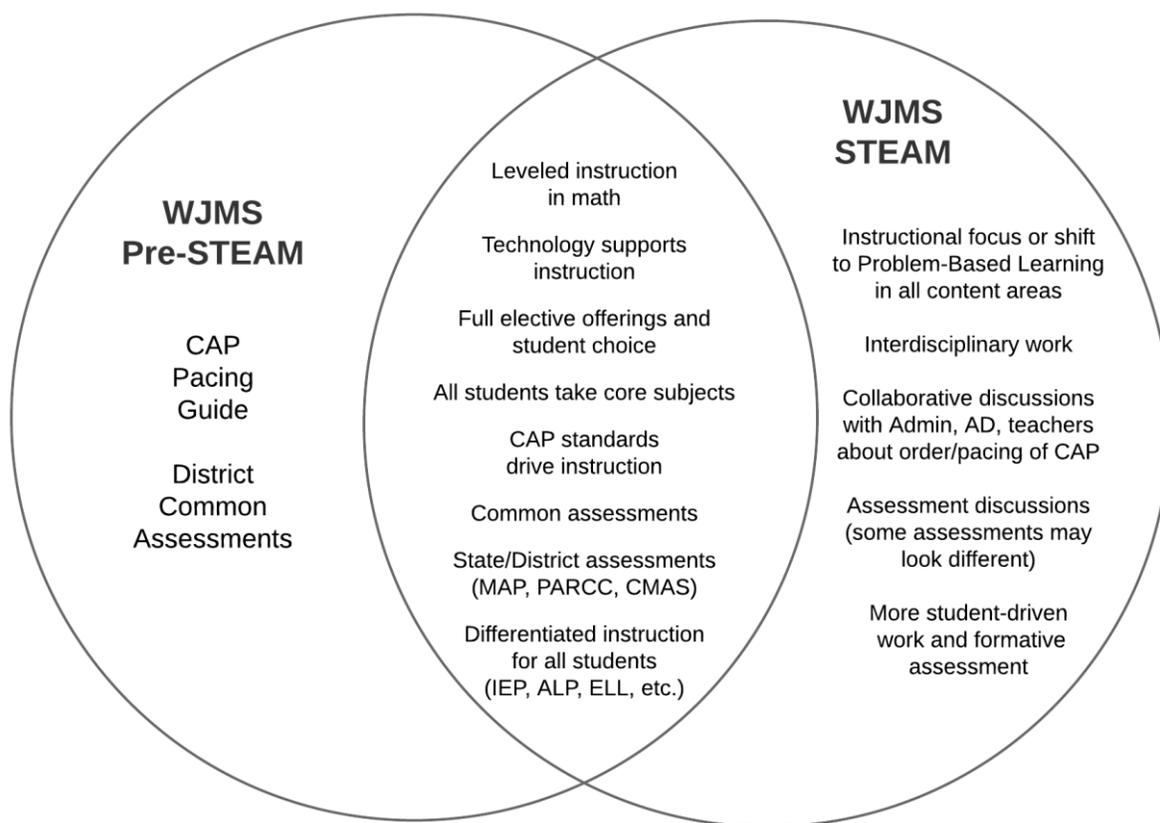
Problem-Based Learning

Instructional coach Mika Melvin was invited to speak about Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and facilitate discussion on how families can support their students with PBL and STEAM. A copy of her presentation will be made available on the Accountability page on the school website.

Our staff began looking at using Problem-Based Learning as an instructional method to deliver Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) learning in the 2015-2016 school year by staff asking what skills students need to be prepared for college and in life. Many of the skills align with the [Jeffco Generations](#) skills: content mastery, civic & global engagement, self-direction & personal responsibility, communication, critical & creative thinking, collaboration & leading by influence, agility & adaptability.

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is a curricular and instructional design that challenges students to learn through engagement in a real problem. The format simultaneously develops both problem-solving strategies and disciplinary knowledge and skills by placing students in the active role of problem-solvers confronted with an ill-structured situation that simulates real-world problems and issues. Working in groups, students identify what they already know, what they need to know, and how and where to access new information that may lead to resolution of the problem. The role of the teacher is to facilitate learning by supporting, guiding, and monitoring the learning process.

The committee looked at what continues to be part of standard practices at our school and what is changing:



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In spring 2017, focus groups were created from students that teachers recommended as doing either very well, doing the same, or struggling with PBL. Charts of the results in the presentation were summarized as:

- 80% of students felt they learned the same or more with PBL
- 83% of students felt they were equally or more engaged in PBL units
- 40% of students felt they produced very high quality work (as compared to other work) in PBL units
- 16% of students did not want to continue doing PBL work

Specific student feedback appeared in the presentation. The floor was then opened to questions and comments.

How often do we do PBL units? How are we working to improve them? Every core subject plans for one PBL unit per trimester; some units are cross-content. Teachers plan units within the guidelines of curriculum and existing parameters. (The article "[Student Learning Experience First, Technology Integration Second](#)" from Jeffco Ed Tech has more on the planning process.) It is an expectation for teachers this year to communicate rubrics, intermediate and final deadlines, and other PBL unit expectations via their websites as well as in classes.

We have been working on communicating individual jobs within the group with each PBL unit and teachers have developed a team worksheet so students can provide feedback on how their team is working. A teacher shared that sixth grade's cross-content Geographic Issues documentary project has evolved with them adding complexity and increasing students' level of buy-in with each year. This year are using the school's new WeVideo subscription and working with the computer applications teacher on building student capacity for video production.

What items were on the "pre-STEAM" side of the Venn diagram?

- Strictly following the pacing for curriculum, previously called C-CAP but now Bridge to Curriculum. Pacing changes have to be approved by our school administration and the area achievement director, but it was not flexible in the past.
- District common assessments, which we continue to use for math assessments but is no longer the only type of assessment.

How do teachers feel about PBL? A teacher expressed that they were initially hesitant when they started planning PBL into their courses, but have since found it provides a lot of engagement and gives students an "a-ha moment" of connecting that they need and use math in real life. It is challenging to plan cross-content projects with math because we offer seven levels of math across three grades. While planning, if an idea for a unit doesn't align to state standards, it gets passed over – we want to provide challenge, but ensure it ties into state expectations and pacing. We have to teach students how to collaborate effectively, then how to persevere through productive struggle.

How do parents feel about PBL? Several parents shared sentiment from student feedback on seeing more specific communication and timelines. It was suggested we do a parent focus group on PBL feedback; Mika and Sara will coordinate that outside of the meeting. Parents would like to receive direct messaging on what PBL is, why we are doing it, and what it looks like for their students.

What can the school and accountability committee do to communicate our PBL and STEAM vision? Put positive messaging into the community about PBL and share the data on long-term growth for students. Include something for parents in new-student orientation about PBL and what to expect; possibly communicate this to local realtors. Write a page for the school website specifically about PBL and STEAM, including existing videos, and make sure this is more up front on the website.

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Are we working with elementary schools to prepare current 5th grade families for PBL in 6th grade? We will be sharing at Showcase about how learning feels and looks in PBL units.

Do we have information and/or data on high schools using PBL? Evergreen HS is using PBL; Conifer HS has a lot of exploratory learning that is not specifically labeled as PBL. There is a lot of group and collaborative work at the high school level. We are a little ahead of the curve with Jeffco Generations right now because we started PBL before Generations was published. One of our PBL units has been shared for use at another K-8 school in Jeffco.

Mika will follow up with the committee after the next student focus group to share results and discuss next steps.

2018-2019 Student-Based Budgeting

Becky Brown brought copies of the 2017-2018 budget for the meeting attendees to reference. We had budgeted for 550 students in the 2017-2018 school year and only had 533 at the October count window, so we returned \$90,000 compared to the \$53,000 anticipated. We will be budgeting for 2018-2019 based on 533 students and hope to have more students. If we have more students than budgeted for at October count, funds will be adjusted upward when they are disbursed to schools. In 2017-2018, we spent down about \$263,000 and will not have that much next year. The amount we get per pupil has decreased to about \$4900.

After salaries and other already-directed expenses, we have about \$200,000 that gets allocated to pay for substitutes (\$1000 per teacher), building-level paraprofessionals (about \$15,000 each for three positions), and the clinic aide (about \$20,000), with about \$70,000 left that the committee may provide input on how it may be spent. This amount will be spent regardless of the committee's input, so the discussion mostly looked at where money is spent.

It was asked if there were broad categories of where funds might be allocated for the committee to offer input on spending priorities. Significant areas of discretionary spending at our school include technology (a focus during Mrs. Brown's tenure as principal), curriculum development, annual spending stipends for individual core subject departments (about \$1000 each to ELA, math, science, and social studies), and Outdoor Lab fees for students whose families have not paid them for any reason (last year we paid \$5400, over \$10k the year before).

It was asked if we could hire more (theoretical) people, what would we want? Ideally, we would like more teachers so we could have dedicated teams, freeing core teachers having to teach multiple grade levels or subjects, but we do not currently have the room for that and it is hard to allocate if we only added a single person. It was then asked what our building capacity is; we feel 570, but the district might state a higher number.

Questions asked at the meeting for later follow-up:

- Can we offer unfunded "wish list" items and/or costs somewhere online? (It was noted that replacing the computers in 113 will cost about \$26,000 and we could use graphing calculators for advanced math.)
- Can we publish where we spend some of the discretionary funds, e.g., technology, Outdoor Lab, etc.?
- Can we communicate that student fees are payable in installments? Do fees carry over year-to-year?
- Can families offer to pay fees for other students? The beneficiary's name(s) would not be shared.
- Can the committee or school publish facts like "x% of our families receive free and reduced-price lunch benefits, but x + whatever % did not pay student fees in full in [school year]?" It would be eye-opening for many families to see that the school itself covers a lot of gaps they might not have been aware of before.

We will see the full budget communicated from administration later in the spring.

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Open Forum

Principal Selection Process

Sara spoke with Dan Cohan, our area achievement director, the day after Becky Brown's retirement was announced about what the principal selection process looks like.

The district has a TeacherMatch posting for the secondary principal pool open from December 19, 2017 through January 21, 2018. The job posting is listed as both an ongoing (permanent, following a probationary period) and temporary (one-year contract) position, although the hope is to hire someone into an ongoing (permanent) position. The selection process is guided by a committee of two teachers, one classified staff member (e.g., a secretary, paraprofessional, or other non-salaried hourly position), two parent representatives, and district representatives such as administrators from other schools in the articulation area; the committee submits their ranked choices to the district, which makes the final decision. We do not yet know whether committee members will be elected by their peers or appointed by the district.

Sara has expressed that it is very important to her that an additional venue for staff and parent feedback can be included in priority setting; we do not yet know if that will be included in consideration. She has also passed along names of people that have contacted her.

Start Time Task Force Update

The district is holding Start Time Information Night at the Ed Center on Monday, February 12. A task force will be established after the information night; any changes would not happen before the 2019-2020 school year. There is a flyer on the school website.

Meeting adjourned at 4:06 pm.

Next Meeting

Date: 2/12/2018

Time: 4:06 pm

Location: WJMS Library