

WJMS ACCOUNTABILITY MINUTES

April 2018

Date | 4/9/2018 | Meeting called to order by Sara Miller

In Attendance

<input type="checkbox"/> Jennifer Baker	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> Paul Figlia	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sara Gilloth	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Melissa Gutierrez
<input type="checkbox"/> Kim Halingstad	<input type="checkbox"/> Salesa Hancock	<input type="checkbox"/> Diane Lowry
<input type="checkbox"/> Patti MacLennan	<input type="checkbox"/> Mika Melvin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sara Miller
<input type="checkbox"/> Clara Mizenko	<input type="checkbox"/> Janet Moore	<input type="checkbox"/> Paul Pinarretta
<input type="checkbox"/> Aimee Pless	<input type="checkbox"/> Shea Robinson	<input type="checkbox"/> Mya Sapien
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> David Schoenhals	<input type="checkbox"/> John Seevers	<input type="checkbox"/> Kristy Sjogren
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ann Sparks	<input type="checkbox"/> Kyle Stielow	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jennifer Stoltman
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Paul Stoltman	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tammy Story	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heather Swegle
<input type="checkbox"/> Sally Kate Tinch	<input type="checkbox"/> Lynn Westfall	<input type="checkbox"/> Barbara Wickham
<input type="checkbox"/> Bridget Williams	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wendy Woodland	

Welcome and Introductions

The attendees introduced themselves, along with their connection to the school. Five guests attended to meet Mr. Schoenhals: the Stoltman family, whose students currently attend Elk Creek Elementary, and principal Wendy Woodland from West Jefferson Elementary.

Approval of Minutes

The March minutes were posted to the school website and distributed via e-mail. A motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept the March minutes with revisions for a misspelled name and an incorrect word found after the minutes were published.

Elections

Nominations for a chair, co-chair, and a secretary were due at the March meeting. The only nomination at the time was Sara Gilloth to serve as chair. Melissa Gutierrez is willing to continue serving as secretary. A motion was made, seconded, and passed to nominate Melissa to the slate for secretary. Sara Miller reported that seven of the thirteen people that had attended a majority of the year's meetings were present, providing a quorum necessary for voting. Sara Gilloth and Melissa Gutierrez each gave brief stump speeches, then a hand vote was taken to vote on each of their positions. The votes were unanimous to elect Sara Gilloth as chair and Melissa Gutierrez as secretary for the 2018-2019 school year.

Sara Miller thanked all of the committee members for serving and hope they continue in the future.

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End-of-Year Report

Beth Bunchman, outgoing PTA president, reported some exciting news on behalf of the PTA.

The PTA nominated Paul Figlia, our Watch D.O.G.S. coordinator, for the Colorado PTA's Male Involvement Award. We received notification last week that he will receive the award at the state convention later this month.

PTA members nominated Laura Garrison, our instrumental music teacher, for the Jeffco PTA's Crystal Apple Teacher of the Year Award. She will receive the award at Jeffco PTA's Spring Fling on Wednesday, April 18.

The next – and final for this school year – PTA meeting will be Thursday, April 19 at 2:35 pm in the library. We have a new board coming in: Aimee Pless as President, Sara Miller as Vice President for Education, Salesa Hancock as Vice President for Community Outreach, Melissa Gutierrez as Vice President for Communication, Jennifer Burtis as Treasurer, and Kyle Stielow as Secretary. It is exciting to have a full board after several years where it had been tough to fill the minimum required board positions.

The spring social event is a Fun Fest, held immediately after school on Thursday, April 26. Wristbands cost \$10 – just enough to cover costs, not as a fundraiser – during lunches starting April 20 as well as at the door. They will require a signed permission slip. Wristbands grant unlimited access to all activities: giant trikes, jousting, an obstacle course, carnival midway games with prizes, a chalk wall of kindness, pie the teacher, photo booth, a cake walk, and a board game room. Food will be available at an additional cost.

The committee thanked Beth for her service to the school.

A committee member asked what staff changes would be happening in the 2018-2019 school year. Melissa briefly ran through them:

- Hillary Rines will be teaching 7th grade math; she is coming from Peiffer Elementary.
- David Schoenhals will be our principal beginning in July; he comes from Aurora Public Schools.
- Misty Bradley will be teaching 8th grade math; she will be coming from Salina, Kansas.
- Caitlyn Mergendahl will be our instructional coach; she will be coming from Denver Public Schools.
- We have posted a position for a special education teacher to fill the position that we have had long-term substitute Char O'Brien in this year.
- We have posted a position for counselor to fill the position currently held by Shea Robinson.

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) Focus Group

Mika Melvin has done focus groups with students about Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in the past two school year where she asked teachers to recommend a range of students that did well with PBL, struggled with it, or surprised a teacher (either positively or negative) with how they did with PBL. She is interested in doing a parent focus group before the end of the school year. Anyone interested in participating may contact Sara Miller.

A separate online survey will go to families in a SchoolMessenger e-mail.

It was suggested that the committee work with teachers on a creating a PBL guide for our school including information on how PBL units look and work, where to find resources, etc.

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Public Safety Report

Steve Cox, Sara Gilloth, and Tammy Story attended the district's School Safety Panel Discussion on March 20 at Lakewood High School; Sara Miller and Ann Sparks watched the livestream. Representatives from the district security department, law enforcement agencies, and mental health organizations talked about the resources Jeffco has and collaborates with community agencies on to improve student safety. Breakout groups by articulation area talked about area-related issues. Local law enforcement agencies cover the cost of school resource officers, which is a huge savings for the school district. John McDonald, the district's Executive Director of Security and Emergency Management, noted that the district has received nationally recognition for its work and we provide information to other districts across the country on procedures and practices. A former elementary school (Martensen) is now the Frank DeAngelis Center for Community Safety, a training center for first responders. The district also has a simulation system that can be set up on-site for live-shooter training.

Meet & Greet with Mr. Schoenhals

The remaining time of the meeting was turned over as an opportunity for families to meet our incoming principal, Mr. Dave Schoenhals (pronounced "shane-halls").

He recapped his introduction from the March meeting: he is a Colorado native and both a graduate and long-time employee of Aurora Public Schools, where he is currently the principal of a K-8 school. He felt it was a good time to change since his youngest child will be graduating from high school. He has two daughters – one in high school and one at Colorado State.

Mr. Schoenhals outlined several priorities for his work:

- *Learning about the school and community culture.* He plans to ask students, staff, and families about what they feel are our school's strengths, challenges, and their hopes for the future, then take that information and approach it as a five-year plan for the school with an embedded one-year plan within. He plans to do an online survey for families about his big three questions and hopes to meet with parent representatives over the summer. A real grasp on data for him requires knowing individual students by their successes, challenges, and working style.
- *Hearing what people are thinking and reacting accordingly.* When he started at his current school, it was second to bottom on the district's climate survey. He took on the challenge and the school rose to third in the district the following year. It can be uncomfortable to listen to difficulties and challenges with strong feelings involved, but it is important to deal with it and not let problems continue. It is important to gain the trust of students, parents, staff, and community to take action and build up how things are going.
- *Student safety.* Keeping kids safe – both physically and emotionally – must be a top priority.
- *Having a great teacher in every classroom.* Teachers need strong support and to be held to high expectations. He noted that there is only so much you can "get" about instruction from data outside of classrooms.
- *Positive climate.* He wants staff to love coming to work, parents to feel welcome and happy with what the school is doing, and for students to enjoy coming to school. Middle school is a big transition where kids are moving away from close relationships with adults but not yet at a point where they have the privileges of young adulthood.

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The floor was opened to attendees to ask questions.

An update on his relationship status, mentioned at the March meeting, was requested. Mr. Schoenhals is now engaged to his high school sweetheart, who he reconnected with 30+ years after high school.

It was asked about how the turnover rate came down at his current school. There was a lot of climate and culture work and building trust among staff. A significant shift was norming families to try to work out issues with a teacher before escalating concerns to administration. Once escalated, he facilitated conversations to find a solution that worked for everyone, having a separate conversation with each party before the facilitated conversation so he could hear each side and discuss what would be optimal solutions for each of them.

It was asked whether Mr. Schoenhals is aware of our school's issues on social media and if we have a plan to address it. He has experience with parents and students expressing concerns about their school on social media. The question was clarified that there are specific concerns about respect between students and between students and staff. Mr. Schoenhals responded that sitting down with both students and their families can help establish expectations and figure out the root cause of issues.

It was observed that it seems like many discipline issues are related to issues outside of school that the school may or may not know about. Affective and social-emotional support needs to be as big a focus as academics in order for students to feel engaged and like they can be successful. We should be asking what our kids' stories are and how we can support them on a daily basis.

It was observed that it seems like good things happening at the middle school are not getting as much promotion to the community as negative feedback and past media coverage. Our elementary principals appreciated being invited to be an audience for PBL work (7th grade ancient civilizations *Shark Tank* and Math 6/7 Europe trip). It feels like communication about changes at the school has not been cohesive. We hear about challenges more than successes. It takes the whole community to build that positive buzz. Sara Miller noted that we are looking at doing parent focus groups again this spring.

Open Forum

The District Accountability Committee is seeking a parent representative from the Conifer articulation area for the 2018-19 school year. Anyone interested may contact Sara Miller.

The committee thanks our administration, Becky Brown and Kim Halingstad, for their active participation in the School Accountability Committee this past school year.

Meeting adjourned at 7:02 pm.

Next Meeting

Date: 9/10/2018

Time: 2:35 pm

Location: WJMS Library