

**STEM School and Academy
School Accountability Committee
2015 – 2016**

Date: December 16, 2015

Time: 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.

Location: STEM High School Cafeteria

Meeting Notes

1. Welcome & introductions – Jeanne Work Swaim

Members present: Cody Blackburn, HS Principal; Karen Johnson, Elem Principal; Kimberly Worth, MS Teacher; Cindy Fiechtner, voting parent member; Jean Medberry, DAC Liaison; Renee Borchert, parent; Inge Brazelton/

2. Staff report – Kimberly Worth

Staff are celebrating at the end of a successful semester with holiday activities, such as an Ugly Christmas Sweater contest, Secret Santa gift exchanges, and a staff holiday party on Thursday, December 17, 2015.

3. District Accountability Committee (DAC) report – Jean Medberry

SAC's web site needs to match the template provided by the DAC. Kathy Brown, District Parent Liaison, is available to meet with our SAC to help guide our format. SAC agreed to post meeting notes within 24 hours of the meeting and to vote to approve notes as meeting minutes at the next meeting.

The DAC Winter Forum will be held in February. SAC is asked to provide input to Jean regarding topics of interest for the Winter Forum.

ACTION ITEM: Jeanne will reach out to Kathy Brown for available dates to meet in January. Cindy Fiechtner will join meeting.

4. STEP Organization report – Rebecca Duarte

SAC needs to identify a STEP liaison for SAC representation.

R. Borchert suggested more frequent communication, such as facebook posts, for fundraisers and events.

ACTION ITEM: Jeanne will reach out to STEP and Rebecca to request a liaison.

5. SAC Bylaws – Jeanne Work Swaim

- Approval vote

Only two members voted by email to accept the bylaws. The bylaws will be emailed out again to all voting members for an electronic vote. If 4 "yes" votes are received out of 7 votes, the bylaws will be submitted to the STEM Board for review and approval.

ACTION ITEM: Jeanne will email bylaws to all voting members and solicit approval.

6. Principal's Report – Cody Blackburn and Karen Johnson

- Elementary School Expansion

DCSD Board of Education voted to expand STEM to K – 4 next year. The approval includes eight provisions that must be met at identified calendar milestones, such as traffic planning.

There are currently 1,100 students on the enrollment interest list. Open enrollment admission notices are being sent this week, whether accepted or not.

Kindergarten will be held in a full-day format only, with tuition set at \$3,900 per year, paid in monthly installments. Administration is considering a staggered start time and STEM will provide a BASE program.

Construction will begin in late winter to building nutrition facilities, PE, library, and art rooms, twelve additional classrooms, and an administrative offices suite in the elementary building.

- PARCC/UIP

Data is becoming available but still embargoed to the school. Trends indicate STEM's scores are higher than the state and district averages, and in some cases substantially higher.

UIP plans for this year for all schools are a repeat of last year's plans. The new testing format does not provide the appropriate data to update UIP plans for schools in Colorado.

- Parent Survey

Parent survey data was presented from May 2015. Data indicates high levels of satisfaction with departments within STEM. The survey allowed for text feedback and that information was disseminated to department heads.

Highlights include 97.1% of parents agree or strongly agree their children feel safe at school, and 90.8% of parents agree or strongly agree their children feel like they fit in and are respected.

SAC will begin the process of developing a new parent survey in March 2016 for roll out in May.

- Questions/Concerns

There were no additional questions or concerns.

7. Committee Updates

- Communications – Cindy Fiechtner

The weekly newsletter is the primary means of communication between the school and parents. When an event changes (time, location, etc.) there is not a "typical" approach to notifying parents. Cindy expressed an interest in working with staff to identify communication "exceptions" and see if there is a simple way to push information to parents when a change occurs.

SAC has agreed there is an interest in developing a student and family directory. The purpose of the directory would be to enable students to contact each other while working on assignments to ask questions and to coordinate projects. It would also provide STEM families a better connection to the parent community.

ACTION ITEM: Cindy will prepare a proposal to create a directory. SAC will review and vote on the proposal via email. If the directory proposal is approved, Cindy will work with administration to develop a policy for opting into the directory mid-year (versus opting out at registration), and to limit the purpose of the directory to school communication, rather than marketing.

8. Open forum for guests – Jeanne Work Swaim

- Safety concerns

Neighbors continue to express concerns over traffic during drop-off and pick-up times as well as students walking through their parking lots and driveways. The majority of parents and students are respectful of our neighbors, but it only takes one disrespecting community member to upset a neighbor. SAC would like to urge all families and students to respect the needs of our neighbors as we drop off and pick up our students. Remember to exercise patience while waiting, turn right only out of the middle school parking lot, and encourage your students to be good ambassadors for STEM.

- Community concerns/input

Administration was asked to provide a philosophy between grading for assignment completion versus content mastery. Administration expressed greater interest in mastery as a teaching philosophy but identified the difficulty in conveying separate assessments to higher education. Ms. Worth provided her own philosophy stating she is eager to reward students for what they have succeeded in rather than penalizing them for missing something; she encourages her students to demonstrate what they've learned.

The High School Showcase was regarded as a great event, but not well-attended. SAC discussed ways to increase communication for events in the future. Parents who attended said it was valuable.

A parent asked for consistent communication from administration, a department chair, or both, when a teacher leaves, citing an instance this fall with no communication following the departure of a teacher.

Next meeting:

- *To be discussed: January 27, 2016*
 - Topics to discuss:
 - Communications Developments