

DAC Meeting Minutes

PSD Boardroom

Wednesday, April 16, 2025

6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Present

Meghan Archuleta	Clare Barquero	Ashley Barrett	Stephanie Cotton-Maceta
Adam Cronk	Erica Daniell	Jess Ellis Hagman	Marcy Lewis
Jodi Quass	Marybeth Rigali-Oiler	Alica Romero	Ian Rutherford
Susan Sasson	Scott Schoenbauer	Michael Werner	Becky Woodcox Joe Zappa

Welcome and Introductions

Dwayne welcomed the committee members.

Approval of Minutes

The committee approved and seconded the February 19, 2025, meeting minutes as amended.

Preview Meeting Design and Announce BOE Approval – Ashley Barrett

Cell Phone Policy/Practices and Family Engagement Strategies – Dr. Julie Chaplain

Dr. Julie Chaplain, Rusty from WMHS, and Mo from CHS reviewed the new cell phone policy process. They discussed how it connects to the purpose behind the conversation and are seeking feedback. The focus is on aligning high school cell phone practices, while also supporting consistent practices in middle schools with flexibility tailored to each site. This effort is informed by existing data and research highlighting the impact of cell phones on learning, mental health, attention, and social interaction. Although the current policy, originally adopted in 2014, remains valid, the focus is now on clearer communication and more consistent enforcement. Key expectations include no phone use during class time (bell-to-bell) unless outlined in a documented plan such as an IEP, 504, or healthcare plan. Students may use phones during passing periods, lunch, off periods, and before or after school. Exceptions are allowed for medical or regulatory needs and for respectful emergency use.

Tight (District-wide, non-negotiable):

- Phones must be silenced and out of sight during class.
- No AirPods or similar devices during instructional time.

Loose (site-based flexibility):

- Schools adapt implementation methods (e.g., pouches, caddies, storage areas).
- Site-specific tiered response systems and designated phone-use areas.
- Restorative approaches or alternative practices permitted (e.g., at Centennial).

At all high schools, phones must be silent and out of sight during class, and the use of AirPods or similar devices is not permitted during instructional time. However, individual schools have flexibility in how they implement the policy, using tools such as pouches, caddies, or designated storage areas. They also establish their own tiered response systems and phone-use zones, with some schools, like Centennial, adopting restorative or alternative approaches. Enforcement follows a three-tier violation system: after three

infractions, schools work with students and families to develop a formal technology plan. Continued issues may result in a code of conduct violation, but only after multiple steps. Importantly, teachers do not confiscate phones directly; students are expected to place them in secure containers, and parents are notified of each incident. Procedures for phone retrieval vary by school. The policy also emphasizes equity and accommodations, outlining a clear process for evaluating and supporting students with specific needs, aiming to normalize accommodations and ensure all students feel safe and supported.

Implementation Timeline

- Board of Education presentation: May13.
- District communication: Mid-July.
- School-level briefings: Before end of the current school year.
- Family communication: Through newsletters, emails, websites, and handbooks.
- Student rollout: During first week of school (transition and full days).
- Teacher alignment: Expectations shared in first two days of school.

Committee discussion/feedback:

- Although phones are mostly kept out of classrooms, students are finding alternative ways to socialize digitally (e.g., massive Google Chats, Microsoft Teams during class).
- Some student voices advocated stricter controls (e.g., no phone possession at all), leaders aim to balance self-regulation, safety, and instructional integrity.
- Smartwatches, iPads, etc., must follow the same expectations.
- Students may use laptops with headphones for music when appropriate.
- School-provided laptops are sometimes being used as personal communication devices, blurring the lines between instructional and personal use.
- Digital platforms like Google Chat and Teams leave digital footprints, making it easier for schools to investigate issues than platforms like Snapchat or Instagram.
- While these tools can be misused, they also provide more transparency and accountability.
- There's strong interest in teaching students the "why" behind tech restrictions, including the long-term neurological effects of early social media use.
- Proposals include giving students ownership of their choices and offering educational sessions at the start of the school year that highlight these impacts.
- The book *The Anxious Generation* was referenced multiple times as a resource for framing this messaging.
- There's a call to support parents with tech knowledge (e.g., hidden iPhone folders, AI chat apps, safety tools like BARK).
- Parents appreciate more proactive and earlier communication about tech policies, ideally before summer.
- Concerns were raised about school groups and clubs using Instagram as their only communication method, unintentionally pressuring kids to join social media.
- Schools report fewer behavioral issues and surprisingly positive student and parent responses to the policies.
- Students have largely accepted the rules, and some have even held adults accountable for phone use.

- Data from one school (Timnath) shows minimal repeat offenders, indicating successful behavior change.
- Ideas include creating short videos explaining the policy and its rationale, to be shown during orientation and to new students and families throughout the year.
- There is strong interest in leveraging documentaries like *Screenagers* to support parent engagement and explain the "why" behind policies.

GPA Calculations in PSD and Family Engagement Strategies – Beth Green

The district is proposing a revised GPA and class ranking system to better support student mental health, equity, and interest-driven learning, while also simplifying and standardizing GPA reporting across schools. There is unanimous support from high school counselors across the district and charter schools. The committee is being led by Beth Green, the lead counselor/coordinator, with representatives from multiple schools.

Key Points:

- Reflects input from a broad community of educators closest to students.
- Aligns with district goals around mental health & belonging and graduating with options.

Current System Challenges:

- Multiple GPAs on transcripts (Raw, Adjusted, Weighted) cause confusion.
- Poudre High School adds a unique GPA and rank due to IB, adding complexity.
- Class rank is based on a “sort-of weighted” GPA, leading to inequities.
- Lack of standardization causes problems comparing PSD students with others.
- Toxic academic competition and pressure among top students.
- Access gaps—some students can afford extra AP/online courses; others cannot.
- Students choose classes for GPA advantage, not personal/career interest.

Proposed System Changes:

- Use a Weighted GPA (5-point scale) as the official GPA.
- Eliminate the adjusted GPA to simplify reporting.
- Remove valedictorian/salutatorian titles.
- Introduce a decile-based recognition system (top 10%, 20%, etc.):
 - Schools can personalize honors (e.g., *summa cum laude*).
- Standardize GPA and ranking practices across all schools in the district.

Expected Benefits:

- Improved equity in recognition and course access.
- Reduced stress and unhealthy competition.
- Clearer transcripts for college admissions and scholarships.
- Students are encouraged to take interest-aligned, ICAP-based courses (e.g., music, work-based learning).
- Supports students across the academic spectrum, not just top performers.

Committee discussion/feedback:

The committee feedback expresses strong support for the proposed GPA and class ranking changes, particularly from educators and counselors, who anticipate positive impacts on student mental health, equity through decile recognition, and clarity with a consistent, weighted GPA. The shift towards interest-based course selection is also viewed favorably.

However, the feedback underscores the critical need for clear and proactive communication, especially with families, to address several concerns:

- Regarding the removal of Valedictorian/Salutatorian, families will need a clear understanding of the rationale, specifically how this change promotes student well-being and fairness. Some families may perceive this as a reduction in rigor, potentially leading them to seek more challenging academic environments elsewhere. Therefore, communication must emphasize that this proposal aims to provide "more rigor for all students" by expanding access to advanced coursework and real-world learning, moving away from the intense, often marginal, competition at the very top that overlooks many other high-achieving students. The adjusted GPA, intended to address this, has unfortunately caused further confusion.
- Persistent Incentives: Even with a weighted GPA, students might still prioritize AP/IB for GPA benefits over genuine interest. The suggested response is to emphasize balanced course planning aligned with individual pathways (ICAPs).
- Access Inequities: Unequal access to advanced courses could still create disparities in the new system.
- Decile System Implementation: Clarity is needed on how deciles will be determined and whether it will still foster competition.
- Transcript Clarity: There is some uncertainty among the committee about how GPA and rank will appear on transcripts.
- The committee discussed the possibility of not including class rank on transcripts for students below a certain percentile, potentially the 50th percentile. This suggestion arose from concerns about the mental health of students with lower rankings. While acknowledging that being in the bottom 10% is better than being second to last, it still isn't a positive experience. Since class rank is not a requirement, the committee explored the idea of only displaying it for students above a specific threshold. Expanding on this, there was support for the idea of eliminating class rank altogether, at least for freshmen, sophomores, and possibly juniors. The rationale is that students begin focusing on rank too early, and in large graduating classes with very close GPAs (as illustrated by a student being 90th with a 4.0), the difference in rank becomes statistically insignificant. Some school districts already do not rank, often smaller ones, highlighting the potential for this approach.

Overall, while the direction of the proposed changes is seen as positive, the committee stresses the importance of transparent communication that highlights the benefits, addresses potential concerns, and emphasizes increased opportunity and rigor for all students.

Pathway Exploration and Family Engagement Strategies – Tanya Alcaraz

Tanya outlined the development and purpose of the Four-Year Career and Academic Plans being created in Poudre School District to support student career exploration, align coursework with individual goals, and empower students, families, and counselors to design purposeful high school experiences. These plans help students begin exploring career interests such as healthcare, computer science, or agriculture early in high school, while connecting those interests to relevant classes, work-based learning opportunities, and graduation requirements.

After two years of development and multiple feedback rounds, the new graduation pathways will launch with the Class of 2029 (current 8th graders). While core pathways are consistent districtwide, each high school customizes offerings based on programs and student interests, e.g., medical courses at Fossil Ridge, agriculture at Wellington. All students will have access to advanced programs at the PSD Career Tech Center in 11th and 12th grade, regardless of school. Plans will be available in print and online, with school-specific logos and links. Students can explore and switch pathways in 9th and 10th grade, and an exploratory option is being developed for those undecided. Challenges like limited course availability are being addressed through shared offerings and improved scheduling. Final plans will be published before fall registration, with ongoing feedback and collaboration to strengthen offerings across the district.

Committee discussion/feedback:

- Students have flexibility, none of the pathways lock them in, and all courses count toward graduation.
- The work is seen as student-centered and aligned with post-secondary opportunities.
- Strong collaboration with local colleges and industry partners (e.g., CSU, Aims, Front Range).
- Advisory committees with post-secondary and industry representatives meet regularly.
- Pathways like aviation and behavioral health are backward designed from college programs.
- Recognized need for improved and early outreach to parents, ideally starting in elementary school.
- Suggestions included using:
 - Brochure-style displays in schools (like in hotel lobbies).
 - A shared districtwide communication strategy.
 - Interactive tools like Xello to explore pathways.
- Parents want clear, consistent messaging across schools to avoid confusion or school comparisons.
- Caution was raised about schools competing or being perceived as “better” than others.
- Emphasis on promoting a unified district identity while celebrating individual school strengths.
- Some worry that too much complexity might push families toward simpler school.
- PSD is not alone; it's part of a Northern Colorado network of schools, community colleges, and employers working collaboratively.
- Programs are designed to complement rather than compete—students can access offerings across schools.
- Career & Technical Education (CTE) is well-supported at the state level.
- Additional state funding has supported this work for decades; funding continuity is considered stable.
- Classes are more likely to run in 9th and 10th grade due to broader student availability.
- It becomes harder for 11th and 12th graders to access certain classes due to limited enrollment.

- Low-enrollment courses may be centralized at one school to maximize participation.
- The Career Tech Center provides access to specialized courses that may not run at individual schools.
- Suggestion: Track course offerings and rotate some courses every other year to support student planning.

Unified Improvement Plan Update and Review (Part 1) – Dwayne Schmitz

- The DAC needed to move this item to our next meeting due to time constraints.

DAC Recruitment and Budget Priorities Survey (Sept/Oct)

The SAC survey has been launched, and the results will help guide district planning efforts.

There are four 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

The recruitment process for the DAC is underway; applications can be submitted via the PSD website.

Closing Reflections and Next Steps – Ashley Barrett

- Suggestion to provide pre-meeting materials or highlights for speakers, allowing more time for discussion during meetings.
- Acknowledgment that time often runs short due to rich discussion and multiple topics.

Closing

The next DAC meeting will be May 14, 2025, JSSC Boardroom, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Adjourned

Parking Lot Items: