

DAC Meeting Minutes

PSD Boardroom

Wednesday, September 17, 2025

6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Present

Meghan Archuleta	Ashley Barrett	Stephanie Cotton-Maceta
Adam Cronk	Erica Daniell	Dr. Traci Gile Tena Green
Jess Ellis Hagman	Lindsey Mozer	Marybeth Rigali-Oiler
Ian Rutherford	Scott Schoenbauer	Michael Werner Joe Zappa

Welcome and Introductions

Dwayne welcomed the committee members.

Preview Meeting Design– Ashley Barrett

Ashley went over the meeting design. If time allows, Dwayne would like the DAC to vote on a new applicant for the PSD Teacher seat.

Approval of Minutes

The committee approved and seconded August 20, 2025, meeting minutes as amended.

UIP Strategy 3A conversation (Full DAC Part 1) – Dwayne Schmitz

The focus of this meeting was to discuss mental health and belonging, and the district's Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) Major Improvement Strategy 3A.

3A – Positive School Climate and Culture

Description: PSD continues implementation of [Colorado Multi-Tiered System of Supports \(COMTSS\)](#) through [Positive Behavior Intervention and Support \(PBIS\)](#) that is trauma-informed, restorative, and culturally responsive. We do this to create and sustain learning environments in which every student experiences belonging through affirming, empowering, engaging, meaningful, rigorous, and relevant instruction while feeling respected, cared for, dignified, and safe. Staff efforts will focus on a proactive and preventative school climate and culture.

Dwayne emphasized that the main concern raised for discussion by the DAC is the perceived conflict between district policies and practices regarding gender-diverse students and the stated goal of creating a safe and inclusive environment for all. The DAC agreed that there is a shared value of ensuring student safety. The DAC conversation endeavored to explore and better define the issue that had been raised while considering implications for PSD policy and practice.

The conversation focused on gender identity and bathroom access/use in a public-school setting. Regarding students feeling safe, the DAC distinguished between a student *feeling* unsafe versus being in a situation where there is an *actual* threat to their safety. Both matter, and it is important to distinguish between the two in a productive conversation.

- **Defining Behavior Norms:** The discussion highlighted the value of clear norms and expectations for student behavior. It was suggested that communicating these

norms, especially as they pertain to potentially sensitive areas like bathrooms, hallways, and locker rooms can help students understand what is considered poor behavior and what the consequences are. Explicit district and school communication regarding behavior norms can empower students to identify and report issues, thereby increasing their safety and sense of security.

- **Identity, Discomfort, and Policy:** The conversation expanded to consider the complexities of safety as it relates to identity, not just behavior. The topic of discomfort versus actual danger was raised, questioning how the district can navigate providing a safe environment without necessarily removing all situations that might cause discomfort.
- One participant presented the **CASEL** (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) framework, which outlines five key components of social-emotional learning: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. The framework suggests a need for explicit instruction and systematic approaches to help students develop these skills, which can contribute to a safer, more inclusive school environment.
- **Concerns over Safety and Social Norms:** One participant expressed concern that the district's push for inclusivity is undermining traditional norms of modesty and safety. They argued that “males shouldn’t be allowed in female bathrooms or locker rooms, and vice versa”. The participant also raised the issue of trauma, suggesting that students who have experienced physical abuse might be especially uncomfortable in these situations. A separate, single-stall bathroom for transgender students was proposed as an alternative to changing the norms for the majority. See the following section for details on the legalities of this approach.
- **Comparing to Other Marginalized Groups:** A counterargument was presented by likening the situation to racial prejudice. It was argued that it would be considered unacceptable to ask a black student to change classrooms because a white student felt unsafe around them. The point was made that gender identity is a characteristic of a person, just like race.
- **Emotional vs. Scientific Constructs:** The discussion then delved into the difference between sex (a biological construct) and gender (an identity). While one participant argued that gender is a “feeling” or “emotional state” that is not permanent, another participant stated that both race and gender are social constructs that are fluid and can vary.
- **Physical Safety and Statistics:** Another key point was that while the fear of trans students harming cisgender students is often a perceived threat, there is no data to support this. Several DAC members mentioned that there is strong, consistent evidence nationally that transgender students are more likely to be victims of bullying, harassment, and assault, including in school environments. Furthermore, there is no comparable, credible national evidence showing transgender students are a widespread source of attacks on cisgender students. The conversation focus

distinguished between “perceived safety” of cisgender students to the actual, documented safety risks for transgender students. National and state data sources (such as the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey) indicate that transgender students may face an increased real risk of harm if they are forced to use bathrooms that do not align with their gender identity.

- **Existing Policies and Practices:** An educator offered insights into how schools currently handle these issues, explaining that schools do not teach "modesty" as a moral value, but rather focus on teaching children about body privacy and safety as part of health and wellness standards. The educator noted that schools were built with sex-segregated spaces, but that there is a growing need to provide more private spaces for all students. It was also clarified that single-stall bathrooms are available for any student who feels uncomfortable in multi-person spaces, not just for trans students.
- **Call for Continued Dialogue:** The conversation was acknowledged as a brave and important discussion. The group was encouraged to continue exploring how to align school policies and practices with the needs and safety of all students, and how to better communicate existing resources, policies, and practices to parents.

District guests share relevant information to enrich DAC conversation – Shayna Seitchik and Jenna Altomare

Based on the DAC conversation just observed, Shayna and Jenna were able to provide some discussion-relevant information and insights. It was shared that PSD's approach to gender identity in schools is governed by a combination of legal requirements, safety, and dignity/respect.

Policy and Law

- **Discrimination:** PSD adheres to Colorado's non-discrimination laws (C.R.S. 24-34-601) and its own non-discrimination policies (AC, JBB), as well as related PSD policies (e.g., JICDE). These policies explicitly indicate that forcing a transgender student to use a single-stall or separate bathroom is considered discriminatory because it singles them out based on their gender identity or gender expression, both being protected classes.
- **Student Self-Identification:** Staff are directed to honor the gender a student communicates (gender expression), as it's considered who they are, as opposed to a “choice” that can/should be dismissed. The policy is not that "boys can be in girls' bathrooms," but rather that "girls can be in girls' bathrooms" and "boys can be in boys' bathrooms," recognizing that a student's gender identity, not their sex at birth, determines their correct space.
- **Privacy:** PSD will not enforce inspections or checks of a student's body in any space to confirm their gender.

The Human Perspective

- **Courage and Bravery:** It takes immense courage for a transgender person, especially a child, to live authentically due to the discrimination and violence they often face. A key point from the discussion was that it is unlikely a person would "pretend" to be trans given these challenges and risks.
- **Gender Dysphoria:** Gender dysphoria, where a person feels a misalignment between their biological sex and their gender identity, is a very real experience.
- **The Big Picture:** The discussion urged participants to move beyond policy and consider the daily reality for transgender people, who often face a world where their existence is challenged, and their lives are at risk.
- **Behavior Over Presence:** The conversation should focus on positive behaviors rather than simply a person's presence in a room.
- **Accommodating All Students:** It was acknowledged that many students, not just those who are transgender, may feel unsafe in multi-person bathroom settings. Providing private, alternative bathroom options in public spaces such as schools can accommodate anyone (not limited to preferences related to gender identity or gender expression) who may prefer a more private bathroom experience.

UIP Strategy 3A conversation (Full DAC Part 2) – Dwayne Schmitz

The discussion continued with the following points regarding the safety of students in public school facilities, including bathrooms:

- **Homicide Rates:** The committee heard a statement that the per capita murder rate for transgender people is low compared to other minority groups. The committee acknowledge the difficulty in calculating an accurate per capita rate due to inconsistent population data.
- **Suicide Rates:** The committee discussed the significant difference in suicide consideration rates between transgender and cisgender youth. The Healthy Kids Colorado survey was referenced as a data source that supports this finding.
- **Threat to Others:** The committee heard that there is a lack of evidence to support the idea that transgender people pose a threat to others in public spaces like bathrooms. It was noted that law enforcement agencies and research organizations have found no credible evidence that transgender people are more likely to commit crimes or engage in violent behavior than cisgender people.

This discussion continued with the district's Unified Improvement Plan (UIP), specifically Strategy 3A, to address concerns about its wording and implementation.

- A committee member noted that while the district's non-discrimination policies are clear and legally binding, the language in the UIP's instructional practices is less concrete. The current wording, which focuses on social-emotional learning to ensure all kids feel "included," is perceived as vague. It was suggested that the language in the UIP be made more explicit to reassure families from diverse backgrounds, including those with differing religious or cultural beliefs. The goal is to articulate exactly what the district is doing in its classrooms and schools to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students.
- The point was brought up that there may be students who have safety concerns that may not be expressing those concerns. How can we ensure all voices are heard and respected?

- To illustrate the need for clearer communication, a personal anecdote was shared about a family who was concerned about a library book. The educator explained that while they could not remove the book, they worked with the family to create a communication plan and find a way to honor their values while still upholding district policy. This example highlights the difference between an unchangeable policy and a flexible, accommodating practice.
- The group proposed examining wording for the future UIP to make it more transparent about school practices. This would help families understand what "social-emotional support" and "safety" mean in practice, and how the district responds to concerns about inappropriate behavior or discomfort, regardless of the cause.

The next DAC meeting, as an extension of tonight's conversation, will include a discussion of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Liz Davis (Senior Executive Director of Student Services) and Amanda Kreiger (Director of Curriculum and Instruction) will be invited to join the DAC for this topic.

DAC topics to share with DAB (District Advisory Board) – Ashley Barrett

Ashley asked the DAC if there are any topics they would like her to discuss the DAB.

- The overall sentiment of parents and the community's "pulse."
- Feedback on how mill levy funds are being used and their impact.
- The level of parental confidence regarding their child's social-emotional learning and behavior support, and how they receive this information from schools.

The group hopes that by gathering this information, they can develop more structured and helpful ways to improve family engagement and communication for the entire district.

The DAB will be discussing the district's marketing efforts to determine if they are reaching the intended audience. The group believes current efforts are not effective and plans to focus on improving family and community engagement. Ashley will share insights from this discussion to help inform the group's own efforts on this topic in the future.

Closing Reflections and Next Steps – Ashley Barrett

Dwayne requested to add an agenda item about a teacher who applied for the open seat on the DAC, but the topic was tabled due to time constraints. He will email the DAC with the teacher's information to set up an electronic vote on whether to invite them to the next meeting.

Closing

The next DAC meeting will be on October 15, 2025, JSSC Boardroom, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Adjourned