District Accountability Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes
October 22, 2015

I. Call to order
Janna Youmans called to order the regular meeting of the District Accountability Committee at 6:11 pm on Thursday, October 22 in the Dr. Ed Lord and Patricia Lord Board Room (Educational Services Center, Peoria Building).

II. Roll call
The following persons were present: Jeanette Carmany, Lisa Escárcega, Ella Hart, Merrie Jones, Karen Porter, Julie Rapone, Dan Wright, Janna Youmans,

Guest: Cheyenne Drevon – Student
Laura Noonan – Institute of Play
Remi Holden – C.U. Denver
Liz Aybar – The Studio School
Jane Shirley – VP of Leadership Initiatives (CATAPULT)

Board of Education Liaison: Amber Drevon

Speaker(s): Lisa Escárcega – Chief Accountability & Research Officer
Jackson Westenskow – Presenter (The Studio School)

III. Welcome & Introductions
Karen Porter welcomed and gave an introduction to DAC members and guests

IV. State of the District Presentation
Lisa Escárcega presented the group with the State of District Presentation and covered the following points

Lisa shared the Vision – Every Student Shapes a Successful Future. She shared that our mission is to partner with our community and to accelerate learning for all students, thus developing knowledge, skills, and character to shape successful futures. Lisa voiced the districts 3 strategic goals – She explained that APS is in the process of developing implementation plans with strategic goals, metrics and timelines

- Goal 1: A Plan for His or Her Future
- Goal 2: A Set of Skills to Implement His or Her Plan
- Goal 3: Credentials that Open Doors

Lisa further explained that one APS Core Belief is Diversity is strength in our community. She went on to share statistics regarding growth, number of employees, enrollment numbers, and student languages. The group spoke about achievement and a successful future – Lisa stated our students are taking responsibility for their learning and that APS is now number one in Colorado for students earning post-secondary workforce credentials. She went on to speak about the Aurora Welcome Center and engaging our families.

Lisa spoke to the Action Zones (Aurora Community-based Transformation, Innovation and Opportunity Network) – She shared that January 19th is a target zone (5 schools) The International Leadership theme will build on this strength so that all APS graduates are prepared for their lives as global citizens.
The group was also presented with the names of members of staff that received recognition as highly-qualified professionals:

- Jennifer Passchier received Crawford Elementary School leader named National Distinguished Principal of the year for Colorado.
- Colorado School Nutrition Association honored Mona Martinez-Brosh with the 2015 Director of the Year award.
- APS Chief Accountability and Research Officer Dr. Lisa Escárcega earned the 2015 Colorado Association of School Executives Policy Leadership Award.

There was discussion about APS teachers and professional learning, Aurora Voters – Milly levy funds in 2008 and 2012, and a $215 million Bond. In addition Lisa addressed student needs – Long-Range Facilities Advisory Committee. Lisa explained that APS is considering nine options to address overcrowded schools and academic program needs, and that APS will be engaging the APS community at 15 community open houses, and the meetings will take place in spring of 2015. She also voiced to the group that The Aurora Welcome Center is located at 1085 Peoria Street and will provide community services for immigrant and refugee students and families.

**Handout:** APS 2020 – Shaping the Future Strategic Plan Packet

**V. New Pilot School Presentation – Institute of Play (The Studio School)** – [Click here to view](#)

Jackson Westenskow, Colorado School Design Team Lead, presented DAC with a presentation expressing the need to open a new pilot school in Aurora. He spoke about the design model, why it's a good fit for Aurora, A day at The Studio School – A place for curiosity, to practice and experiment and a place where students want to learn, practice, and study. He talked about preparing students for the next stage of their lives by providing them with the skills, knowledge, and expertise to thrive. He talked about game like learning principles and engaging students' with fun work, vigorous work, and 21 Century work.

**Questions – New Pilot School Presentation – Institute of Play (The Studio School)**

**How do you do grading? What if my student isn’t a good fit? What profile are you looking for?** We are interested in standards based grading – William Smith has a good model – learning objectives are clear on what needs to be achieved next. Digit badging will support this as well.

**What traditional testing is incorporated into this?** Anything a teacher can do will count – if a student can meet the learning target, the teacher must get evidence of that – for example, presentation, multiple choice tests, projects/presentations.

**Are you talking more of a portfolio approach?** Yes, but may include tests as well.

**Taking a test takes more skill than just content, if not practicing that, then how will state testing work out?** It does feel like a necessary evil, we want to focus on life skills, but we do want to focus on these skills – using this type of approach doesn't preclude test preparation. We believe in teacher as designer – letting them have the autonomy to design that. Broadening the task to a performance task – so they experience stress/pressure in other areas of well. Students get up and defend their learning.

**How will you select students?** Complete lottery based. Vision and mission presented to parents/students. Students would be accepted, if something in the app or background that indicated the need, we would sit with the parent and then would decide if it wasn’t a right fit.

**There would be some limit to severity of needs (special education students)?** School size would limit this. There is no push out. If you want to be here, it’s our job to accommodate the students need. It is students centered. At the board meeting, it sounded like we would be selective
DAC – the app didn’t seem to address this – address students with severe disabilities – they will need to help them with the language.

What would your discipline policy be? We would follow district policy safe schools – broader than that in it would include engagement and culture – William Smith didn’t have the fights – we saw how that worked – advisory, engaging content, much smaller school. The school is designed for the kids, not the adults.

How will you engage the community given you are not a neighborhood school? Parents will come when students want parents to see the work.

All of the following questions were asked with need for responses:

The game based curriculum is interesting to us, but what other aspects beside immediate feedback can you bring into the presentation?

Sports is large for Middle Schools – is there a way you can piggy back on other schools sports?

How do you merge gaming, with what students need to learn?

How about Montessori for MS?

Bring your kids from the Rock project and show what they had to do.

Have you thought of being a competitor with the current compass program? Rock center is compass learning program.

Studio middle school, how did you come up with that name? 4 years ago, I was a part of a fellowship, and I brainstormed studio as a name.

How does the school compare to Expeditionary Learning? - need response.

When you go to High School, students have practiced testing 3-8 grade – if no practice from grades 6-8, what might happen? – need response.

What are they doing to get High School ready? – Examples of schools doing this work are Quest To Learn – NY and Chicago schools.

What about subsequent years after year one at South MS? – Don’t know now.

Connected math is intense the way it has to spiral – how does that fit with the rest of the design? You have 4 blocks – how will you make it work – will the modules be in the right order? APS has strong models for math we will be using and it will be critical to hire will and create a solid final schedule.

The writing target growth was low? Because we didn’t have real baseline data … DAC Response - you should have a great increase in writing – reasonably should expect to see an increase.

What role does everyone have who is in attendance at this presentation on behalf of the school? Supporting the school, Jackson as school leader

How will you comply with the OCR order? Need a response.
What is your plan for allowing access to discipline data, documents, etc., to concerned stakeholders? The goal of the school – see parent engagement plan – parent teacher conferences – student led.

What are you going to ask the district to provide financially? Class size? Are you expecting a small school size budget? Were you given the finance numbers for a startup school? The school should be cost neutral to the district. Need a response.

If you have a new board – how will you explain being a pilot school? We do have the other principals and support for Pilot schools.

You will make allowance for sports? What about band, etc? How can they transport back to their home school for practice? They would have to make a choice if they want sports, band, etc. and our schedule could not accommodate their getting back to their home school.

Overall statement made by DAC – We like the student centered – hands on – choice for students, but we want to make sure they are ready for High School – that students will get content and skills.

VI. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

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Chairperson

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ATTEST Secretary