

WJMS ACCOUNTABILITY MINUTES

September 2018

Date | 9/10/2018 | Meeting called to order by Sara Gilloth

In Attendance

Amy Gutierrez Baker
Nanci Blanton
Kate Broyles
Steve Cox
Sara Gilloth
Kim Halingstad

Salesa Hancock
Kimbrough Johns
Patti MacLennan
Sara Miller
Janet Moore
Aimee Pless

Mya Sapien
David Schoenhals
John SeEVERS
JP Squires
Heather Swegle

What is Accountability?

The School Accountability Committee looks at the school budget, the school improvement plan, and trends in our school's assessment data. The committee can make suggestions to administration.

Committee norms were briefly reviewed:

- Each year members need to complete an intent to participate form.
- Meetings are the second Monday of the month, September through April, with no meeting in December. Voting on a December meeting was tabled to October.
- It was agreed to push the meeting start time to 2:35 pm to allow for parking. The current ending time is 3:45 pm, 15 minutes later than last year, and may be adjusted as needs dictate.
- An [issue/concern form](#) is available on the school website to bring issues before the committee. Completed forms may be returned to the school office or sent to Sara Gilloth.

Principal's Report

David Schoenhals gave the principal's report.

Enrollment Update

Our student enrollment is nearly forty students above the spring projection at 574 students. Previous principal Becky Brown planned enough carryover for the 2018-2019 school year, so the school is in a good financial position while waiting for funding based on October count. The school needs to consider sustainability for recently hired positions looking beyond this year.

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Staff Changes

We have several new staff and a few internal staff changes for the 2018-2019 school year:

- Allison Barker is teaching academic intervention classes (special education).
- Misty Bradley is teaching 8th grade math.
- Rebecca Castor is a district-level paraprofessional notetaker.
- Hillary D'Amico is teaching 7th grade math.
- Colinda DeGroen is the receptionist, a newly-created position this year.
- Mimi Dunn is teaching 7th grade Social Studies and 6th Honors Social Studies.
- Craig Enlund is a counselor for 6th graders whose last names begin with the letters M through Z and 8th grade.
- Patty Garthe has become a math interventionist, a newly-created position this year.
- Caitly Mergendahl Pitt is the instructional coach.
- Becky Meyers is teaching 6th grade math.
- Jennifer Nickerson is a Significant Support Needs paraprofessional.
- David Schoenhals is the principal.
- JP Squires has become the Dean of Students, a newly-created position this year.
- Mary Sutton is a Significant Support Needs paraprofessional.
- Noelle Vance is teaching 6th grade English/Language Arts and Social Studies.

Mr. Schoenhals met with district finance staff to look at the school's budget and staffing for this year. Stakeholder feedback indicated a need to provide more student support, such as creating the dean position and hiring additional paraprofessionals, to bring the principal and assistant principal into a place where they interact with students in the classroom and not just in the office. The receptionist position was created to both share the workload of the principal's secretary, which had outgrown a single full-time role, and provide a dedicated "right there" person toward our goal of improving school culture.

It was noted that a sixth-grade teacher was added for class size relief; funding for individual support paraprofessionals comes from the district budget, not the school's budget; and that our School Resource Officer is shared with Evergreen Middle School and is at Conifer High School on an as-needed basis.

New Business

Feedback from Principal's Beginning of Year Survey

The meeting attendees began looking at the survey feedback in an informal manner. At future meetings, the feedback presented will include quotes, numbers, and other data points. Mr. Schoenhals' initial survey posed three questions: *What are the school's strengths?*, *What are the school's greatest challenges?*, and *What are your hopes for the school's future?*. The intent was to identify aspects that work well and can be built off of to apply toward tackling challenges and to identify some things that can be done for "quick wins" that can be seen right away, while also looking down the road.

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A summary of the over 70 responses received:

- **Strengths:** The school has eager family support, some teachers willing to go above and beyond to support our students, the school communicates well to families, and there are a variety of elective courses.
- **Challenges:** There are concerns about how bullying is addressed, that the school could communicate more effectively, that there was either too much or not enough focus on GT programming, that struggling students are not getting their needs met, and a sense the school does not feel as welcoming as it could be.
- **Hopes:** We would like to build a sense of community, create a place where students and families want to be, ensure students' academic and affective needs are being met, gain favorable comparisons to our other community schools, and offer activities and opportunities beyond the school day.

Fostering School Culture

After initial teacher meetings, Mr. Schoenhals chose to focus on broad goals of Culture, Instruction, and Affective:

- **Culture:** We will be looking within the staff, students, and the community. There will be some work for everyone and some broken into groups.
- **Instruction:** We are looking to meet the needs of all students. We need to plan for the students in front of us, need to adjust and establish a faculty focus on differentiation.
- **Affective:** Along with instruction, we have a lot to unpack with supporting students' social-emotional needs. Adults need to have students' best interest at heart and focus on having a happy student.

The Community Barbeque and Science Night had great turnout. An open gym for adult basketball is planned for Saturday, September 15th. These events are helping us determine what engages our community with the school. There is a challenge in being a school so reliant on buses. What can the school offer after school and on weekends?

Community members have great things to say about the high school and elementary schools, but not the middle school. What can we collectively do to change this? Mr. Schoenhals wants to work on changing the narrative - perception and realities - to communicate the need to support both our students and our school.

Students will be surveyed in the next few weeks to see what they want to do and be a part of within the school community. There will be the opportunity to dress up for Halloween this year.

Celebrations

Instrumental music teacher Laura Garrison is among 188 quarterfinalists for the Music Educator Award, which is awarded jointly by the Recording Academy and Grammy Museum.

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Our 2017-2018 7th grade English/Language Arts CMAS data was highlighted at last week's district Leadership Meeting for making a 16-point gain, a statistical improvement with gains that outperformed the district. District representative will be visiting the school in October to talk to, and possibly film, teachers.

Open Forum

The culture-building discussion continued into Open Forum time. We need to look at how the school gets information out: to the community, to our elementary schools, and on social media. In the past, PTA officers would attend springtime PTA meetings at our elementary schools just to answer questions and alleviate concerns.

How can we get people to judge by the future, not by the past?

- We can publish more information on available supports as families think about the shift to middle school.
- We can encourage people to contact the school before going to social media when they have an issue with the school. There is value in non-digital conversations for identifying and resolving issues.
- How can we encourage the school to be portrayed in a positive light on social media? The West Jeff Middle PTA has an active Facebook page. Conifer High School has its own Facebook Page for the school.
- With the open gym for basketball, what about other staff coming in? Inviting current fifth grade families?
- Could we share positive news from the school in local venues, such as the Conifer Area Council or Conifer Chamber of Commerce meetings?
- Some of our elementary schools use Party Boards as a fundraiser and way to build relationships.
- We want to offer more after-school opportunities. There are several logistical challenges. Could adult volunteers contribute to a low adult-student ratio? What about students that can't be picked up by 4 pm?

It was asked if [school start times](#) will be changing for the 2019-2020 school year; we do not have information yet.

It was asked why backpacks are not allowed in classrooms at the middle school when they are allowed at the high school. This is a safety issue; there is simply not enough room in the classrooms for our students and backpacks.

We have a Safety Information Night event scheduled for this Wednesday, September 12; a message was sent to families today with more information. It will cover [online safety](#), [vaping](#), and [trauma-informed practices](#).

The meeting adjourned at 3:45 pm.

Next Meeting

Date: 10/8/2018
Time: 2:35 pm
Location: WJMS Library