

WJMS ACCOUNTABILITY MINUTES

April 2024

Date | 4/22/2024 | Meeting called to order by Christopher Bauer

In Attendance

Lee Acree	Melissa Gutierrez	Karin Plow
Vanessa Acree	Rachel Hammer	Dominique Prizgint
Christopher Bauer	Jennifer Hodges	Marni Reinstein
Susan Bergkamp	Deputy David Joslin	Bret Roller
Kelly Beaulieu	Richard Kalasky	Heather Schreuder
Benjamin Brickweg	Tim Krug	Alan Skerl
Megan Brickweg	Anita Lizzi	JP Squires
Kristen Ellis	Jeane Lopez	Laura Squires
Kyle Ellis	Megan Orr	Daniel Tucker
Carrie Evans	Lisa Pastor-Drozda	Brooke Webster
Brian Everton	Wesley Paxton	Jackie White
Karena Everton	Sarah Phillips	Matt White
Melissa Fisher-Faler	Jeff Pierson	

Introductions and Minutes

Introductions were made around the room as there were several new attendees.

The February 2024 minutes, a draft of which was made available the day after the meeting, were briefly reviewed for acceptance. A motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept the February 2024 minutes into record.

Old Business

2024-25 Student Fees

Some electives fees were unknown at the February meeting and expected to be available for the April meeting. The administration asks all staff to review the fee list to check for any changes from the previous year; sometimes electives consumables or workbooks (like for math) increase from year to year. Some things depend on enrollment numbers, such as the number of foreign language sections. It was agreed to table further discussion and approval to the May meeting.

New Business

2024-25 SAC Leadership Positions

Nominations are open for anyone interested in serving as School Accountability Committee chair or secretary for the 2024-2025 school year. Christopher Bauer is happy to continue as chair or co-chair. Anyone interested in either position is asked to reach out to Christopher Bauer.

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Principal's Report

As Kim Halingstad was unavailable to attend the meeting, assistant principal JP Squires gave the report.

Survey Feedback

Our instructional coach Caity Mergendahl distributed a handout titled WJMS 2024 Perception Data Results which summarized our school's results from the [annual district surveys](#) administered by Panorama Education. The complete handout is an appendix at the end of the April 2024 minutes.

There are four areas asked about in the family survey, with 31% of families responding:

- Jeffco Strategic Plan: 36% approval (no change since last survey)
- School Climate: 40% approval (+4 since last survey)
- School Fit: 42% approval (+4 since last survey)
- School Safety: 63% approval (+7 since last survey)

Caity said the family survey largely asks questions about what they feel the experience like for students in the building and what families know their students' experience and curriculum is like. Our lowest performance category was the strategic plan goal of sense of belonging, and our approval in Climate, Fit, and Safety all improved since last year's survey.

There are seven areas asked about in the student survey, with 81% of students responding:

- Academics: 55% approval (no change since last survey)
- School Belonging: 35% approval (+3 since last survey)
- School Climate: 40% approval (-6 since last survey)
- School Engagement: 19% approval (-9 since last survey)
- School Rigorous Expectations: 61% approval (-2 since last survey)
- School Safety: 62% approval (+2 since last survey)
- School Teacher-Student Relationships: 45% approval (-2 since last survey)

All students are offered the opportunity to complete the student survey during a core subject course (our school usually does this during Social Studies). Students may choose to not participate in the survey.

A parent asked when the surveys were taken. The 2023-2024 survey window was January 16 – February 23, 2024.

Caity reviewed the student questions along with the areas, noting that the Academics questions were geared toward perceptions of math. While we saw declining approval compared to last year's survey in several areas, overall, the data felt corroborating to the staff development we have been doing. Noting that engagement has the biggest downward trend, there is a feeling of disconnect between what we are asking students to do and the why of those learning tasks. The staff is exploring how to make the curriculum feel more relevant and come alive for students. It was asked if something triggered the change in engagement. We don't know yet. Community superintendent Wesley Paxton stated that this is a challenge for many schools.

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It was asked how the 81% response rate was compared to previous years. (Per [School Insights](#), the student participation rates were 59% in 2023, 92% in 2022, and 81% in 2021.) Districtwide, we see higher participation rates at the elementary and high school levels, with a drop among middle schools.

It was asked how the results might differ if the survey was taken today. We don't know.

It was asked what is working based on the survey results. We feel positive that professional learning for staff tied to helping students become drivers of their own learning is helping, as well as finding ways to teach that more effectively meet students' needs.

It was asked how our school's survey results are so disparate between high and low approval stores, particularly on student engagement. We are still trying to figure that out.

A parent stated that their student has been out for the past week due to safety concerns following the April 15 safety issues and have major concerns that the safety issue is not resolved.

Attendees were asked to consider what the ideal situation for our students looks like, and how do we get there. What can we do in the classroom? What can we reinforce as a culture (e.g., 'if you see something, say something')?

Several parents then stated specific concerns they had with the school:

- Book choices. A parent stated they are pre-reading books for their student to screen for content and working with the student's English/Language Arts teacher to choose books for their student that do not conflict with their family's moral values.
- Bullying. A parent stated they know a family whose student was bullied here and enrolled their student in another school district (Platte Canyon School District in Park County).
- Classroom politics. There is a concern about specific teachers pushing political agendas on students and causing a decrease in student engagement.
- Curriculum. A parent cited that 8th grade science teaches the big bang theory.
- Gender identity issues. Several parents stated that some classrooms display rainbow pride flags and if they display those, they should also display straight pride flags. A parent stated that [Outdoor Lab Schools](#) may have transgender students as high school leaders and they do not want transgender students sleeping in bunkhouses with middle school students and possibly grooming them. They feel that Outdoor Lab Schools are making a statement that it is more important to them to support transgender people than their middle school students' safety.
- Learning plans. A parent is concerned whether the school is following their student's 504 plan.

A parent asked where the school has accountability. The reply was through [continuing state accreditation](#) and accountability to the [district](#) and [state](#). It was then asked if families don't see the results they want, who gets held accountable and responsible and the discussion shifted to the April 15 safety incident for the remainder of the meeting time.

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Open Forum

The April 15 safety incident and subsequent response was discussed for much of the meeting. The discussion has been grouped by topic for clarity.

Background: A note was brought to the office by students on the afternoon of Monday, April 15. The note was handed to a staff member, who was told that it was found on a classroom floor and had been passed around that classroom. A [Safe2Tell](#) report was made about the note that evening. School administrators saw the note early on Tuesday, April 16 and found it to be possibly threatening in nature. Our School Resource Officer Deputy Joslin, Jeffco Public Schools' [Department of School Safety and Security](#), and the [Jefferson County Sheriff's Office](#) responded to assist in investigating the situation. At the time of the meeting, we do not know what student(s) may be responsible for the note and do not believe there is an ongoing danger to the school.

Communication to Community

Many speakers agreed that the initial communication sent to families should have been faster. Parents were upset that they found out about the situation from their students before the school sent the letter on April 16, and wanted to know why a dialer wasn't sent to all families.

Jeff Pierson, Executive Director of School Safety for Jeffco Public Schools, explained that communication regarding safety issues goes through vetting. The April 16 letter went through the district [Communication Services](#) department before reaching him, then went on to the school principal to add their touches to it and be sent out. He noted that the April 18 follow-up letter could have stated more clearly the initial letter's timing was not what they wanted and there were missteps in protocol that led to a delay in notifying the community. A parent stated they want the approval process to move faster any time there is a threat at school.

A parent asked what happened to the note and why didn't administration know before the Safe2Tell report was made on Monday night. Assistant Principal JP Squires replied that errors were made in the reporting process. Jeff Pierson added that the district Department of School Safety and Security doesn't know until the school contacts them. They worked with the sheriff's office to evaluate the note for how specific and concerning the note content might be. We know that kids sometimes write stupid things on paper, but we take what it said seriously and determine if we need to get resources in place or if we need to take immediate action.

JP Squires added that he wants to make it clear that we would be happy to be able to communicate more quickly, but there is a process and rules guiding what we communicate. Our school leadership is going to work with Wes Paxton, Jeff Pierson, and district Communications Services to improve future communication about the situation. A parent stated that they appreciate individual staff members owning their part in lapses that delayed the response to the note. Several parents agreed that they want more communication after safety situations, even if there is no update. A parent said they want a letter on Wednesday breaking down step-by-step what the school will be doing regarding the safety situation along with their reasoning. Jeff Pierson replied that he will work with school administration to make sure they are addressing community concerns, and that administration is listening to student concerns. We want to get students that need help connected to appropriate resources.

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A parent asked what the school needs to do for the community to feel better about the situation. They do not feel the community has confidence that the school can quickly evaluate and communicate what is going on. Community superintendent Wesley Paxton stated that he can work with school administration on improving communication to the community. A parent said they are just now finding out about other incidents at the school that happened earlier this year but did not specify what they were referring to. (There was an incident with graffiti of a hate symbol found in a restroom; communication about that occurred through the weekly newsletter on September 6, 2023.) Jeff Pierson replied that we're going to do what we can to get resources for the school.

A parent stated our school has a history of not communicating and not being transparent about where funds they are asking for are used. They were very frustrated that it seems that the school keeps saying "we're going to get better" and then not improving. They stated they have never felt welcome as a [Watch D.O.G.](#) or in our school.

Communication to Students

A parent stated their student has not been in school since the threat. It is damaging to students' grades and school engagement. It was asked how many students were absent the day after the threat. JP Squires replied that the raw numbers was about 12% on April 16, but that is not disaggregated by the reasons why students were absent.

A parent asked if teachers are communicating to students about [Safe2Tell](#). Yes, it has been communicated by teachers in Advise [homeroom] classes and to all students via all-call announcement that they can anonymously report via Safe2Tell. A parent stated that students not in school the day after the note was turned in might have missed that communication. They added that the students turning in the note did the right thing and the delay in reporting was a misstep on the school's part, which they feel the school should acknowledge to the students.

JP Squires communicated with staff to be sensitive of requests about missed work, asking teachers to clearly communicate what is necessary to be caught up. A parent replied that plenty of teachers are not being flexible with make-up work to their students.

A parent stated that "death mode", a phrase that may have appeared in the note, is a superpower in the manga and anime series *Naruto*. It could be non-worrisome but the student(s) responsible may now be scared to say anything. Is there an option for students to talk about it without fear of getting in trouble? How do the students know they won't get in trouble if they come forward with information? JP Squires replied that when the communication went out to the school, we repeatedly stated that Safe2Tell is anonymous and confidential. Jeff Pierson added that if we need to soften the message, we can do that in future communications. A parent thanked Jeff Pierson for his transparency in communication and would like that going forward from school administration.

A parent asked if the school would communicate thanks to the students that turned in the letter for doing the right thing to the student body. Students are not getting communication from adults that positively reinforces when they do the right thing.

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Family Engagement

Several parents stated they want to help but don't know how or where to help. A parent stated they wanted to volunteer with [Watch D.O.G.S.](#), but never heard back on how to sign up. Daniel Tucker, our school's lead Watch D.O.G., stated that program information runs in the school newsletter every week. While there is a two-week turnaround on background check, it is not too late to volunteer this year. He is happy to help walk people through the process and may be contacted by email at watchdogswestjeffms@gmail.com.

It was asked if an existing background check for the [Raptor](#) visitor management system was acceptable for a background check for Watch D.O.G.S. Our school does not use that system. It was asked about adults with concealed carry permits volunteering. Carrying weapons is not allowed on school grounds.

A parent asked the school to compare our School Engagement survey scores to Marshdale Elementary, where they have higher Watch D.O.G.S. participation. It was asked if we know why engagement scores are higher at elementary and high schools than at middle schools.

Investigation

Deputy Joslin stated that the note was given to the sheriff's office's Special Investigation Unit, which investigates threats. They also noted the anime connection. He has spoken with five of the seven students named in the note so far. The family of one of the students refused, and for the remaining student they are waiting on information before they speak with that student. They are looking for any connections between the named students. A parent asked about the teacher named in the note. Several parents stated that students do not like that teacher.

Deputy Joslin stated that we just don't have more information to know where the note came from or how serious it is yet. We just want to know what happened so we can give everyone peace of mind. Our goal is to help the people that feel the most threatened. We want to make sure both the victims - the students and teacher named in the note - and the community feel safe. The note is a threat, but we need more information so we can evaluate its credibility and whether more information is needed. A parent asked why that information can't be shared to the community. There are rules and limitations on what information schools can publish.

A parent asked why a picture of the note was not sent to teachers sooner. A parent commented that teachers should be able to recognize the handwriting on the note, followed by a brief discussion about how listed names on the note appear to have been written by more than one person. It was repeated that if anyone knows who may have written it, encourage them to report anonymously via [Safe2Tell](#). It was stated that if the note had been reported via Safe2Tell sooner, maybe the teacher whose classroom it was in might have had some idea of which student(s) sit in the area that the letter was found. Several parents stated that the teacher in question does not have assigned seating. JP Squires stated that many kinds of student records are confidential under FERPA. A parent replied that the note is not confidential because it has been published on the internet. (An adult posted a photo of the note to Facebook.)

A parent stated that looking at the [Code of Conduct](#), it doesn't look like the responsible student(s) would miss more than 2 - 3 days of school, while their student has been out for days. Jeff Pierson replied that discipline would depend on what is found out.

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A staff member asked if the SRO's schedule can be shared so staff know when they are in the building. Deputy Joslin replied that he is in the building at lunches and is outside at recess. The staff member replied that they don't personally see him. Deputy Joslin replied that often when he is at the school, he is working with staff or investigating. He tries to be visible at the school but does not interrupt classes. The staff member replied that the more he visits, the less of an interruption it is. Parents at the meeting agreed that they were not as concerned with teachers being interrupted because they want students to feel safe.

Security

A parent asked whether additional security personnel being visible at West Jeff is pulling resources away from Conifer High School to support our school. It is reducing the time that Deputy Joslin, our School Resource Officer, is available at Conifer High School. Many parent attendees feel our school needs more security staff.

A parent asked if the school could have security with dogs at the door and random backpack checks. Jeff Pierson replied that we cannot escalate it to that level of security at this time. We just haven't identified what student or students are responsible.

A parent asked what the average response time is in the case of an active event. Per the September 27 [Community Conversation](#), the average response time to mountain area schools is 7-8 minutes for the sheriff's office. Jeff Pierson added that the district wants to have a security presence in the schools because they have more access to the schools than law enforcement as they can be in the schools without a possible infraction of the law first.

Jeff Pierson stated that the district's Department of School Safety and Security has 27 patrol officers on duty 24/7, an internal dispatch system, and works with [Jeffcom](#) [the county's dispatch communications center] to disseminate information. Not many districts nationwide have the safety infrastructure that Jeffco has. The mountain area is on a district list for added patrol coverage, but we don't have a date when that will happen yet.

A parent asked if any staff members be held accountable for the errors made in the reporting process that delayed families being notified, and whether it will be communicated to families. Jeff Pierson replied that it depends on what the investigation finds out, and that community superintendent Wes Paxton handles personnel matters.

The meeting adjourned at 6:19 pm.

Next Meeting

Date: 5/13/2024

Time: 4:00 pm

Location: WJMS / Google Meet

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Appendix: WJMS 2024 Perception Data Results

Family-School Relationships Survey

113/358 families responses (31% response rate)

Jeffco Strategic Plan

36% approval (no change since last survey; compare to 50% among Jeffco middle schools and 61% districtwide)

Perceived alignment of WJMS to the Jeffco Strategic Goals:

- Belonging
- Instructional Prioritization and Excellence

Question types:

- Are your child's individual differences viewed as assets?
- Are your child's strengths recognized?
- Is your child challenged to improve?
- Does your child have needed supports?
- How often is communication applicable to you and your family?

School Climate

40% approval (+4 since last survey; compare to 55% among Jeffco middle schools and 70% districtwide)

Perceptions of the overall social and learning climate of the school.

Question types:

- To what extent do you think that children enjoy going to your child's school?
- How motivating are the classroom lessons?
- How fair or unfair is the school's system for evaluating students?
- How much does the school value the diversity of children's backgrounds?
- How well do administrators create a school environment that helps children learn?
- Overall, how much respect do you think the children at your school have for the staff?
- Overall, how much respect do you think the teachers at your school have for the children?

School Fit

42% approval (+4 since last survey; compare to 54% among Jeffco middle schools and 67% districtwide)

Families' perceptions of how well a school matches their child's developmental needs.

Questions:

- How much of a sense of belonging does your child feel at their school?
- How well do you feel your child's school is preparing them for their next academic year?
- How well do the activities offered at your child's school match their interests?
- At your child's school, how well does the overall approach to discipline work for your child?
- How comfortable is your child in asking for help from school adults?
- Given your child's cultural background, how good a fit is their school?
- How well do the teaching styles of your child's teachers match your child's learning style?

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School Safety

63% approval (+7 since last survey; compare to 62% among Jeffco middle schools and 74% districtwide)

Perceptions of student physical and psychological safety at school.

Questions:

- How often do you worry about violence at your child's school?
- If a student is bullied at your child's school, how difficult is it for them to get help from an adult?
- How likely is it that someone from your child's school will bully them online?
- Overall, how unsafe does your child feel at school?
- To what extent are drugs a problem at your child's school?

Student- Relationships Survey

388/474 responses (81% response rate)

Academics

55% approval (no change since last survey; compare to 56% among Jeffco middle schools and 57% districtwide)

Questions:

- My math work is challenging.
- The things my teacher asks me to write are challenging.
- The things I read in school are challenging.
- Do you get good grades in mathematics?
- How often has mathematics been of your best subjects?
- Are you able to learn in a mathematics course?
- Is mathematics a subject you will use throughout life?

School Belonging

35% approval (+3 since last survey; compare to 36% among Jeffco middle schools and 35% districtwide)

Questions:

- How connected do you feel to the adults at your school?
- How well do people at your school understand you as a person?
- How much do you matter to others at this school?
- How much respect do students in your school show you?
- Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?

School Climate

40% approval (-6 since last survey; compare to 41% among Jeffco middle schools and 46% districtwide)

Questions:

- How positive or negative is the energy of the school?
- How pleasant or unpleasant is the physical space at your school?
- How fair or unfair are the rules for the students at this school?
- At your school, how much does the behavior of other students hurt or help your learning?

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- How often do your teachers seem excited to be teaching your classes?

School Engagement

19% approval (-9 since last survey; compare to 23% among Jeffco middle schools and 24% districtwide)

Questions:

- How excited are you about going to your classes?
- In your classes, how eager are you to participate?
- How often do you get so focused on activities in your classes that you lose track of time?
- When you are not in school, how often do you talk about ideas from your classes?
- Overall, how interested are you in your classes?

School Rigorous Expectations

61% approval (-2 since last survey; compare to 63% among Jeffco middle schools and 60% districtwide)

Questions:

- How often do your teachers take time to make sure you understand the material?
- How often do your teachers make you explain your answers?
- How much do your teachers encourage you to do your best?
- Overall, how high are your teachers' expectations of you?
- When you feel like giving up on a difficult task, how likely is it that your teachers will make you keep trying?

School Safety

62% approval (+2 since last survey; compare to 56% among Jeffco middle schools and 61% districtwide)

Questions:

- How often are people disrespectful to others at your school?
- If a student is bullied in school, how difficult is it for them to get help from an adult?
- How likely is it that someone from your school will bully you online?
- How often do you worry about violence at your school?
- At your school, how unfairly do the adults treat the students?
- How often do students get into physical fights at your school?

School Teacher-Student Relationships

45% approval (-2 since last survey; compare to 50% among Jeffco middle schools and 50% districtwide)

Questions:

- How many of your teachers are respectful towards you?
- If you walked into class upset, how many of your teachers would be concerned?
- If you came back to visit class three years from now, how many of your teachers would be excited to see you?
- When your teachers ask how you are doing, how many of them are really interested in your answer?
- How many of your teachers would you be excited to have again in the future?