

WJMS ACCOUNTABILITY MINUTES

September 2023

Date | 9/12/2023 | Meeting called to order by Christopher Bauer

In Attendance

Christopher Bauer	Chris Harrington	Abby Redwine
Susan Bergkamp	Kim Halingstad	Alan Skerl
Sharon Burger	Tim Krug	Miranda Tucker
Melissa Gutierrez	Dominique Prizgint	

Introductions and New Business

The attendees introduced themselves to the meeting. Most attendees have students at West Jeff Middle; principal Kim Halingstad, teacher Susan Bergkamp, and community stakeholder Melissa Gutierrez were also in attendance.

Meeting Norms

Meeting norms were briefly reviewed:

Start and stop on time.

There will be an electronic agenda for each meeting, sent prior to meetings to Accountability members and published for the public on the school website.

Meeting minutes will be taken and published for the public on the school website.

Members will respect the opinions of others and be considerate of differing points of view.

Only one person will speak at a time.

Each committee member will be equal.

Decisions needing approval will be put through Robert's Rules of Order.

2023-2024 Meeting Dates

Chair Christopher Bauer sent a poll prior to the meeting with up to four choices: Monday morning at 8 am, or Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday afternoon at 4 pm. The afternoon options were nearly equally selected, with a one-vote lead for Monday afternoon. Attendees offered the recurring dates of nearby elementary schools' School Accountability Committee meetings to avoid time conflicts, and the fourth Mondays were agreed upon as the best option for the 2023-2024 school year, with the following dates: October 23, November 27, January 22, February 26, April 22, and May 13.

Principal's Report

Kim Halingstad gave the principal's report.

Enrollment Update

We currently have 483 students enrolled at West Jefferson Middle School – 165 sixth grade students, 167 seventh grade students, and 151 eighth grade students. 23 students are new to our school (not counting the incoming sixth grade class) or new to the area. Our enrollment is stable but slightly down in line with demographic trends. The current kindergarten and first grade classes should put our school back in increasing enrollment.

WJMS ACCOUNTABILITY MINUTES

September 2023

Recent Issues/Concerns

There are three significant issues communicated to families in the past few weeks:

Hate symbols – Per the email sent with the September 6 Weekly Wednesday Update, a swastika has been found on a bathroom door in the 8th grade (second floor) boys' bathroom more than once so far this school year. We have not had any occur in the past two weeks and the school has not yet been able to determine the responsible party or parties. Kim has had a conversation with Rabbi Jamie Arnold at Congregation Beth Evergreen and been in touch with the ADL about their [No Place for Hate®](#) curriculum. While it takes a while to implement, it is powerful for anti-bullying work. It was asked how the curriculum works year-over-year and whether lessons are repeated. It adds layers and evolves over time. We have previously used [Rachel's Challenge](#) for anti-bullying curriculum.

Tragic events – West Jeff families experienced significant events in early September with a house fire affecting the Lopez family and the unexpected death of student Kier Bockus. Our school is grateful for the community and district support. We will continue to support students that have expressed a need for individual support. Links to GoFundMe fundraisers to help the Lopez family with immediate needs and the Bockus family with medical and funeral expenses were communicated to PTA members in an email sent on Friday, September 8 and the links will be published on the WJMS PTA website.

There are rumors regarding the student's death being related to bullying. Our school did not have any reports of bullying made prior to the student's death. School staff have spoken with over a dozen students at length and have no evidence nor witnesses to any bullying at this time. We have been talking with students about the impacts of gossip. There are [guidelines](#) provided by the district for memorials on school grounds. We do have some trees planted in memorial of past students that have died, but the guidelines do not allow for a plaque.

Ms. Samuelson on medical leave – Tricia Samuelson will be on medical leave for the next three months and will most likely be out until winter break while she is receiving treatment for cancer. We have been working with our community superintendent on acquiring administrative support. If you are waiting for a reply or an answer to something from Kim Halingstad, please feel free to reach out and ask again as she has been extra busy due to the situation. You may also reach out to business manager Julie Barrett with your request.

Staff Changes

Two new teachers were hired over the summer, learning specialist ShiningEyes Archer and math teacher Kacie Fitzgerald. Haley Bishop was hired into a permanent position teaching 8th grade English/Language Arts after being in a temporary position, and Nick Walker became our head custodian.

Unified Improvement Plan (UIP)

Schools prepare an [Unified Improvement Plan](#) (UIP) each year. The plan uses achievement data (where students fall in CMAS scoring) and growth data (students' scores from last year, compared to other students nationally with same scores and evaluating whether students have shown a year's growth in a year's time) because students that may be below proficient can still display growth. While the district provides much of what schools' major improvement strategies should contain, each school ultimately submits their own plan to the district.

WJMS ACCOUNTABILITY MINUTES

September 2023

The following handouts were distributed to meeting attendees:

- 2023-24 Unified Improvement Plan Strategies: Middle School EXAMPLE;
- 2022-2023 WJMS CMAS data broken out by subgroups;
- a chart showing grade-level trends;
- 2022-2023 School Performance Framework.

The handouts are appended at the end of the September 2023 minutes.

Data Trends and Areas of Celebration

We consistently have courses above both district and state averages, which is partly attributable to having greater stability (fewer students changing schools during the year) and a lower rate of students eligible for free and reduced-lunch programs (20.4%) than more highly impacted schools. There are a lot of things we do well, with areas where we can do better. How do we improve at pushing and challenging students, and building their stamina to continue taking on challenges as they learn?

On a chart showing grade-level trends, most are going up. It was noted that students that complete a lot of time in IXL see a correlation in growth, and students whose math results are not proficient struggle in 8th grade math.

Areas of Concern

Some student subgroups are not showing expected growth, such as the subgroup of students with Advanced Learning Plans (ALPs), whose growth in English/Language Arts is flattening over time.

We do see a drop on English/Language Arts scores going into sixth grade, a dip in growth that may be related to the 90-minute literacy blocks in elementary school schedules.

It was asked if we seen a difference in going from 2022-2023 hybrid block schedule to an 'every class, every day' schedule. It's too soon to tell. It was asked why our schedule changed. Two reasons were the start/end time change and feedback from teachers and students. The start/end time change would have resulted in 100-minute blocks, which would be tough for middle school students.

It was asked whether parent refusal for testing impacts the data. We aren't penalized for students when refusal is completed through proper channels. Our participation rates tend to be a little lower for some subgroups such as students that have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or 504 learning plans.

It was asked what would be helpful for the committee to support the school's goals. Ideas for helping make the data accessible for families and community members to understand would be welcome. Families can communicate with their students about concrete steps they can take to improve their learning and retention. It was asked if it would make sense to have family nights where attendees can learn about what they can do to support/help their students. A parent stated it would be nice to be able to suggest to a student they can work on IXL when they may not have a lot of homework.

It was suggested that the committee consider how we can communicate that middle school is a safe place for students to stumble along the learning process because it's not on transcripts like high school. Ways to restate grading and assignment makeup policies in a more accessibly format would be welcome. Families want to know how to support their students' learning outside of school, and adjust to the ways things are done in a new school, such as using tools like Infinite Campus

Kim Halingstad will share out the 2023-24 draft UIP once available.

WJMS ACCOUNTABILITY MINUTES

September 2023

Open Forum

Campus safety

A parent new to the school this year asked about campus security, whether the school has a School Resource Officer (SRO), and whether there are security staff that walk the campus. We do not have a full-time SRO; we previously shared an SRO with Evergreen Middle School, a position that was eliminated in staffing changes outside of our school's control. It was then asked what we would do if we needed an SRO on campus. When needed, we can request assistance from Deputy Joslin, the SRO assigned to Conifer High School. Conifer High School does have security staff and only about 250 more students than at our school. It was asked if we have a Watch D.O.G.S. program here. Our Watch D.O.G.S. coordinator last year was Daniel Tucker. It was noted that few to no volunteers signed up on the Watch D.O.G.S. calendar Mr. Tucker set up for the 2022-2023 school year.

An attendee noted that there are only sixteen SROs assigned to single schools in Jeffco Public Schools; other SROs are shared among schools. They added that some districts hire combat veterans to provide full-time security at schools; committee chair Christopher Bauer stated that could be elevated that to the articulation area representative for the District Accountability Committee.

It was noted that community members can [sign up to speak at board of education meetings](#) or contact the superintendent's office if they would like to attend a [District Accountability Committee](#) meeting, which are held monthly at the Education Center.

It was asked if students have a feeling of safety at our school. Generally, yes. We do miss having a shared SRO that knows our students.

Furry culture concern

A parent expressed a concern that their student finds furry culture in the classroom to be distracting. They provided examples of students going by chosen names, wearing ears and tails, and sharpening their teeth and biting students.

District policy [AC, Nondiscrimination/Equal Opportunity](#), addresses treating all members of the school community with dignity and respect. While biting other students would be an issue of physical aggression, a student that experiences discomfort with other students wearing a tail should be privately addressed between the student feeling discomfort and an adult staff member. We want to address the concern from a lens of respect and tolerance.

The concern will be added to the October agenda for further discussion.

The meeting adjourned at 5:18 pm.

Next Meeting

Date: 10/23/2023

Time: 4:00 pm

Location: WJMS / Google Meet

WJMS ACCOUNTABILITY MINUTES

September 2023

Appendices

Handouts to be appended to the minutes by the end of September 2023 include:

- 2023-24 Unified Improvement Plan Strategies: Middle School EXAMPLE
- 2022-2023 WJMS CMAS data broken out by subgroups
- a chart showing grade-level trends
- 2022-2023 School Performance Framework