

MITCHELL HIGH SCHOOL SAC MINUTES

Date: March 13, 2025

Opening: Mr. Smith at 5:06 PM

Present: Michael Bibbs, Shelley Bibbs, Terrie Blackwell, Delia Busby, Robert Elder, Valorie Jordan, Irene Kornelly, Julie Ott, Sharon Simpson-Dogon, and nearly 20 staff and community members

Absent: Joe Aida, Cindy Angeles, Cassie Booth, Kasnyme Coke, Shay Dabney, Shatarie Johnson, Rebecca Kenderdine, Edward Mouchette, Alyssa Webb, Jackie Wick, Michael Williams

Approval of Minutes: February minutes had been approved previously by the chairperson, Mr. Bibbs

Agenda Presentation

Business from Previous Meeting: None

New Business: Special guest Superintendent Gaal and Area Superintendent. Kalbach presented background and next steps to clarify the process since Mitchell has hit the window to exit the state's watch list.

1. Sherry Kalbach introduces a slide show. She acknowledged the vested interest in Mitchell's success.. Data shared:
 - SPF from 2017-present. Acceptable student performance has dropped from 42.1% in 2016-17 to 31.2% this year.
 - Enrollment in 2016-17 was 1246 and is currently 690. The worry is that with declining enrollment, we have fewer opportunities for our students. The goal is to return MHS to the glory-day status of decades ago.
2. Mr. Smith — Where we are with our academics. STAR Benchmark Assessment Winter, 2024 showed ELA with 32% passing with 65 Median growth; Math 16.8% passing with 45 median growth. Data show a 12.9% increase in meets/exceeds; 15.2% decrease in below grade level— 1.9 % increase m/ex and 6.9% decrease in well below grade level. We will be proposing to what needs to happen in order to turn things around.
3. Mr. Gaal — These are possible district actions when a school fails to meet the performance expectations: district reorganization or management by public/private entity or conversion to charter school or innovation status designation or school closure/revoked charter. These are possible school actions: management by public/private entity or charter school operator/board is replaced or conversion to charter school or innovation status designation or school closure/revoked charter. We are at the point of school action. Regardless of what we propose, the CDE could take a different path. National data show that the students in the lowest socioeconomic strata receive the lowest quality of instruction. Per the Colorado State Review Panel visit in March, 2024, the state doesn't recommend community school conversion, charter conversion, or closure for Mitchell. The state recommends partial external management for the school that focuses on improving instructional delivery and collaboration with the district. Ten of D11 schools are currently partnered with Instructional Empowerment. The same recommendation will be made to SAC, staff, DAC, and the BoE.

4. Mr. Smith — The IE needs assessment (school comprehensive needs assessments) occurred over the course of two days. According to one of the assessors, there is much within MHS that makes it ripe for improvement. Mr. Smith is more comfortable with the direction and the recommendation than he was prior to the visit. He has Mr. Gaal's assurance that he (Mr. Smith) will maintain leadership of the school while working in partnership with IE, a company that will be classroom-focused to provide greater support and resources for classroom teachers. The demeanor of the IE assessors was positive and supportive.

Q & A:

1. Tom — **Where does SPED fit?** (Gaal) There is a holistic relationship, so staff and programs will not be changed. SPED is a bright spot at MHS and in the district. **Management connotes evaluative and authoritative. Does the teacher understand that evaluation and authority will remain with Mr. Smith?** — Yes. Student agency is a focal point. The evaluators saw that student agency is high at MHS. IE helps to increase that. School comes together around the "agency" model, such that teachers will also be required to participate in professional development. Mr. Gaal was sure that MHS would be off of the watch list (based on winter assessments), but the CMAS scores required otherwise. He wants to make a recommendation in line with what CDE suggested in their report from last spring.

2. Mr. Bibbs — **If the district's recommendation is not taken, what happens?** — (Kalbach) We have examples of private charter schools in our area (Atlas, James Irwin). We could access their knowledge. Andy Swanson at CDE believes in what MHS is doing and supports the plan to have IE in partnership with the school. Mr. Gaal believes in MHS and in Mr. Smith. Accolades have been shared about the AFJROTC, the theater program, and SPED.

MHS has the most permits out but has the greatest number of school-aged children within its boundaries; the best way to change that is to get off of the states watch list.

4. Alyssa — **How did you choose this pathway as opposed to making Galileo a community school?** (Gaal) The power of the partnership lies with the district. **How many consultants will MHS have? Will they work with the buildings governance structure?** — They will work with the SAC. They will be at the school three times per week. We have two years to show change. The contract with them will be year-to-year per the district's policies. Galileo's being a community school was the principal's desire. Per Mr. Gaal's discussions with Mr. Smith, the focus has been on increasing rigor, and IE partnership will permit that.

5. Marsha — **It appears that CDE recommended innovation, and if innovation doesn't put us at the projection, then an external partnership would occur. MHS wasn't permitted to do a 4-day work week.** (Gaal) We cannot afford to give up instructional time. — **Under the 4-day plan, MHS had more minutes than required, and that would have brought more high-quality staff.** — (Gaal) I won't approve it as long as students are under-performing. (Smith) Let's focus on how can we expand innovation practices. Which innovations can we collaborate on.

Instructional Leadership Team expansion?

Alyssa — **Aren't eight positions being cut?** (Gaal) Staffing for this year was made on projections from the previous year, but MHS didn't make that number. Therefore, positions need to be scaled back. However, we will have the staff necessary for quality instruction.

6. Tracy — **Presentation to CDE will be in May. When will we be notified of the result?** — (G) The announcement from CDE will be the next day. If CDE makes a different

recommendation, the school will function normally next year with the change occurring the subsequent year.

7. Alyssa — **It feels as though the district seems to be leaning toward CTE professionals instead of on certified teachers. How can we rebrand and refresh the brand of MHS, who think that this is a “ghetto” school?** — (Gaal) MHS has had \$21,000,000 in improvements over three years. The school looks better than others. Staff countered that despite that, MHS does have classroom needs. Mr. Gaal committed that upgrades will be made.

8, Marsha — **Were students invited to the interviewed?** (Smith). Yes, specific students were selected by the administration.

9 Lilly — All of our programs are working to a high level. The kids are great.

10. Terri — ... Appreciate Mr. Gaal and Mrs. Kalbach’s being here at SAC. There’s been miscommunication that there’s a rift between Mr. Smith and the board. Mr. Smith has been transparent and consistent at every level — respectful, open. Seconded by Lilly.

11. Mr. Bibbs — ... Has heard the chatter of MHS being a ghetto school. However, he holds district accountable not only to make the physical plant good but to assist in changing public perception.

12. Valorie — “If you hear negative comments about MHS, correct them.” She’ll take Marauders over any other students in the district because the majority of them want to learn. It’s incumbent upon all of us to counteract negative public comments.

13. It’s important that MHS community receive the same level of investment as other schools.

14. Irene — **How does this plan increase the enrollment at MHS?** — (Gaal) There are people chasing the shiny apples. He’s asking the board for a bond initiative. We have to get MHS off of the state’s watch list. Some of our students attend college, but many of them attend for five years because they are in remediation for the first one. We have students here who thrive in AFJROTC and theater. We have an adult problem, not a student problem. We cannot continue to advance students who have been failed prior to high school. Then, MHS doesn’t inherit the failures.

15. Is there a way for media to show the improvements at MHS?

16. Robert — **Avg. incoming 9th-grader enters at the 5th-grade reading level. When will the district ensure that middle-schoolers are prepared well enough to succeed in high school?** — (Gaal) We don’t have consistent grading. We don’t have enough opportunities outside of the regular day/calendar so that those who aren’t proficient are required to attend summer school or weekend programs.

Robert — The district has chosen not to implement procedures that could have turned things around.

17. Mr. Bibbs — Requests furniture for the MHS and an addition to the field.

18. Jessica — New teacher who was suggested not to work in D11. Let her kids choose where to attend. Child who attends two other schools in the district is thriving and happy here at MHS. We must do more to highlight the school to the public.

19. Mr. Bibbs — Please spread the word that we need more parent involvement.

20. Mrs. Blackwell — Can we have student voices represented? — (Smith) We did invite them in the past, and they provided good information during a panel discussion.

21. Mr. Smith — We are bringing choice predicated on importance of education. That's a message (importance of education) that parents need to share with their children. The assessor indicated that there's no sense of urgency in the classroom. There must be dedication to increasing rigor. Students, according to interviews with IE assessors, don't feel challenged in our schools. Mr. Smith feels supported by the Mr. Gaal and Mrs. Kalbach.

Adjournment: 6:37 PM by Mr. Smith