

The header features a warm, orange-toned background with several autumn leaves scattered across it. The leaves are in various shades of orange, red, and yellow, some appearing as if they are falling or floating. The text is centered at the top.

October 2025

DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

Welcome from the DAC Chair

Dear District 11 Families and Community Members,

As we settle into fall and prepare for parent-teacher conferences, I want to share some thoughts about the incredible opportunity we have to strengthen our school communities together.

Beyond Parent-Teacher Conferences: Building Lasting Connections

For many families, this has traditionally been the *only* time they step into a school building, meet their child's teachers, and learn about their progress. And while this moment is valuable, **we now know that family engagement should go far beyond a single conversation in the fall.**

As members of SACs and the DAC, we understand that when families are truly engaged, it positively impacts **student success, school culture, and community trust**—especially in middle and high school, when students are developing more independence. At that age, families often rely on these brief windows, like conferences, to understand how to support their kids. **But how effective can we be with just one touchpoint a year?**

As a parent of three wonderfully challenging children, I've come to see parent-teacher conferences as an invaluable opportunity to put faces to names and build genuine connections with my children's teachers and administrators. When challenges arise – and they will – having established these relationships makes all the difference. The teachers know me, I know them, and we can work together as partners in my child's education.

Sharing the Power of SAC Work

This conference season also presents a perfect opportunity to share the important work of your School Accountability Committee (SAC) with your broader school community. During our SAC workshop in early September, we discussed creative ways to bring awareness of SAC work into our communities.

Consider sharing updates like: "At SAC, we discussed..." or "During our SAC meeting, we asked about..." or "The SAC feedback helped us understand..." or "The conversation at SAC has led to..."

Here's the reality: the majority of our school communities don't know what a SAC is, what happens in these meetings, or how SACs support schools and ultimately improve the daily experience for every

student. The only way we can change this is by talking about it – all of us. SAC chairs, members, principals, and staff need to share this important work.

The Power of Functional SACs

There is incredible power in a successful SAC that truly benefits ALL students. Our DAC working groups have been exploring what makes a "functional SAC" and how we can support the superintendent's goal that every school will have a functional SAC this year.

We recognize that SAC needs are as unique as each school in District 11. Our strength as a district lies in our diversity. However, we've identified some key elements that functional SACs share:

- **Collaborative relationships** built on mutual respect and shared goals
- **Effective communication** that fosters trust through respect and transparency
- **Focus on all students**, viewing the school as a whole and considering the broader community

Growing Together: From Training to Workshops

As DAC, we want to help and support every school and every community on this journey. That's why we're renaming our "SAC training" to "SAC workshops" – because we want to learn and grow together. Our community is what we make it, and we want it to be a place where everyone feels they belong and need to be.

I Need You

I want YOU to be part of this community. Actually, I NEED you to be part of it. Your voice, your perspective, your passion for our students – it all matters. In return, I will do everything I can as DAC chair to build the support we need for success.

Thank you for reading and sharing this newsletter. It's filled with information, important dates, and practical suggestions because together, we can make our schools stronger.

Happy Fall,

Marion Clawson
DAC Chair

DAC Meeting Recap: Supporting Every Student's Future

At our **September** DAC meeting, we dove deep into how District 11 is supporting students on their path to post-graduation success. This conversation was both eye-opening and encouraging.

Understanding Success Metrics

The state measures our schools' effectiveness by examining graduation rates, dropout rates, and matriculation rates (how many students continue to college or career training after graduation). But our district team helped us understand what these numbers really mean – and more importantly, what concrete steps we're taking to help ALL students succeed.

Future Ready: More Than Just a Name Change

If you have a high school student, you've probably noticed their advisory class is now called "Future Ready." This isn't just a rebranding – it represents a fundamental shift in how the district aims to prepare our students.

Superintendent Gaal has expressed concern that too many students graduate without a clear plan for their next steps. Future Ready classes are designed to change that reality. These classes pair every student with a well-trained teacher who will help them navigate high school opportunities and plan for life after graduation.

Leveling the Playing Field

Here's what excites me most about this initiative: we're addressing the inequality in access to information. Some families and students naturally have advantages when it comes to knowing about opportunities – college prep programs, career pathways, scholarships, and district resources. But now, every single student will be connected to a teacher who can and will support them on their journey.

The district team assured us that structured lessons planned for Future Ready teachers ensure this support is consistent and comprehensive across all our high schools. No student will fall through the cracks simply because they didn't know what opportunities were available.

Future Centers: Additional Support

Our high school Future Centers are also playing a crucial role in supporting both students and families as they navigate post-graduation planning. These centers provide hands-on assistance with college applications, career exploration, and connecting students to resources.

The Bottom Line

Learning about this systematic approach to student success planning gives me hope. Instead of leaving post-graduation planning to chance or family connections, schools are ensuring every student has an advocate and a plan.

Join Us at the Next DAC Meeting

When: October 16

How to Participate: Check the [district calendar](#) for the agenda – every committee agenda includes the WebEx link at the top so you can join virtually from home. All DAC meetings and Subcommittee meetings are public and open for anyone to attend.

Get Involved: Have questions or want to join a DAC committee? Contact us through "Let's Talk" on the [D11 DAC website](#). Your voice and perspective matter in shaping our district's future.

Why Attend? DAC meetings give you direct access to information presented by district leadership and the opportunity to experience how DAC members advocate for all students. Plus, you'll stay informed about initiatives that directly impact your child's education and future opportunities.

We hope to see you there – whether in person or online!

Join Us at the Next SAC Workshop (formerly titled “SAC Training”)

When: November 6 from 6:00-8:00 PM

Topics for this Workshop: Family Engagement and the new Middle School Accountability

How to Participate: Watch your email for a Save-the-Date with more information.

Why Attend? SAC Workshops (formerly titled “SAC Trainings”) are a great way to learn how to run your SAC and learn new tools on how to help your school.

We hope to see you there – whether in person or online!

SHOUT OUT!

Celebrating Our DAC Accreditation Subcommittee

We want to give a huge shout-out to our DAC Accreditation Subcommittee for their incredible dedication and hard work! Working under tight deadlines, this committed group of volunteers reviewed Unified Improvement Plans (UIPs) for schools on Priority Improvement or Turnaround status across our district.

The impact of their work has been immediate and meaningful – principals have responded with genuine gratitude for the thoughtful feedback and have shown real willingness to consider and incorporate the committee's recommendations into their plans.

Special Recognition

A massive thank you goes to Subcommittee Chair Courtney for her outstanding leadership and the countless hours she invested in this critical work. Her dedication to ensuring every school has a strong improvement plan directly benefits all our students.

Want to See Your School's Plan?

You can review your school's Unified Improvement Plan on the Colorado Department of Education website under SchoolVIEW. These plans outline each school's goals, strategies, and commitments for student success.

Important Note: The submission deadline for public posting is October 15, so plans should be available for viewing shortly after that date.

Why This Matters

Unified Improvement Plans aren't just paperwork – they're roadmaps for how each school will address challenges and build on strengths to better serve students. Having community members like our DAC subcommittee review these plans ensures they reflect real community needs and priorities.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this important work!

DAC Accreditation Update:

Your DAC Accreditation team has reviewed all School Improvement Plans for schools identified as Turnaround and Priority Improvement by their School Performance Framework. This work was done by team members in teams of 2-3 in early September, with feedback collated by the Chair and given to principals by September 15. This allowed principals time to incorporate our feedback into their plans prior to their Board presentations.

We did not have a meeting to discuss this, but Accreditation Chair Courtney Hertner will present to the Board on the process as well as our takeaways on October 1.

Another of our charges is to identify schools to be Accredited with Distinction. This honor is given to those schools with a School Performance Framework of 70 or higher. Recommendation will be made to the Board at either the October 1 meeting or a meeting in November, as our team feels that these schools should publicize their Accreditation during the Choice window.

A recommendation was made during our meeting that we discuss the Spring testing window with District leadership at our next meeting. We feel that doing all testing (STAR and CMAS) post Spring Break creates conditions that may impact our CMAS scores negatively. More to come on this topic!

You can view the recording for our most recent meeting here;

Recording link: <https://cssd11.webex.com/cssd11/ldr.php?RCID=d3a443bc4c73eeae572acddff14cca93>

Password: vJT5uWJy

We always welcome new members and look forward to seeing some of you soon! :)

DAC Representative Report: North Middle School SAC Meeting

I had the pleasure of attending North Middle School's School Accountability Committee (SAC) meeting as your District Accountability Committee representative, and I'm excited to share what a fantastic experience it was!

The meeting was well-attended, and I was immediately struck by the friendly and welcoming atmosphere..

Principal Leasure delivered an impressive presentation packed with valuable information. The data shared regarding student achievement provided clear insights into the school's progress and areas of focus. It was particularly interesting to learn about their enrollment efforts and how they've successfully navigated the delicate balance of allowing student choice while maintaining manageable class sizes that their dedicated staff can effectively handle.

One of the highlights was hearing about their excitement for **Chalktober** – a district-wide middle school event that sounds absolutely amazing! This cross-curricular initiative will culminate with students presenting their artwork downtown in Colorado Springs, showcasing the incredible talent and hard work of our middle schoolers.

The principal also took time to explain how Middle School's accountability work is presented to parents and the broader community, demonstrating their commitment to transparency. The open question and feedback session that followed showed the collaborative spirit.

This was truly a jam-packed, super informative, and productive SAC meeting. Great work, North Middle School! Your dedication to student success and community engagement is inspiring.

DAC representative Marion Clawson

INVITE us to your next SAC meeting

Aiming to build community DAC area representatives would like to visit your School's SAC meeting, please invite us using "LET'S TALK" on the [DAC website](#). This is an opportunity to connect and meet a resource for questions or support in all things SAC.

Please share this newsletter with other families and community members. Together, we build stronger schools for all our students.