



State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education

**SACPIE Quarterly Meeting**  
**November 18, 2025**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**Members Present:** Kimberly Chatman, Jess Welch, Caitlin Fitzpatrick, Roxanne Aviles, Nathan Hickman, Beth Donahue, Michelle Zeles-Hahn, Finessa Ferrell, Twyla Esquibel, Brooke Cote, Christena Burnham, Jamita Horton, Jenny Lerner, Michelle Zinser, Sena Harjo, Kate Garvin, Carrie Olsen, Sarah Hanselin

**Guests:** Melissa Bloom, Christina North, Darcy Hutchins, Jes Stroope, Yazmine Patiño, Martha Fischhoff

**9:30 Welcome and Business**

Jess Welch opened the meeting, announcing the Vice Chair Election will be postponed until after lunch.

Jess then announced that SACPIE has a full council, with two new members joining us today. Finessa is filling the Health and Wellness position, and Christina Burnham is filling the role of a representative from a state-wide organization that represents parents and teachers. Finessa introduced herself, sharing some information about her work as a senior strategist at the Colorado Health Foundation. Christina also introduced herself and shared some information about her work as the State Colorado PTA President.

Jess also thanked Darcy Hutchins for creating today's slide deck.

Lastly, Jess led the members through the August meeting minutes approval process. Kim Chatman provided a correction for her last name. Caitlin Fitzpatrick motioned to approve the meeting minutes. Roxanne Aviles seconded. The August meeting minutes were approved pending the correction.

**9:40 Get to Know SACPIE Members**

Darcy Hutchins introduced and led the group through the small group connections activity.

**9:55 State Board of Education Liaison Updates**

There were no State Board of Education Liaison updates shared at today's meeting.

**9:55 2026 Legislative Session Preview**

Darcy Hutchins introduced the agenda item and the presenter, Melissa Bloom, who is here to provide a preview of the upcoming legislative session which members requested back in May. Darcy also reminded members that SACPIE as a council does not take positions and cannot advocate for legislation.

To begin the presentation, Melissa introduced herself and her work within the Policy Office of the Colorado Department of Education and reviewed the agenda for today's presentation.

## Legislative Process Overview

For the Legislative Process Overview portion, Melissa reviewed the state legislative process which happens January through May and how a bill goes through the legislative process. First, the bill will go through a 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> reading within the House or the Senate. During the 1<sup>st</sup> reading, the bill will go through various committees for discussion prior to moving on to the next step. For education, most bills will go through the Education Committee and, if funding is involved, the Appropriations committee. Melissa noted that if an education bill then goes to the State, Civic, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee in either the House or the Senate, the bill will likely be killed. The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> readings give members who do not participate in these committees a chance to revise the bill. The bill then goes to the second chamber, House or Senate. At this time, Melissa noted that in order for a bill to go through the legislature, the same version of the bill must have passed both the House and the Senate. If both groups do not pass the same version and cannot agree on a version, the bill will die. Once the bill has made it through the House and Senate, the bill will then go to the governor, who can sign it into law, veto it, or let it become law without his signature. During this time, the governor has ten days to make his decision unless the bill comes to the governor within the last ten days of the legislative session, at which time he has thirty days to decide.

## 2026 Preview

Next, Melissa provided a preview of the budget outlook for the 2026 legislative session. Melissa shared that there will be a budget shortfall for the 2026-27 budget year, which starts on July 1, 2026, that will greatly impact decisions made. She also noted that the budget must be balance prior to passing.

Every year, the governor must submit a budget proposal by November 1<sup>st</sup>. This year, the governor requested expenditures of \$50.7 billion. The budget request is an increase from last year largely due to the General Funds obligations increase.

As part of the process, every state agency also proposes their own budgets for the year. Unlike other agencies, CDE does not report to the governor but to an elected state board, who vote on what CDE's proposed budget will be for the coming year. They do this over the summer. For the upcoming year, there are a lot of reductions proposed, including some ideas that differed from the governor's proposal like the elimination of the CMAS and CoAlt Social Studies assessment. The governor's proposed budget for K-12 included an increase in K-12 spending based on an increase of the per pupil spending. The main thing to note is that it stuck to the legislature's school finance formula. The governor's office took a different approach to the Social Studies assessment, instead proposing to take out 4<sup>th</sup> grade and only test all students in 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

Melissa also reviewed a list of legislation to watch, including the 504 Complaint Process and the Anti-Discrimination and Harassment Complaints. The state has a robust system to process complaints within IDEA but would like to strengthen and set parameters for processing complaints within this system. There is also discussions around expanding the READ Act and the usefulness of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, along with discussions around general legislation within Administrative Burden. Lastly, the Educator Recruitment and Retention Program Flexibility is a program that is highly utilized for people going through professional preparation programs. The state board would like to be able to set priorities for how the stipends will be distributed.

Twyla Esquibel asked for additional information regarding the 504 Complaint Process. Melissa shared that the complaint process goes through the Office of Civil Rights. However, with staffing changes, they have received complaints that the office is taking too long to respond.

Darcy Hutchins asked if there have been any discussions around the parents bill of rights. Melissa shared that there were no discussions last year and hasn't seen anything this year. However, she wouldn't be shocked to see it again for this year. Michelle asked for additional information. Melissa clarified that the bill of rights is a declaration or voucher (tax incentive) of what parents believe they should have power over within education.

Darcy asked Christina North if the PTA had shared their official position. Christina shared that the PTA is doing similar work as SACPIE, reviewing what is coming down the pipeline to decide if they would like to take an official position. Unfortunately, she couldn't attend the last meeting.

Darcy shared that moving forward, Melissa will be busy during the February and May SACPIE meetings, but if SACPIE would like to stay informed, a follow-up can be added to the agenda.

Kim Chatman asked if bond measures will be discussed to help support school systems. Melissa shared that this is typically not something that is seen at the state level but more so on a local level.

Finessa asked if Melissa has heard anything about the Healthy Kids Colorado survey. Melissa shared that she has not heard anything specific on this, but suspects if anything comes up, it would center around the collection process and any burden that results from the collection, not so much about the data specifically.

#### Educational Governance Fact Sheet

Melissa introduced the small group activity, which asked members to switch gears and discuss the educational governance fact sheet. Her team hopes to increase understanding around educational governance, and as part of building this capacity, her team has put together a fact sheet that provides a summary of educational governance in Colorado and how that structure impacts education policy.

Melissa asked SACPIE to review the fact sheet and provide feedback on its usefulness.

During the small group discussion time, members were asked to review the Colorado Education Governance document and answer the three feedback questions, noting their responses in the linked Google Slide Deck. These questions included: Is the level and amount of content appropriate? Where and how should we distribute the fact sheet? Where do we go from here?

Michelle asked to clarify if the document will be pushed out to community stakeholders and whether the document needs an overview perspective. Darcy asked members to review the document as general members of different stakeholder groups (i.e. parents, PTA members, etc.).

After the small group discussion time, Darcy brought the group back together for a whole group share-out, asking each small group to share two ideas they'd like to elevate to the group.

Michelle Zeles-Hahn for group 4 shared two questions their group had: who is the intended audience and what is the hoped for outcome? Melissa clarified that the intended audience are folks who are parent and community leaders who do not work in the education field but are leading efforts within the system. The goal is to empower them so that they can be more precise in those efforts and better understand the system and how it works. Michelle responded that the information is too high level and does not provide that empowerment.

For Group 1, Michelle Zinser shared that since she has experience with this and understands it, she did not find the PDF to be too high level but would like a glossary be added to increase understanding. She suggested that this be pushed out at CASBE conferences with an accompanying video. Melissa shared

that this actually originated within a CASE and CASBE presentation. Lastly, Michelle added that local board meetings can become frustrating when there isn't a common understanding. Christina added that getting this fact sheet out to the community as a whole can be challenging, but partnering with parent organizations and attending conferences and conventions may be helpful in distributing the PDF out to communities.

For Group 3, Roxanne Aviles shared that they had the same questions as Group 4 regarding the intended audience and goals. If the intended audience is parents, the PDF is too wordy and suggested adding the "why". Kate Garvin added that for parents' understanding, it needs to be facilitated somewhere and include the "Now What?" for parents, outlining where the opportunities are for parents to become involved. At this moment, Group 3 feels like the PDF read more like a glossary.

Darcy added that the reason it's so packed is to keep it all on one page, to which Kate added that they appreciated the document being only one page. Roxanne added that visuals could also outline some of this information. Kate added that the document could be an outline for any group, which is good. However, it just needs to be facilitated towards certain groups. Finessa added that the intent was great to hear but would like the one-pager to increase understanding of how readers can best leverage this greater understanding.

Lastly, for Group 5, Kim Chatman shared that they had similar questions – who the intended audience is and the what now. Their group also liked the idea of infographics. Jess Welch suggested creating a fillable template for districts to complete to share information specific to their district, including information like who to complain to, how to become more involved, etc.

Darcy added that given all that was shared out, one of the next steps could be this document being the grounding document from which readers can click through. This could be something her and Melissa could work on down the road. Darcy then asked members to discuss whether they see this document with appropriate evidence to act as a grounding standalone document. SACPIE members felt as though the document needed a purpose statement to act as a standalone document.

Darcy then followed up by asking if SACPIE members feel like this is something worth pursuing or if they feel as though this is duplicative. SACPIE members feel like this is a great standalone document. However, more information is needed. Finessa added that creating the document based on the intended action would be more helpful. Twyla shared that she likes the PDF as more like a guideline. Jess Welch then added that the way Melissa presented the legislative process today was helpful and suggested the team explore different modes of presenting the material other than a PDF. She suggested a podcast or a video, tailoring the mode of presentation to the people who are outside of the system, like parents or people newer to the education system. She also shared that she has a neighbor who isn't too involved with their child's education, but she also has a neighbor who is very interested in becoming more involved because her child has a disability. Therefore, thinking about creating something that can go in either direction is important. Caitlin added that a choose your own adventure guidance based on parent involvement levels would be helpful.

Darcy shared that she wonders if it would be helpful to reintroduce an ad hoc committee to continue discussing the PDF and will send out the option to join to members. Melissa added that this discussion was helpful and is looking forward to continuing to work with SACPIE on building out this resource, along with any others.

Before ending the agenda item, Kim suggested, similar to Jess's suggestion of a podcast, adding voiceovers to each information box or a popup window with more information to increase

understanding. Darcy Hutchins added that finding ways to make it accessible in different modalities would be great.

### **11:30 Election**

Darcy Hutchins reminded members this is the time to have an election for a new vice chair. Angie Frank, who was the Parent Representative from CD 6, has had to step down before the end of her term. Darcy shared that there was nomination for Michelle Zeles-Hahn to fill the position.

Michelle shared some information about herself and what makes her a good fit for this role. There were no additional questions from the council. Kim Chatman made a motion to elect Michelle as Vice Chair. Caitlin Fitzpatrick seconded. All members were in favor, and none were opposed. Darcy welcomed Michelle as the Vice Chair.

### **11:30 Lunch**

#### **12:00 Stakeholder Engagement and Governance**

Nathan Hickman introduced himself, his role as an ESEA Specialist within the Federal Programs and Supports Unit (FPSU), and provided a high-level overview of the unit work, which includes stakeholder and family engagement. Today, Nathan will be reviewing the stakeholder piece and discussing with SACPIE how CDE can improve communication with districts regarding ESEA parent and family engagement requirements, emphasizing that the unit work centers on working with districts.

To begin his presentation, Nathan asked members to complete a short survey regarding general ESEA knowledge and asked members to answer the questions from their perspective as a parent or as a community member interacting with school districts. Nathan thanked members for completing the survey, noting that school members are often unable to answer family and stakeholder engagement questions from the Federal Programs Unit and would like to gather more information on how CDE as an agency can provide better guidance.

Next, Nathan reviewed the ESEA stakeholder engagement requirements. School districts must develop an LEA Plan and include family engagement somehow, posting it for public comment. LEAs must also have a parent and family engagement policy discussion with parents and families that should be updated as needed. They must also build parent and family capacity to understand the school system and how best to support their child(ren). Lastly, communication is required to be clear and concise in language that parents can understand.

Twyla Esquibel asked for further information on Title I. Nathan shared that Title I is the primary funding source within ESEA primarily used for underserved, low-income students. Darcy Hutchins added that this funding stream dates to 1965 and has been reauthorized under different names.

Next, Nathan shared how CDE communicates these requirements with the districts. First, this communication comes through the Consolidated Application, where CDE asks districts to respond to specific questions around stakeholder engagement. Additionally, there is an ESEA Parent and Family Engagement Website, which includes descriptions of the requirements under ESEA, how CDE monitors these funds, and a list of resources to help districts better plan for these funds. There is also a proposed updated website that SACPIE members can review where FPSU is attempting to better describe the individual pieces of ESEA and the specific requirements. Lastly, communication with districts occurs through ESEA monitoring and implementation evaluation.

Nathan reintroduced the question up for discussion: “How can CDE improve communication with

districts regarding family engagement requirements so that parents can understand how they should have access to this information and so that school/districts can know how best to present this information?”

### Group Feedback

Finessa asked Nathan to clarify the purpose of the discussion, whether it's to ensure compliance or to find innovative ways for districts to be able to ensure compliance. Nathan responded that it's both, where firstly, they must ensure districts are compliant, but they are also looking for ideas to share with districts in the following cycle.

Michelle asked how CDE knows the problem is their communication rather than the districts ignoring these communications or not seeing this work as a priority. Nathan shared that this is coming from the monitoring findings where districts are not sharing the evidence of how this is happening in their districts.

Kim Chatman asked if they could tie accountability to funding, withholding some funding until responses are received. Nathan shared that this can be complicated because the monitoring comes after the funds have been spent or given out. Therefore, the focus is on technical assistance and training for improving the use of funds. Withholding funding is unlikely.

Jes Stroope verbally shared the chat comment from Christina Burnham stating that it's important to communicate these requirements for schools/districts with parents, like distributing a “Did you know?” flyer. She also asked if there were any consequences to noncompliance. Nathan shared that within monitoring, there can be a finding or corrective action. When giving a corrective action, their monitoring remains open until they are compliant and the FPSU team continues working with them to ensure compliance.

Kim asked if FPSU feels like some of the reporting has suffered due to free and reduced lunch. Nathan shared that there is no specific data for this but there has been concern with school districts on reporting these numbers accurately and their funding suffering because of inaccuracies.

Caitlin Fitzpatrick asked if there were any measures to mitigate the lack of accurate data. Nathan shared that there are ways for schools to share what type of data they will be using whether Free and Reduced Lunch or other types. However, it does come down to what has been used historically, which is Free and Reduced Lunch. School districts also have leeway to decide where these funds go, so that is where being involved as parents to voice their opinions becomes important. These distributions stay the same throughout most schools but districts can change where they choose to allocate these funds.

Finessa asked for further clarification on the discussion questions, asking what it is exactly that CDE needs support with. From the conversation, she understands that there is an application where districts are required to describe how they will meet these requirements. Afterwards, CDE follows up and if any corrective action is given, there is no monetary or financial consequences, nor impacts on their accreditation. Nathan clarified that the application is not approved until the district provides concrete evidence of a plan for family engagement, where funds can be withheld until the application is approved. In monitoring, this is a check after the fact without true financial consequences.

Jess Welch suggested building in the impact of the work into the application. Parents are also wondering why they are no longer in a Title I school, so asking districts to provide policies to parents around how they choose to allocate Title I funding can be helpful. Additionally, FPSU can be more explicit in asking districts to share these family engagement plans.

### **12:37 Office of FSCP Updates**

For state level leadership updates, Darcy Hutchins shared that the FSCP office is now in the Field Services Unit and no longer in Accountability and Continuous Improvement. Darcy introduced Christina North, who is Darcy's new supervisor. FSCP also continues to work with other office on the State Education Agency (SEA) Core Competencies. Additionally, the Office of Learning Supports, where MTSS is housed, has incorporated Family Engagement into their performance goals. For direct facilitation of districts updates, Darcy shared that they have continues scaling up regional supports. Kate Garvin added that Santa Fe Trail has decided to make Family, School, and Community Partnership their regional focus for the year. Darcy also shared that the FSCP Office will be hosting the Think Tank in January. Additionally, the office will also continue have their monthly Coffee Chats. For November, the Coffee Chat focused on Principals, where they featured a principal from D49. Lastly, Darcy shared that the team will continue to integrate family engagement into as many spaces as possible.

For SACPIE updates, Darcy once again shared that we have a full council for SACPIE. She also shared that CDE has a new platform for their website and asked SACPIE members to provide feedback if they see any broken links on the FSCP or SACPIE pages. Lastly, Darcy will be revising the annual report that is due to the State Board of Education and the House and Senate Education Committees on December 31<sup>st</sup>. Darcy will share a link with SACPIE members to a short Google form if they'd like to add anything to the report. Darcy plans to complete the report on December 1<sup>st</sup>, so all responses to the form should be submitted before then. New members do not need to submit the form, and it is not a requirement for all other members.

### **12:45 FSCP, Attendance, and SACPIE**

Martha Fischhoff returned to SACPIE to follow up on the Increasing Student Engagement – CDE's Strategic Plan and SACPIE topic from the August meeting. To start the conversation, Darcy Hutchins reminded members that SACPIE is written into the CDE strategic Plan. Darcy also provided a summary of the work completed with Martha and her office over the last few months from August until today.

Martha shared that the feedback her office received during the August SACPIE meeting was shared with the communications team at CDE. The communication team has since created monthly attendance toolkits that have been shared with the folks who do communications within the districts, with a note that some districts may not have a communications person. These toolkits include attendance and chronic absenteeism data and templates for communication materials districts can use and share with others.

For today's discussion, Martha shared that her team would like SACPIE to look at some of these toolkit pieces and discuss where these resources can be valuable, if anything is missing, and whether the resources align with the feedback presented in August. Although members were welcome to look through all the resources shared, the discussion focused on the following communication templates: Social Media Posts, Backpack Flier, and Postcard/Nudge Card. Members were asked to record their feedback within the Google Slide Deck.

Roxanne Aviles asked how these resources are distributed. Martha clarified that they go out in the communications to the main communications person in the districts and those who have opted into the attendance challenge. The resources are also shared as often as possible during meetings and are posted online in the communication section of the attendance CDE webpage. Martha and team are

working on making the information as visible as possible. Darcy Hutchins then moved everyone into their small groups for discussion.

After some time, Darcy brought the team back together for a whole group share out, asking members to share anything they'd like to elevate.

Caitlin Fitzpatrick shared that her team believes the templates are too simplistic and lack the relationship and trust building aspects. Kim Chatman shared that her team reviewed the August SACPIE feedback notes and did not see that feedback reflected in the templates.

Jenny Learner shared that Sena Harjo suggested adding more diverse pictures to the templates. Sarah Hanselin added that her group discussed further calling out resources for families who may need to be connected to resources to eliminate barriers to attendance in the templates. Two examples that Sara shared were shouting out 201 Colorado and pointing families to resources if there are other issues that may be impacting attendance.

Michelle shared that her group discussed the messaging around "Don't Disappear," feeling like now is not the right time to use this as the messaging. It all feels punitive without sharing the why this exists or its importance.

Kate Garvin shared that her group discussed that it would be great to have resources for elementary, middle, and high schools. They also considered the purpose of these resources, sharing that having a single communication going out to all isn't building trust. They also felt as though nothing was new for districts. These communication resources don't feel like new practices but instead feel like supports that don't feel supportive.

Darcy highlighted that the comments around trust stand out because SACPIE continues providing feedback for these resources to CDE, but the feedback is not reflected, which is eroding trust between SACPIE and CDE. Martha emphasized that this feedback has been extremely helpful in presenting what is important for families at CDE.

Kim asked for more information on how these communications are reaching their target audience, i.e. truant students, and whether it's effective.

Martha shared that most of the students who are chronically absent are within 2-5 days of being considered chronically absent. There is also a group of students who are critically absent. Martha acknowledged that the messaging needs to reach both groups, and awareness campaigns, like these, may not be reaching those critically absent students.

Beth Donahue asked what feedback, if any, was gathered from families who have students that are chronically absent. Martha answered that they often discuss barriers to attendance, like bussing availabilities and social economic barriers. She acknowledged that these resources are so high level that they may be missing the reasons why students may not be attending, and do not respond to the root cause of absences.

Kate suggested bright spotting districts that have done things that work, capturing data on how these successful resources are shared and bright spotting those practices. Martha shared that the team has

been asking for this feedback. Caitlin added that the tone of the outreach should be more of an invitation and should provide more tangible resources.

Martha transitioned the group to the presentation slides, sharing slides that were recently presented to the state board regarding student engagement as a widely important goal, pointing out that SACPIE is also represented in these slides. Lastly, Martha invited members to continue sharing feedback via email.

### **1:30 Member Resource Sharing**

Jenny Learner shared that she is resigning from the Migrant Education program at CDE at the end of December and will be working with Head Start. She thanked SACPIE for the opportunity to be a part of the committee and for their interest in migrant students. Danielle and Noemi will connect with Darcy to discuss who will be the SACPIE representative for Migrant Education moving forward.

Sarah Hanselin shared that SNAP benefits should be fully restored, so if any families are having trouble accessing these funds, SACPIE members can send them Sarah's way. For CDHS (Colorado Department of Human Services), they have a family voice council that is a lived experience council that is receiving any CDHS benefits. They are recruiting folks who have been receiving any SNAP benefits or related to CDHS to join. Sarah will send out that flier that SACPIE members can share with others who they believe would be a good fit. Kim Chatman asked if they are compensated for their time. Sarah shared that they are compensated \$200 per meeting and meet once a month. There are also additional meetings they can attend that they would be compensated for. Sarah will also share information on how people can get connected with their team if they are having any issues accessing their benefits.

Darcy Hutchins will share resources in a follow-up email on Thursday, November 20<sup>th</sup>.

### **1:35 Wrap-Up**

Darcy reminded members that the next meeting is on February 10, 2026 at the Colorado Gives Foundation at 9:30am. The following meetings will be held on May 5, 2026 and August 25, 2026.

### **1:40 Adjourn**