



State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education

SACPIE Quarterly Meeting
May 5, 2026
Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Jess Welch, Kimberly Chatman, Caitlin Fitzpatrick, Nathan Hickman, Beth Donahue, Jamita Horton, Liz Wilson, Finessa Ferrell, Twyla Esquibel, Michelle Zeles-Hahn, Sarah Hanselin, Rhonda Palic, Sherrell Lang, Michelle Zinser, Christena Burnham

Guests: Dan Jorgensen, Jes Stroope, Sherri Wright, Kathy Plomer, Yazmine Patiño, Jamie Madigan, Darcy Hutchins

9:30 Welcome, Business & Introductions

Jess Welch started the meeting, welcoming everyone in person and online.

She then moved to approving the February meeting minutes. Caitlin Fitzpatrick moved to approve the meeting minutes. Michelle Zeles-Hahn seconded. All in favor. The February meeting minutes were approved.

Darcy Hutchins then reminded members that they are eligible for mileage reimbursements. Yazmine Patino added that reimbursements submitted within 60 days are not taxed while those submitted within 61-90 days are taxed. Additionally, reimbursements are not accepted after 90 days.

Darcy discussed SACPIE vacancies, which include a Special Education Representative from a non-profit, a CASBE representative, a CD6 and a CD5 parent preferably on a SAC or DAC, an Early Childhood representative or someone with early childhood experience. The CASBE representative has historically been someone on the CASBE board, but it can be anyone on any school board. The vacancies have been shared through Linked In and applications are due June 5th with the plan to have the positions go to the state board in August or September. In general, CDE is attempting to streamline new vacancies by posting positions in the spring to be due in summer to then present at the state board in August. Additionally, Jess and Darcy confirmed that members can invite content experts to present at SACPIE even if they aren't members.

Jess and Darcy then led the group through a rapid-fire introduction activity, asking members to share their name, their role in SACPIE, and describe their school year in 5 words or less.

9:50 State Board of Education and Legislative Session Updates

Kathy Plomer provided an update on the last couple of State Board Meetings. During the last meeting, the board set a standard where they will have three-day quarterly meetings, which last happened in April. The State Board is also working on the post-secondary workforce readiness funding, which was previously funded with twelve different grants with heavy reporting requirements. The Board is attempting to create a process where the funds will be distributed based on a formula with new programs, MLLs, and rural areas given priority. However, Kathy shared that the amount of funds will not be enough for all students to have an opportunity to participate in workforce credentials (AP or certification credit). Kathy also shared that the Board has a robust process for public comment and they do read every comment submitted. Additionally, Kathy shared that transportation and buses is an issue for rural schools. Rules are open. The State Board will also be voting on Math Standard at the May meeting. Although the comment period on the website is closed, comments can still be submitted to the Board in writing.

Regarding part-time enrichment programs, the Board is discussing areas where schools and districts can receive funding for home school enrichment. Rules were set around requirements like attendance, hours of instruction, etc. a couple years ago. In January, the Board received a report that expenditures had grown to \$90M, mostly through the BOCES, and they are receiving feedback that the Board should know where the money is going. Therefore, Kathy shared that the State Board has put forth a proposal to legislature to ensure they nail down the rules for what the BOCES can and cannot do. The Board will also determine rule making around reimbursements and what activities qualify. Members can send emails to the Board if they have any comments. Lastly, Kathy shared that the May meeting will take place in Denver and the June meeting will take place in Grand Junction.

Darcy Hutchins also shared Melissa Bloom's presentation slides, who joined SACPIE in February to present the Board of Education and Legislative Session updated. The presentation was created with information that Darcy, Michelle Zeles-Hahn, and Jess Welch found beneficial for SACPIE to know. The slides included:

1. What Happened Since January, including status on K-12 topics since November
For this slide, Kathy added that the
2. State Board Positions
This slide outlines the position the state board took on various bills. Kathy added that SB 26-135 State Public K-12 Education Funding will be in the ballot for a vote if it's passed.
3. Budget Updates
For this slide, Jamita Horton provided additional information on the TABOR and Medicaid impact. Although federal funding cuts have been made, the cost of both has not decreased. Therefore, at the state level, the cost of Medicaid is increasing. The state is discussing how the fund the increase. Kathy also added that there's discussion out there about what will happen to individual school/district funds. Many will not receive additional funds or very minimal funds. Although K-12 was spared significant cuts, the budget could not keep up for inflation and medical cuts. CDE did lose funding for the bully prevention grant, teaching prep programs, the school Medicare provider grant, and the school counselor grant.
4. What's Left
No additional information was added for this slide.

5. Additional Resources

This slide includes links to various resources. Caitlin Fitzpatrick also shared the Protect Colorado's Future – Initiative 195, which introduces a 10% increase to the graduated income tax for those making over \$500,000. Members can find more information on the Protect Colorado's Future website.

10:23 Office of FSCP Updates and DAC Feedback

For state level leadership updates, Darcy Hutchins shared that the discussions for increasing student engagement on the CDE strategic plan is going well. The Engagement Advantage article from TNTP and Learning Heroes has been published. The study shows that FSCP has more of a positive impact on student outcomes, culture, etc., than poverty when controlling for various factors. Darcy also presented the article to the strategic planning team at the last meeting. Additionally, Darcy is working on a set of talking points for CDE staff around the study to include in their presentation and will do the same for SACPIE members. SACs and DACs fit within the first step of the FSCP Trail Map, "Have A Team", which shows how SACs and DACs fit into the study. Darcy also shared that Jes Stroope is once again a web content creator and can now update the CDE FSCP webpages. If anyone has any feedback, they can contact the CDE Communications team. Lastly, all recordings of Friends of FSCP, which will be renamed, are available on the website. Darcy will also share the recordings, along with the link to the Engagement Advantage article after the meeting.

For direct facilitation of districts updates, FSCP held the 9th annual District Leaders Retreat last week, which received positive feedback. Largely due to funding cuts, there were less attendees than in 2025 with only 16 districts and 60 people. Next year, FSCP will host the 10th Annual Retreat. After the meeting, Darcy will share a list of the attendee districts. Jes has also put together an online course about community schools that includes a strategic guide and will include a readiness assessment. Darcy will share the link to these resources after the meeting. Lastly, next year's FSCP theme will be "Linked to Learning." Monthly Coffee Chats, the Retreat, etc. will be linked to learning.

For FSCP Updates, Darcy shared that Lisa Medler is helping the READ Act team put together a focus group for stakeholders and has stressed the importance of including parent voices. Lisa would like SACPIE input. There will be one focus group sometime in May. Darcy will share more information after the meeting. Additionally, help with Promising Practices and SACPIE vacancies is requested.

As a follow-up for the Education Governance conversation, Darcy shared that the one-pager is complete and the link in the presentation slide should link to the PDF. Translation to Spanish is currently in progress. Additionally, the FAQ has been reviewed and revised and is now being finalized with the communications team. Darcy will share the FAQ once it's available. Regarding the State Dashboard, the team is completing additional feedback sessions and will circle back with SACPIE at a later date.

Darcy shared that CDE has contracted with Michelle Zeles-Hahn to create a DAC course that will mirror the SAC members course. The course will be available in both English and Spanish and will be completed by June 30th. Michelle added that she is receiving feedback for the course from other SACPIE members.

Lastly, Dan Jorgensen and Darcy are working on a DAC members toolkit. For the first part of the discussion, Dan and Darcy shared that they are working on a one-pager for each of the DAC's legislative responsibilities, which will include 2-3 sentence vignettes of DACs in action. They have reached out to their contacts for examples, but SACPIE members are invited to add district examples to tab 2 of the linked spreadsheet as soon as possible. Tab 1 of the spreadsheet includes legislative verbiage. For the second half of the discussion, SACPIE members were moved into small groups to discuss what else

would be helpful for DAC members to be included in the toolkit and discuss whether “toolkit” is the correct title.

11:15 Break

11:25 Planning for Next School Year

Jess Welch started the conversation by recapping the work completed this school year. She reviewed the discussion from last May 2025, where SACPIE members decided to focus on family engagement to decrease chronic absenteeism and improve attendance. Members also wanted to learn more about the legislative process, so many of the presentations throughout the year focused on attendance and the legislative sessions. They also requested more ad hoc opportunities in between meetings, which Darcy provided. However, engagement was low.

Jess also took the notes from last year and suggested focus areas for coming year based on those May 2025 conversations, which included improving resources, communications, and efficiency of school and district accountability committees, early childhood, and postsecondary workforce readiness. After lunch and in small groups, members will discuss if these are the right topics of focus and/or if there are any others that SACPIE should focus on. Teams were asked to rank order the focus areas, choosing to focus on one, some, or all of the topics. Darcy Hutchins also reminded members that the SACPIE legislative responsibilities do include improving resources, communications, and efficiency of school and district accountability committees. Online groups will capture notes in the note catcher, while in-person groups will jot down notes on poster paper.

11:35 Lunch

12:00 Planning for Next School Year, continued

At this time, Jess Welch encouraged members to join their small groups for discussion.

For the whole group share out, Jess asked each group to share a summary of what they discussed and any conclusions they came to. For the online group, Michelle Zinser shared that they discussed the need to rebrand public education and family engagement with the decline in enrollment. The group discussed the need to redefine public education, specifically what the role of public education is as it relates to declining enrollment. Kathy Plomer shared that there is a bill the State Board will be looking at next year regarding online education and suggested SACPIE discuss this next year to provide input. The State Board has engaged a facilitator to walk through this work, but it would be helpful to know what questions people have for the Board. Michelle offered to provide public comment for this bill if needed. Rhonda Palic shared that it would be helpful to ask families why they choose to leave and what would get them to come back, and her team is passionate about providing input for this as well. Twyla Esquibel shared that her team discussed prioritizing post-secondary workforce readiness, what parents should know and understand about it, and if the bill would be helpful. Secondly, the team discussed prioritizing resources and understanding of SACs and DACs (what each does, how they relate to CDE, toolkits, etc.). Twyla added that the team was split between PWR and early childhood and suggested a 6-month/6-month focus split. Liz Wilson shared that her team spent the bulk of the conversation discussing the DAC/SAC resources that already exist. The team also discussed bringing in superintendents for a discussion panel and developing relationships within the accountability work. Additionally, there are principals that don't know what DACs do or leaders that request subcommittees or focus groups that don't fall under the compliance aspect of what the SACs and DACs were created for. There is also no one

that checks to ensure DACs or SACs are used in a district. Lastly, Liz shared that her group discussed the SACPIE's sphere of influence when it comes to SACs and DACs. For the last team, Caitlin Fitzpatrick shared that they believed SACs and DACs would be a great focus area because it involves all schools and districts. The group feels that a lot of work can be done around communication to parents. The group also discussed the differences between the purpose of SACs/DACs and what is actually happening, along with considering the actual impact or influence of SACs and DACs. The group was also interested in understanding what SACs and DACs look like in different spaces.

After the whole group share-out, Jess summarized what was discussed. SACs and DACs came up as being an appropriate and engaging topic, along with the need for differentiated SAC/DAC resources for different age groups (early childhood, middle school, and high school). Jess highlighted that this work can lead into the post-secondary workforce readiness work and allow for professional development for SACPIE members. Additionally, members are interested in having a through line for what school boards are doing for online learning. Members posed the following question for consideration: *What about SACs for online schools, BOCES, MDALs?*

Kim Chatman shared that getting the foundation of SACs and DACs is important but can take time to fully understand. Liz added that a list of DACs and their contact persons would be helpful for incoming SACPIE parents. Finessa Ferrell shared that families are pulling their children from schools in alarming numbers. She is working with about 65 schools all asking the question "why?" and the organization she works for is completing a case study. They are hearing that a lot of children aren't feeling welcomed or accepted or children are feeling overwhelmed. Finessa shared that she is invested in this topic and others should be as well. Finessa is unsure when the case study will be published, but she is also on a team working on attendance. That team has found that academic and social anxiety is keeping children from attending school and anxiety and lack of wellness are common. Kim added that she personally knows a family whose child wasn't going to school due to anxiety or families of color pulling their children from school for discrimination. Finessa wondered what public education can do to reassure parents that they can be trusted to have their children's wellness in mind. Liz added that some parents may be choosing charter schools for similar reasons. Darcy Hutchins added that this goes hand in hand with accountability committees since they are meant to increase family engagement in schools. While public education rebranding is an existential question that SACPIE may not be able to take on fully, they can be considered a trusted resource. Kathy Plomer added that the state board has discussed the study Finessa shared. She also shared that there are 47-50 multidistrict online schools in the state with more applications submitted all the time. It may be interesting to study what happens to a multidistrict online school, what the tradeoffs are, and what can be done at the state level. For example, in a school, students have access to a counselor and trusted adults, so highlighting the positives in public school settings and what schools are doing to put proper supports/structures in place to ensure children feel safe in schools is important. Finessa shared that there's also an additional study that shows the positive outcomes of the 35 schools that created a community building space. Darcy asked that Finessa share these resources to be included in the follow-up email to SACPIE.

To bring the conversation to a close, Jess asked everyone to continue thinking about this conversation to determine how best to use the time in next year's SACPIE meetings. Members should think of a list of topics they want to learn about and what they'd like to do with the information. Thoughts can be emailed to Darcy or Jess Stroope by the end of the day. The SACPIE executive committee will discuss

everyone's input on May 13th. Darcy added that discussions with people who directly support SACs and DACs may be more helpful than engaging with superintendents. She added that the field has shared their interest in make-and-take resources. Additionally, SACPIE can help create short case studies or examples. Finessa shared that she would like a panel of people that would be honest about the downsides and difficulties and superintendents may not be the right group of people for these discussions.

1:05 Promising Partnership Practices

Darcy Hutchins reminded members that the flyer for the Promising Partnership Practices was included in the recent SACPIE email and will also be added to Linked In. SACPIE is listed as the first author in the Promising Partnership Practices, so Darcy asked for members' help in getting the word out and submitting practices. She recommends personally inviting people to submit. For this year, FSCP is specifically looking for P20 resources, institutes of higher education, and early childhood centers. Submissions are due June 5, and there is no minimum or maximum number of submissions. Jes Stroope added that the Promising Partnership Practices webpage has been prioritized and can be shared with folks as a point of reference. Lastly, Darcy shared that community-based organizations will still be highlighted but they must be in tandem with a school or district to be included.

1:20 Member Resource Sharing

Sarah Hanselin shared Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) updates. CDHS is going through HR1 updates (Medicaid, SNAP, etc.) Medicaid changes will be reported back. For SNAP, eligibility changes have been put into effect as of April 9th. Sarah will share resources for these changes with SACPIE. About 9,000 individuals in Colorado will lose their SNAP benefits. CDHS has been made aware and resources have been shared with these families. Sarah added that 211 is another resource that families can use to navigate good insecurity. 211 is working closely with local food pantries and have language access through translators and bilingual navigators. CDHS has also created a warm line for mandated reporters in Gilpin, Boulder, and Pueblo counties. Sarah will share the flyer with SACPIE. The line is available for mandated reporters in the hopes of eliminating unnecessary reports of abuse and instead navigate families to resources. The warm line has been live for four months and CDHS is looking to expand. They are determining how best to build a bridge to mandated reports given the liability and training required of them. If anyone is curious to learn more, they can contact Sarah. Additionally, 211 has established a monthly training series. Sarah will share the list of resources with SACPIE. Everyone is invited to join. The training series is ideal for social workers or people in the district who are always looking for resources for families and teaches participants how to use 211 as a tool for finding resources for families.

For the Colorado Education Initiative (CEI), Finessa Ferrell shared that they are finishing their third and final impact showcase this week. Two networks of schools were included: one of 35 schools mentioned in the earlier study and another of 30 schools that have been working toward four outcomes, including increasing social emotional skills, increasing step satisfaction and wellness, increasing relationships and connection, and increasing health supports for students and staff. The outcomes for the second network of schools will be available on Friday. Three regions were included: the metro region (Cherry Creek, Aurora, and Mapleton), the south region (Pueblo 70, Harrison, and Fort Carson), and the north region (Thompson, Boulder, Brighton 27J, and Greeley). Family work is highlighted in the study as having an impact on schools. Finessa also shared the slides in print regarding the 35 schools in the first network discussed and their outcomes.

For the Accountability Work Group (AWG), Jamita Horton shared that the group discussed insufficient data and low participation in assessments at their most recent meeting. The group also discussed changes to the accountability framework (specifically, to the post-secondary workforce readiness subindicator), Unified Improvement Plans (the role of the state regarding UIPs, pain points, where they can be used more effectively in districts), and small school systems (how an accountability system can be created for small schools rather than trying to fit big school systems into small schools). Jamita will bring more updates to future SACPIE meetings.

Lastly, Nathan Hickman shared that the Federal Programs Consolidated Application is opening soon. Parents should be a part of the conversation on how districts use federal funds. Nathan reminded members about the Supplement not Supplant rule but added that federal funds can be used in situations where activities are impacted due to decreased funds. Nathan also shared that the 2026-2027 funds have been allocated but the 2027-2028 funds are unknown. The Federal Programs and Supports Unit has advised districts to account for a 10% reduction in funds, but once again, actual funds are still unknown. Darcy added that the Flamboyant Foundation has an online resource that lists family engagement activities and whether they are allowable and allocable to federal funds. Nathan and Darcy both shared that they will be using this resource and adding state funding options. Darcy will share the original resource with SACPIE members after the meeting.

1:30 Wrap-Up

Jes Stroope reminded members that the next SACPIE meetings will be on August 25, 2026, November 17, 2026, and February 9, 2027. Everyone should have received calendar invites. Additionally, SACPIE members shared that they continue to be fans of the Colorado Gives Foundation, so Yazmine and Jessie Steinbaum will work on reserving the space for the August meeting. Once secured, Darcy Hutchins will update the calendar invite location.

Jess Welch thanked everyone for coming to the SACPIE meetings, and Darcy shared that she will send out the follow-up email on Thursday morning. Any resources members have to share with SACPIE should be shared with Darcy before then. Finessa Ferrell's resources will be shared on Friday.

1:35 Adjourn