SACPIE

State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education

COLORADO
Department of Education

SACPIE Quarterly Meeting
August 25, 2026
Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Jess Welch, Caitlin Fitzpatrick, Nathan Hickman, Liz Wilson, Finessa Ferrell, Twyla Esquibel, Michelle Zeles-Hahn, Sarah Hanselin, Rhonda Palic, Michelle Zinser, Christena Burnham, Kate Garvin, Roxanne Aviles, Kathy Plomer, Rashida Banerjee

Guests: Kathy Plomer, Courtney Hertner, Jody Hovde, Swagata Banerjee, Susan Lopez, Nicole Rosendale, Willyn Web, Darcy Hutchins, Jes Stroope, Christina North, Jane Miyahara, Jessie Steinbaum, Martha Fischhoff

9:30 Welcome, Business & Introductions
Darcy Hutchins started the meeting, welcoming everyone in person and online.

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

Darcy gave vacancy updates. There were 5. The application closed in the beginning of June. Darcy welcomed the new people who will become official members next month. Darcy reminded everyone that they are all eligible for travel reimbursement. Jessie Steinbaum added some logistics of the reimbursement process. Darcy shared that Jess Welch is stepping down from SACPIE. She mentioned we will be electing a new chair and vice chair in November.

Darcy led the group in an introduction activity. The group went around the room and gave their name, their SACPIE role, and a few words about how they feel about the school year.

9:46 State Board of Education Updates
<u>Budget</u>

She started with the budget, explaining that the governor has asked all the departments to take a 4% budget cut. Kathy explained this is a tough decision, as they believe everything they do is worthwhile for kids. Nothing is decided yet, but they may cut funding for a computer science program that is a pathway for students to get their Associates in 5-6 years.

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Legislative Platform

Regarding the legislative platform, things will change this year when we have a new governor, and there are lots of conversations happening at the capital about what is best for student success and good decisions for school finance. The legislative platform has value statements and specific work they want to see done that will be public on the website. Last year they did an introduction session for members of education committees about what the State Board does. They will try to do that again.

MDOLs (Multi District Online Schools)

44 different MDOL schools are chartered by districts and BOCES and right now the SBE doesn't have a lot of eyes on them. They are trying to figure out how the SBE should look at them because of a lack of data, and there is potential legislative action for the SBE to have more authority over MDOLs.

Homeschool Enrichment Programs

There have been lots of changes in funding for homeschool enrichment programs. Homeschool students have the right to access public education, but how they do that is changing. Based on what was added to the school finance act, we are now in the process of trying to define what public school means for homeschool kids. In the short term, one of the groups that was a big provider for these programs was the ER BOCES, and that organization has been dissolved. There's about 40 programs looking for a place to receive public funding, and if the program isn't approved, they won't receive public funding. The SBE did emergency authorizations for four MDOLs so they don't have to leave, but they will have to find new authorizers next year. Lots of people want a deeper dive about this to make sure public funds are being spent on worthwhile programs

Liz W shared some data. She shared that since 2017, they pulled the public check registers and over 357 million dollars has gone to these programs. Some funding was going to homeschool enrichment, and some was going to non-profits that were sharing a location and a board structure of a private school. This information was provided to CDE and to the JBC. She shared that this was public information that has since been taken down.

Kathy said if you want to learn more, they have a session on Thursday you can listen in on. The JBC gave some legal authority to make some changes and Kathy offered to answer questions. Darcy provided context by sharing that BOCES stands for Board of Cooperative Educational Services.

Budget, Part 2

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Kathy added one more piece related to budget. Over the years, initiatives that are important have been put into grants by CDE. With the budget cuts, it is important to pay attention to budget discussions. As we go into the fall, there will be lots of ballot measures and they may take individual positions or a position as a State Board. Please watch your ballets and Kathy offered to answer questions.

Jess Welch added that school safety is a categorical grant, so schools that need grants for those programs may have them cut. SAC members may not understand how much comes out of these grants. Kathy added that the BEST grant, for school facilities funding, is possibly going to be cut. There are lots of structural things to talk about in how we fund our schools and Kathy said they take public feedback very seriously.

10:07 FSCP: The Secret Sauce to Student Success Part 1 - Slides Linked Here

Office of FSCP updates

Darcy presented slides that started with Office of FSCP updates. She stated that they are doing a lot of cross office collaboration, working on state personnel development grants, still fixing the CDE website, and the FSCP theme this year is Linked to Learning.

She highlighted events they have launched for the year and what is upcoming. The office of FSCP is piloting DAC networking sessions on Oct 8 and April 8, from 6-7pm on zoom. They are inviting DAC chairs, local board members who are a liaison to the DAC, they will use affinity groups, they would love any SACPIE parent reps to join to help facilitate or listen in.

November is family and school partner in education month. Please reach out to Darcy if you have ways you would like to celebrate.

Liz asked how CSI-authorized charter schools will be included in the DAC networking sessions. Jess W explained that school boards serve as DACs. Darcy thanked her for bringing that up, they will discuss it as an office.

Darcy asked people to send trainings and conventions to her so she can make a calendar.

Secret Sauce

Darcy prefaces this is a learning opportunity for everyone in the room, and there will be an activity that includes moving around the room and some small groups. She started with a think ahead activity. She asked everyone to think 1 year in the future. If chalk beat has a family engagement in Colorado article, what would the headline be? The pairs went around the room and shared their headlines.

Darcy shares a slide with a brief overview of what the office of FSCP does, such as coordinating family engagement, working with district level staff, and staffing SACPIE. She shared the evolution of family engagement in Colorado.

Rashida asked about how to bridge higher education into these conversations. Jes Stroope replied saying that they now have an FSCP collaborative for educator preparation programs. Higher education institutions are represented in that collaborative, and they are working on including family engagement in their training. Rashida explained that we should stick together, and she wonders if there is a way for us to be more informed of each other's work.

Darcy explained the theoretical model that is the basis of family engagement work, the overlapping spheres of influence. She shared strategies for thinking of family engagement from “Everyone Wins” and from research.

The group then did an activity facilitated by Darcy. The group Strongly Agreed, Agreed, Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed with statements regarding family engagement in schools, standing in different corners of the room.

11:00 Break

11:10 FSCP: The Secret Sauce to Student Success Part 2 - Slides Linked Here
Group Discussion

After the break, we moved into group discussion about takeaways from the theoretical and research base of FSCP, and how that can be used in everyone’s role on SACPIE. The group discussed how barriers for parents are something to be thoughtful about, as well as the difference between capacity and barriers. Darcy encourages everyone to rethink barriers, instead view them as challenges. The group was struck by the reimagining of family engagement and how it ties to not having as many resources, trying to see assets in different ways, and how it should move beyond involvement to authentic partnership.

Kathy explained that some places are at different places on the continuum, meaning some places know that families are stakeholders, but not everyone does. There is work to do there, because FSCP should be used as an improvement strategy.

District and School Structures

Darcy walked the group through district and school structures. For district level work, the ideal situation is that the 6 strategies weave through both sides of the double arrow. For schools, they encourage them to follow the FSCP trail map, which outlines forming a team, following a framework, writing and

implementing a plan, and evaluating the outcomes. This is successful when it is customized, comprehensive and continuously improved

Next, she highlighted Colorado's P-12 FSCP framework themes. These include:

- Inclusive culture
- Build trusting relationships
- Design capacity
- Dedicate necessary resources

Michelle ZH asked who the framework is for. Darcy explained that everyone can use it, and that Colorado's framework is globalized and used around the world. However, the rubrics are ultimately intended for small groups like DACs or subcommittees on DACs. They recommend district and school teams partner with parents in the community to pick an element to focus on.

Liz W asked what happens when a new school board member hears about this, and asks how this impacts accountability and performance. Darcy explained that she would point them to various students on family and engagement initiatives that highlight outcomes. Rhonda wonders, as they develop these in their district, what is the success point? Is it times they collaborate with families? Darcy is going to add a slide about school improvement strategy.

Liz then raised that for a rural district that has low literacy rates, a question they could have is, how many years of doing this will it take to improve? Darcy said she would answer this when we get to the continuum of impact slide in the presentation.

<u>Essential Elements and National Standards</u>

Darcy presented that essential elements are the foundation. The national standard for family-school partnerships are categories for initiatives and activities.

<u>Continuum of Impact</u>

Darcy asked, what are generalities or themes you see on the continuum of impact? The group answered that individual activities are more impactful than full group ones. Finessa added that very few people will say they are against collaboration, but then people are usually resistant. She said if you try to explain the purpose of the collaboration to get past the resistance, you can ask the room if they want something

done differently, or if they want them to feel something. That is why this is important. Any pre-service training or PD about this is rare.

Kathy added that the left side of the continuum of impact can be done from a building level or district level, but the right side is individualized to the teacher. The group agreed it really takes the building leader to have this be the most successful and move beyond the random acts of partnership.

Small Group Discussion

The group moved into small group discussion, based on the questions below:

Take some time to discuss the trail map, the double arrow, the promising partnership practices. How can these tools guide our work as SACPIE, as a collective and individually?

12:00 Lunch
The group took a break for lunch.

12:45 Outcomes for 26-27 School Year - Slides Linked Here
Martha Fischoff

Martha Fischoff introduced herself. She works at CDE in the dropout prevention and student engagement office, and SACPIE has been an important partner for them in reducing chronic absenteeism from its pandemic high. She cannot share data since it isn't shared with the public yet, but it will be on Thursday (8/27). Martha explained that September 1st, they are announcing a partnership with the Broncos Community Foundation, which is a more intensive two year partnership. Martha and her colleague Johann are happy to work with SACPIE members who are talking about attendance and engagement in any SAC or DAC meetings. They are happy to join a meeting. September is national attendance awareness month and doing an attendance webinar. Martha will share the link.

Michelle Zinser asked if the attendance data will also be posted on the CDE website. Martha confirmed it will, on Thursday 8/27.

Susan asked about in the space of chronic absenteeism, are there certain districts doing a great job or bright spots. Martha said she will send some videos the communications team has of good work that is happening. Martha said that the work in urban districts and rural districts is very different. Denver Public Schools launched a community network and Summit School District called all the pediatricians in the district. Thompson School District started a district wide process where all teachers do a warm welcome at the beginning and the end of the day, as well as any adult who sees a kid in a building says hello, and

their engagement rates have increased. Darcy shared that in Lewis-Palmer school district, they send letters home about goals and how the parents can support those goals at home.

Jess Welch

Darcy asked if Jess Welch wanted to share any words about her stepping down. She expressed thanks and that she will stay in touch.

Small Group Sharing from the pre-lunch Discussion

Michelle ZH spoke on the continuum of impact and about how we need the whole spectrum. The outcomes build upon each other, even if the left side is low impact. It reminds us that if we don't see parents in schools, that doesn't mean they aren't engaged. Finessa talked about bridging the sides of the continuum of impact slide, thinking about how working the pieces together to occur simultaneously can be helpful. Jody Hovde added that her group talked about how engagement can be overwhelming for families, so it is important to meet them where they are at and support them.

Fitting it All Together

Darcy showed a slide from the May meeting, with focus ideas and conditions for success. Darcy asked if these goals still resonate and for other feedback/updates from the group.

Susan shared that people have asked for funding for CTE, and that it feels like there isn't a vision for the emergence of CTE. Michelle Z explained they are getting reach for the big 3 (earning college credits, industry recognized credentials, and workplace learning), and mentioned that new legislation that has come out has increased awareness for CTE.

Darcy asked if it would be helpful to ask our PWR team at CDE to come in and spread some awareness on CTE. The group answered that it would be helpful.

Jess W mentioned we talked about differentiated research sets for SACs in a previous meeting, which could be a good bridge for the work. Liz shared that she is shocked that some SACs and DACs have membership out of legislative requirements. We don't want to lose focus when so many districts are small rural, and thus are getting different interpretations of the work and messaging.

Courtney asked how that happens (being outside of the membership requirements), and how do we get those people the right information.

Darcy mentioned it might be helpful to have dedicated work time at SACPIE meetings for people to work together on collective challenges.

Nicole asked for clarity about when the group says SACs and DACs, are they specifically talking about SACs and DACs, or does that include SEACs (special ed)? Darcy explained that it specifically means SACs and DACs, but we shouldn't forget about the other groups as well.

Finessa posed a few questions, asking where we are going, if the goal is to make them more impactful, to make them more statutorily aligned, or to have more meaningful work. Darcy posed the question to the group. The group talked about using outstanding SACs and DACs as models to learn from.

Liz asked if the group, as SACPIE, could set a goal to make contact with a certain percentage of DACs in the entire state, that could potentially increase awareness of resources out there.

Jess W prompted the group to think about something we could track over time to see if there are changes based on the group's changes and actions. She asked how we can test if our resources and communications are having an impact? She said that measure might give them more traction for what they are trying to do.

Darcy explained that the UIP team, (Office of Continuous Improvement), is partnering with FSCP, and has given feedback about helping family engagement and the connection to the UIP. Once again emphasizing we can use family engagement as an improvement strategy.

Darcy then asked if the group wants to explore using different online/resource platforms for sharing meeting materials, as well as bright spots for the group. Members threw out ideas, such as creating a WhatsApp group. The conversation closed with Darcy sharing that there is a lot of flexibility as membership changes, so tell Darcy if structure changes or other platforms are something you want.

1:15 Member Resource Sharing - Slides Linked Here
Sarah shared information on snap EBT funds. There's a website for summer EBT (SEBT) where families can see how to get a new card, since it isn't their normal snap card. If families are having issues, please know most funds run out in September, so encourage families to use them. Sarah also echoed that the budget/transition season at CDHS is tough right now and there are lots of tough conversations. CDHS is doing lots of proactive planning, so when they transition to a new governor they will get them up to speed. There will also be new leadership at CDHS for the first time in 8 years. Sarah also talked about the Warmline, which launched as a child welfare system. The warmline is connected to the hotline where abuse and neglect can be reported. The warmline is still running, and they are looking for funding to add

more counties every 6 months. In the child welfare space, the same creator of the warmline, also created a handbook called The Love Letter to Families.

Kate shared that RMFEC (Rocky Mountain Family Engagement Collective) is in the middle of a webinar series. The series is called State Leadership for Family Engagement: From Policy to Practice to Impact. This week is focused on Colorado and the work that the FSCP team at CDE is doing, with Jes Stroope. They have two more sessions in September, they are posted online after, so people can watch live or see them after. If anyone wants to take them back to their schools, they also run a 6 session educator family engagement PD series. It looks like RMFEC will be getting funding for years 4 and 5, so if there are resources we really want to be developed out, RMFEC can partner with them to move that forward. If there are conferences people would like to present at, RMFEC can help with funding or getting people registered if they have enough notice. They are also looking for more cohort districts in the next year. If any SACPIE members have districts that are ready to dive into systemic family engagement work, reach out to Kate. They are launching in DPS and Thompson currently.

Twyla shared that from the Department of Higher Education, financial aid has been high on their priorities. They have been working with the State of Colorado DOJ regarding the asset law and state tuition. They are working with them to review a complaint and are determining next steps. Financial aid remains in effect. The US Department of Education is looking for folks to test the 27-28 FAFSA. It is in beta now, but submissions will roll over once it launches. Colorado free application days are 10/20-10/22, where all college applications are free. The Department administers 3 applications for scholarships. They have educator financial aid training coming up which is free, all day, in October at CSU in Fort Collins. They also have monthly lunch and learn webinars about higher education topics such as FAFSA.

Caitlyn shared about “Protect Colorado's Future”, which is coming together with Great Education Colorado. She also shared about a project called “Youth Celebrate Diversity”, which focuses on power sharing and capacity building.

Liz shared that in the current landscape of complicated education and misinformation, if you have questions or issues with what is happening with the part time homeschools, there is a department at CDE that works on this, but she is also happy to speak on it and share information. She also shared about a facebook group that has come together to provide dorm room resources for students who come from foster care or who don’t have families.

Darcy will share all of the resources in a follow-up email.

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1:45 Wrap-Up

Darcy emphasized that it was great to have all the potential new members join the meeting. If any new members want any extra support, let Darcy know. Darcy will send the invites for February and May meetings, but the November one has been sent. Darcy reminded the group that the expectation is that you attend in person or virtually 3 out of the 4 sessions of the year. Jessie reminded the group that if they are interested in mileage reimbursement, they can reach out to her.

2:00 Adjourn