School Accountability Committee Manual

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Incorporating changes to BVSD policy and state law
Into the June 22, 2011 draft that was:

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I: Purpose of this Handbook

This SAC handbook is designed to assist schools within Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) in implementing an accountability program and a school improvement process that conforms to guidelines, policies, and statutes from the state of Colorado and the Boulder Valley Board of Education.

The handbook was created by the District Accountability Committee (DAC) Communications Subcommittee, which worked on the handbook from January 2011 to September 2011. The intention of the subcommittee was to help School Accountability Committees (SACs) accomplish the work delegated to them by BVSD, and this document highlights functions of the SAC and its importance in school improvement.

The handbook contains required and recommended practices and other guidelines for SAC operations. The District Accountability Committee would like to stress that required practices are state law and are noted as such. Recommended practices may be tailored to fit individual school needs and circumstances.

II: Function of the School Accountability Committee

The School Accountability Committee is an official group where the community can be involved in educational improvement at a school. It is through the cooperative efforts of teachers, parents, staff, administrators, students, and community members that the foundations for school improvement are built.

Section 1: Name
The usual name of this team is “(Name of the school) School Accountability Committee,” and it is normally referred by the acronym “SAC”.

Section 2: Role and Purposes
In general, a School Accountability Committee is a representative advisory committee. BVSD requires each school to have an active School Accountability Committee (generally referred to in the district as a SAC), that serves as the grassroots’ organization for accountability in the district.

The primary role of the SAC is in the areas of making recommendations about spending priorities, making recommendations about the school improvement plan, and discussing implementation of the school improvement plan. These specific duties and powers are enumerated below with reference to law, in a
manner that reflects models schools might use and questions that SAC members might ask in evaluating their committee’s performance.

Subsection a: Making recommendations about improvement plans

It is a duty and power of SAC “to advise the principal of the public school . . . concerning the preparation of a school performance or improvement plan . . . and to submit recommendations to the principal . . . concerning the contents of the performance or improvement plan.” (Legal reference: CRS 22-11-402(1) (b))

There are several possible ways in which school accountability committees may be engaged in making recommendations about school improvement committees. Here is a non-exhaustive list. The listed ways are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

1. Parent/community members of the SAC participate as TIES team members as the team identifies persistent patterns in school data, and, as time allows, root causes of problematic patterns that are within control of adults in the school and theories of action to address root cause(s). Depending on data studied, parent/community team members may be asked to sign confidentiality agreements.
2. SAC receives TIES team work products identifying persistent patterns in school data, root causes of problematic patterns that are within control of adults in the school, and proposed theories of action to address root cause(s). SAC provides feedback on this work and makes recommendations about actions that will address root causes.
3. SAC receives a nearly completed School Improvement Plan (SIP) and makes recommendations about future work on what they have received.
4. SAC makes recommendations in an April/May period for work the school should consider for the following year based on the perceived success of recent improvement efforts and persistent patterns in data. These recommendations become part of the following year’s SIP, which is compiled by the principal.
5. Parent/community members of SAC (and possibly, other school committees) develop action plans of their own to support school improvement.

Reflective questions SAC members may use to examine their SAC’s role in making recommendations about school improvement plans.

1. How does one of the above models, if any, compare to my SAC’s role in making recommendations?
2. What were my SAC’s recommendations this year? To what extent are those reflected in my school’s plan (SIP)?
3. How might my SAC change the way it makes recommendations?
4. Did my SAC “ADVISE” and “SUBMIT RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PRINCIPAL” as required by law? (If a priority improvement plan or turnaround plan was required of my school, the duty is to advise and submit recommendations to the district board of education.)
5. To what extent would my SAC find it useful to have feedback from a DAC member on how it makes recommendations?

Subsection b: Making recommendations about spending priorities

It is a duty and power of SAC “to recommend to the principal of its school priorities for spending school moneys.” (Legal reference: CRS 22-11-402(1) (a))

There are several possible ways in which school accountability committees may be engaged in making recommendations about school spending priorities. Here is a non-exhaustive list; the listed ways are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Additional information and recommendations can be found in the SAC Budget Recommended Practices document created by the 2010-2011 DAC Budget Subcommittee.

1. SAC reviews and responds to a detailed budget proposal for spending school funds, and recommends specific priorities.
2. In advance of having specific budget information, SAC makes high level recommendations for values to use in determining spending priorities, such as for reducing class size as a higher priority rather than purchasing materials.
3. SAC receives a current year spending plan and makes recommendations about future year spending.

Reflective questions SAC members may use to examine their SAC’s role in making recommendations about school spending priorities.

1. How does one of the above models, if any, compare to my SAC’s role in making spending priority recommendations?
2. What were my SAC’s recommendations this year? To what extent are those reflected in my school’s budget?
3. How might my SAC change the way it makes spending priority recommendations?
4. How and when did SAC receive school budget information?
5. How were our recommendations informed by needs identified in our current school improvement plan?
6. In what ways, if any, were our recommendations informed by anticipated needs relative to next year’s improvement efforts?
7. How if at all did our SAC solicit input from other members of the community regarding school spending priority recommendations?
8. How and when did we inform other members of the community of our recommendations?
9. Did my SAC “send a copy of its recommended spending priorities to the school district accountability committee and to the local school board” as required by law?

Subsection c: Discussing implementation of improvement plans

It is a duty and power of SAC “to meet at least quarterly to discuss whether school leadership, personnel, and infrastructure are advancing or impeding implementation of the public school's performance, improvement, priority improvement, or turnaround plan.” (Legal reference: CRS 22-11-402(1) (d))

There are several possible ways in which school accountability committees may be engaged in discussing implementation of school improvement plans. Here is a non-exhaustive list. The listed ways are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

1. SAC members review specific steps related to action strategies in the school improvement plan, and discuss implementation of those strategies.
2. SAC members receive the principal’s progress report and discuss how well it matches their perceptions of the progress made in implementation of the school improvement plan.
3. SAC members share their general sense of whether implementation or the school’s improvement plan is advancing or being impeded, and discuss differences in their perceptions based on their observations regarding specific steps related to action strategies in the plan.

Reflective questions SAC members may use to examine their SAC’s role in discussing school improvement plans.

1. How many times this year did my SAC discuss improvement plan implementation?
2. To what extent did our discussion rely upon observations about implementation of specific steps called for in action strategies, as contrasted with a general sense of whether plan implementation is advancing or being impeded?
3. To what extent were observations from SAC discussions reflected in school newsletter communications to our community about improvement plan implementation and in formal reports the principal submits several times a year to the district documenting progress?
4. How might my SAC change the way it discusses implementation of improvement plans?
Subsection d: Making recommendations about development plans and evaluation procedures.

It is a duty and power of SAC “to provide input and recommendations on an advisory basis to District Accountability Committees and District administration concerning principal development plans for the school’s principal pursuant to § 22-9-106, C.R.S., and principal evaluations conducted pursuant to § 22-9-106, C.R.S.” (Legal reference: CRS 22-11-402(1) (e))

Subsection e: Engaging Parents

It is a duty and power of SAC “to increase the level of parent engagement in the school…” (Legal reference: CRS 22-11-402 (1)(h))

(Additional information about these two areas of responsibility will be forthcoming)

Section 3: Relationship between SAC and PTO/PTA

Subsection a:
It is recommended that the School Accountability Committee and the Parent Teacher Organization/Parent Teacher Association (PTO/PTA) be separate committees. In general, PTO/PTA emphasizes fund raising, coordinates school volunteers, organizes community events, etc. SAC is a decision-making advisory team that looks at school goals, drives school improvements, and reviews school budgets.

Subsection b:
In the interests of better communication between SAC and PTO/PTA, a member of either body could be designated to serve as a liaison between the SAC and the PTO/PTA communities.

Section 4: Representation and Membership

Subsection a:
According to 1 CCR 301-1 - 12.03, a SAC consists of the following minimum membership

- Principal (or Principal’s designee)
- One teacher at the school
- 3 parents of students enrolled at the school
- 1 adult member of an organization of parents, teachers and students recognized by the school
- Community representative
Subsection b:
A person may not serve more than one of the required membership roles on the SAC.

Subsection c:
The members of each School Accountability Committee shall annually select from among the Parent representatives on the committee a member to serve as chair or co-chair of the committee. It is important that the membership of SAC reflect the diversity of the student population.

Subsection d:
A Parent shall not be eligible to serve on a School Accountability Committee if he or she is employed by, or is a relative of a person who is employed by, the Public School. "Relative" means a person’s spouse, son, daughter, sister, brother, mother, or father.

Subsection e:
If, after making good-faith efforts, a principal or an organization of parents, teachers and students is unable to find a sufficient number of persons who are willing to serve on the SAC, the principal, with advice from the organization of parents, teachers and students, may establish an alternate membership plan for the SAC. Such alternate plan shall reflect the required representation stated above as much as practicable.

Section 5: Recruitment of Members

Subsection a:
Members of the SAC shall be appointed by the principal of each school. The principal shall ensure, to the extent practicable, that the persons appointed reflect the student populations significantly represented within the school.

Subsection b:
If the principal chooses to increase the number of persons on any SAC, the principal shall ensure that the number of parents appointed exceeds the number of representatives from the group with the next highest representation.

Subsection c:
Members of the SAC shall serve terms of 1 year, which are renewable. Vacancies shall be filled by majority action of the remaining members of the SAC; however, a vacancy exists only if fewer than the minimum number of members specified above remains on the SAC. The SAC shall select a parent representative to serve as chair or co-chair, who shall serve a term of 1 year. These terms may be extended if other members cannot be found.
Subsection d: If a vacancy arises on a School Accountability Committee because of a member’s resignation or disqualification or for any other reason and fewer than the minimum number of members specified above remains on the SAC, the remaining members of the School Accountability Committee shall fill the vacancy by majority action.

Section 6: Legal Requirements
These requirements are from The Education Accountability Act of 2009 (SB 09-163) and the Colorado State Board of Education document (1 CCR301-1) entitled RULES FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ACCREDITATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS.

III: Organization

Section 1: Membership Responsibilities

Subsection a:
Chairperson’s main responsibilities are:
- To preside and facilitate all meetings
- To set meeting agendas in collaboration with the principal
- To guide the team in reviewing goals and other elements of the SIP
- To guide the team in making budgetary recommendations

Subsection b:
Co-chairperson’s main responsibilities are:
- To fulfill all of the above in the absence of the chairperson

Subsection c:
Secretary/recorder’s main responsibilities are:
- To record and distribute minutes of SAC meetings in collaboration with the principal
- To type and distribute meeting agendas
- To place notice of upcoming meetings on the school bulletin board
- To keep the “SAC Manual” and a copy of the SAC bylaws (if adopted) up to date, and place these documents in the library, staff common room, or
a location that allows easy reference by any parent or other member of the school community

Subsection d:
DAC representative’s main responsibilities are:
To represent the school at District Accountability Committee meetings
To report and/or distribute district-level information to SAC members
To communicate SAC members’ queries and concerns to DAC

Subsection e:
Faculty representative’s main responsibilities are:
To act as a liaison between SAC and the faculty at large
To bring faculty concerns to SAC meetings
To facilitate communication with parents on SAC matters and to assist in raising parent interest in participating on SAC
To help bring parent concerns to SAC meetings

Subsection f:
Parent representative’s main responsibilities are:
To bring parent concerns to SAC meetings
To provide parents’ perspectives on school issues
To help communicate school concerns to the broader community

Subsection g:
Community representative’s main responsibilities are:
To help raise awareness of neighborhood/community issues
To help communicate school concerns to the broader community

Subsection h:
Principal or designee’s main responsibilities are:
To provide the School Improvement Plan to the SAC for review
To provide budgetary information to the SAC for review
To oversee elections for SAC membership (if needed), and to recruit likely candidates for SAC
To provide various reports, raw data, and specific information requested by SAC members
To assist the team in reviewing implementation of the School Improvement Plan
To act as a liaison between SAC and the school community, between SAC and BVSD, and between SAC and the TIES team, if necessary

A member of the SAC may also be asked to serve as liaison with the TIES team, depending on the membership of the two groups and the relationship between the two groups at that school.
Section 2 Term Duration
It is suggested that no SAC member be eligible for the office of the chairperson for more than two consecutive years.

Section 3 Decision Making

Subsection a:
All SAC members should agree to be aware of and considerate of differing viewpoints, and should try to make decisions that are in the best interests of the entire school.

Subsection b:
It is suggested that decisions be made by consensus. Consensus is a general agreement. If the chairperson determines that a consensus is not possible, a call for a vote can be initiated. A decision on the percentage of members needed to approve a measure by vote should be made in advance by the SAC membership, and included in any bylaws document. Only SAC members may vote.

Section 4: Subcommittees
These may be formed as needed, and appointed by the chairperson. They should be provided with a purpose or charge. After completion of the given task, the subcommittee should submit a report to SAC for review and inclusion in the minutes.

Some SACs establish subcommittees to address action strategies related to achievement, equity, and school climate. SAC subcommittees might work with the TiES subcommittees in those areas.

IV: Meetings and Procedures

Section 1: Meetings

Subsection a:
12.04 (A) (4) states that the SAC meets at least quarterly to discuss whether leadership, personnel, and infrastructure are advancing or impeding implementation of the plan; it is recommended that SAC meetings be scheduled regularly, preferably at least once a month. All members of the school community should be welcome to attend the meeting. Participation by parents and staff should be encouraged. It is recommended that the SAC meeting be scheduled to follow the monthly DAC meeting, to facilitate the dissemination of information from the district to the SAC. A meeting attendance record can be kept through a sign-in form.
Subsection b:
On occasion, non-scheduled meetings are needed, for example, to review portfolio components prior to submission to the district. The principal or the chairperson may call non-scheduled meetings. Sufficient notice should be given for such meetings.

Subsection c:
A quorum must be present for all matters that require a vote. A quorum shall consist of more than half of the total SAC membership, unless otherwise specified in the SAC bylaws. Only SAC members may vote.

Subsection d:
SAC meetings should be publicized through school bulletin boards, web sites, and newsletters. The meeting agenda and a summary of discussions, actions, and resolutions could also be placed on the bulletin board.

Subsection e:
All SAC members should agree upon written ground rules or operating principles to guide discussions. They should agree to be aware of and consider different viewpoints, and to extend courtesy to all speakers. Each member should try to make decisions that are best for the entire school, and not just advocate in the interest of their personal priorities or their constituent group. Robert’s Rules of Order is a useful reference for the operations of a group, and can be used to govern committee procedures in cases not covered in this manual or in the SAC’s bylaws.

Subsection f:
A SAC member is encouraged to inform the chairperson in advance of any absences.

Section 2: Agenda
The chairperson shall set a meeting agenda. A sample agenda is shown in Appendix B. It should be published prior to the meeting, and a copy placed in the school newsletter or on the bulletin board. It is recommended that the DAC representative be allocated time to report, in the interests of encouraging communication between SAC and DAC. An open forum at the end of each meeting would allow SAC members to request that specific issues be included in a future meeting.

Section 3: Minutes
Minutes shall be written by the secretary/recorder, and distributed to SAC members prior to the following meeting. The minutes shall be presented at this meeting for approval. Approved minutes shall then be kept in a SAC meeting minutes’ folder, and placed in the staff room and/or the library, or on the school website.
Typical meeting minutes would include the following:
  - Date, time, and place of the meeting
  - Name of the chairperson and the attending members
  - Main topics of discussion, action items, and outcomes
  - Any follow-up items

**Section 4: Bylaws**

In the interests of facilitating SAC operations, it is strongly recommended that each SAC develop, and periodically review, bylaws to govern the operations of the group. Information in this document can be used as a model.

**Section 5: Communications**

All available means of communication should be used to inform parents, faculty members, and the community of the availability of the SAC agenda, meetings, minutes of the meetings, and outcomes.

**V: Procedure for providing feedback about this manual**

Comments, suggestions for revision, and other feedback regarding this manual and the issues addressed herein should be sent to DAC via the school’s DAC representative, to be forwarded to the DAC Communications Subcommittee and Jonathan Dings for review.

**VI: References**

Please visit [http://www.cde.state.co.us/scripts/reforms/detail.asp?itemid=623952](http://www.cde.state.co.us/scripts/reforms/detail.asp?itemid=623952) for access to the state law and the CDE requirements.

Department of Education, 2010 East Colfax Avenue, Denver, Colorado 80203-1799; telephone 303-866-6600.

More information can be found on the Colorado Department of Education Web site, at [http://www.cde.state.co.us](http://www.cde.state.co.us); and on the Boulder Valley School District Web site, at [http://www.bvsd.org](http://www.bvsd.org).

*Robert’s Rules of Order*, by Henry M. Roberts III. Various editions are widely available.
Appendices

Appendix A: DAC Bylaws Relevant to SAC Operations (Under revision, not included in current draft)

Appendix B: Sample Agenda
Boulder Valley School District
School Name:____ School Accountability Committee
Date: Time: Place:

AGENDA

1. Call to order, welcome
2. Celebrations
3. Agenda review
4. Approval of minutes from previous meeting
5. DAC report
6. Principal’s report
7. Discussion items
   a. Old business items (Example: Discuss Implementation of School Improvement Plan)
   b. New business items
8. Set agenda for next meeting

Appendix C: Sample Member Registration Form
Boulder Valley School District
SAC Registration Form
School Year:_____

The School Accountability Committee Directory form contains the names of the school and of the SAC members.

The purpose of assembling this directory is to enable a faculty member, parent, employee, community member, or student to contact any SAC member for information.
Appendix D: Glossary of Acronyms

BOE  Board of Education
BVSD  Boulder Valley School District
CRS  Colorado Revised Statutes
CSAP  Colorado Student Assessment Program
DAC  District Accountability Committee
EOY  End of Year
PTA  Parent Teacher Association
PTO  Parent Teacher Organization
SAC  School Accountability Committee
SIP  School Improvement Plan
TIES  Tools of Inquiry for Equitable Schools

Appendix E: Calendar of SAC Activities

(Note: Essential activities are listed with bullets as shown at left.)

August/September
- Make recommendations regarding preparation and content of school improvement plan
- Elect officers for the year, in not elected in May
- If the school lacks a DAC member or the member will not attend the October DAC meeting, designate a member to attend who will attest to and reflect upon SAC activity in making recommendations regarding preparation and content of school improvement plan
- Welcome new SAC members
- Report from DAC representative

- May review available assessment data from previous year
- May participate in plan development
October
- Discuss implementation of school improvement plan
- Report from DAC representative

November
- Discuss implementation of school improvement plan, if not covered in October
- Report from DAC representative

December
- Discuss implementation of school improvement plan
- Report from DAC representative

January
- Discuss implementation of school improvement plan, if not covered in December
- Report from DAC representative

February
- Discuss implementation of school improvement plan
- Report from DAC representative

March
- Make recommendations on prioritization of school expenditures
- If the school lacks a DAC member or the member will not attend the April DAC meeting, designate a member to attend who will attest to and reflect upon SAC activity in making recommendations regarding school expenditures and consult with DAC on recommendations about district expenditures
- Report from DAC representative

April
- Make recommendations on prioritization of school expenditures, if not accomplished in March
- Discuss implementation of school improvement plan
- Recruit DAC representative for following year, if needed
- Report from DAC representative

May
- Make recommendations regarding preparation and content of school improvement plan for following year
- Report from DAC representative
  - May review results from climate surveys and parent/staff snapshot surveys
  - May elect new officers
Appendix F: The Parents’ Role in Accreditation and Accountability in the Boulder Valley Schools (under revision)
Appendix G: Flowchart for SAC/DAC Duties

**Appendix G: School Accountability Committee & District Accountability Committee Recommendations Workflow**

**FALL: IMPROVEMENT PLANNING**

- SAC school plan recommendations
  - August-September

- DAC district plan adoption
  - October-November

- Board plan adoption
  - December

**WINTER/SPRING: BUDGET**

- SAC school budget recommendations
  - January-February-March

- DAC district budget adoption
  - April

- Board budget adoption
  - May

- SAC recommendations
  - June

School year work begins with improvement planning. SAC makes recommendations about the school plan. With the assistance of SAC members who attend DAC, DAC takes into account school plans when making recommendations about the district improvement plan. In late fall, SAC discusses implementation of the school plan.

Another fall DAC activity is meeting with the school board to jointly establish what topics DAC will study in addition to budget. If the district receives a charter application, DAC review of that application is completed in the fall.

Sometime after winter break, SAC recommends priorities for spending school monies. With the assistance of SAC members who attend DAC, DAC takes these recommendations into account when making recommendations for district spending priorities. In late winter and spring, SAC discusses implementation of the school plan. SAC may provide recommendations regarding school climate if not discussed in fall. DAC often completes jointly-determined study topics in spring, reporting findings to the board.