

Polaris at Ebert Elementary School, Denver Public Schools

Collaborative School Committee

October 6, 2014 Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Leta Kalfas and Stephanie Nussbaumer, chairwomen and parent representatives; Karin Johnson, principal; Marisa Hudson-Arney, parent representative; Catherine Forington and Angela Dire, faculty representatives; Lee Cooper, instructional superintendent, Denver Public Schools; Kevin Reidy, Polaris parent.

Agenda:

Discussion and Development of CSC bylaws. Committee members drafted a set of bylaws, using a sample set created by the Denver Public Schools Office of Family and Community Engagement. Topics included:

- Composition of the CSC, including number of faculty, parents, non-faculty staff and community members.
- Term lengths.
- Nominating and electing members.
- The transition and orientation of new members.
- How to handle vacancies.
- Attendance requirements.
- Frequency of meetings.

The CSC will continue drafting bylaws at its next meeting and will also review the nomination form for members.

Discussion and Selection of CSC Community Member. By consensus, committee members selected Jeff Aitken, owner of Fluid Coffee Bar, as the community member of the CSC. Mr. Aitken has owned Fluid since 2005 and has supported Polaris in a variety of ways, such as donating food and coffee to school events as well as providing space for Polaris elective classes. The coffee house has been the site for Polaris's "The Art of Math" elective for the past three years.

Polaris School Performance Framework (SPF) rating. Lee Cooper, Polaris's area instructional superintendent, reviewed the results of the school's SPF rating. The DPS School Performance Framework is a district-created system for measuring how well each school supports student growth and achievement and also how well it serves students and families. Elementary schools are given a rating in the area of: academic growth, academic proficiency, student engagement, parent satisfaction and enrollment. Ratings range from "distinguished" to "on probation." A school on probation for three years in a row can become a "turnaround school," which means DPS will replace the principal and faculty and in some cases change the mission or vision of the school. The state of Colorado has a similar framework that it uses to evaluate public schools, and the results of the state framework are expected to be

released in December. Under both frameworks, Polaris students are compared to a demographic of similar students throughout the state.

Information on Polaris SPF results:

- Polaris is rated distinguished and received 95 of 112 possible points in the framework.
- Enrollment is 333 students with the following demographic information:
 - 3 percent of students are on free or reduced lunch
 - 4.2 percent are classified as English Language Learners (ELL)
 - 3.9 percent receive special education services
 - 9 percent belong to a minority group
- Student growth: Polaris missed the “distinguished” rating by one point. Growth in math fell slightly below the 50 percent benchmark.
- Student achievement in reading and writing: Polaris exceeded expectations with 100 percent of its students scoring in the “proficient or advanced” category on state mathematics tests. It also had the highest percentage of proficient/advanced students – 99 percent – in reading. In addition, 96 percent of Polaris students were proficient/advanced in writing.
- Statewide, Polaris ranks 1st in math scores and 2nd in reading and writing by a margin of 1 percent.
- Student engagement and satisfaction: Polaris exceeded district expectations.
- Parent satisfaction: Polaris met expectations.
- Enrollment: Polaris exceeded expectations.

According to district policy and state law, the results of the SPF will be used to create a “Universal Improvement Plan” for Polaris. Faculty have already identified an area of focus on reading. Proposed changes include professional development on guided reading, conferring with readers, using rigorous texts, comparing multiple texts, teaching vocabulary in context and developing higher-order and critical-thinking skills in students.

Other business. The committee welcomed Marisa Hudson-Arney, newly-elected to the CSC to represent parents of primary (K-2) students. Ms. Hudson-Arney is the parent of a Polaris first-grader and fourth-grader.

The next meeting of the Polaris CSC is scheduled for Nov. 3.