| Themes/ Key Points from Centralized Entry, Transfer, and Exit Process Focus Groups | Key Takeaways |
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| **Focus Group 1: December 15th 4:30-6pm**<br>**Attendees: 4 charter school leaders**<br>• MSDC should look at residency mid-year when a family is interested in enrolling mid-year.<br>• Available seats should be linked to SLED for easy transfer of transcripts and verification that the student is/is not from out-of-state.<br>• Schools would most likely not leave seats open within their enrollment ceiling; set-asides would most likely need to be above their enrollment ceiling.<br>• A school that has students with preferences on their waiting lists (i.e. sibling preference) would want to take those students first.<br>  ○ The waitlists are already resistant to "gaming" and adding something that is "outside" of the waitlist (like set-asides) or getting rid of the waitlists opens up the possibility of gaming.<br>  ○ There could be a hardship preference that schools could rank within the list of preferences. However, if a school does not rank hardship preference high enough and the student just goes into the waitlist without getting a seat, it does not help the student.<br>  ○ Including change of residence and medical reasons in the definition of hardship opens the system up gaming; reasons like educational custody change, ward of state, foster parents with siblings already enrolled at a school, etc. should be part of the definition of hardship.<br>  ○ Allowing schools to opt into taking expelled students as part of the hardship definition would make it easy for some<br>  ▪ If there are no set-asides, how would students entering the system find out which schools had seats available?<br>• Ways to possibly reduce the waitlists: 1) Ask students and families; 2) Keep students on the waitlist who have ranked the school highly.<br>• To find out why students are entering mid-year, the centralized process is necessary. | 1. Alternative to set-asides: preferences in the lottery for hardship, out-of-state, and expelled students.<br>  a. Schools individually rank these preferences.<br>2. Qualifications for hardship: should not include medical reasons or change of residence within the District because of gaming risks.<br>3. Centralized process is necessary but set-asides outside of the waitlist could cause controversy and add confusion.<br>**4.** Getting rid of waitlists would increase the gaming of the system. |
| **Focus Group 2: December 19th 10-11:30am**<br>**Attendees: 6 education policy experts**<br>• We need to know and look at between-year mobility to get a clear picture of why and how many students are moving between sectors (to adequately examine if students are being forced out of charters).<br>• LEA Payment may increase student mobility by causing charters who lose students mid-year to call students on their waitlists, causing them to move from their current school (DCPS or charter). There is a lot of pushback from the community on LEA Payment.<br>• A clear disincentive should be attached to losing students mid-year; this would affect charters but not DCPS because DCPS experiences a net gain regardless of mid-year exits due to out-of-state entries.<br>  ○ Another way to implement this would be to have the loss of a student mid-year affect (decrease) the next year's budget.<br>• The biggest issue with mid-year transfers is the lack of clear transcript information and IEP information and the issues with transferring credits from school to school or from outside the District. Students are more likely to drop out when they don't receive credits they previously earned.<br>  ○ The un-enrollment and enrollment process needs to be streamlined so that there is only one form for families to fill out when moving to a different public school in the District.<br>  ○ The two-step process of getting a seat and then going to a different office to enroll a student is difficult for families. If the whole enrollment system were | 6. LEA payment carries the risk of increasing churn; there is no clear disincentive attached to losing students mid-year or between years.<br>7. Between-year mobility is part of the picture of overall student mobility in DC and has not been examined.<br>8. Clear and quick information about a transferring student (transcript, IEP, credits) is essential; the current process is too slow for schools and too complicated for parents.<br>9. Students transferring mid-year could be at-risk (foster care, etc.) and |

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| centralized, the process might be easier for families.<br>• There is no clear picture of how many mid-year transfers are due to changes in foster care.<br>• DCPS should be the sector that accepts all students at all times throughout the year; DCPS choosing not to do this could have unforeseen effects on DCPS.<br>• The Task Force does not have enough civic representation or enough members who are working at schools and close to the issues the Task Force is working to address.<br>• The neediest high schools have the highest churn as well. Mid-year transfer students having the ability to access a school that doesn't have so many of those disadvantages may not be in the full public's benefit, but it might be in the best interest of an individual student. | more information is needed about their demographics.<br>10. The Task Force needs to be more representative of people working at schools.<br>11. There could be unforeseen consequences to adding the centralized process (more bureaucracy and confusion for parents, decrease in DCPS enrollment, increase in mid-year transfers) |
| **Focus Group 3: December 19th 4:30-6pm**<br>**Attendees: 5 school leaders (1 DCPS, 4 charter)**<br>• With LEA payment, charters will feel the need to fill a seat that has been left empty mid-year so they do not lose money. This will cause them to call down their waitlists and pull a student from a different school, which would exacerbate churn. There would be a cascade effect.<br>• It would seem unfair to current DC residents who have been on waitlists to have empty seats go to students just moving in from out-of-state.<br>• Hardship transfers: the sending LEA would have to verify the information form from the student and the hardship reason.<br>• A way to incentivize schools to provide hardship seats: pay schools for having hardship set-asides.<br>  ○ Schools could also partner with other schools to take on students experiencing special circumstances.<br>• School registrars are better able to discuss what a school has to offer to students than MSDC.<br>• Medical reasons should not be included in the definition of hardship. Including medical reasons in the definition of hardship leaves room for gaming and if the hardship is something that an LEA can address, it should not be considered hardship.<br>• Expulsions could be their own category and the state should provide resources to an LEA that takes on expelled students. Expulsion could also be included in the definition of what makes a student "at-risk."<br>• Additional resources could include additional counseling staff, instructional coaches to support teachers, connections to community organizations that support students with challenging behaviors/circumstances.<br>• For hardship/safety transfers, the current process involves many departments at DCPS talking to one another and an extensive research process to understand a student's background and see if a school is truly going to be the right fit/safe for the student.<br>  ○ Full enrollment for a safety transfer doesn't happen until school administrators have met with a student and thought through the effect the student could have on the culture of the school. DCPS schools can refuse to take a transfer student for valid safety concerns.<br>  ○ This kind of probing and research could be done by MSDC instead but is currently being done by the schools.<br>• Students returning to the District after moving out of state should be allowed back into the school they last attended (possibly via preference) | 12. (Same as #6)<br>13. Verification process to qualify for hardship transfer would need to include vetting by the sending school.<br>14. (Same as #2)<br>15. Set-asides would need to come with an incentive for schools. (Could include mobility and expulsion in the definition of at-risk).<br>16. Additional resources for schools: counseling , instructional support for teachers, behavioral/social services supports for students.<br>17. Safety transfers require more background research than just transcripts, SPED status, and credits; MSDC could conduct this research but would need to be thorough to ensure the safety of the student/maintain the culture of the school .<br>18. There could be a preference for mid-year transfers returning to a school they previously attended. |

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| **Focus Group 4: January 6th 10-11:30am**<br>**Attendees: 8 Directors of Strategic Operations (DCPS) and 1 DCPS principal from East of the River schools**<br>1) Mid-year student mobility is a huge problem for these schools East of the River; 4 out of 8 attendees reported enrolling between 1-7 students in the last few days. They were supportive of steps being taken to address mobility (i.e., CSCTF proposal and revised LEA payment).<br>2) Some were concerned that the revised LEA payment and the second enrollment count (referred to as the second audit) would increase mid-year mobility; others were of the opinion that the revised LEA payment initiative will incentivize public charter schools to retain students rather than try to find more students to enroll mid-year. Overall, they agreed that the LEA payment's benefits outweigh the risks to DCPS enrollment.<br>3) They were fine with the idea of a centralized mid-year enrollment process, even for in-boundary enrollments; they did note that it could add an extra layer for families.<br>4) They were concerned with the idea of any type of counseling from the My School DC team (or anyone else) during the mid-year enrollment process: the counseling body might inject bias into the process. They appeared satisfied about the way MSDC provides information to students and families currently (after we described it) and think it would be sufficient/appropriate for mid-year entries.<br>5) The attendees were fine with either the mechanism of set-asides or lottery preferences for out-of-state set asides or hardship set aside; they were in favor of whichever way would get more charters to participate.<br>6) They were very supportive and excited about the revised LEA payment because it has been a "loophole" that some/many public charter schools have been using for a while (i.e., pushing out/counseling out students after the Oct 5 count on which they were paid). They were also excited about the idea of DCPS schools receiving the additional funding they need to serve the maximum number of students that they have. They were concerned about whether the funds would actually trickle down to the schools that gained students mid-year (regardless of whether or not the school reached its initial enrollment projection at the October 5 count). | 19. Mid-year mobility is a huge problem for schools East of the River and either set-asides or preferences could help if enough charters choose to participate.<br>20. The benefits of LEA payment outweigh the risks to DCPS enrollment.<br>21. Counseling of any kind could inject bias into the process; what MSDC is doing right now to communicate school options to families is enough.<br>22. It is unclear how the benefits of LEA payment will trickle down to individual schools. |
| **Focus Group 5: January 9th 12:30-2:00pm**<br>**Attendees: 25 DCPS Central Office staff**<br>• Instructional superintendents have often worked to spread out students coming from charters in a particular area so that they all don't end up transferring into one in-boundary school.<br>• The DCPS Student Placement Office interacts with some students transferring from charter schools, students who have disengaged, etc. The placement office is not always contacted when a student is expelled from a charter school or when a student has withdrawn from a charter school.<br>• It could be problematic and frustrating for families and schools, as some parents will come to a school to register a child with the full intention of having that child begin attending school that same day. There should be a way to register when they show up at an in-boundary school.<br>• MSDC parent council has previously discussed having ward-based offices to interface with students and families.<br>• Collecting and transferring data/student records:<br>o There could be a way for DCPS, through current systems, to collect information about why students are exiting/entering without changing the system to go through MSDC.<br>o OSSE does not provide support with transferring student records; there is a file that has been built for students who have been expelled through the formal process, but this folder does not always travel with the student. | 23. DCPS Placement Office plays a key role in helping students who are transferring/returning to school mid-year.<br>24. (same as #17) Safety transfers require more background research than just transcripts, SPED status, and credits; MSDC could conduct this research but would need to be thorough to ensure the safety of the student/maintain<br>25. Registration for in-boundary schools still needs to be a quick, smooth process for families with a centralized system.<br>26. (same as #8) Clear and |

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| ○ A data-sharing agreement with Prince George's county would be helpful for IEP sharing.<br>• Hardship transfer qualifications need to match victim's transfer protocol and should have a narrower focus (medical, safety, residency). There should be a vetting process for the documents for the hardship transfer; there will need to be tight coordination between the members of the placement office and the MSDC team to ensure that students are not going to cause problems at the new school. This open communication should include a weekly report of open seats.<br>• Charter schools should have to follow the codes under DCMR around expulsions; charters and DCPS are not following the same policy, which is causing challenges.<br>• The LEA payment average should account for the type of students who have transferred out; Level 4 special education students leaving or entering a school mid-year has a different effect on a school than general education students.<br>• If there are set-asides for OOS, there should be a separate one for military families.<br>• Some attendees thought that policies like LEA payment and the centralized process should be implemented one at a time to see how charter schools change their behavior in response to policy changes. Others did not seem concerned about the timeline of policy implementation (LEA payment and centralized process implemented simultaneously).<br>• Getting rid of the waitlists is a good idea so long as parents are made aware throughout the entire process that waitlists will go away after a certain date. Principals hold onto the waitlists rather than adding students from them because they don't know who is on the waitlist and what their effect on the school could be (or if the students are on other schools' waitlists). | quick information about a transferring student (transcript, IEP, credits) is essential; the current process is too slow for schools and too complicated for parents.<br>27. There needs to be a close examination of how existing offices and structures within DCPS would work with the centralized system.<br>28. Qualifications for hardship transfers need to follow current codes.<br>29. Charters and DCPS need to be on the same page with regards to expulsion policies under DCMR.<br>30. There should be a military preference outside of a regular out-of-state transfer.<br>31. Getting rid of waitlists would encourage principals to fill open seats (rather than having to call down a waitlist). |
| **Focus Group 6: January 9th 4:30-6pm**<br>**Attendees: 4 former/current Innovation Fellows teachers (2 charter, 2 DCPS)**<br>• The impact of a few students entering mid-year on a classroom is different and has a bigger effect than the impact on schools. Because of this, families should be restricted from transferring schools unless it is for specific and appropriate reasons.<br>• There need to be alternative placements for students in upper elementary schools and middle school (the way there are alternative placements for students in high school). Students in these alternative placements need to have access to wrap-around services.<br>• Because charters can say no to offering set-asides, it is unclear how this will help neighborhood schools. The centralized process seems like it will help charter schools but its effect on neighborhood schools is unclear.<br>• If MSDC is going to help students who are transferring, they need to have knowledge of students' needs and need to help direct them to other schools that can serve those needs (this includes students who are not officially on an IEP).<br>• Schools need to be incentivized to hold onto their high-need, at-risk students through resources that are specifically attached to those students. (If a particular student needs a therapist, a school that is serving that student gets a full-time therapist, which then benefits other students in the school. If the school loses that student, the service follows the student.) There could also be a fee if schools don't keep a high-need, at-risk student.<br>• Waitlists could be kept but reduced so that families opt to only stay on their top waitlist, or on the waitlists for their top 3 schools.<br>• When students transfer mid-year:<br>○ Parents will sometimes pull kids out after they have been referred to CFSA at | 32. The effect of this policy on neighborhood schools is unclear and it is not guaranteed that charter schools will opt into the set-asides.<br>33. The number of mid-year transfers needs to be reduced. A stricter transfer policy would discourage parents from transferring without a good reason.<br>34. MSDC (or another body with detailed information about the services given schools provide) should play a more direct role in helping families find schools that meet students' needs.<br>35. Schools should be incentivized or rewarded for retaining high-need or |

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| one school.<br>o Charter schools will use the language of "fit" to encourage students to transfer mid-year. | at-risk students. School should be dis-incentivized from losing their high-need or at-risk students.<br>36. Waitlists should be kept but reduced so that families opt to only stay on their top waitlist(s). |
| **Focus Group 7: January 11th 3-4pm**<br>**Attendees: 2 DCPS placement office staff**<br><br>**Key Takeaways:**<br>• Victim transfer: there is a specific legal process for these students and there are requirements laid out in DCMR (D.C. Municipal Regulations)<br>• Involuntary transfers/expulsions<br>o Charter schools: information packet is not always sent with student; charter schools do not follow the same regulations as DCPS for involuntary transfers and victim's transfers<br>• Discretionary transfer: where there is a non-student victim (e.g., a student having issues in their neighborhood)<br>• Whether or not students transfer through the Placement Office comes down to if there is a relationship between the school and the Placement Office<br>o Some DCPS principal to principal transfers happen outside of the office<br>• State Department students and military students should have a preference | |