

DRAFT ONLY
Tuesday, January 24, 2016
6:00-8:00pm
Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force
Meeting #10

Attendees:

- Amanda Alexander | Deputy Chief of Elementary Schools, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)
- Evelyn Boyd Simmons | Francis-Stevens parent; W2 Education Network; former member, Student Assignment Committee; President, Logan Circle Community Association
- Shanita Burney | Deputy Chief, Community Engagement, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)
- Angela Copeland | Stuart-Hobson MS parent; public affairs specialist
- John Davis | Interim Chancellor, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)
- Charlene Drew-Jarvis | Graduate, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS); Senior Advisor, KIPP DC PCS; former Ward 4 City Councilwoman
- Caryn Ernst | Watkins ES, Stuart-Hobson MS parent; former PTA president, Capitol Hill Cluster School; member, Capitol Hill Public School Parent Organization (CHPSPO)
- Carlie Fisherow | Executive Director, Scholar Academies and DC Scholars
- Erika Harrell | DC Prep PCS parent; Member, My School DC Parent Advisory Council; member, DC School Reform Now; member, PCSB Parent & Alumni Leadership Council (PALC)
- Kemba Hendrix | Elsie Whitlow Stokes PCS parent; former public and public charter school teacher
- Irene Holtzman | Executive Director, Friends of Choice in Urban Schools (FOCUS)
- Faith Gibson Hubbard | Chief Student Advocate, State Board of Education (SBOE); former member, Student Assignment Committee
- Melissa Kim | Chief Academic Officer, Secondary Schools, KIPP DC; former principal, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)
- Emily Lawson | Founder & CEO, DC Prep PCS
- Mary Levy | Independent education analyst, former Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, Parent of DCPS alumnae
- Claudia Luján | School Turnaround and Performance Division, Office of the Chief of Schools, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)
- Scott Pearson | Executive Director, Public Charter School Board (PCSB)
- Karen Williams | Ward 7 Representative, State Board of Education (SBOE)
- Antwan Wilson | Incoming Chancellor & incoming Task Force member, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)
- Darren Woodruff | EL Haynes PCS, Benjamin Banneker HS parent ; Chair, Public Charter School Board (PCSB)

Co-Chairs:

- Jennifer Niles | Deputy Mayor for Education
- Anthony Williams | CEO & Executive Director, Federal City Council; former Mayor

Facilitator:

- Jim Sandman | President, Legal Services Corporation; former General Counsel, DCPS

Members not in Attendance:

- Hanseul Kang | State Superintendent of Education
- Bethany Little | Murch ES, BASIS PCS parent; Education policy expert
- Ariana Quiñones | Duke Ellington HS, Cesar Chavez PCS parent, education and human services policy consultant, Otero Strategy Group LLC, former member Student Assignment Committee
- Alejandra Vallejo | Bancroft ES parent; Chair, Bancroft ES Local School Advisory Team (LSAT)
- Shantelle Wright | Founder & CEO, Achievement Prep PCS; Chair, DC Association of Public Charter Schools

Staff:

- Aryan Bocquet | Director of Partnerships and Engagement, My School DC, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME)
- Jennifer Comey | Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME)
- Michele Desando | Parent Response Manager, My School DC, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME)
- Hannah Holliday | Leadership for Education Equity Fellow, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME)
- Amy Lerman | Director of Operations, My School DC, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME)
- Aaron Parrot | Director of Data and Strategy, My School DC, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME)
- Cat Peretti | Executive Director, My School DC, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME)
- Laura Schroeder | Leadership for Education Equity Fellow, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME)
- Ahnna Smith | Chief of Staff, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME)
- Aurora Steinle | Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME)

Meeting Summary:

The meeting began at 6:15pm due to traffic delay. Deputy Mayor Niles briefly introduced the meeting by welcoming three new members to the Task Force: Antwan Wilson, incoming DCPS Chancellor and Task Force member; Mary Levy, independent school finance analyst/consultant (replacing Rod Boggs); Claudia Luján from the School Turnaround and Performance Division in the DCPS Office of the Chief of Schools (replacing Anjali Kulkarni).

Facilitator Jim Sandman introduced the goals and agenda of the meeting, noting that the group will need to make sense of the feedback from the focus groups and community meetings, some of it conflicting, before diving into the recommendations the Task Force will make.

Focus Group and Community Meeting Feedback:

Jenn Comey introduced the Focus Group and Community Meeting feedback by going through the efforts the DME staff supporting the Task Force had taken since the conference calls in December that served as the rescheduled November Task Force meeting. These efforts include the community meetings and focus groups held throughout December and January 2017.

Ms. Comey commented on the overview of the focus groups and community meetings (slides 10-22):

- One of the focus groups included several DCPS Directors of Strategic School Operations and principals from Wards 7 and 8. It was helpful to have school based staff at the focus groups.
- Strong themes came through from all of the focus groups and were captured in the feedback slides of the slide deck.
- Overall, the feedback received from school based staff was that DCPS is committed to its mission of serving students all year round. At the same time, there are challenges associated with a steady flow of mid-year entries and transfers. The impact on schools cannot be overemphasized. Minimizing the number of mid-year entries and transfers would help improve the potential for teaching and learning. School-based staff noted that the possibility of decreasing enrollment is worth it in comparison to the benefits of having less churn.
- We heard across the board (at the focus groups and community meetings) that many people are interested in providing a way to serve students in crisis and in making sure they are in stable situations.
- Some advocates noted that this centralized mid-year enrollment process coupled with the LEA payment initiative could have a negative impact on DCPS enrollment and that the policies should be rolled out in stages.
- There were also concerns that the policy's scope is too narrow and will not help reduce mobility.
- The idea of "one in one out" (for identifying school seat availability after October 5) did not garner support from the focus groups and community meetings. There was support for coordination of the centralized process with the reengagement center.
- Attendees agreed that it makes sense to collect data to better understand why students move mid-year. They also discussed how there is a lot of information that receiving schools need about the new students and that the policy needs to facilitate that transfer of records.
- Everyone agreed that MSDC should not be the entity providing counseling; some thought third party counseling made sense. They also wanted counseling to assess student needs to see if resources and wraparound services are necessary.
- There was a lot of feedback on non-voluntary transfers and expulsions; some stakeholders noted that these circumstances should be included in hardship set-asides
- People had mixed feelings about including "change in residency that causes undue hardship" in the definition of "hardship set-asides" due to the concerns about gaming.
- A common theme was the fear of the gaming that could arise from the hardship set-asides, particularly if residency changes were included.

Task Force member questions/comments:

- Q: What is an example of a residency change that is a source of the hardship?
 - A: Section 8 voucher changes: members of the community suggested maybe including *involuntary* residency change in the definition of hardship. Ultimately the policy needs to ensure that the definition of hardship is clear and that there are uniform requirements for what would count as acceptable documentation of hardship.

Ms. Comey continued discussing the feedback from the community engagement:

- Out-of-state set-asides received no support from the community. Residency verification issues were cited as a key reason for the opposing out-of-state set-asides. Some community members did think a military transfer could be an acceptable reason for an out-of-state set-aside.
- The focus group attendees and the community gave a lot of feedback about waitlists. In general, with the exception of one community meeting, people liked idea of reducing waitlists rather and getting rid of them. Those who wanted to get rid of waitlists cited the reason that waitlists promote mid-year mobility.
- Focus group and community participants were concerned that gaming would occur without waitlists and gave suggestions for how to reduce or hone waitlists.
 - There could be an active opt-in process if a student wants to stay on a waitlist after October 5.
 - Low-information families might not know about the opt-in process so another option could be an automatic opt-in process: students would only stay on their top choice (top 2, 3, etc.) waitlists after a certain date.
- Opponents of keeping waitlists expressed concerns about kids being called off of waitlists during the year because of the domino effect it causes.

Task Force member question:

- Q: How many kids are called off the waitlists now?
 - A: 60-80 students but there is no incentive to call down waitlists now because charter schools do not get paid for students they take on mid-year now.
 - MSDC can't see how many students move off of schools' waitlist after December when control of waitlists is returned to individual schools.

Ms. Comey went over additional feedback the DME team received during the community engagement process:

- There was interest in standardizing suspension and expulsion policies across LEAs because those policies can lead to transfers between LEAs.
- Some attendees discussed creating a transfer window to restrict transfers.
- School staff who participated in the community engagement process expressed interest in creating alternative placement setting across LEAs for elementary and middle school students to help stabilize and invest in these students.
- Many participants highlighted the need to provide more robust information to families choosing where to send their students so that they can make better school choices.

Task Force member questions/comments:

- Q: Can you clarify why people who were in agreement with military transfers opposed to out-of-state transfers, like the section 8 housing change?

- A: People were in favor of including section 8 housing changes in the definition of hardship under “involuntary residence change” but were very concerned about gaming and generally wanted to make the definition of involuntary residence change very narrow.
- There is a clear concern about gaming, but the system has a fundamental problem with students coming in from out-of-state. It seems like this is not going to be addressed without out-of-state set-asides. Creating the definition of hardship and hardship set-asides will open up a new opportunity for gaming, more so than the out-of-state set asides.
 - School-based staff and community meeting participants also emphasized the importance of documentation and vetting by the sending school to avoiding gaming around hardship set-asides.
- The family (and sending school) needs to meet a high bar to prove that there is a hardship. The process must be skeptical and whatever legislation there is around this had better be ironclad to avoid litigation.
 - Q: Will there need to be legislation around these policies?
 - A: Not necessarily; hardships could be done administratively. It isn’t clear what will need to be done to operationalize the system yet.

Proposed Policy Recommendations: (slide 23-29)

Ms. Comey went over the recommendations that the Task Force could make, taking into account both the Task Force’s feedback and the feedback collected during the community meetings and focus groups.

Task Force member questions/comments:

- Q: The first purpose for the recommendations mentions only DCPS schools but there are 9 high-churn charter schools; shouldn’t the purpose be to decrease churn in-general?
 - Charters schools have control over whether or not students enter their schools mid-year. DCPS cannot control whether or not students enter mid-year so the policy is meant to address those entrances.
 - The Task Force member suggested that changing the wording would make the purpose more sector-neutral.

Ms. Comey directed the Task Force to look at the Equity Report graphs (handout) to see what churn looks like the school level for the DCPS comprehensive high schools. The “alligator graphs” look at the entry and withdrawal for high-churn DCPS schools.

Task Force member questions/comments:

- These graphs also exist for charter schools as well as DCPS schools. What if the Task Force gave the Mayor a recommendation about creating programs in high-churn schools to address the churn? To not pilot a program in these schools would be a missed opportunity.
 - The feedback that Task Force members gave during the retreat in November was that the Task Force wants to focus on supporting the at-risk student population as its next cross-sector effort after addressing student mobility/enrollment stability. The centralized process

is a part of a larger set of recommendations; supporting high-churn schools and at-risk students could be the next issue the Task Force tackles.

- The Equity Report graph of Roosevelt's mid-year mobility is interesting; with Cardozo and Roosevelt, the mobility is coming from students who are new to the country. Roosevelt has the International Academy to serve these types of students.
- In the goals of the policy, there should be an explicit reference to providing support and resources to high-churn schools so that the Task Force does not move past addressing student mobility without it, even if it does come up again later in other Task Force recommendations.
- In the third purpose of the recommendations, it mentions that students in crisis will have more options for mid-year placement. Ensuring more options gets into the issue of counseling; counseling should be used to identify students' barriers to success.
 - This could be an opportunity to stop students from leaving their schools in the first place; if the reason they are leaving sounds like it could be mitigated, counselors should be able to identify supports to help them figure out how to stay at their current school if possible. MSDC should not do everything; there are other entities in the government and community-based organizations (CBOs) that already exist and can support students.
- Jenn Comey: Participants suggested that there could be a checklist of things families might be concerned about and understanding where you are. Supports around highest need and the programs that are there. We can try and tackle it here. Or we can put pins in it and try to work on it during the next goal.
- The issue of what form the counseling could take and what it would aim to accomplish needs to be addressed now, before moving forward with the recommendations, because it influences how the centralized process would be set-up. It will be easier to incorporate supports for students from the beginning rather than going back.
 - There needs to be a way to track the progress of the centralized process and the data collection efforts.
- Q: Does high-churn primarily affect high schools? Could our recommendations be focused more on just high schools for now?
 - A: It disproportionately affects high school but there are high-churn elementary and middle schools too.
 - Jenn Comey: There are credit issues and transcript issues associated with entries and transfers at the high school level. Overall, creating a more comprehensive information package for the receiving high school would be a huge support. This was reflected in the conversations with the community and focus group participants.
- According to the group norms, the Task Force aims to advocate for what is best for all students and families; if there are some schools with an increased number of students entering mid-year, it is important to keep in mind the students who have their classes disrupted throughout the year. If there are going to be transfers, how does the Task Force think through a process that allows transferring students to make the best choice and eliminates the need for another transfer later. Any transfer during the year is a challenge; if a school accepts more transfer students, the current students are impacted. The first purpose of the recommendations needs to include more language about the students. The goals need to be stated more clearly and in student-centered language.

- The goal of the Task Force should be to get schools on-board with serving and supporting all students throughout the entire year. In the purpose of the recommendation, it should be clear what this policy means for students, families, and schools and that the interest driving the policy is the interest in serving kids. More schools will participate because they are public and have an interest in serving students. Having the policy refer only to DCPS creates a way for schools to not participate in the policy.
- Where is the tipping point for student mobility? What level of mobility is acceptable in a city with a high-choice environment? This would allow for predictions of when there will be adverse impacts. Eliminating student movement mid-year can't be the whole goal; it is not possible to match students to schools perfectly when there is a lottery to get into schools.
- The real question is how do schools keep students from leaving and engage them when they are in the schools? There should be a program to look at individual schools. Cardozo is an interesting example because its exit rate is so much lower than entry rate. What if there were an action research project to examine schools with high entry rates and low exit rates?
- Is it possible to put a pin in these recommendations on student mobility and then move onto bigger issues so that the Task Force can submit recommendations as a package?

Deputy Mayor Niles summed up the conversation thus far, noting that the Task Force could **reframe the purposes of the recommendation to be more student and family-centered**. She highlighted that the Task Force should think of the recommendations as part of a suite of recommendations but that in order to get started on this particular recommendation, actions need to be taken sooner rather than later. She asked the Task Force to consider if these recommendations are a good place to start and if there could be a way to come back and look at the mid-year mobility policies while still looking forward at the other goals.

Task Force member questions/comments:

- The counseling about entries and transfers should occur within the schools with the current counselors. The policies should support programs that are already in schools.
- The people who attended the community meetings were people who had the luxury of coming; the Task Force does not have a full enough picture of the families that are more affected.

Deputy Mayor Niles noted that the centralized process in itself is not enough to reduce mid-year mobility and that it could be a first step towards gathering more information and further promoting enrollment stability. She asked the Task Force to consider what the layers of policy, including the centralized process, could look like.

Task Force member questions/comments:

- Q: Does the Task Force have a timeline for submitting recommendations?
 - A: Certain mechanisms would need to be put in place now to be in place for the 17-18 school year. There are certain mechanisms that will need to put in place at some point to collect information. Are there steps could be taken and mechanisms that could be used in the process no matter what else about the policy changes?

- This Task Force member agrees with rephrasing the goals to be more student-focused. The Task Force has not been in agreement on what it is trying to accomplish at a high level with this policy. Putting forth policy recommendations without clear over-arching goals is concerning.
- Going back to the purposes and revising them from the perspective of the students that the Task Force is trying to serve might clarify the over-arching goals.
- The third purpose of the recommendations needs to mention additional services for students and schools
- The Task Force will want to recommend these policies eventually; if the Task Force can begin moving on to the next goals, it can better examine the different policy “buckets” to see how various policies work together or where more recommendations are necessary.
- The recommendations could be framed differently and could capture possible future plans and thinking.
- The Task Force needs to get started with a policy to be able to show the community what the starting point looks like.
- It would be better if the framing includes how policies fit into overarching goals. One of those overarching goals should be to reduce student mobility.

Deputy Mayor Niles paraphrased the outcomes of the conversation and indicated that the goals need to be revisited and that one of the goals needs to make it clear that while some mobility in the school system is expected, the policies should not increase mobility. She stated that the goals need to be rephrased to make the recommendations student focused and to acknowledge the next steps more clearly. She commented that the Task Force seemed to be at a spot where it could move forward in baby steps and should make it clear to the public that the steps it is taking now should be considered small changes, in anticipation of a larger, more complete set of policies later in the process. We should not make perfection the enemy of the good.

With that in mind, she asked the Task Force members to share their level of agreement by indicating 0-5 (0: completely disagree and 5: completely agree) with the following three steps:

- 1) Make the recommendations’ purposes more explicit, including an acknowledgement that the Task Force is seeking to reduce mid-year mobility but cannot eliminate it completely nor increase it
- 2) Rephrase the purpose and recommendations to be more student-focused
- 3) Clarify the steps the Task Force is interested in taking in the future across all five goals so that the community is better informed about what the entire recommendations package may be

The majority of the room indicated 4s and 5s, with a few 3s, indicating that the majority of the Task Force was on-board with the next steps listed above.

Task Force member questions/comments:

- This is the right work: there is a lot to be done in the future. What steps come after this?
- The Task Force needs to be sure to move forward and accomplish the things it says it will do in the future. There will need to be evidence for the community of forward movement.

- This question will need to be answered in the future: What resources and supports will schools receive when they take on students?
- There is interest in starting to address more issues facing families and students: how does the Task Force wrap up this issue and move on to the next issue?

Deputy Mayor Niles noted that no Task Force member indicated complete disagreement with the next steps; she took this to mean that if the DME team reworks the recommendations according to those next steps, the Task Force could move forward with these recommendations, once they are revised, as a starting point.

Looking Ahead:

Deputy Mayor Niles went over the steps the Task Force had taken during its tenure so far and what it needs to accomplish over the next year. She emphasized the need for the Task Force to work more efficiently and that the dynamic of how the Task Force works might look different over the next year. The Task Force might not be making policies at the same level of detail as the centralized mid-year entry and transfer process and would in some cases be giving feedback on pre-existing projects.

Task Force member questions/comments:

- Can the Task Force address issues raised during the focus groups, such as student discipline, how families navigate their school options, etc.?
 - A: The Task Force will be providing insight on existing projects like Grad Pathways, etc. This group will comment on work the DME is doing in other areas.

Deputy Mayor Niles took a moment to announce the Mayor's Education Week (January 30, 2017-February 3, 2017). The goal of the week is to focus the city's attention on education. There will be a series of events: Chancellor Wilson will start next week and there will be a happy hour on Friday, February 3, 2017 to celebrate cross-sector collaboration in the District.

Task Force member questions/comments:

- The Task Force should talk about common accountability; however, OSSE's timeline does not allow enough time for the Task Force to comment.
 - The timeline could be pushed back to give the Task Force time to address it during a meeting.

Deputy Mayor Niles asked the Task Force for suggestions on how to keep the momentum up and how to accomplish all of its goals in the next year. She mentioned the possibility of creating working groups around different issues as an example. She noted that there will be a meeting for the heads of DCPS, PCSB, and OSSE before the next Task Force meeting to discuss next steps.

Task Force member questions/comments:

- A Task Force member requested the use of the term "acting out" instead of "discipline."

- There will be a hearing on February 2 about the OSSE discipline report; this would be a great opportunity for folks to participate in the conversation about student behavior.
- In the second year of the Task Force there should be working groups around certain topics.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20pm

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