

Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force: Meeting 7

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By-Right Charter Schools Breakout Group:

- The facilitator reviewed the definition of by-right: each DCPS school has a “zone” where a student has a right to go to that school at any time during the school year.
 - It was clarified that it would likely require a redrawing of the boundaries.
 - Also reviewed what a neighborhood preference is and how it differs: the student would get a boost in the lottery, but does not have a right to that school.
- From the perspective of the Public Charter School Board (PCSB), this is a non-starter:
 - One of the distinctions between public charters and traditional schools is that a student from anywhere in the city can attend the school. It would be a 180 degree shift in policy.
 - However, a neighborhood preference/voluntary weighting has been discussed as a possibility. “Community schools” have also been discussed.
 - One issue is that public charters don’t have automatic or guaranteed access to facilities
 - Can’t make them a by-right school when they don’t know what community they will be serving.
- DME staff discussed when a neighborhood preference was considered a few years ago. At the time, the concern was that some underserved students wouldn’t have access to a high-quality school, but if a school is already in a neighborhood that serves predominantly at-risk students, that is no longer a concern.
- One of the original intents of the task force member’s proposal was focused around facilities: DCPS has empty facilities that they do not want to give up because they don’t want to deprive that community of a by-right school by allowing a charter to take over the building.
- Possible options to tailor the proposal:
 - A charter school would opt into being a by-right school. There was brief discussion on the PCSB’s approval process.
 - You could enroll at the school at any point up to a certain date.
 - The zone could be sized to ensure that by-right students don’t fill the entire school roster.
 - Allow charters to takeover a low-performing DCPS school and maintain their by-right zone
 - Currently, when a charter takes over a low-performing DCPS school, we already give current students a “right of first refusal”.
 - Allow charters to takeover empty DCPS buildings and maintain their by-right zone
 - Charters would have to be guaranteed the facility with either ownership or a long-term lease.
- Requirements that would need to be met before the PCSB would consider the proposal:
 - The charter would own the building or receive a long-term lease.
 - Need to be able to guarantee a charter applicant that they have a building in an area that they want to serve that student population.
 - Additional funding for facilities maintenance.
 - Maintain autonomy in curriculum; facility control; and the ability to close low-performing schools.

- Several concerns were raised:
 - Would this result in closing DCPS schools?
 - Not necessarily: there are some empty DCPS buildings that can be taken over by charters.
 - If we don't want DCPS closures, the policy proposal can be crafted in a way that doesn't result in that.
 - A public charter parent would not have any say in whether the charter opts in. If high mobility or enrollment churn (students entering and leaving mid-year) is detrimental to a school, then allowing public charters to opt into being by-right would open up the possibility for more mobility in that school. Public charter parents may be concerned that those same issues will now plague their school.
 - What happens if a charter takes over a low-performing school and is then itself low-performing and is closed? Would there then be no by-right school in that area?
 - How permanent is the by-right label?
 - Would be permanent until another boundary study is conducted.
 - Would want to pilot this proposal in an area of the city that is optimal before opening it up to the entire city.
- Follow-up
 - Revisit the possibility of a neighborhood preference in the lottery.
 - Need to develop some working definitions.