

Tuesday, October 25, 2016
6:00-8:00pm
Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force
Meeting #8

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 | Chief of Schools, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) (incoming interim DCPS Chancellor)
- 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
- 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
- Hanseul Kang | State Superintendent of Education
- Melissa Kim | Chief Academic Officer, Secondary Schools, KIPP DC; former principal, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)
- Anjali Kulkarni | Deputy Chief, Strategic School Planning, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)
- Emily Lawson | Founder & CEO, DC Prep PCS
- Scott Pearson | Executive Director, Public Charter School Board (PCSB)
- Karen Williams | Ward 7 Representative, State Board of Education (SBOE)
- 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 on the Phone:

- 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)
- Bethany Little | Murch ES, BASIS PCS parent; Education policy expert
- 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

Members not in Attendance:

- Kemba Hendrix | Elsie Whitlow Stokes PCS parent; former public and public charter school teacher
- Ariana Quiñones | Duke Ellington HS, Cesar Chavez PCS parent, education and human services policy consultant, Otero Strategy Group LLC, former member Student Assignment Committee

Staff:

- Jennifer Comey | Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME)
- Cat Peretti | Executive Director, My School DC (MSDC), Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME)
- Aurora Steinle | Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME)
- Hannah Holliday | Leadership for Education Equity Fellow, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME)
- Richelle Russell | Education Pioneers Data Analyst Fellow, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME)
- Neela Rathinasamy | Assistant Superintendent of Operations, Office of the State Superintendent for Education (OSSE)

Meeting Summary:

The meeting began promptly at 6:00pm with Deputy Mayor Niles briefly going over the agenda before introducing Neela Rathinasamy, Assistant Superintendent of Operations at the Office of the State Superintendent for Education. Ms. Rathinasamy presented on the new proposed residency regulations to start out the meeting.

Residency Regulations:

Ms. Rathinasamy noted that OSSE hopes to have the new regulations completed prior to April 1 if the regulations are to go into effect for the following school year. She focused her presentation on ideas on the table for the new regulations, rather than on the current practices.

Key Points from the OSSE Residency Regulations Presentation:

- The definition of residency was not spelled out in the 2008 regulations. The proposed definition asks to establish both physical and legal presence. The goal is to protect vulnerable students (homeless and undocumented students) and avoid any barriers to their enrollment in school.
- Another key goal of the proposed regulations is streamlining the residency verification process by using within-government resources. This would involve using documents collected from other agencies to verify the residences of reenrolling students who had not changed addresses. OSSE would also have to request parental consent before using other documents on file at separate agencies.
- The proposed residency regulations also seek to ensure that a student has the ability to attend school in DC so long as at least one parent lives in the District and has any sort of custody of the student. This is important given the fluidity of some custodial situations.
- The proposed regulations include an Office of Dispute Resolution to hear residency cases that can more easily control the timeline of these cases and expedite them when possible.
- Non-residents who attempt to enroll will be flagged in the OSSE system under the proposed regulations and that flag will follow the student to different schools. (The flag can be removed should the student become eligible to attend DC schools.).
- The current public comment period ends tomorrow, October 26, 2017. Comments are being accepted via email. Earlier in the public comment period, OSSE held a number of public engagement sessions and has held several meetings with councilmembers.

Hanseul Kang noted that the current public comment period is for advanced notice of the proposed regulations and that there will be another public comment period once there is a formal proposed rulemaking.

Task Force Member Comments/Questions:

- Q: The process is being streamlined but there is no information on how OSSE is going to cut down on residency fraud through these new regulations. They seem to focus on enforcement rather than prevention. How will OSSE reduce residency fraud?
 - A: The presentation did not go through all the things OSSE does to reduce residency fraud. Part of this is done through the enrollment audit by looking at documentation; get a number of tips coming out of residency audit period. There are ways to verify residency through data analysis. If OSSE wants to use tax records, there has to be consent.
- Q: How many people are working on the residency fraud team?
 - A: There is a team of four full time employees and contracted investigators.
- Q: What does “physical presence” mean?
 - A: It essentially means living in the District; OSSE chose not to define it as a percentage of custody. The exact definition is not in the presentations slides but it can be looked up.

Deputy Mayor Niles encouraged the group to take advantage of the current public comment period and thanked Ms. Rathinasamy for her presentation. Mr. Sandman asked the group to turn to the regular agenda to proceed with the rest of the meeting. He went over the goals and norms for the meeting and noted that the group has begun to address substantive issues and has started exercising the norms and ground rules set by the group during the early meetings.

Deputy Mayor Niles noted that this meeting is about discussing the big questions for the community and the ideas that the group believes have promise, rather than about trying to sort out all the details of each part of the policy proposal. She also noted that the timeline for community engagement and recommendations for the Mayor have already been moved to give the Task Force ample time to discuss the policy proposals.

Mid-Year Entry, Transfer, and Exit Policy Proposal Discussion:

Jenn Comey from the DME reviewed the previously discussed policy options and presented a process slide to show how the proposals were edited and revised after the September Task Force meeting. The Task Force held two separate conference calls to discuss 1) By-right charter schools and 2) Mid-year entry, transfer, and exit policies. The revised version of the mid-year entry, transfer, and exit policy proposal was sent out to the group on Friday, October 21, 2016. The by-right charter schools proposal has not yet been revised because the broader questions about by-right charters require more whole group discussion at a later meeting. She noted that the momentum and positive focus on midyear transfer policy proposal drove the decision to focus on that proposal during this meeting.

Ms. Comey described a few of the edits made after the breakout call, including a revision to the overall purpose of the mid-year transfer policy. She noted that during the conference call discussion, the group decided that the goal of the policy should be focused on equitably distributing transfer students across the sectors, rather than on reducing overall mobility.

Ms. Comey prompted the Task Force members to take five minutes to read through the slides of the presentation dealing with component 1 of the mid-year entry, transfer, and exit policy proposal and discuss them with another Task Force member. Members read through slides 14-16 in preparation for discussion around the questions posed on slide 16.

Component 1 Discussion:

Comments/Questions:

- Q: Where is the definition of “hardship transfer?”
 - A: The definition is part of component 2 slide and the group will discuss hardship transfers later in the meeting.

- Q: In component 1, it mentions the possibility of eliminating waitlists after October 5. Should October 5 be only option for when waitlists could go away? It might be better to wait until later in the school year to eliminate waitlists like the date in December when My School DC launches the new year's application.
 - A: A different date is a possibility; the purpose of this discussion is to put ideas on the table for the group to consider.
- Q: What does it mean for the centralized transfer office to provide neutral counseling to students?
 - A: My School DC already provides neutral counseling to families who call in.
- My School DC gives "sector-agnostic" counseling but not necessarily "neutral" counseling
 - Cat Peretti from the DME noted that My School DC is school-agnostic and sector-agnostic. It does not provide opinions on schools, and instead focuses on providing the families and students with clear information, access to tools like the School Finder, and resources to ensure they can make an informed decision that is best for them.
 - A Task Force member stated that it is more like "guidance" and the group should more carefully consider what is meant by "counseling" and that adding another counselor into the mix (when the student might already be speaking to a counselor) could add trauma.
- Q: Could there be a clarification of point 5 ("Maintains students' right to attend their in-boundary DCPS school[...]")? How would the centralized process work with mid-year entries into in-boundary DCPS schools?
 - A: The office would need to capture the movement of all students; otherwise it could miss vital information about the movement of students. Having in-boundary mid-year transfers go through the office is not intended as a hurdle to enrolling at the in-boundary school. It is still students' right to attend their in-boundary school but the move needs to be documented through the centralized system.
- Q: What does the information sharing between the office and schools look like? Within DCPS, it is not easy to share information between schools; how does this look from a third party? What kind of discretion is there in deciding how many seats a school has open?
 - A: LEAs would indicate what seats are available but this is a process challenge that would need to be addressed. They are currently self-reported with varying fidelity.
- Q: Does the language used in these parameters include all of the schools that are intended to participate?
 - A: All schools that offer PK3-12 would participate for maximum effectiveness in gathering data, providing information and distributing mid-year entries; it was discussed on the breakout call that adult schools and alternative schools would not participate in the centralized transfer process. It was also discussed on the breakout call as a possible opt-in process like My School DC is.
- Q: What about charters that do not opt to set aside seats for transfer students?
 - A: Information about any open seats would still be captured through the transfer office.
- Even though the centralized transfer process does not include adult schools, there should be a role for connecting students who are 17 or 18 with adult schools and the reengagement center.
- Q: How does the counseling and enrollment process through My School DC work now; do students automatically get into a school mid-year?
 - A: Schools self-report weekly whether they have open seats still available. If there's a seat then a student applies, becomes number 1 on a waitlist, and is offered enrollment if there is an open seat. The school then offers that seat to the student and they enroll in person at the school.
- Q: Could the group discuss an example of what goes into a school's determination of how many seats they have? Through this process, how much information the school would have before getting the student?

- A: A school would just get application information like name, address, and preferred home language and they would not receive information special education status, etc. Schools would not be able to turn a student away.
- Q: If a school gets to decide whether or not it has seats and every school can determine whether or not it is ready to accept students or not accept students, isn't this an opportunity to limit the number of students who enter the school? What are the incentives to take on students, assuming the school is not interested in the per-pupil funding that would come with the student? (Given the LEA payment process)
 - A: This system does provide a way for charters schools to exercise their exclusive control by allowing them to opt to enroll students mid-year.
- Q: How is the mid-year process working now? Would adding the mid-year transfer process burden My School DC?
 - A: Cat Peretti, DME team member and Executive Director of My School DC, noted that if the mid-year transfer process were given to My School DC, they would need to change the staffing model. As of right now, My School DC's process for mid-year applications is working; there is a steep drop off in waitlist offers made after Oct 5 due to current payment structures, and K-12 entries into in-boundary schools do not require an application. Self-reported school data on open seats is not always updated with fidelity but the My School DC hotline is in constant communication with school staff and families. The guidance My School DC does could possibly be combined with the Office of the Student Advocate to the benefit of students.
- If students don't find what they need during the initial enrollment process, they might have to keep transferring around. There should be counseling before initial enrollment to save time and trouble in the long-run. This might mean creating another, more extensive model for the transfer office. If the Task Force is going to create a mid-year enrollment counseling process, it needs to be complete and correct to help students find the best option from the beginning.
- Q: Every LEA uses different logic around how many seats to put into the lottery; there is no consistent or standardized rationale. How schools offer seats for the lottery and for transfers needs to be codified to disallow "gaming."
- Q: Would My School DC handle neighborhood schools?
 - A: My School DC currently handles all out-of-boundary applicants but does not handle in-boundary students. Any system should ensure that there are as few barriers as possible for in-boundary student enrollment, but this would need to be evaluated going forward. A student's in-boundary school could simply be an option that opens up on their My School DC account after October 5th or a certain point in the year.
- In the opinion of this Task Force member, waitlists should be eliminated completely.
- Eliminating waitlists seems untenable.
- Waitlists and the midyear transfer office need to be tied to My School DC and should be opt-in in some way.
- What if set-aside seats were paired with waitlists in some way? Schools would have the ability to decide if they wanted to add their open seat to the out-of-state set-aside seat list or pull from their waitlist to fill. This process would not be transparent and could be on-top of the other seats they set-aside
- Charters will not be incentivized to take transfer students, who might be expelled students; they will want to go off the waitlists.
 - There are LEA leaders who are interested in taking transfer students.
 - Why do charter schools not take in transfer students now?
 - Because there is no legal mechanism to take them now, even hardship students can't jump the waitlist; charter schools have to go through waitlists.
- This Task Force member expressed interest in allowing the elimination of waitlists because the lists get long and stale after a certain point.

- Q: Isn't there a date when the existing waitlists disappear in My School DC?
 - A: In mid-December, when My School DC launches next year's application, remaining waitlists are transferred back to the schools for the remainder of the school year. At that point, if a school pulls from its waitlist, it would hopefully continue to pull students in the order in which the students appear on the waitlist. This waitlist remains through the end of the school year but My School DC does not have visibility into any movement of students after December 12 when the control of waitlists is transferred to the schools.
- The new LEA payment system could change how schools use their waitlists. Waitlists should not be eliminated until after LEA payment has been in place.
- October 5 is too early to end the waitlist but perhaps there is an ideal later date, closer to December 12.
- This Task Force member is uncomfortable forcing all schools to participate in this centralized transfer process but believes there could be a way to have schools agree to participate as they opt in to My School DC.
- Q: Is there a way to use the lottery system to place out-of-state students? Would it be possible to heavily weight out of state students so they can move to the top of existing waitlist?
 - A: This is a perfect way to transition to the discussion about hardship and out-of-state set-asides.

Component 2 and 3 Discussion:

Ms. Comey went over the hardship transfer definition slide (slide 19) and emphasized the possibility of having two sets of set-aside seats for transferring students: hardship set-asides and out-of-state set-asides. Ms. Comey again prompted the Task Force members to take a few minutes to read through and discuss with a partner the slides pertaining to components 2 and 3 of the policy proposal.

Comments/Questions:

- Q: Would in-boundary entries and transfers go through the hardship transfer process?
 - A: The purpose is to have a record of the in-boundary transfer through this office and process.
- Q: Should the "change of residence within DC" criterion be included?
 - A: This is something to consider throughout the group discussion.
- Q: Does the proposal include students who are former private school students in the definition of new out-of-state entry students?
 - A: Yes, these students were included in the definition for the set-aside structure.
- It is objectionable to have private school and out-of-state students able to jump ahead of other students on a waitlist. What is the argument for why they deserve to go ahead of students who have been living in DC and have gone through the lottery process?
 - A: This is what was under the definition of out-of-state laid out in the policy proposal; the definition of out-of-state could be written differently.
- The assumption is that the Task Force is operating under is that out-of-state students are in unstable family situations and that the hardship seats would serve them. This is very different than transferring from private school. The group needs more data around why students are moving before creating policy around what to do with them.
 - One of the potential benefits of the office would be its capacity to capture this data and interview families going through the transfer process.
- There should be targeted outreach from schools and service providers who can identify families going through a transfer process. There would need to be one-on-one interviews with families to find out why they are moving.

- This Task Force member believes that if a call for action was sent out, assuming that the LEA payment structure is fixed, school leaders would step up and the disproportionate weight on DCPS would be alleviated. They may not recognize that this is a citywide issue.
- There is some data on where students are coming from (private school, etc.) but it hasn't been looked at before.
- How much of the new payment system will address this disproportionate weight on DCPS? There are reasons to do component 1 and then LEA payment before coming back to the other two components.
- Having seats above a school's enrollment ceiling seems like a good incentive for schools now, even before the LEA payment process has been implemented. Schools are always looking for ways to increase their enrollment ceilings and are interested and open to this.

Ms. Comey paused the discussion and directed the group to being considering questions on slide 24 about which components have the most promise and could be brought to the community for feedback.

Comments/Questions:

- The transfer office should be paired with payment piece as a way to test out the process and see how LEA behavior changes as a result of the new LEA payment process.
- There is a heavy lift involved with setting up the office; it might be more worth it to have some set-aside seats in place to test out how they would affect the mobility numbers. It could be 2-4 years before any LEA changes its behavior based on the new LEA payment system.
- Component 1 by itself seems like more bureaucracy even though it would collect important information. Component 1 without 2 or 3 does not seem worth it.
- Investing money into gathering information from families and analyzing the information that already exists would be a better use of time and money.
 - It is difficult to come up with policy solutions in an environment that is not fully understood; it is necessary to understand first how these families move.
- The group needs to consider the current enrollment numbers and the cost as well as how to pay for any of these components before making a decision about a policy.
 - Gearing up for the new LEA payment process getting at some of the data necessary to understand enrollment and costs. What is necessary now is a monthly enrollment count.
- The first step should be the centralized process for midyear transfers. Once there is a basic transfer process, then set-asides can be implemented.
- Q: Is there consensus on waiting to see the impact of the LEA Payment Initiative? Should the group focus on talking about a centralized process 2-4 years out from now?
 - A: The LEA Payment Initiative process will happen but this does not help students and parents going through the transfer process. If the group is trying to figure out where these children should go, there needs to be a system.
- Could set-asides and the LEA Payment Initiative go together? Presenting those two components to the community might elicit a positive reaction from the community. The next step should be adding those set-asides alongside the LEA payment process.
- It feels premature to go to the community given that larger community isn't really thinking about this issue. If the goal of the community engagement is merely to barometer test these policies then the engagement could be worth it.
- Families who are already going to places for counseling should be able to access this type of data from those places.
- Q: Should the group seek community input on how to structure a data collection operation?
 - A: Data collection is the least interesting part. The first step is to make sure the transfer happens smoothly so student records move between schools; the second step is make sure

families who are leaving know what their options are. These steps seem more important. If schools are going to be forced to participate, then there should be community input.

- The first step should be to figure out why families are moving. A data office would facilitate gathering this information.
- Would it be beneficial to do some focus groups?
 - Formal interviews/investigators might not be viewed positively by families but families and students already work with a variety of entities who could collect data on student movement. It might be possible to coordinate with these groups to get the necessary data.
- Q: What does the community need to provide input on?
 - A: They would provide input on how the office should be set up and how a parent/guardian would want to interface with it.
- In the opinion of this Task Force member, the data has already been collected. The students affected by these potential policies are the students who need the most support and need that support as soon as possible. More data collection will slow down the process.
 - There needs to be more data collection in order to avoid unintended consequences.
 - My School DC could collect some basic information when they receive calls from families.
- If the Task Force wanted to pilot some of these policies, when could it start? February is the end-date for deciding seats to open up or set-aside for the next year (for charter schools).
 - It is possible to get valuable data by piloting set-asides rather than waiting to gather data before piloting the set-asides.
 - It is unclear when this could actually start. This coming school year seems pretty soon.
- Q: When the Task Force is discussing a set-aside pilot, would these seats be for any mobile student or only for hardship transfers? It seems like it might be a way to get a quick enrollment bump.
 - A: If the group decided to pilot the set-asides, it would need to iron out the criteria.

Deputy Mayor Niles summed up the group discussion, noting that the group did not seem ready to take ideas to the community in December. She suggested that the Task Force have two calls prior to the November meeting: one call about the possible set-aside seat pilot idea and one call to discuss the data collection that members of the group want to see completed before moving forward.

Comments/Questions:

- What problem is the policy proposal is trying to solve? It is not always clear how these policies align.
 - The problems are embedded in the goals
- Would each school adding hardship or out-of-state seats even cut down the number of transfers into high-churn schools? What are the numbers?
 - It will help; the idea is not to burden any one school with student mobility. Ideally the hardship seats would be proportional and after that the group would have to see how the policy works and reevaluate if necessary.
- What are the biggest arguments against a centralized process that distributes mobile students?
 - The process could end up sending students off to schools that are not set up with wraparound services. The schools that mobile students end up in might not be the best schools for them.
 - Channeling mobile students to all the same schools is not the solution either
- Members of the Task Force already know why students move.
 - This could be assuming things solely based on demographics — it is helpful to have direct data from parents and students.
 - However, simply collecting data does not do anything for distributing the responsibility of taking on transfer students.

Community Engagement & Looking Ahead:

Deputy Mayor Niles noted that the Task Force would discuss community engagement either during its November retreat or during its November meeting. She reviewed the details for the retreat, stating that the goal of the retreat is to begin conversations around the Task Force's next issue area. However, she highlighted that the conversation on the midyear entry, transfer, and exit policies would also become a key part of the November retreat.

Deputy Mayor Niles showed the Task Force members a revised timeline of the Task Force's work through January. There was an extra meeting proposed for January 10, 2017 but because the community engagement had been pushed back, this meeting would no longer be necessary. Task Force members were prompted to look out for information about breakout call.

The meeting adjourned at 8:25pm.