

# DC CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION TASK FORCE

01.24.16  
Meeting 10

# GOALS FOR TODAY'S MEETINGS

- 1. Share the focus group and community meeting overview and feedback**
- 2. Propose recommendations to the Mayor**
- 3. Provide framing for year 2 of the CSCTF**

# AGENDA

- **Welcome (6:00-6:05)**
- **Share Focus Group and Community Meeting Feedback (6:05-7:00)**
- **Discuss recommendations to the Mayor (7:00-7:45)**
- **Looking Ahead for CSCTF in 2017 (7:45-7:55)**
- **Next Steps (7:55-8:00)**

# WELCOME

- **New and incoming Task Force members:**
  - **Antwan Wilson, DCPS Chancellor as of February (first official meeting February 28, 2017)**
  - **Mary Levy, independent school finance analyst/consultant (replacing Rod Boggs)**
  - **Claudia Lujan, School Turnaround and Performance Division in the DCPS Office of the Chief of Schools (replacing Anjali Kulkarni)**

# TASK FORCE GOALS

- Improve the experience of parents and families understanding and navigating their public school options.
- Develop methods for information sharing with the public and across public school sectors.
- Develop a framework for coordinating processes on school openings, closings, and facilities planning.
- Promote enrollment stability.
- Identify educational challenges that need to be addressed through cross-sector collaboration.

# GROUP NORMS AND EXPECTATIONS

We want members to:

- Act as public ambassadors for the process
- Advocate for what is best for all students and families and not just what is best for one particular school community or sector
- Put individual agendas aside in the interest of improving public education for the city
- Be open-minded
  - Genuinely consider alternatives to their own opinions
  - Respect each others' opinion
  - Generate and consider creative solutions

# PURPOSE OF OUR WORK

Twenty years ago public charter school choice was established in DC. With 56% of public school students attending DCPS and 44% attending public charter schools, the next chapter of improving education in DC is for both sectors to strategically work together.

We come together now to:

- Objectively consider data to better understand our educational landscape across the City.
- Brainstorm ideas and generate solutions through cross-sector collaboration and problem-solving.
- Consider our current challenges for what they are – citywide challenges - and not side with or assign blame to a single sector.
- Develop clear and fair recommendations on how to reach our CSCTF goals (*our charge*).

**“TO IMPROVE IS TO CHANGE; TO BE  
PERFECT IS TO CHANGE OFTEN.”  
-WINSTON CHURCHILL**



**FOCUS GROUP AND  
COMMUNITY MEETING  
FEEDBACK**

# REVIEW OF CSCTF EFFORTS IN DECEMBER AND JANUARY

- **December 1 and December 2:** Task Force members held conference calls in place of the November 22 meeting
  - Went over the ratings from the retreat, the strawman policy proposal, and the plan for the focus groups and community meetings
  - The policy proposal included the following components at this point:
    - Centralized mid-year entry and transfer process through My School DC
    - Hardship set-asides
    - Out-of-state set-asides
    - One-in-one out as a mechanism for identifying open seats OR having schools maintain an up-to-date list of open seats
    - Reducing OR eliminating waitlists after set-asides had gone into effect
- **December 15-January 9:** DME team held 7 focus groups with targeted stakeholders to collect feedback on the strawman proposal. DME team revised the proposal based on the feedback throughout series of focus groups.
- **January 10, 17, and 18:** DME team held small community meetings to verify the feedback from the focus groups and posed questions building on feedback received from the focus groups

# OVERVIEW OF FOCUS GROUPS AND COMMUNITY MEETINGS

- **Goals:**
  - Provide an overview of the Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force's work and proposed policy to promote enrollment stability
  - Gather feedback on the proposed policies to help the Task Force shape the recommendations to the Mayor
  - Identify the additional information needed to better understand and explain the proposed policies
- Focus groups for school leaders were advertised via PCSB newsletter and through the DCPS Office of Family and Community Engagement (through listservs, Facebook announcements, and the principals' daily announcements)
- Meetings were advertised via stakeholder group email lists (DCERN, DFER, FOCUS, PAVE, C4DC, SHAPPE, CHSPO, DC Education Coalition for Change, DCPS principal and community email list, PCSB newsletter) and on Open-DC.gov
- Community meetings supported by LINK Communications (notetaking and compilation of feedback via discussions, worksheets, and survey responses)

# FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

- 7 focus groups totaling 54 participants
- Attendees:
  - DCPS leaders, school staff, and teachers
  - PCS leaders, school staff, and teachers
  - DCPS Central Office staff
  - Education policy experts
  - Education Innovation Fellows (teachers)

Type	Date	Location	Attendees
School Leaders	12/15	Benning Library (W7)	4 PCS leaders
School Leaders	12/19	Shaw Library (W4)	5 (4 PCS and 1 DCPS)
Education Policy Experts	12/19	DME	6 (finance experts, facility experts, DCPS parent advocates, and SPED advocates)
DCPS Ward 7 and 8 School Leaders	1/6	Anacostia HS (W8)	8 (DCPS principals, DCPS directors of operations)
DCPS Central Office	1/9	DCPS Central Office	25 (Office of Youth Engagement, School Operations, School Improvement, Public Engagement)
Innovation Fellows	1/9	Bellevue Library (W8)	4 (2 PCS teachers and 2 DCPS teachers)
DCPS Placement Office	1/11	DCPS central	2 DCPS Placement Office staff

# COMMUNITY MEETING PARTICIPANTS

- 3 community meetings
- 21 community members
- Participants included community members, parents, charter school staff and teachers, DCPS teachers, parent support organizations, DC Council staff, and government agencies (DMGEO, State Board, Office of the Student Advocate, Office of Ombudsmen)

Date	Location	Attendees
January 10	Bellevue Library (W8)	4
January 17	Mt. Pleasant Library (W4)	9
January 18	Northeast Library (W6)	8

# OVERVIEW OF FOCUS GROUP AND COMMUNITY MEETING FEEDBACK

- Overall sentiment from DCPS staff focused on the instruction, learning, and placement needs of students entering mid-year (both from school personnel and central office):
  - DCPS's mission is to serve all students at any point in the year – that is a core component of DCPS's school of right.
  - School leaders and staff emphasized that the steady flow of mid-year entries and transfers causes significant disruption to a classroom/school. Even with efforts to improve students' transition, the impact cannot be overemphasized. Thus, trying to minimize the amount of late entries would improve the potential for teaching and learning at the highest churn schools.
  - Providing a way for students in crisis to be served across LEAs (i.e., hardship transfer) could improve the circumstances for that student as well as stabilize the receiving schools.
- Some advocates are concerned that a common process, coupled with revised LEA payment, could have a negative impact on DCPS total enrollment. Some recommended phasing in some components of the proposal after the revised LEA payment initiative is implemented.
- Some advocates and school personnel are concerned that a common process could be overly bureaucratic, does not decrease mobility in high churn schools, and/or does not take across year mobility into account.

# PROPOSAL FEEDBACK (1/7)

## Common mid-year enrollment process proposal

1. **General support for creating a common mid-year enrollment process that would also include in boundary DCPS students through My School DC**
  - DCPS staff flagged that this will require a culture shift for families and registrars to have an additional step should families walk into a DCPS school ready to enroll. My School DC and DCPS registrars will need to work together to collect the necessary information regarding applications, school rankings, and data about why entering mid year. Stakeholders will need to help communicate the shift in policy to families.
  - General support for ensuring regular updated seat (including out of boundary seat) availability because seat availability means a student can immediately enroll.
  - In order to best place disengaged youth who are entering mid-year, some emphasized the need for My School DC to coordinate with the Re-Engagement Center and the adult and alternative LEAs that do not participate in the common lottery.
  - Some were concerned that a common process would increase the bureaucracy for families or schools.
2. **Participants strongly support the mechanisms for sharing documentation in a timely manner, as it will better serve students and prepare schools**
  - Receiving schools need the following information: IEPs, 504, attendance records, discipline records, reasons for dismissal if not voluntary, and official transcripts/report cards.
  - Records need to be sent in a timely manner. Otherwise, students do not receive the services they need nor are they assigned to the appropriate classes and schools are not prepared to serve them.
  - OSSE should explore timely record sharing with surrounding counties.

# PROPOSAL FEEDBACK (2/7)

## Common mid-year enrollment process proposal, cont'd

3. Many supported collecting information about why students enter or transfer mid-year via My School DC process to better understand mid-year mobility.
  - Some suggested that the reasons should be aggregated and made publically available, as part of information about a school or LEA. If so, then schools should be able to vet the reasons.
  - Some were concerned about the increase in bureaucracy or thought there may be ways to collect existing data through individual school registrars.
4. Feedback was mixed regarding counseling for mid-year entries and transfers
  - Virtually all agreed that My School DC should not provide counseling in order to remain neutral.
  - Some felt that 3<sup>rd</sup> party counseling could benefit students in that they would be more likely to find a school that meets their particular needs.
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> party counselors could provide a standardized set of questions to prompt families to determine the school that meets their needs (could be addressed in CSCTF goal #1).
  - Others were concerned that counseling would be biased to a particular sector.
  - Some were concerned about the increase in bureaucracy.



# PROPOSAL FEEDBACK (3/7)

## Common mid-year enrollment process proposal, cont'd

5. School leaders and staff from DCPS and public charter schools universally recommended that schools identify their available seats after October 5, similar to how they do it now.
  - This applies to the available seats at public charter schools, citywide DCPS schools, and selective DCPS schools, as well as the available out-of-boundary seats at DCPS neighborhood schools.
  - School leaders and staff did not support the 1 in 1 out policy because they wanted the flexibility to meet their school needs (e.g., a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader may leave mid year but the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class is already too large).
  - School leaders and staff understood the need to keep seat availability updated continually in order to ensure students can enroll immediately.

# PROPOSAL FEEDBACK (4/7)

## Hardship set aside proposal

1. Many supported the concept of hardship set asides in order to best serve our highest need students and help stabilize schools
  - LEAs would opt in to participate, provide the specific number of set aside seats per school, and keep the hardship seats updated on a regular basis in My School DC. These set asides would be outside of the waitlists and schools would not be able to pick and choose hardship students.
2. Many suggested revising the criteria for hardship set asides
  - Suggestions that the “change in residence within DC if the move has created a hardship” be either restricted to only “involuntary changes in residence” or removed altogether as this is hard to clearly document and defend.
  - The victim transfer criteria and required processes included in DCMR 21 should be an explicit part of the criteria.
  - Many support that non-voluntary transfers/expulsions should be included in the definition because these are students in high need. However, some pointed out that expulsion policies are not uniform across all schools, so it may be difficult to include expulsions in the definition of hardship.

# PROPOSAL FEEDBACK (5/7)

## Hardship set aside proposal, cont'd

3. Those who work to place students mid-year recommend that this process operate similar to and in conjunction with the DCPS Placement Office.
  - The participating LEAs should work closely with each other, MPD, and other related parties to determine the best fit for the student. My School DC would identify the LEAs/schools with available seats, but not determine where the student would go.
  - All agreed that the sending LEA has to provide the supporting documentation in order to vet that the students meet the hardship criteria.
  - Some were interested in having a third party vet the supporting documentation from all LEAs to maintain the consistency of the policy.
  - The number of hardship set asides should not be listed on My School DC, nor should it be noted on My School DC that a school offers hardship set asides in order to prevent “gaming” of the system by families.
4. High demand public charter schools may prefer “hardship lottery preferences” rather than hardship set asides in order to keep the integrity of the waitlist.

# PROPOSAL FEEDBACK (6/7)

## Out of state set asides

1. Across the board, there was little support for out-of-state set asides because:
  - They could potentially allow “gaming” of the common lottery in order to avoid waitlists (e.g., families not enrolling students at beginning of the year in order to access a school later in the year).
  - These types of set asides are unfair to current DC students who are trying to get into a higher-quality school.
  - Some felt that residency fraud is a concern and this would heighten that possibility even though the criteria for these students are about whether the student was enrolled previously in the year and not about their residency.
  - Some participants thought a military transfer set aside is appropriate and worthwhile.

# PROPOSAL FEEDBACK (7/7)

## Wait lists

1. Virtually all participants agreed that there could be a better process for waitlists after October
2. More participants were in favor of reducing the waitlists by either:
  - Asking families to actively opt into their existing waitlist or their existing top choices.
  - Having families passively remain on only their top schools on their waitlists (families are only kept on their top two or three choices after a certain date).
  - The challenge with this is ensuring that low-information families are informed.
3. Some participants were in favor of eliminating waitlists altogether
  - Some community participants supported this because it may reduce the amount of students transferring mid year (students wouldn't be called from the waitlist)
  - Others supported this because new students could more easily enter a school mid year
  - Challenges are that it is 1) unfair to students who were ranked very high on the waitlist and 2) high-information families who would continually contact My School DC to enroll mid year

# ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK

Participants recommended the exploration of the following policies to promote enrollment stability:

1. Standardize suspension/expulsion policies (align to the D.C. Municipal Regulations) across all LEAs so students are not expelled or excessively suspended, leading to withdrawal from public charters.
2. Limit the transfer window so that students can only transfer public schools within a set period of time.
3. Reward schools that retain students, particularly at-risk and special education students, so that schools can best serve students.
4. Create a cross LEA alternative placement setting for middle school and elementary school students struggling in their current schools.
5. Develop more robust information through the existing government agencies sites so that families and students can better determine their school options.

# **PROPOSED POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

# CONTEXT OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- These recommendations are the first phase focused on how to promote enrollment stability. We expect that this phase will be part of an overall “package” of recommendations to the Mayor.
- These recommendations are narrow and will provide us with critical information needed to devise further policies to reduce mobility.
- The purposes of these first recommendations are to:
  - Decrease the mid-entry of students at DCPS schools, especially those with high churn, which will result in more stable learning environments.
  - Better ensure that schools are prepared with the information they need to immediately serve students who enter mid-year, which will result in better learning environments.
  - Ensure students in crisis have more options for a mid-year placement, which will result in better learning environments for the high-need students and ensure more stable learning environments in the sending school.
  - Increase our knowledge about why students enter and transfer mid year.



# STRAWMAN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The recommendations are a result of feedback from the focus groups and community meetings (DCPS and public charter school leaders and teachers, community members and parents, and organizations and agencies that assist families and students).

Policy Component	Status
Common mid-year enrollment process	Recommendation ✓
Hardship set asides	Recommendation ✓
Revamping wait lists after October	Recommendation ✓
Counseling or for mid-year entry or transfer	Not at this time
Out of state set asides	Not at this time

# MID-YEAR ENTRY AND TRANSFER POLICY RECOMMENDATION TO MAYOR (1/3)

1. The Task Force recommends that My School DC manage a common mid-year entry and transfer process for public school students starting in SY17-18.

## Current thinking:

- Relies on the existing processes of the common lottery, My School DC.
- Includes students who wish to enroll in their in boundary DCPS school.
- Schools identify their available seats (available out-of-boundary seat for neighborhood DCPS schools and all seats at public charter schools, citywide DCPS schools, and selective DCPS schools) and ensure that these seats are up-to-date year round so mid-year students are aware of all options.
- Ensures prompt sharing of key information needed about the mid-year students from the previous school in order to best serve them.

# MID-YEAR ENTRY AND TRANSFER POLICY RECOMMENDATION TO MAYOR (2/3)

2. The Task Force recommends that Local Education Agencies (DCPS and public charters) voluntarily set aside hardship seats that are separate from school waitlists in order to serve students who meet the hardship criteria.

## Current thinking:

- Allow LEAs to identify the specific number of hardship set aside seats and keep their set aside seats updated on a regular basis.
- The process would operate in conjunction with the DCPS Placement Office and other support agencies like MPD.
- Participating LEAs would work together, with the student and family, to identify the best and most appropriate placement of the student.
- The sending LEA would be responsible for providing supporting documentation to ensure the student meets the criteria as well as the supporting records for the receiving LEA.
- The hardship criteria definition will be further refined by a working group who has experience with student placement.
- This would be phased in starting SY17-18.

# MID-YEAR ENTRY AND TRANSFER POLICY RECOMMENDATION TO MAYOR (3/3)

3. The Task Force recommends that wait lists are refreshed after October starting SY17-18.

## Current thinking:

- Further exploration of how waitlists should be revised is required by a working group. The DME and My School DC will solicit feedback on how to determine the best policies moving forward.

# DISCUSSION

- Thoughts?
- Revisions?
- Feedback?
- Suggested framing and context for the recommendations?
  - Examples:
    - Part of a broader set of recommended policies
    - Does not try to reduce mobility but future recommendations might

**LOOKING AHEAD**

# LOOKING BACK

- **Year 1 of Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force**
  - Conducted **11** focus groups with community members on the mission and goals of the CSCTF
  - Focused on one of five CSCTF goals
  - Developed practice of constructive conversation
  - Used extensive exploratory process to develop policy
  - Shared analyses with CSCTF and public
  - Held 7 focus groups and hosted 3 community meetings on the draft policies for the CSCTF's fourth goal

# LOOKING AHEAD

## ■ Year 2 of CSCTF

- Need to focus on four remaining CSCTF goals
- Use constructive conversation to develop recommendations
- Integrate CSCTF feedback into other cross-sector projects
- Form committees or work in subgroups to develop recommendations

Potential projects could include:

- Common accountability
- Providing counseling/information/referrals to families for supports and best school fit
- Supporting schools with high churn and large proportions of at risk students
- Master facilities plan
- Grad Pathway efforts
- Safe Passage efforts



**NEXT STEPS**

# NEXT STEPS

- The next CSC Task Force meeting will be on February 28, 2017, 6:00-8:00pm at EducationCounsel- 101 Constitution Ave., NW Suite 900
- Send any word-smithing about the recommendations to Jenn Comey ([jennifer.comey@dc.gov](mailto:jennifer.comey@dc.gov)) by COB Friday, January 27.

# **APPENDIX I: DCPS PLACEMENT OFFICE**

# DCPS PLACEMENT OFFICE

- **Housed in the Office of the Chief of Schools, Youth Engagement Division**
- **Works with students transferring into/within DCPS**
  - Engages with students transferring from charter schools at the charter schools' discretion
- **Services include:**
  - **Visiting Instruction Service (students out of school for medical reasons)**
  - **Connections to Health and Wellness information, Registration information, Transitory Services information, School Options, Community-based resources, etc.**
  - **Coordination of discretionary transfers, victim's transfers, and involuntary transfers**
    - Includes coordinating with MPD, SROs (School Resource Officers), school administration, registrars, etc.

# FOCUS GROUP TAKEAWAYS: DCPS PLACEMENT OFFICE

- **Victim transfer:** there is a specific legal process for these students and there are requirements laid out in DCMR (D.C. Municipal Regulations)
- **Involuntary transfers/expulsions**
  - **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
- **Discretionary transfer:** where there is a non-student victim (e.g., a student having issues in their neighborhood)
- **Whether or not students transfer through the Placement Office comes down to if there is a relationship between the school and the Placement Office**
  - **Some DCPS principal to principal transfers** happen outside of the office
- **State Department students and military students should have a preference**

# **APPENDIX II: SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUPS AND COMMUNITY MEETINGS**

# COMMUNITY MEETING AND FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

## **Community Meeting Summary**

- See handout from [LINK](#)

## **Focus Group Summaries:**

- See separate handout