

DRAFT
Advisory Committee on Student Assignment: Complete Meeting Summary
Meeting #5, February 24, 2014
Thurgood Marshall Center, 1816 12th Street, NW, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Introduction

Deputy Mayor for Education Abigail Smith welcomed Advisory Committee, thanking them for taking on a public role at a number of recent community meetings and carrying the message that the Advisory Committee was actively deliberating together. She acknowledged that this often puts members in the public spotlight and appreciated being able to stand with Committee Members and say that “we” are doing this work.

Michael Aiken and Tiffani Long from Reingold-LINK communications were introduced. DCPS has just contracted with them and they will partner with the DME and the Technical Team to manage the working group engagement events and help co-design a robust working group process. They recently assisted with a boundary process for Arlington Public Schools and also in Memphis. Michael Aiken introduced himself and the company based at 14th and Harvard in the Urban League building.

Agenda and Meeting Goals

The aims for the meeting were stated: (1) consider guiding principles for scenario building; (2) review small group assignments; (3) continue scenario building; (4) discuss the critical path and timeline (see meeting materials for the complete Power Point presentation). Meeting goals were:

- Review guiding principles for scenario building
- Flesh out scenario options
- Identify where policy scenarios have shared and divergent elements.

Members’ Commentary and Questions on Agenda and Meeting Goals

- What about summary notes from the last meeting?
 - Since we just held the second January snow-day make-up meeting four days ago (Thursday the 19th of February), the Technical Team has not had time to get the complete notes together yet.

Guiding Principles

Abigail Smith remarked that the Committee - - and the focus groups - - had spent considerable effort reflecting on Guiding Principles. However, in order to get to the work of the scenarios she did not want the group to spend the meeting on reviewing Guiding Principles.

Consequently, Deputy Smith provided a distillation created by the Technical Team and given to the Committee to use as a working draft to be tested as they consider how they would apply to scenarios:

- ***Equitable access to high quality schools:*** We believe families have the right to a good education independent of economic or geographic circumstances.

- **Parental choice:** We believe families should have the ability to access public schools outside of designated schools assigned by residence.
- **Predictability:** We believe it is important to provide a path of right to families beyond elementary school.
- **Neighborhood schools:** We believe it is important to support the connections between communities and their schools.

The Team considered feedback received from the draft focus group summaries and from community meetings when drafting these statements, but they also assumed they will change. Abigail Smith asked members to refer to this draft and note what might be missing and what goals or definitions might be added. The Committee is expected to continue to refine the Guiding Principles as they test them against the developing scenarios. Abigail Smith noted that people were struggling with the need to define characteristics of “high quality schools”.

Members’ Commentary and Questions on Guiding Principles

- One member asked whether in considering Guiding Principles, the Committee should express what’s possible, as opposed to what describes the current reality? People have talked about it not being the Committee’s job to create quality schools but rather just equitable access to schools.
 - The Deputy Mayor responded that the Committee needs to establish forward-thinking policies but at the same time think about how new policies will actually play out in the next school year. Equitable access, parental choice, predictability and neighborhood schools have continually come up as four core values but there are lots of individual interpretations.
- Another member said that they have heard from the community about work being done at the neighborhood and individual school level, such as the Ward 5 middle school plan and the Ward 6 middle school plan. Should this information be incorporated and considered?
 - Ms. Smith explained that the Committee can draw upon all such information as source material as they flesh out scenarios. The scenarios are a first crack at testing the Guiding Principles; the Committee’s role is to bring in and consider all these conversations as well as the specifics of DCPS plans and policy.
- A third member noted that the focus group participants were a biased set of individuals. How is the Committee to accommodate for that?
 - This Committee needs to refine and endorse the Guiding Principles, to consider them iteratively as they apply to scenarios. The Advisory Committee articulates and evaluates what to bring to the public. The Technical Team asked for instance in the Preliminary Principles about “maximal choice”. We heard from the community that too much choice was not valuable to people, but we did hear that they definitely wanted a measure of choice to be available.

- A Committee member commented that the first three principles are from the point of view of the family whereas the Committee's job is to consider the best interests of the city. They are responsible for all the children in the city.
 - The Deputy Mayor noted that this was an important thing to point out. Technical Team members interjected that many of the people participating in the focus groups were thinking of the city as a whole.
- Another member noted that the Committee is getting close with the Guiding Principles. We realize that you can't trap people without choice. The Ward Two meeting was largely a discussion of equitable access to high quality schools.
- A member repeated the acknowledgement that the focus groups were not statistically representative of the city as a whole. However, over the past few months they are getting the feeling that the Team thinks the impact is more broadly representative.
 - Ms. Smith stated that there is a much better geographic spread now with the addition of one more focus group and more community groups. The Technical Team is not quite so sanguine about the fact that the focus groups are a very highly educated group that is not broadly reflective of the community and also skewed in terms of income.
- A second member wondered if there is a bias toward Ward 3 in the focus groups?
 - A Technical Team member cautioned that different wards in the city generally do not have drastically different educational values, and referred to a statement of one of the Ward 7 focus group participants who asked why people would expect that Ward 7 would want something different for their children than what is available in other wards? But with that said, the people who have already signed up for the working groups appear to have the same skewed distribution as the focus groups; there is a challenge of parity. They will have to talk more about how to use this wealth of content within the process.

Developing Scenario Options

The Deputy Mayor stated that almost every committee member had a chance to take part in one of the trial scenario groups at the January meetings. There were lots of assumptions but the Committee is now in the driver's seat. Committee members can re-select a group they were in before or join a new group. The Committee ended up with six scenarios after the January meetings; the Technical Team had to collapse those to four which are presented on the work-sheet as scenarios A, B, C and D. ¹

¹ An interim summary of the meeting was originally posted omitting the discussion of scenario options. After the preliminary scenarios were announced to the public in early April, this complete summary was posted.

Scenario A Outline: Choice sets at elementary level (just DCPS schools), always have a right to a school within the choice set; geographic & programmatic feeders from ES to MS; middle school choice set, including middle school destination school; magnet schools within comprehensive high schools to attract families; program alignment from middle schools to high schools. They did not talk about high schools or incentivizing charter schools.

Scenario B Outline: Geographical choice sets of about 5 elementary schools; choice sets include only DCPS schools, except in cases where there are too few DCPS schools within a geographic zone to provide safe walkability for elementary students; right to one of the schools in the choice set; out of boundary seats reserved across all schools; retain selective high schools, but disperse them more equitably throughout the city; increase selective admission schools—thematic and test-in. The group explored including charters in choice sets if there is no appropriate DCPS school available in the area.

Scenario C Outline: Guarantee PK4 seats in neighborhood schools; right to attend elementary schools based on address and/or out-of-boundary; Include out-of-boundary set aside for all elementary schools; provide socio-economic weights for out-of-boundary set asides; all schools offer the same, robust core programming - but all with some additional offerings; elementary boundaries combine to create a middle school attendance zone; middle school boundaries combine to create a high school attendance zone; co-locate magnets in comprehensive high schools and middle schools.

Scenario D Outline: PK3-5th grade schools are 90% neighborhood based, with attendance boundaries; 10% out-of-boundary set-aside, but if crowded might be no out-of-boundary; no feeders from elementary into middle school; create new application middle schools; preferences in the lottery could be that you come from a low performing school; sibling; or program alignment; within individual schools could have seats offered by application only.

Members' Commentary and Questions on Developing Scenario Options

- What about the questions in the scenario worksheets?
 - The Team wanted to make the scenarios more coherent so provided some questions that might help to address some of the differences between the four types and help the committee think through all the policy options.
- What is the real difference between scenarios A and B?
 - Scenario B includes out-of-boundary admissions Where Scenario A doesn't. They may not be that different in the way they are described here. The scenarios here describe something like Boston's walk-zones with a mini-lottery between a set of schools. The choice set

could be a geographical set of nearby schools or it could include schools that are not close geographically.

Reports on Further Scenario Development

Scenario A: The group settled on choice sets for elementary schools based on geography with exceptions for programmatic or themed schools. All students enter into a lottery among the choice set of schools with preferences for siblings. There is no out-of-boundary lottery except for programmatic schools that are not available in your choice set. Charters are incentivized to be part of choice sets. Similarly for middle schools, there is a lottery among a choice set of schools. Certain elementary schools would feed into certain middle schools, and guaranteed to attend one of the middle schools within the choice set. Everyone always has to enter a lottery to attend a DCPS school. Students would lose their right to the choice set if a programmatic option was selected.

Scenario B: This scenario also includes choice sets, but this group was still debating whether they should be determined by a radius around the child's home or a radius around the school. There would be a mini-lottery among the schools in the choice set; a 10% set-aside at each school with a preference for students who did not have quality schools available to them within the choice set. There would be a middle school choice set as well with a set of elementary schools feeding into two or three middle schools. Middle and High schools would also include set-asides for out-of-boundary students, but did not determine the exact percentages and mentioned anywhere between 10%-50% at the upper grades. At the high school level there would be lottery set-asides for specialized programs. Charters would be part of the choice sets, but only if they function as a school of right.

Scenario C: The group talked about having PK3 and PK3 by right at neighborhood schools, spending quite a lot of time on this. The thinking is that the entry grades are an important threshold for neighborhood schools in developing community coherency. There might be stand-alone early childhood centers for PK3, PK4 and K where the schools do not have the necessary ground-floor space. There was consensus on having elementary school boundaries related to students' residence in a way to ensure predictability way but there was also much discussion about how to include choice and out-of-boundary rights. There was discussion concerning ways to get to an equitable system of neighborhood schools: providing out-of-boundary is one immediate off-ramp to this end because not allowing for choice would chase people out of DCPS. There might be requirements for having families state a reason for entering into an out-of-boundary lottery. Other possibilities included considering what would incentivize people's support for their neighborhood schools and whether there should be a city-wide cap on charters.

Scenario D: This group had elementary school boundaries, with a 10% set-aside for socio-economic diversity or for children with only low-quality schools in their neighborhoods. Some

city-wide programmatic elementary schools would remain such as Montessori programs or language immersion. At the middle school and high school level there would be no boundaries or feeders and would have an all lottery system. The schools would focus on having universal programmatic quality. There would be sibling preferences, and a preference for children of school employees - - possibly other preferences. Application high schools would not be located in high-income areas.

Critical Path and Timeline for Working Groups

Working groups are being organized around three general high school catchment areas: northeast and northwest, central city, and east of the river. There will be two meetings in each of the areas. The Technical Team strongly advises Committee members to attend and participate in the working groups. The Advisory Committee has one more meeting left (March 25th) before the working groups will be testing out the preliminary scenarios.

Members' Commentary and Questions on Critical Path and Timeline

- A member asked how the Advisory Committee would be able to get to scenarios soon enough for the March meeting. Will there be boundary maps by March 25th? Would the scenarios be too specific or too general to be useful for the working groups?
- Another member suggested that the Advisory Committee needs additional meetings in order to get to more robust scenarios within this timeline. Would people be willing to meet again before March 25th?
 - The Technical Team welcomed the offer from the Advisory Committee to proceed with additional meetings in March. The Team will need to finalize the scenarios, boundaries and feeder patterns – which will be more difficult with choice sets. They have developed a web application called Boundary Planner which allows you to manipulate census block data and will help make the task of determining boundaries much more precise. How to link choice sets of elementary, middle schools and high schools is not clear at the present time. The goal is to have a good draft for discussion at the March 25th Advisory Committee meeting and start working group meetings on April 5th.
- Another member emphasized the importance of having a coherent scenario. It was not at this point clear how coherent the recommendations would be with the policy goals stated in earlier meetings. The Committee needs to understand how everything ties together when the scenarios are presented.
- A member stated that the deadline seems unrealistic. Should the committee consider pushing it all back?

- A member suggested that each of the individual scenario groups meet before March 25th to move the scenarios further along; the Committee spent 30 to 40 minutes tonight just re-orienting themselves – a solid two hour discussion is required. It is all theoretical and conceptual at this point. The Committee needs to get closer to a real understanding of how these scenarios will work operationally.
 - Abigail Smith stated that there were lots of affirmative nods and she thanked the Advisory Committee for their willingness to go to extra meetings. Hopefully each group will be able to provide more detail and rationales to their scenarios with this additional time. Members are welcome to move to a different group but the challenge is in scheduling meetings with your group members.
 - The Technical team will send back to the group a synopsis of all of the scenarios created so far, and place them into a framework that is more consistent in language so they can more easily be compared. Members should look for misconceptions in the synopsis sent out to ensure everything is noted correctly within your scenario.
- A member noted that the Committee is now developing four recommendations. Will the working groups get all of these scenarios?
 - It is unlikely that the Advisory Committee will take four preliminary scenarios out to the public.
- Another member suggested discussing the virtues of the various options. There has been a lot of work getting to this point to just throw out some of the scenarios.
- One member noted that people would be upset if the Advisory Committee presented only one option.
 - Abigail Smith agreed that one scenario seemed insufficient but four seemed to be too many. But thinks the Committee could develop two or three scenarios and make them clear about each element and make sure they could be compared.
- Another member expressed the Committee's need to determine which scenarios best resonate with the community and be able to compare and contrast them all.
 - The protocols used during the working groups are as important as the structure of the options provided during the meetings. We don't expect to engage 100 people in a discussion at the working groups.
- Are you taking steps to get broader participation in the working groups?

- There will be no additional targeted outreach for the NE/NW group as it is already well subscribed. It might be possible to push back the Advisory Committee meeting scheduled in April to May 5th or 6th in order that the Committee is better able to synthesize input from working groups.

The Deputy Mayor thanked the Committee again for their willingness to take part in another round of meetings.

ATTENDING

Co-Chair:

Abigail Smith, Deputy Mayor for Education

Community Representatives:

Maryam Ahranjani, American University

Wilma Bonner, Howard University, retired DCPS principal and assistant superintendent

Ed Davies, Children Youth Investment Trust Corporation

Denise Forte, Leadership for Educational Equity, DCPS parent

Matt Frumin, Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner 3E (ANC), DCPS parent

Heather Harding, The Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation (EdCORE), PCS parent

Faith Hubbard, Ward 5 Council on Education

Ellen McCarthy, urban planning consultant and teacher at GWU/GT

Cathy Reilly, Senior High Alliance of Parents Principals and Educators (SHAPPE)

Evelyn Boyd Simmons, ANC 2F Education Committee; DCPS parent

Eboni-Rose Thompson, Save the Children Organization; Ward 7 Education Council

Marta Urquilla, America Achieves/Results for America; PCS parent (Ward 4)

Martin Welles, labor and employment attorney; Amidon-Bowen PTA

District Agency Representatives:

Josephine Bias-Robinson, DCPS Chief of Family & Public Engagement

Christopher Delfs, Sr. Citywide Planner, DC Office of Planning

Arianna Quinones, Chief of Staff, Office of the Deputy Mayor for HHS

Emily Bloomfield, Member, DC Public Charter School Board

Technical Team

Claudia Lujan, Office of Deputy Mayor for Education

Jennifer Comey, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education

Cecilia Kaltz, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education

Mary Filardo, 21st Century School Fund

Nancy Huvendick, 21st Century School Fund

Austin Nichols, Urban Institute, Senior Research Associate

Graham MacDonald, Urban Institute

Tiffani Long, Reingold LINK, Communications

Michael Aiken, Reingold LINK, Communications

Agency and Technical Staff Members

Iris Bond Gill, Dir. Grants Management & Compliance, OSSE

Clara Hess, Clara Hess, Director, Human Capital & Strategic Initiative, PCSB

Judi Greenberg, Special Assistant, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education

NOT ATTENDING**Co-Chair:**

John W. Hill, Jr., CEO of JHill Group and president of the DC Board of Library Trustees

Community Representatives:

Rev Donald Isaac, East of the River Clergy, Police, Community Partnership and Chair of Interfaith Council

Kamili DeFreitas-Kiros, Achievement Prep Board of Trustees; PCS parent

Dianne M. Piché, Leadership Conference on Civil & Human Rights

Sharona Robinson, Ward 8 Education Council; Ballou HS PTSA

Technical Team

Alex Donahue, 21st Century School Fund

Staff Members

Shanita Burney, DCPS Office of Family & Public Engagement

Sharon Mar, DCPS Office of Family and Public Engagement

Scheherazade Salimi, Chief of Staff, Deputy Mayor for Education