Advisory Committee on Student Assignment: Meeting Summary
November 19, 2013
Thurgood Marshall Center, 1816 12ᵗʰ Street, NW
6:00-8:00 p.m.

Introductions
Advisory Committee Co-chairs, Deputy Mayor for Education Abigail Smith, and John Hill greeted the group and initiated a round of introductions of committee members and staff present.

Meeting Goals
- Reach preliminary agreement on the working principles for the Committee
- Share major questions or concerns with Policy Brief #1
- Review contextual data and specific illustrations of challenges
- Discuss data needed for policy recommendations

Student Assignment Initiative Goals
Co-chair John Hill reviewed the goals of the student assignment initiative and the charge of the student assignment advisory committee (both items had been presented during the first advisory committee meeting).

Members' Commentary and Questions on Committee Charge
- One issue discussed at the previous meeting was the extent to which the charter schools would be affected by or involved in this process of student assignment.

- Perhaps this initiative would be a way for DCPS and the charters to look at school choice and student assignment together since charters are understood to be incubators of new ideas and techniques.

- Others pointed out that during the last meeting, the Committee agreed that student assignment and reviewing the DCPS boundaries were the primary responsibilities of the Advisory Committee – with charter/DCPS collaboration a hoped for secondary outcome.

  - Staff noted that the change would be made to the language in the charge.

- Advisory Committee members are not all coming from the same place - - the diversity of the group is its strength, as it helps us understand how parents feel about possible changes from perspectives all across the city.

Updated Timeline
Deputy Mayor Smith reviewed changes that clarify the timeline. Additions to the time-line make it clear that preliminary recommendations are scheduled for May 2014, and final Committee recommendations will be delivered in July 2014. The DME's recommendations to the Mayor are in August and the Mayor's final plan is due in September, 2014. Input from the

focus groups, working groups and on-line feedback (surveys, engagedc.org) will inform the Advisory Committee's recommendations to the DME and the Mayor and these will occur between October through April, and prior to the preliminary recommendations being issued in May, 2014.

Members' Commentary and Questions
- How will the information from focus groups and working groups be incorporated into the committee's work?
  - Time will be set aside each meeting to share the summary of public input that has been received thus far with all committee members.

Summary of Public Input

The DME explained that a portion of each Committee meeting will be dedicated to understanding public feed-back. The Advisory Committee will receive reports on the input from focus groups, working groups, community meetings and community discussions. These will be summarized and provided to the group and available online on the DME's website. There will be other feedback mechanisms as well to make sure that committee members are aware of the kind of issues being raised. The DME provided a one page summary of outreach and input efforts that have occurred thus far by both the DME and DCPS. The DME also mentioned that they will not go over everything on the summary sheet but instead highlight the main points.

Outreach:
— Efforts to get the word out about the Student Assignment initiative have included an initial letter to parents in October; a press release on the initiative; adding information to the DME website; and flyers on the focus groups distributed through e-mail directives to principals by DCPS and through the Public Charter Board to individual charter LEA. The DME asked DCPS and the PCSB to send parent letters and focus group flyers home with students. There will be targeted outreach for focus groups in Wards 7 and 8. Outreach for working groups will begin in January.

Focus Groups:
— A summary report of participation by ward and by venue for those who signed-up for a focus group was given to the Advisory Committee. Focus Groups have been held so far at the Tenley Library (Ward 3) and Seaton Elementary School (Ward 6); with two focus group sessions being held at each venue in an effort to keep discussion groups small. There has been great demand and we are prepared to do four focus group sessions on Thursday at the Takoma Education Center. The goal is not to turn folks away and also to keep the sessions small enough that participants are able to have more in-depth conversations. Initially the effort was to keep sessions small at Tenley and we capped participation and assigned people to their second or third choice venue. Since then, once we saw how great the demand was, we decided to not cap the number of people who could participate at any particular focus group location.

— Focus groups are not the same as community meetings; the content follows a protocol that is very similar to the exercise that the Advisory Committee has been engaged in using the Guiding Principles worksheet—the aim is to clarify deeply held community values. Good representation from all areas of the city is needed. As a consequence, the technical team will concentrate its outreach for those dates and locations where response has been light—in Wards 7 and 8. The Office of the DME will seek to have a local community group co-sponsor the focus group in an effort to increase participation. Once we have feedback from the focus groups from all wards, there will be a full qualitative analysis of the public input.

Members' Commentary and Questions
- Members stated how some community members felt that they missed their moment to sign-up for the focus group since it was closed so quickly.
  - Once The DME realized the high demand for the focus groups they started to no longer close them and instead hold multiple sessions on the same night.

- A question was raised on whether the committee should be concerned with the number of people who signed-up versus the number who actually show-up?
  - The DME thinks this is probably due to people being eager to sign-up but then too busy to follow through. The DME and the technical team are paying attention to who shows up and what voices are being heard in these focus groups. So the emphasis shouldn't be on the number of people signing-up, but on the voices represented at the focus groups. It is important to have good representation from every ward to ensure that the voices and concerns from those areas of the city are heard. The DME is currently pushing outreach efforts in areas with low participation—in Wards 7 and 8. If after all the focus groups are conducted and the DME feels like they are still missing a huge part of the city, then they may add one more focus group or partner with an organization that is active in that area in an effort to gain more input from the areas with weak representation.

Emails and calls to the Office of the Deputy Mayor
— The dme.studentassignment@dc.gov inquiry e-mail has received and responded to 34 e-mails so far which have been categorized by topic. There has been a range of questions and issues raised by community members including feedback on opportunities to be involved with the process and questions regarding how children in particular schools or geographic area will be affected. The DCPS Critical Response Team (CRT) is fielding telephone calls on student assignment because the DME does not have a hot line. Some questions to the CRT team have included how grandfathering will work, and whether children will have to change schools.

Council Hearing, November 15th

⎯ A council hearing on the Student Assignment and School Boundaries process took place November, 15th. There were 25 witnesses scheduled for the hearing; one person did not show-up. We received a lot of feedback and some issues were very specific to certain neighborhoods and others were raised on the make-up of the Advisory Committee. Based on the feedback received and concerns raised, the DME will take another look at the make-up of the committee and decide if new members will be added.

Members' Commentary and Questions

• Some members requested that the additions or changes to the committee happen sooner rather than later. The concerns raised about the make-up of the committee caused some confusion and doubt for some communities, and perhaps the process of communicating how the committee was formed wasn't as transparent as it could have been.

• Another member asked whether members from the ANCs 2B and 2F would be included as additions?

   o The DME replied that the office will make that decision soon and that their office has notes from conversations with community members after the hearing last Friday that will help them reach out to organizations and ask for their recommendations on potential committee members.

Other Community Meeting:

⎯ The Technical Team had a good meeting with the Ward 7 Education Council's executive board and they are aware of all the other opportunities to engage in this process. The technical team will add to the monthly public outreach report a list of community meetings the Office of the DME has attended.

Community Guide to Conversations about Student Assignment

⎯ The technical team has developed a four page Community Discussion Guide that outlines a discussion template similar to the protocol being used for the focus groups. The Guide asks that any group using the guide provide feedback summaries to the DME's technical team. The Discussion Guide will be translated and distributed widely.

Members' Commentary and Questions on Public Input

• People have contacted Advisory Committee members to meet with them and talk about the Committee's work, for instance one member talked with a group of Capitol Hill parents who would like a survey. Is there a format to submit notes or information from those meetings?

- We would like the Advisory Committee members to start sharing summaries of their conversations with communities so we can capture that input as well and report it out during the portion of the meeting that summarizes public input. Guidelines on how to submit this information will be sent to Committee members. The Office of the DME is willing to share talking points with members, if that is helpful.
- The DME also wants to allow community members to post questions and discuss their concerns without using them or the committee members as intermediaries. The engagedc.org website is estimated to go live at the beginning of December and this site will allow community members to review and comment on Advisory Committee documents and post questions.
- The DME noted that several Committee members have been on radio shows and expressed her appreciation for their role as ambassadors for the Committee.

Committee Breaks into Small Groups to Discuss Guiding Principles
The technical team shared preliminary results from the Advisory Committee members' ratings of the guiding values & principles for elementary age students; however, these results are only preliminary since not all of the members have filled out the values and principles worksheet yet. It was noted that thus far what is being heard from the focus groups is that proximity and neighborhood schools are viewed as high priorities, which differs from the ratings from the Advisory Committee. But these differences are preliminary and not complete since not all focus groups have been conducted yet.

The Advisory Committee was asked to re-convene into the break-out groups from the previous meeting to continue discussing the Guiding Principles worksheet. During the first meeting with the Advisory Committee, members were asked to come to consensus on the values and principles worksheet. However, this time around, the groups were asked to consider points of tension and agreement and discuss why they hold their personal positions. They do not have to come to a consensus. Specifically groups were asked to identify what principles your group considered the most important; identify where there was strong consensus; identify where the group did not share consensus.

Members' Commentary and Questions
- It was noted that in discussion, the word "quality" is loaded as it was as well in the newspaper clippings from 1968 - - we all think of "quality" very differently.

Guiding Principles-Large Group Discussion and Feedback on Policy Brief #1
In an effort to get to the agenda item of reviewing data, the large group discussion on Guiding Principles was postponed. Similarly, any further feedback on Policy Brief #1 should go to 21st Century School Fund directly as there was no time in the current meeting for discussion.

Impact of Current Policy and Practice

The Technical Team presented findings from preliminary data analysis and specific examples of the challenges and confusion with the current student assignment and choice system, as part of the PowerPoint presentation to the Advisory Committee.

Citywide Distribution of Enrollment
The city-wide distribution of public school students enrolled last year (2012-13) throughout the entire city was illustrated by a pie chart. It showed the following distribution: DCPS in-boundary 25%; DCPS out-of-boundary 23%; DCPS Special Ed., Adult Ed. and Alternative schools 6%; DCPS selective high schools 4%; Charter LEA's (including Special Ed., Alternative and Adult Ed.) 42%. It was noted that the DCPS out-of-boundary includes students who are attending feeder schools by right. It was also important to note that this data is based on a point in time and on the 2012 Student Level Education Data (SLED), so these data will not always align 100% to other reports since it is a snapshot in time.

Student Assignment and Choice by Ward
A bar chart illustrated the distribution of all public school students by Wards, and how many students living in that ward attend their in-boundary DCPS schools and public charter schools. It was noted that by far the greatest number of public school students live in Wards 8, 7 and 4 with comparatively low numbers of public schools students in Wards 3 and 2. It was noted that most Ward 3 residents attend their in-boundary school.

Members' Commentary and Questions
- A committee member pointed out that if attending neighborhood in-boundary schools is seen as a high value, then achieving this requires a huge change for much of the city, except for Ward 3, which is an outlier because 80% of students already attend their neighborhood schools.
- There was some discussion about proximity being different than neighborhood schools. For instance in there are parts of the city where schools are in close proximity and student population is dense, students may attend a school near their home but not necessarily attend their in-boundary school. So we also need to look into and obtain data on how far kids are traveling to school.

Confusing Attendance Zones;
Poor Alignment for Walkability;
Closed School Boundaries not Redrawn
Because boundaries of closed schools were not consistently combined with a receiving school boundary, some addresses in the city have three different schools-of-right. Similarly, when boundaries of closed schools were joined with the boundary of a single receiving school some students were left with their school of right being much farther away than another DCPS school where they are considered to be out-of-boundary. The examples provided are not anomalies - - these are a few of many similar situations throughout the city.

Members' Commentary and Questions

- With the school closings, were the number of students who could potentially attend an in-boundary school considered?
  - That was not the case in the 2008 closings, but the potential number of students was taken into consideration during the most recent round of DCPS school closings last spring.

Imbalance in High School Boundaries and Feeders;
Imbalance in Middle School Feeders;
Poorly Aligned Feeder Schools: Roosevelt HS;
H.D. Woodson HS Zone and Feeders
It is important to keep in mind that there are two ways a student has a right to attend a school; they are either assigned based on their address (in-boundary) or based on their feeder pattern.

Feeder patterns are also not balanced; students have the right to continue as part of the feeder rights of the school they attend regardless of whether it is their in-boundary school. There are four very small elementary schools feeding into Johnson Middle School for example, but seven large elementary schools feeding into Deal Middle School. Wilson High School has the largest number of 8th graders feeding from Hardy and Deal. Deal has a strong feeder pattern with many large elementary schools feeding into it, while Johnson Middle School has few feeder schools and schools with lower enrollment.

Wilson's boundary covers about half of the city, whereas Woodson's boundary is smaller than that of many elementary schools. With the closure of its former feeder, Ron Brown Middle School, Woodson now only has Kelly Miller Middle School feeding into it.

Members' Commentary and Questions
- Fifteen years ago Woodson's small boundary made sense because there were more students living in the surrounding neighborhood.

- Woodson's neighborhood is no longer as populous and many of the in-boundary students do not attend Woodson.

- Similarly Roosevelt's enrollment is struggling even though the boundary is much larger than Woodson's. There is not much alignment of feeder elementary schools to their destination high schools. There are two PS-8 schools that feed to Roosevelt and the adjacent MacFarland Middle School was closed last year. So although the elementary schools nearest Roosevelt are very full some currently have no feeder rights to Roosevelt.

- In 1968 a section of MacFarland's boundary was assigned to Deal in order to integrate Deal. Adjusting that boundary 40 years ago might have relieved some crowding at Roosevelt and helped increase enrollment at the under-utilized Wilson, but this now contributes to the other problems we are facing today such as over-crowding at Wilson and not enough students at Roosevelt.

- There are about 2,000 high school age students in the Roosevelt boundary but not many go to Roosevelt. They are in Banneker, Wilson, Ellington, McKinley and School Without Walls primarily; a comprehensive high school with quality academic program options at Roosevelt should make a difference in attracting students. It is important to keep in mind that if every high school student that lives in-boundary for Roosevelt chose to attend Roosevelt, then the school would be overcrowded.

DCPS PS and PK Lottery;
DCPS Lottery Changes
DCPS has a robust out-of-boundary process for K-12th grade. Preschool and pre-kindergarten are not compulsory grades so all available seats are required to be distributed through a lottery. Consequently, there is limited space at these grade levels even for in-boundary students. In addition, there is a huge amount of demand for few seats - - only 29% of students who entered the SY13-14 for the K-12th lottery got their first or second choice school.

Members' Commentary and Questions
- How is the number of DCPS out-of-boundary spaces calculated?
  - The number of DCPS out-of-boundary slots calculated is a joint decision by the principal and the central office. DCPS considers a combination of the capacity of the school (the classroom space available), number of expected returning students, and what principals believe they can provide staff for. Charters have more control because the decision has more to do with each individual school's model for the optimal number of students in each classroom/grade and the number of expected returning students.

- For DCPS, PS and PK are the typical entry level grades for elementary school. But it seems as if DCPS is steering people away when families can't get into the neighborhood school - - and they enroll elsewhere and many times may not go to their in-boundary school. If parents are interested in their neighborhood school, then it seems as though early childhood is a good way to get students into their neighborhood school and DCPS should capitalize on that opportunity.
  - Practically speaking, the member noted that they were not sure if it plays out that way. At some DCPS schools there are preschool and pre-kinder seats available but parents choose to go elsewhere.
  - Further, at some of the over-capacity PS-8th schools, opening up a middle school for the 6th-8th grades would provide more space for early childhood programs at the elementary level.

- At Takoma Ed. Center, where there is a PS classroom, oftentimes children who are in-boundary for nearby Shepherd (with no PS classroom) use the lottery to access the PS classroom at Takoma and are happy with the program - - but then they leave and go to Shepherd because that school feeds to Deal Middle School. Powell

similarly is over-subscribed for early childhood grades but because Powell doesn't feed to Deal, many families enter the lottery at about third grade aiming for Ward 3 schools that feed to Deal. But as the system gets more crowded, desirable Ward 3 schools can no longer accommodate out-of-boundary demand. One alternative path would be to develop strong schools all across the city with clear feeder patterns.

- The issue was raised that every school needs to be a place where parents feel confident in sending their students. This is the situation for Powell, as some families leave around third grade as stated earlier presumably searching for a preferred feeder pattern. So it's hard for parents to invest in schools where they do not like the feeder patterns.

- Is there any correlation between the more than 1700 out-of-boundary places that were not filled and the level of achievement at those schools?
    o The technical team mentioned that they would look into this.

Charter Lottery 2013-2014
Charter schools are required to run a lottery for all available seats when a school has more demand than the seats available. According to the PCSB website for SY13-14:

- There were 1,083 seats available in August 2013
- There were 18,230 names wait listed
- 43 charter schools had no wait lists
- 13 had 10 or fewer names wait listed
- 32 schools had 100 to 901 names wait listed
- 3 schools had 1,000 or more names wait listed (Two Rivers; EL Haynes; Mundo Verde)

This data does not account for duplicates and we know that many families are on multiple waitlists and receive seats at multiple schools for the same student.

Members' Commentary and Questions
- With charters, people often apply to multiple schools and hold onto multiple spots until they are accepted to a school where they really want to go, so these numbers include duplicates.

- The DME briefly described the new common lottery system for 2014-15. The common lottery system will have only one application for all DCPS schools with K-12 out-of-boundary seats; all DCPS PK3 and PK4 seats, all DCPS selective high schools, and over 40 charter PK-12 LEAs (or 90% of all charter PK-12th seats).
    o The common lottery will use an algorithm which matches students based on the number of spaces at each school; sibling, proximity, and other preferences; and each student's choices. When there are more students than spaces at a school, students who have a preference (such as a sibling preference) will be the first to be offered spaces. Then, random selection

decides which other students will be offered spaces. Students will be matched with no more than one school. Families will rank their top 12 school choices in their preferred order. Unfortunately, common lottery data will not be available in time to use for this process, so we will have to use last year's lottery data. We look forward to the data coming out of the first year of the common lottery because it will be much more comprehensive and will include demand and choice across both sectors.

- It was noted however that the increased clarity of the process does not necessarily increase the number of good schools.

- How creative can the Advisory Committee be in its recommendations? Do we have to take the current situation as it is or can we be imaginative about the possibilities such as improving the quality of schools? For instance, could we suggest opening up a school like MacFarland Middle School in order to make a feeder pattern that works for Roosevelt?

- How are we to relieve crowding if we can't recommend building up programs at other schools to provide real opportunity? Does that go beyond the scope of the Committee's charge? This is a real quandary because if this exercise is too limited then where are we [in solving these problems]? There are realistic constraints. Why change the boundaries if parents can simply ignore boundaries? You cannot easily influence parents or force them to go to certain schools. How to change behavior is the quandary.
    o In response to this comment, the DME stated that yes we should imagine the world as it could be but we should also consider actual, realistic, data driven ways to get to a more perfect state of affairs. Think of a path aligned to the guiding principles. We are also going to have to create scenarios that build from different visions.
    o The DME continued and said that the challenge is to present scenarios that are viable given the realities of the current situation. We will wrestle with many ideas together. One question is how to align this process with DCPS' efforts to improve programs; DCPS may propose program changes. The Chancellor sees this Committee's work as an opportunity to push this discussion forward. We won't be able to fix everything with this process, but we should help be the engine of change that allows us to get closer to our ideal state of affairs.

Discussion of Data Needed
The Advisory Committee was asked to provide suggestions for data they would like to see that would inform them and help make decisions about this process.

- Define the city-wide schools in DCPS.

- Provide student mobility and distance travelled by grade level; all data should be provided with distinctions by grade levels when possible. It is also a good idea to break-out pre-K and 3 year old preschool data since the behaviors of those students are likely to differ than those in K-12th grade.
- Provide the percentage of students by race and by school boundary, and compare that to the percentage of students by race who actually attend their in-boundary public schools.
- Provide us with how many students attend schools, distributed by ward. Look at the data points for preschool and pre-kinder enrollment with respect to how many seats are available and where and who gets in.
- Find out if there is any correlation between the more than 1700 out-of-boundary places that were not filled and the level of achievement at those schools.
- More robust wait list data would be desirable.

The Committee was asked to provide other suggestions for data via email. The technical team will send out a list of what we heard from Committee members today so you can let us know what we are missing.

Next Steps
- Review meeting notes before public posting on www.DME.dc.gov
- Read Policy Brief #2: Other Cities
- Email Claudia.lujan@dc.gov brief descriptions of your meetings with community groups; she will send an email with more details.
- Email technical team with any data questions.

Attendees
Co-Chairs:
- Abigail Smith, Deputy Mayor for Education
- John W. Hill Jr., JHill Group; President of the DC Board of Library Trustees

Community Representatives:
- Wilma Bonner, Howard University; Retired DCPS Principal and Assistant Superintendent Ed Davies, DC Children & Youth Investment Trust Corp.; Crossroads Academy Public Charter School Board
- Denise Forte, Leadership for Educational Equity; DCPS parent
- Matt Frumin, Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner (ANC) 3E; DCPS parent
- Heather Harding, The Education Consortium (EdCORE); George Washington University; PCS parent
- Faith Hubbard, Ward 5 Council on Education; DC Board of Library Trustees
- Rev. Donald Isaac, East of the River Clergy, Police, Community Partnership, Inc.; Interfaith Council
- Kamili Kiros, Achievement Prep Board of Trustees; PCS parent

- Ellen McCarthy, Urban Planning Consultant; Urban Planning Program at Georgetown University
- Dianne Piche, Leadership Conference on Civil & Human Rights
- Cathy Reilly, Senior High Alliance of Parents Principals and Educators (SHAPPE)
- Evelyn Boyd Simmons, ANC 2F Education Committee Co-Chair; DCPS parent
- Marta Urquilla, America Achieves/Results for America; PCS parent

District Agency Representatives:
- Josephine Bias-Robinson, DCPS Chief of Family & Public Engagement
- Emily Bloomfield, Public Charter School Board Member
- Kimberly Driggins, Deputy Director, DC Office of Planning
- Ariana Quinones, Chief of Staff, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services

Technical Team:
- Jennifer Comey, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education
- Alex Donahue, 21st Century School Fund
- Mary Filardo, 21st Century School Fund
- Judi Greenberg, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education
- Nancy Huvendick, 21st Century School Fund
- Cecilia Kaltz, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education
- Shelton Lee, Bintech Systems/21st Century School Fund
- Claudia Lujan, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education
- Austin Nichols, Urban Institute

Staff:
Clara Hess, DC Public Charter School Board
Sharon Mar, DCPS

Not Attending
Community Representatives:
- Maryam Ahranjani, American University Washington College of Law; Marshall Brennan Project
- Bobby White, Burrville ES LSAT member; DCPS grandparent; former DCPS parent

Staff:
- Iris Bond-Gill, OSSE