

DRAFT Recommendations

Student Advisory Committee on Student Assignment and School Choice

May 19, 2014

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Advisory Committee Members

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Introduction

In October 2013, the Deputy Mayor of Education announced a process to revise DCPS school boundaries and feeder patterns, as part of a broader look at public school student assignment policies, for the first time in nearly half a century. An Advisory Committee was formed and charged with helping to develop student assignment and school choice policies that provided clarity, fairness, predictability, and equitable access to high quality school options at locations that made sense for families.

Specifically, the DME asked us to:

- clarify what rights and responsibilities families and schools have regarding access to public schools;
- update feeder relationships between DCPS elementary, middle, and high schools to ensure a clear and coherent path through the grade levels;
- ensure that the DCPS boundaries align to the DCPS facility capacity and projected population of students; and
- explore opportunities to bridge student assignment and choice policies across DCPS and charter schools.

We, the Advisory Committee, are humbled by the complexity of planning issues, the responsibility to reach those who will be affected, the challenge of how things have been done in the past, and the need to make decisions and recommendations now that will both affect and prepare for the future of our city.

After 8 months of intense study and citywide community engagement, these are our draft recommendations. We look forward to further engagement from the public on these issues, as we prepare to finalize our recommendations to the Mayor late this summer. We know that your ideas, creativity, insight and information will help foster a District of Columbia in which students and families have equitable access to high quality education in sustainable communities.

The “Big Picture”

Public schools are part of the fabric of our communities. The way families access public schools (student assignment and choice policy) and the quality, adequacy and equity of the distribution of schools are key factors affecting student success and whether or not families with school age children chose to live or stay within the District of Columbia.

The District has not undertaken a comprehensive review of its student assignment policies, including DCPS school attendance boundaries and feeder patterns, since 1968. Meanwhile, DCPS schools and public charter schools have opened and closed, and since this time, the city’s population has both declined and begun to grow again. As a result, the current system is confusing, not predictable, and does not provide equal and certain access for families. In addition, transportation challenges add unnecessary strain to families and DCPS.

The goal of the school assignment policy process has been to review current policies and discuss what we as a community can do to make it better. While we were not tasked with “improving the schools”,

we were tasked with improving a key aspect of the school system, which must always have as the ultimate goal to support and improve the schools. We are all highly invested—both professionally and personally—in the future of our system and our city, and we have tremendous collective understanding of the history, present, and future of public schools in the District. Accordingly, we have made every effort to put forth a set of policy recommendations that support continuing school improvement across the District.

The Advisory Committee identified and considered important factors when developing its recommendations for student assignment and school choice in the District of Columbia. Factors such as the quality of educational opportunities, the diversity of school enrollments, and their connection to neighborhoods and communities are all critical components of school and community success.

This is hard. But is a critically important task for our ever-changing city.

Over the last eight months, with the support of the DME and DCPS, the Advisory Committee has received volumes of existing and newly commissioned research and reviewed extensive data analysis, in order to have the best possible understanding of these issues. This research was supplemented by an extensive public engagement effort that included focus groups, community working groups, online engagement through EngageDC.org, and hundreds of community meetings in every corner of our city.

Based on our extensive research, engagement and active debate, the Advisory Committee is proposing a core system of neighborhood elementary schools and geographically based feeder patterns through high school. This core student assignment system seeks to support the ongoing improvement of the quality of education in the District of Columbia by:

- creating a transparent and predictable system that will support the short- and long-term positive growth of all DCPS schools;
- re-establishing the valued connection between school and neighborhood, and encouraging families and community members to claim ownership of their neighborhood public schools;
- avoiding disruption through “grandfathering” provisions designed to buffer the immediate impact on current students and families.

In addition to this core system of neighborhood schools and geographic feeder patterns, the Advisory Committee is proposing a complementary set of policies to provide access to schools other than a student’s zoned schools, and continuity of that access throughout a geographic or programmatic feeder pattern. These policies seek to support the ongoing improvement of the quality of education in the District of Columbia by:

- Providing access for students to specialized programming not available in every school
- Allowing for more racial and socioeconomic diversity in schools than current housing patterns provide for
- Ensuring ongoing predictability for families who access schools outside their geographic feeder pattern

Finally, perhaps most promising, yet politically difficult, the Advisory Committee is proposing that the District of Columbia change its process and system for making decisions about the opening, closing, location, expansion and capital investment of all public schools—both DCPS or charter. This recommendation seeks to advance education quality and equity in the District by:

- encouraging stable relationships of families and communities with both DCPS and charter schools through better planning;
- requiring that the planning and decision making process incorporate what is best for a community and the District, not just the school operators, either DCPS or charter LEAs;
- ensuring school siting decisions are linked to citywide, neighborhood and school specific housing, transportation, health, and economic development priorities and concerns.

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Advisory Committee Draft Recommendations

Access to DCPS Early Childhood Education

The objective of the early childhood recommendations is to extend the predictability of access for families to early childhood education in neighborhood schools that are close to home. It is also to create less student mobility, by giving families the opportunity to start in their neighborhood school at the entry level grade, rather than needing to start early childhood in one school and move to their DCPS neighborhood school at kindergarten.

DCPS Early Childhood Access Recommendations	Dates?
(1) Families residing in zones for Title I DCPS schools shall have access by right to PK3 and PK4 seats in their zoned DCPS school, provided they register by March 1 (or by the first round deadline for My School DC)	2015-16
(2) Families residing in zones for Non-Title I DCPS schools shall have access by lottery to PK3 and PK4 seats based on program availability and capacity.	Current Policy
(3) Families residing in zones for Non-Title I DCPS schools shall have access by right to PK4 seats in their zoned DCPS school.	Phased 2016-20
(4) Families shall have access by lottery to out of zone DCPS PK3 and PK4 seats based on program availability and capacity.	Current Policy

There are implementation concerns associated with the building capacity of DCPS schools to meet the level of demand for PK3 and PK4 classrooms. Phasing may include Phase 1: expand PK3 and PK4 rights to families in boundaries where schools serve high percentage of “at risk” populations; Phase 2: expand rights to families in boundaries of all Title I schools; and Phase 3: expand PK4 rights to families in all DCPS zoned elementary schools.

By-Right Access to DCPS Schools through Attendance Zones

The objective of public school attendance zones is to give families a predictable and clear pathway for access to public schools in their communities. It is also to facilitate the least onerous travel time for families and students. Finally, it is also designed to connect families and communities to schools so that there is a clear invitation and right associated with a school to support and engage in the quality of the zoned schools.

DCPS Elementary, Middle and High School Attendance Zone Recommendations	
(5) Kinder through 5 th grade students shall be zoned for and have access by right to a single DCPS PK-5 or a DCPS PK-8 school.	Phase-In
(6) Where the zoned DCPS PK-5 or PK-8 school is not within 1 mile walking distance from the family's residence, then the District of Columbia shall either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) provide transportation to the zoned school; b) provide free metrobus for a parent or guardian to accompany the elementary age child to school; or c) designate a proximity preference to these children to any public school in the common lottery. 	Phase-In
(7) 6 th through 8 th grade students shall be zoned for and have access by right to a single DCPS school offering 6-8 th grade,	Current Policy
(8) 9 th through 12 th grade students shall be zoned for and have access by right to a single DCPS high school.	Phase-In
(9) DCPS and public charter school students in PK through 12 th grade shall have free use of Metrobus to travel to and from school.	Current Policy
(10) 9 th through 12 th grade students shall have free use of Metrorail to travel to and from a public school (currently students already have reduced Metrorail fare).	2015

The challenges associated with the geographic zoned system are structured into the natural and man-made geographic barriers in the City—the Anacostia River; Rock Creek Park; the National Mall and Capitol. These major areas and the transportation system of roads and public transit have provided significant divisions by income and race that student assignment policy works within.

By Right Access to DCPS Schools through Feeder Pathways

The objective of feeder pathways is threefold. The first is to encourage continuity for academic and program progress when students matriculate from one level or type of school to another. The second objective is to provide students who have attended school together to remain together, if they choose to. The third objective is to enable greater economic, racial and ethnic diversity in secondary schools.

Feeder Pathways Recommendations	
(11) DCPS elementary students shall have access by right to the middle school designated as a next level school in the geographic feeder pattern for the elementary school they complete, regardless of whether the students live in the attendance zone of the	Current Policy

designated middle school.	
(12) DCPS middle grade students shall have access by right to the high school designated as a next level school in the geographic feeder pattern for the middle school they complete, regardless of whether the students live in the attendance zone of the designated high school.	Current Policy
(13) DCPS students shall have access by right to the designated next level school in the programmatic feeder pattern for the specialized program/school they complete.	Phase-In

The challenges associated with geographic and programmatic feeder pathways is that changing a feeder pattern is essentially a major boundary shift, so as a means to affect crowding or under-utilization, it involves major boundary changes.

Access through Lottery

The objective of a lottery is to fairly allocate seats to families who are seeking an option different than their DCPS zoned public school. The lottery can be used to increase diversity in neighborhood zoned schools, to increase walkability for families whose zoned school is more than 1 mile away, and to ensure that “at risk” students have a better chance at getting access to high demand, zoned schools.

Lottery Recommendations	
(14) Families have a right to apply for seats in out of zone DCPS and charter schools through a unified, fair and transparent lottery process.	Current Policy
(15) Families of students designated “at risk” shall have priority in the lottery for seats in DCPS and PCS schools.	Phase-In
(16) Siblings of currently enrolled students in a DCPS or PCS school shall have priority in the lottery for seats in that school.	Current Policy
(17) DCPS shall set aside at least 10% of seats in a zoned elementary school for out of zone students.	2015
(18) DCPS shall set aside at least 15% of the seats in a zoned middle school for out of zone students.	2015
(19) DCPS shall set aside at least 20% of the seats in a zoned high school for out of zone students.	2015
(20) Elementary grade students who are not within 1 mile walking distance of their DCPS zoned school, shall be given proximity preference to a DCPS or charter school, if they are closer.	2015

The challenge of the lottery from the perspective of families is when too many of the high quality public options are only available with a low probability for getting access. It is this situation which drives families to move around in elementary or middle schools to be positioned to get into a feeder pathway which they want to participate in, reducing engagement in “downstream” feeder schools and increasing mobility within District public schools.

Specialized School, Continuation and Transfer Rights

The objective of specialized school and continuation rights is to encourage stable relationships for students in their schools, but also to provide some flexibility in the case of over-crowding, so that schools can limit re-enrollment of students who lived in boundary, but moved.

Recommendations on Continuing Access to Zoned and Specialized Schools	
(21) Students in zone for a school-wide dual language elementary school shall have the right to attend a non-dual language school designated as the alternative to the specialized school for grades PK-1. For students in grade 2 and above, they are assigned to the non-dual language school unless they are able to demonstrate proficiency in the target language.	Phase-In
(22) Students whose place of residence changes from in zone to out of zone shall have the right to continue attending the school through the final grade level offered by the school when the school’s utilization rate is less than 85%.	2015

Conditions for Success

The objective of the next series of recommendations is to identify some of the elements of educational program and facilities planning that are critical to the implementation and success of the District of Columbia system of public schools. Having an adequate and high quality system of public schools, not just an ever changing “supply” of public schools that change locations, leadership, management, and governance was a dominant theme throughout the city over the course of the engagement.

DC Public Educational Planning	
(23) Amend D.C. Code § 38-1802.03 on the process for approving or denying public charter school petitions and the Multiyear Facilities Master Plan of D.C. Code § 38-2803 to ensure that the plan and approval process includes provisions for coordinated opening, closing, relocation, siting, expansions and contractions of DCPS and public charter schools.	2015
(24) Ensure code § 38-280 requiring a comprehensive multiyear facilities master plan for all DCPS and public charter schools is prepared by the Mayor and submitted to the Council for review and approval in accordance with the provisions of the code.	Current Policy
(25) DCPS shall establish a public process whereby specialized and selective schools are proposed, considered and decided, as part of a regularly developed and maintained educational plan.	2015
(26) Public school capacities shall be evaluated annually and updated prior to submission of the next year enrollment projections for budgeting.	2015
(27) If a DCPS school is projected to be at 90% or greater utilization according to its updated capacity and the next year projections, work with the school and community to evaluate the school specific boundary population, feeder school enrollments, where applicable, in-boundary participation rates, charter enrollments in the vicinity, and 5 to 10 year population projections for the boundary and its adjacent boundaries (or feeders) to prepare a recommendation on whether any action on boundaries, feeder pathways, building expansion, grade configuration, or other building utilization may be required within a 3-5 year time frame.	2016
(28) If a DCPS school is projected to be at 60% or less utilization, according to its updated capacity and the next year projections, work with the local school and community to evaluate the school specific boundary population, in-boundary participations rates, charter enrollments in the vicinity, and 5 to 10 year population projections for the boundary and its adjacent boundaries to prepare a recommendation on whether any action on boundaries, building expansion, grade configuration, or other building	2016

utilization may be required within a 3-5 year time frame.	
(29)In 2022, and every ten years thereafter, the city shall undergo a comprehensive review of student assignment policies, including school boundaries and feeder patterns.	2015

The first challenge to implementing the recommendations for city level public education planning and approvals is the resistance to external controls by both DCPS and the Public Charter School Board. The second is the need to for building capacity in DC government for ongoing educational and facilities planning.

Adequate School Supply

The objective of these recommendations is to ensure there is always access to the high demand zoned schools from families from throughout the District of Columbia. However, it is also critical that the District align its capital projects to ensure that it is prepared to meet the demographic changes occurring in the District. The population projections and the impact analysis of how boundary and feeder pattern policy and changes affect school utilization indicate the need for additional capacity in specific parts of the District. The analyses of the distribution of DCPS specialized and selective schools and programs have also indicated the urgent need to address the need for more specialized and selective programs and/or schools.

Recommendations to Ensure Adequate Capacity	
(30)DCPS shall ensure that there is an equitable distribution of specialized schools and programs for STEM, arts integration, IB and dual language at elementary and middle schools as part of a regularly developed and maintained educational plan.	Phase-In
(31)Specialized (non-selective) schools shall be neighborhood schools with boundaries unless there is ample capacity in adjacent DCPS neighborhood schools to serve the same grades. If DCPS needs capacity for students, then the specialized school can be required to relocate, or convert to a neighborhood school and offer a non-specialized strand, or convert to a neighborhood school and pair with a non-specialized school to offer the traditional grade level program.	Phase-In
(32)DCPS shall increase early childhood capacity to serve DCPS zoned schools in support of expanded rights to PK3 and PK4.	Phase-In
(33)For the five new schools proposed in the draft geographic feeder pattern chart – DCPS must work with the affected communities on developing an implementation and capital plan for opening these sites.	2014-2015

Population estimates indicate a substantial growth at the early grades in Wards 1 and 4. Currently, in Ward 4 there are no stand-alone middle schools but instead the schools serve grades PK through 8th. In

order to ensure capacity at schools to serve the growing population, DCPS can open a stand-alone middle school and open up capacity at the elementary schools. Well-planned investments in middle schools have the capacity to save operating and capital funds. Using the schools designed for middle schools, rather than upgrading elementary schools to serve middle grades athletic, science, and multi-purpose needs also reduces the capital costs associated with the phase 2 and 3 scope of work for modernization of the PK3-8th grade campuses. Since DCPS has capacity in most of its middle schools, ensuring the programming that aligns to capacity should be a high priority.

Proposed Elementary Boundaries: Round 2

The following recommendations are the changes to the DCPS elementary school attendance zones. The changes are designed to ensure that every DC family has one elementary school within walking distance with sufficient capacity to meet the 3 to 5 year attendance zone demand. A first version of new elementary school boundaries was released for public comment in April 2014. This version was prepared in response to input and continued analysis of enrollment patterns and population projections. These Round 2 proposed revisions will also be changed in response to input from the last round of community meetings. (see Proposed Elementary Boundaries: Round 2 Table of Data and Notes)

Recommendations for Feeder Pathways

The feeder pathways are established to provide geographic, program and academic continuity and access. It is also a system through which DCPS can affect the crowding or under-utilization of its secondary schools.

ANACOSTIA HIGH SCHOOL		
Ketcham ES	Kramer MS	Anacostia HS
Moten ES		
Orr ES		
Randle Highlands ES		
Savoy ES		
Stanton ES		
Nalle ES	Sousa MS	
CW Harris ES		
Beers ES		
Kimball ES		
Plummer ES		

BALLOU HIGH SCHOOL		
Hendley ES	Hart MS	Ballou HS
King ES		
Leckie ES		
Simon ES		
Patterson ES		
Garfield ES		
Malcolm X	Johnson MS	
Turner ES		

WOODSON HIGH SCHOOL		
Houston ES	Kelly Miller MS	Woodson HS
Aiton ES		
Burrville ES		
Drew ES		
Smothers ES		
Thomas ES		
N/A	New Application MS	

CARDOZO HIGH SCHOOL		
Cleveland ES	Shaw MS	Cardozo HS
Garrison ES		
Marie Reed ES		
Ross ES		
Seaton ES		
Thomson ES		
Tubman ES	Columbia Hts MS (Dual Language Program Strand)	Cardozo HS
H.D. Cooke ES		
School Without Walls @Francis-Stevens PS-8		Cardozo HS

DUNBAR HIGH SCHOOL		
Bunker Hill ES (Plan for conversion back to PS-5th)	Brookland MS	Dunbar HS
Burroughs ES (Plan for conversion back to PS-5th)		
Noyes ES (Plan for conversion back to PS-5th)		
Langdon ES (Plan for conversion back to PS-5th)		
Wheatley ES (Plan for conversion back to PS-5th)	McKinley Tech. Ed. Campus (6-8)	Dunbar HS
Langley ES (Plan for conversion back to PS-5th)		
Walk Jones PS-8th		Dunbar HS

EASTERN HIGH SCHOOL			
Maury ES	Eliot-Hine MS	Eastern HS	
Miner ES			
Payne ES			
School-within-School (citywide school with no boundary)			
Capitol Hill Montessori @Logan PS-8 (citywide school with no boundary)			
Browne PS-8			
Brent ES	Jefferson Acad. MS		
Tyler ES			
Amidon-Bowen ES			
Van Ness ES			
J.O. Wilson ES	Stuart-Hobson MS		
Watkins ES			
Peabody PK-K (<i>via Watkins</i>)			
Ludlow-Taylor ES			

COOLIDGE HIGH SCHOOL			
Brightwood ES (Assumes Conversion to Elementary)	NEW North MS	Coolidge HS	
Takoma ES (Assumes Conversion to Elementary)			
Whittier ES (Assumes Conversion to Elementary)			
La Salle-Backus ES (Assumes Conversion to Elementary)			

ROOSEVELT HIGH SCHOOL		
Barnard ES	MacFarland MS	Roosevelt HS
Truesdell ES (Assumes Conversion to Elementary)		
Powell ES		
Bruce-Monroe ES		
Raymond ES		
Oyster-Adams EC		
West EC		

WILSON HIGH SCHOOL		
Bancroft ES	Deal MS	Wilson HS
Janney ES		
Lafayette ES		
Murch ES		
Shepherd ES		
Hearst ES		
Eaton ES	Hardy MS	
Hyde/Addison ES		
Key ES		
Mann ES		
Stoddert ES		

Citywide Schools (no boundary)	
Capital Hill Montessori at Logan EC	SWW HS
School Within a School ES	Ellington HS
Banneker HS	Phelps HS
McKinley HS	
CHEC HS	

PROGRAMMATIC FEEDER PATTERN

ELEMENTARY	MIDDLE	HIGH
Dual-Language Programs		
Powell DL Program	MacFarland DL Program	Roosevelt DL Program
Bruce-Monroe ES		
Bancroft ES		
Cleveland DL Program		
Marie Reed DL Program		
Tyler DL Program		
N/A	CHEC MS	
Oyster-Adams EC		
STEM Programs		
N/A	McKinley MS	Woodson HS
IB Programs		
Thomson ES	Jefferson MS	Eastern HS
Turner ES		
N/A	Eliot-Hine MS	
Shepherd ES	Deal MS	