

## **Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force: Breakout Group Call #1: Entry, Transfer, and Exit Policies**

**Date & Time:** Thursday, October 13, 1:00-2:00pm

**Facilitators:** Catherine Peretti and Jennifer Comey

**Note-taker:** Hannah Holliday

**Participants:** Caryn Ernst, Irene Holtzman, Melissa Kim, Emily Lawson, Bethany Little, Anthony Williams, Karen Williams, Darren Woodruff, Alejandra Vallejo

### **Call Notes:**

The facilitators directed the breakout group members to begin discussing the entry, transfer, and exit policy brief by starting at the beginning of the brief and examining the outcomes of the policy (as listed in the brief).

#### *Discussion about the Description and Purpose section*

- The first 4 outcomes are about school choice; the group didn't write these policies with the intention of the policies being about choice. The priority order should be reversed (the most pressing priority should be mobility, which is lower on the list of outcomes.)
- The fifth outcome (Reduce mid-year transfers, particularly for high-churn schools) can't be a goal if the group doesn't have the data described in number six (Better understand why students transfer, exit, or enter the public school system). This task force member opposes limiting choice without being able to understand why students are making the choices they are making (qualitative and quantitative data).
- The main goal should be more data collection at this stage. The District is trying to implement a variety of policies to address mobility and more equitably share the enrollment of new mid-year students (for instance, LEA Payment Initiative). Since that's the case, the group could implement data collection now for this upcoming school year, and then phase in the other policies over time giving each policy a chance to play out so the group understands what works and what doesn't.
- It was not clear to one of the task force members that the goal (number 5) is to reduce the number of students who enter mid-year. Instead it seems like our goal should be to more equitably share the distribution of mobile students among a greater number of schools.
- There are a certain number of students moving into the school system; with this new centralized process they will have a greater number of schools from which to select and these students will be less concentrated in only a few schools. This will spread out the impact of mid-year entries and transfers.
- Assuming that the number of enterers and transfers stays the same, it should be spread out among schools; the second point of the brief is to reduce the number of enterers and transfers.
- The point about reducing the number of transfers should not be included in the brief yet.

*Facilitator question:* How would the group collect the information?

- DME or OSSE could collect data.

The facilitators provided the following numbers to the group:

- 3,500 transfers and 2,100 new students entering into public schools after October 5.
- Schools that are taking on the transfers after October 5 are disproportionately DCPS schools because of our current structures.

The facilitator summed up some of the feedback on the brief so far, noting that the language in the brief needs to be careful that the group is clear in its use of the term “enterers” and “transfers” and not to use “transfers” to apply to all mid-year movers.

The group agreed to remove the outcome “Reduce mid-year transfers, particularly for high-churn schools” from the brief.

- More information is necessary before setting a hard and fast policy overall.

The facilitators noted that all policy options in the document are open for discussion; the goal is to see if there’s anything the group feels comfortable about taking to the community as a proposal.

### ***Discussion about Option 1***

The facilitators read the first option (centralized citywide process parameters for students who enter, transfer, and exit mid-year) and asked if there were concerns about restricting families moving for any reason.

- There shouldn’t be limitations on transfer as a general rule.
- The office has to be an information/data repository. The office shouldn’t have the ability to vet and reject a transfer because it could lead to increased dropout rates.
- One task force member questioned how well equipped the office handling this process will be? What ensures that schools are able to relay important information?

A facilitator posed the question, “How might this affect in-boundary transfers?”

- It would have to change the My School DC system so that the mid-year entry and transfer process includes both neighborhood schools and lottery schools in order to facilitate and track transfers into the neighborhood school.
  - If My School DC is not going to include neighborhood schools in their application process, then DME should figure out how to include transfers into in-boundary schools in this centralized mid-year entry and transfer office.
  - My School DC has not required applications for in-boundary schools to date because the general consensus has been to make it as easy as possible to access your by-right school. You don’t need to apply; you have a right to it, so why require an application only for better data tracking?
- Some students face barriers to enrolling in neighborhood schools; it would be beneficial to having someone centrally manage this, particularly at the high school level. It seems more

complicated than it would be if My School DC were doing the enrollment process. It should be as easy to enroll in a neighborhood school as it is to apply in the lottery.

- For in-boundary schools, there is no application; would the website have to have an option you could select for neighborhood in-boundary schools? It could be a feature that gets “turned on” mid-year when these transfers would be happening, potentially.

The facilitators made a note of the group’s general agreement with having a central office so long as the process is impartial and done well.

*Comments:*

- Principals shouldn’t be able to negotiate mid-year transfers outside of this central process. If principals can work with other principals to place a mid-year transfer, it bypasses the whole system.
  - What if the transfer that the principals make is in agreement with the family’s choice?
    - That’s not fair and equitable and good for the students. It should be comprehensive if we do it.

A facilitator noted that this comment brings up the issue of waitlists and the concept of hardship, which could be interrelated. The facilitator also stated that the group needs to think through the current system of waitlists and asked the following questions: “Can there be a situation in which a student can jump a waitlist? If principals can resolve a hardship in the case of bullying, etc. can this be a part of the transfer process?”

*Comments:*

- Hardship transfers should not be dealt with outside of the office; principals should work with the placement office consistently. This is also separate from the issue of a round-robin lottery system for placing transfers.
- It could be additionally traumatic to interface with an unknown office to transfer a student in the event of a hardship. Could principals work with the central office? What if there was a way to facilitate the transfer where it doesn’t have to touch the student?
  - It is fine if the principal is the touch point or acts as the liaison between the office and the family. There would just need to be some sort of confirmation that the office is executing upon the family’s wishes.
- Would the office include every grade and every type of school, including in-boundary transfers?
  - The office has to be comprehensive.
  - Does this include special schools? What about adult and alternative schools?
    - All schools should go through the same channel, including DCPS selective schools.
    - Adult schools should not be included. Anything central would be a huge barrier for them because of their different programmatic timelines.

- Coupling the transfer office with reengagement is a good way to get disengaged youth into programs.
- Should charter schools be able to opt in? Participation in the centralized transfer process could be one of the requirements of participation in the My School DC lottery process.
- It should include anyone that's taking in students mid-year, even if they don't participate in My School DC (e.g. LAMB). Whoever is managing the process would see what seats are available.
- A possible question for the community could be "Is the benefit of collecting information through a central office enough to offset the possible risk of making enrollment hard, encouraging drop out, etc.?"

### ***Discussion about Option 2***

The facilitators read the second option on the brief (Hardship transfer parameters).

#### *Comments:*

- The definition of hardship in the brief doesn't include kids who are expelled or counseled out of their schools. Expulsions should be included because we shouldn't expect just DCPS schools to enroll students mid-year who were expelled from charters.
  - If expelled students are included in the definition, then this plan should also include programs or seats for students who are expelled. They need specific programs. The facilitators discussed how Luke C Moore, Washington Metropolitan, and Kingsman Academy are geared for expelled students. One of the task force members stressed that these programs should be located across the city.
  - It is not possible to mandate that charters accept expelled students in general.
    - Dealing with expelled students across sectors creates a whole different topic for discussion.
- The office would not be able to deny a transfer if the school has gone through the expulsion process—those decisions are typically initiated by the school, not the family, like a hardship transfer would be; the expulsion process has its own due process.
- Where are expelled students supposed to go? Are their neighborhood schools just taking all of them?
  - There are several programs; DCPS and charter schools can take in students (e.g., Luke C Moore, Washington Metropolitan, and Kingsman Academy).
- The NOLA model might work (expelled students are placed in one of three alternative programs) because DC has programs in the city that could take on the students rather than just having them go back to their neighborhood school.

A facilitator sums up the ideas, as the group is willing to discuss the idea of a broad cross-sector placement for students and is prepared to figure out how to work with students in these situations.

A group member offered a point of information: there is an additional hearing for expelled students before they are placed at a DCPS alternative program.

*Comments:*

- DC should build programs that serve expelled students and that the best possible outcome of this would be the development of behavioral programs for these students.
- It is not possible to create a process for a program that does not yet exist.
- DCPS's C.H.O.I.C.E. program is an alternative program for long-term suspensions; Kingsman Academy accepts students mid-year and is a charter school. (Point of clarification from DME staff: DCPS's C.H.O.I.C.E. MS/HS program is an alternative education program designed for students who are in a long-term suspension or expulsion status due to an infraction of the Student Discipline Code of Conduct.)

The facilitators noted that the DME staff's next steps would now include creating a strawman of an option for expelled students for discussion at the next Task Force meeting. The facilitators then asked the group about creating hardship seats above schools' enrollment ceilings.

*Comments:*

- One task force member thought that a suggestion from the previous meeting wasn't included in the policy brief. This was the policy option that seats above a charter's enrollment ceiling could be reserved specifically for students coming from out of state. They aren't hardship seats; they are "you weren't in the district during enrollment" seats.
- This would give mid-year entries more options than just their in-boundary school. There has to be some flexibility there.
- The policy could be laid out such that charters opt in to offer these seats.
- Should this be optional? It is a responsibility that all the schools in the system have to share; they should have to set aside a certain percentages of seats.
- Hardship transfers could supersede waitlists whenever they arise (as one option); another option would be schools can't fill from waitlists until hardship transfer seats have been filled.
- If the charters are not required to offer seats and choose not to, then they could just keep pulling from their waitlists mid-year if they take in students at that point.