

Facilities Working Group Notes:

Goals for meeting:

- Reiterate goals, vision, and principles
- Discuss and clarify the identified issue areas
- Decide what further information is needed to advance the work of the working group

Meeting Summary:

Reiterate goals, vision, and principles:

- (Jenn Comey) We are not trying to change any governance structures but trying to work within the Task Force's principles and the purpose of our work

Discussion:

- The goals were handed to the Task Force, not created collaboratively. Had they been created collaboratively, this might have been a different conversation from day 1.
 - Jenn Comey: The goals of the Task Force come from the boundaries process. These goals reflect what we heard from parents and families throughout that process.
- What's the goal for this working group again?
 - "Develop a framework for coordinating processes on school openings, closings, and facilities planning."
- This goal is kind of high level; what are we trying to accomplish? We want to work in the same direction.
- (Jenn Comey) The worksheet we have provided is an attempt to capture what we have heard about how different perspectives see the problem. There are different perceptions of the problem.
- How are we not going to encroach on governance or decision-making rights with this problem?
- (Jenn Comey) Let's walk through this Venn diagram before we start discussing the problem. (*See Facilities Working Group Handout*)
 - The Venn diagram does not currently have public perspective and that needs to be added. What the diagram attempts to do is see where the perspectives and problems of the two sectors overlap.
 - There are mutual concerns on transparency of information; lack of advance notice so that the other sector can plan; and figuring out how to scale up models that are working for students. Community engagement is not included but could be, as could colocation opportunities.
- This is very helpful.
- I want to make sure that the heading on the column should read "PCS" instead of "PCSB".
 - Jenn Comey: Yes, that's correct. We'll fix this.
- I take issue about having the lack of coordination only in the PCS column. The lack of coordination from DCPS causes the same issue for charter schools.
- "Community input" fits clearly into the middle portion of the Venn diagram and should also be written under the "fears from community" section. Please add this.
 - The public wants input into the process and to be a significant part of the process for opening, closing, and locating schools.

- What do people who want to be more involved say about the current community engagement?
 - From the perspective of the community, the process is not transparent at all. What community members hear is that a school has been approved and that they should give input, but they don't know where the school will end up. There are then mixed messages sent about where it will be located. Even though people might go to the PCSB board meeting to give input, they don't feel like the input is meaningful.
- Schools going through the process of trying to open try to give adequate notice but there is a lag in finding a facility. Schools are stressed because buildings aren't available.
 - Both schools and the public need better information; any solution should solve both sides of the issue.
- As an example, public health facilities have a long process that they go through with the community and these facilities often get private sector space. There should be a similar process.
- What could the city do differently on the front end? We could talk about buildings but even with all the buildings that are available, we still can't meet all the demand.
- There has to be some kind of process when it is decided that a school will go somewhere. The anxiety from the community comes from not being involved in this process and not understanding why they want to open a school there. There needs to be some sort of process about what the needs are so when we get to the point of siting a school, we are already informed. The school might be a great school; the question is why do we need it?
- I want to make sure that we all understand that the whole application for a public charter is clarifying the need for the school and conducting an analysis of the need. Charter schools get a lot of pushback for not engaging the community enough. Part of the framework should be how to make that needs analysis more transparent and available to people who are impacted by it. We need to think about where we can involve the parents and families in that process.
- There has to be a comprehensive facilities plan and the community should be able to provide input on the plan. This plan would include things like walkability; it would not just be for individual charter schools.
 - Charters are their own LEAs; DCPS is one LEA. Charters don't have access to those larger buildings to be able to plan. It would have to be a city process. DCPS speaks for one voice—each LEA has to do it in its own independent way.
- Are we going to deal at all with the Master Facility Plan (MFP) process and with the sale of DCPS buildings that are not currently being used by DCPS? It's not just a matter of buildings for charter schools; there are overcrowded elementary schools, no swing space for modernization, etc.
- There are tensions here: when there is community engagement about schools, the people who come and speak are not necessarily the same people who have said they want the school. Is "the community" the people who are most geographically contiguous to the school or the people who could be affected citywide and are interested in out-of-boundary seats? Seats need to be high-quality. The charter sector is not designed to serve kids in a particular geographic area.
- What do we do when the seats are not high-quality? We should look at the schools that are not serving kids well and see how we can use those buildings and the community to actually solve that issue. In the past, DCPS has reconstituted schools; something was triggered and DCPS closed the school and then reopened it with new leadership. It was one of many strategies that DCPS had at the time. And at the time, the community was walked through that process and DCPS showed why they made that call.
 - For schools that are struggling with the most difficult to serve populations, what measures could you use to decide which strategy to use? Even if the charter is not doing well, the

students are there by choice; the level of engagement in the school is different. The school and DCPS should work with the community to figure out what needs to be changed about a school that is struggling. The worst case scenario and last option is closing the school; there should be many other options before that.

- There could be a spectrum of options.
- The DME's office can generate what data the city uses and needs to plan citywide for this group to examine. It would also be interesting to know what it takes each sector to open or close a school; perhaps there could be a way, without changing governance structures, to provide transparency.
- In Denver, this is what's called a strategic regional analysis. Looking at this could be a jumping off point for us to start looking at a common data set. This wouldn't change how decisions are made but it would provide a framework for what are we looking at when we make decisions.
- We also have to be careful with our language when talking about "quality seats". No public school in the District is earning 100% on PARCC; the highest scores in the District are around 70% but no one is turning over those schools. We have to watch our institutional bias. Furthermore, there is information that could be used when making decisions on school options. As a city, there are families who aren't choosing schools in either sector and are choosing to go to private schools. What is it those families want that would make public schools attractive to them? Communities have some say about school openings or sitings in Memphis, New York, and other places but this doesn't mean the community has veto power. We had these conversations in Denver and Oakland -- there was a community conversation about the schools being considered in their neighborhoods. A school may still end up there even after the community says otherwise and doesn't like it, but because we followed a framework, we felt confident in our decision. What is the data that can be made transparent for communities, even if they don't like it?
- We need to consider the difference between programmatic capacity and enrollment capacity; enrollment ceilings are not in the resource deck data. Charters do not turn in data for any master facilities planning so the data in this are currently using is not "apples to apples".
 - It is a question of how big do you want your classrooms and how do you want to serve students in those classrooms vs. the footprint of the classrooms. The enrollment ceilings PCSB has approved in recent years have been more realistic than they were previously.
 - Historically, DCPS schools have been listed as having higher capacities than the community and school principals think is reasonable. DCPS needs to align capacity with what is programmatically realistic as well.
- (Jenn Comey) The Master Facilities Plan (MFP) is happening again and will be due next spring. In the past, it only focused on DCPS facilities. However, this MFP aims to give a more comprehensive view of all our educational facilities. There is overlap with the work of this group and the Task Force will have the opportunity to weigh in on particular areas.
- The work of this group will be to help frame it.
- Solving for what's in the center of the Venn diagram clarifies what we can do since we aren't going to change the governance structure. It will be helpful to see what has been done in other places to continue to frame what is possible and to see what is happening in other cities that we can use and make even better. Let's not recreate the wheel.
- What types of data do we need to look at in this group? We should think about what we could look at to decide what should be used to make decisions about school locations.
- Is there extensive survey data about what people actually want out of their schools? People will be happier if you ask them the question first. What do people envision for their students? Could we get a picture of this from My School DC data? People who are applying to schools through MSDC are availing themselves of choice.

- To capture what people want, we would need some common definitions around programming and the information we collect needs to be sector-agnostic.
 - But I want to caution people that some people want a comprehensive school so that should be on any list of programming options.
 - We know that Montessori and dual language are in demand from looking at waitlists.
 - Waitlists can be misleading because people will throw their names on waitlists to see what could happen.
 - Surveys can also be misleading because people might say they want certain things that they are really just using as proxies for overall quality (particularly if they aren't currently in a quality school).
- There have been one or two studies done with My School DC data that we could use to see what messages are coming through. We do know that parents often choose their schools based on proximity.
- (Jenn Comey) Summary of themes/main ideas of our working group:
 - 1) The group likes the idea of addressing the mutual concerns in the middle of the Venn diagram including creating a common data/information framework and gaining community input and involvement.
 - 2) Linking the work of the facilities working group with the MFP
 - 3) Getting examples of best practices from other cities
 - 4) Collecting current information how we open, close, and locate schools now (PCSB and DCPS)
 - 5) There are two kinds of community—we need to define “community” and include people who don't often get to participate