Focus Group Report

Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force

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DME★
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY MAYOR FOR EDUCATION

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force (CSCTF) was launched in August 2015 by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) at the behest of Mayor Muriel Bowser. Formed with the purpose of uniting community members, leaders of Local Education Agencies (LEAs), and parents, the overarching goal of the Task Force is to cultivate cooperation between Washington, D.C.'s two public educational sectors—traditional public schools and public charter schools.

With traditional public schools represented by District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and public charter schools by the DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB), the Task Force is led by facilitator James Sandman and co-chaired by Deputy Mayor for Education Jennifer Niles and former Mayor Anthony Williams. Under their leadership, this group is comprised of twenty-four members, including representatives from DCPS and PCSB leadership, LEA administrators, community members, and parents from all eight wards of the city. For a detailed list of members, see Appendix I ("Task Force Membership").

Together, these stakeholders are charged with creating a set of clear and fair recommendations that increase the coherence and collaboration of all public schools and improve their overall effectiveness and efficiency; a more comprehensive list of the goals of the Task Force can be found on pages 23 - 24 of Appendix II ("Task Force FAQ").

Summary of Findings

Of the many comments that were shared, participants' comments fell into the following categories most frequently:

- Accountability and Transparency
    - i.e., greater ability to measure, compare schools; more accessible and wider-ranging school quality data points

- Coordinated Facilities Planning
    - Improved communication from sectors to school communities, families, members of public

- Student Mobility
    - i.e., enrollment stability

Methodology

Purpose

A key part of the scope of the CSCTF includes a community engagement strategy aimed at connecting with members of the public. Given the potential impact of the Task Force and its recommendations on the public education landscape, the work plan incorporates numerous opportunities to gather feedback and gauge public opinion.

To begin this community engagement strategy, the DME convened community focus groups in all eight wards of the city throughout February 2016. Much in the same way the CSCTF itself brings together individuals to inform the ways in which traditional public and public charter schools can be improved, these focus groups were assembled to gain insight from community members on their expectations and opinions of the work of the Task Force. In particular, this round of focus groups was designed to gauge the initial expectations and priorities from an external audience. Open to the general public, each conversation empowered participants to respond to a set of questions, discuss key issues in DC education with each other, and provide feedback on the goals of the Task Force.

Outreach

To promote the focus groups, information regarding the sessions was disseminated in a number of ways. Communications to LEA and school communities were intentional in distribution to both traditional public and public charter schools, with specific efforts that included emails, social media, and various other forms of messaging to the following groups:

- ANC commissioners
- DME community listserv (900+ contacts)
- DC Council members
- DCPS administrators and staff
- Educational stakeholders
- Friends of Choice in Urban Schools (FOCUS) network
- Local Teach for America (TFA) alumni network
- DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB) Wednesday Bulletin
- Washington Teacher's Union (WTU)

In addition to these channels, members of the CSCTF itself were also essential in spreading the word. With each of the city's eight wards represented by a parent on the Task Force and a number of community representatives from across the District, these individuals served as spokespeople, communicating news of the focus groups to their networks and communities.

Locations

Focus groups were held in all eight wards of the city from 6:00 – 7:30pm each Tuesday and Thursday night in February. Venues were selected with an eye to their proximity to public transportation, street parking, and Metro accessibility. Being mindful of the goal of uniting the two public school sectors, facilities in both traditional public and public charter schools were utilized, in addition to public libraries. Locations are as follows:

- Columbia Heights Education Campus – Ward 1
- Mount Pleasant Neighborhood Library[1] – Ward 1
- Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library – Ward 2
- Janney Elementary School – Ward 3
- E.L. Haynes Public Charter School, Kansas Avenue Campus – Ward 4
- Lamond-Riggs Neighborhood Library – Ward 5
- Eastern High School – Ward 6
- Benning (Dorothy Height) Neighborhood Library – Ward 7
- Francis Gregory Neighborhood Library[1] – Ward 7
- Achievement Prep Public Charter School[1] – Ward 8
- Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter School – Ward 8

Protocol & Structure

The focus groups cultivated conversation in small groups designed to elicit better, more in-depth feedback. Each focus group was staffed by two DME staff members, one of whom served as a facilitator, and the other as a note taker. Upon arrival, each attendee was given a Task Force FAQ (Appendix II), a worksheet (Appendix V), and a feedback survey (Appendix VI).

At the start of each focus group, the facilitator guided participants through the consent form, which requested permission for DME to anonymously record the conversation conducted. After completing and collecting these papers, the facilitator began the session by introducing the CSCTF, providing background and context for the focus group itself, and allowing participants to share their name and school or community affiliation; a copy of the protocol used can be found in Appendix III.

Participant Demographics

In sum, 185 individuals registered to participate in the community focus groups. Of those registrants, 96 attended, yielding a 52% capture rate.

Participation by meeting location is shown here[2]:

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[1] The focus groups at Mt. Pleasant Library, Francis Gregory Library, and Achievement Prep PCS were held to gather feedback from school staff (MTP, FG) and charter LEA leaders (Achievement Prep).

Participation by Location

Legend:
- W1: 15
- W2: 9
- W3: 15
- W4: 9
- W5: 9
- W6: 21
- W7: 12
- W8: 6
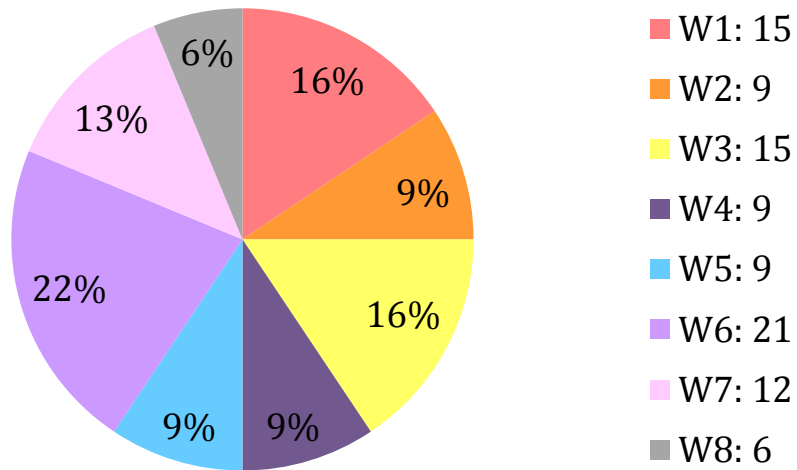
Though more specific information (i.e., educational attainment, racial/ethnic identity, sector affiliation) was not gathered from participants, ward of residence was captured and is shown below:

Participants by Ward of Residence

Legend:
- W1: 18
- W2: 10
- W3: 9
- W4: 15
- W5: 16
- W6: 16
- W7: 11
- W8: 1
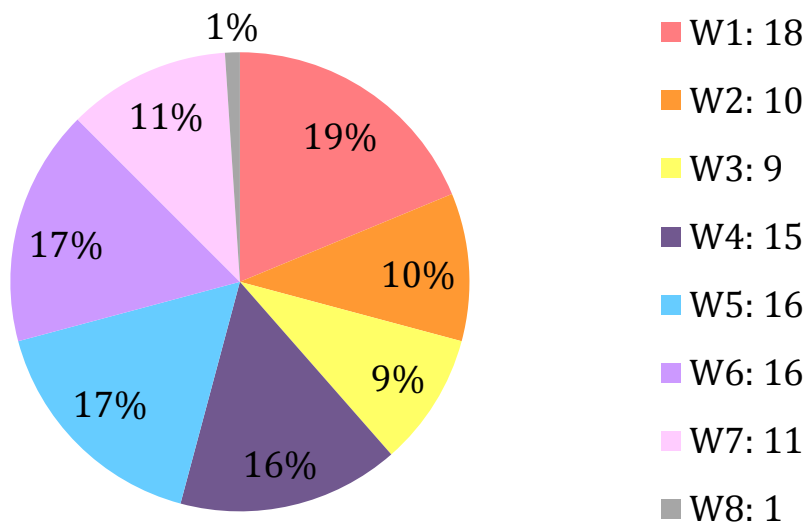
[2] Given that the focus of this report is the feedback shared by members of the community, the graphs and information provided within do not include data from the LEA focus groups at Mt. Pleasant Library, Francis Gregory Library, and Achievement Prep.

Findings

Participant Responses

In answering the questions on the participant worksheet in their focus group discussions, participants provided DME staff with a wealth of information. This section condenses the overarching themes gathered from sixty-two worksheets and notes from the eight community focus groups. Summary responses to each question are given below:

- *Q1 – Which of these goals resonates most with you and why?*
  Q6 – Are there any goals that you think are missing or that shouldn't be included?

  NOTE: Task Force goals can be found on pages 23 - 24 of the Task Force FAQ in Appendix II.

  Overall, participants' responses affirmed the value of and indicated a high level of resonance with the existing Task Force goals.

  When asked which of the five goals resounded with them the most, attendees across all of the focus groups related to them by sharing relevant personal experiences in navigating public education in the city. These anecdotes not only demonstrated that participants identified with the goals of the Task Force, but further underscored the significance of the work to be done.

  With regard to the scope and content of the goals, participants again responded positively, confirming the necessity of each one and offering specific ways in which the priorities listed in the FAQ document have the ability to improve education in the city.

- *Q2 – What information needs to be shared with the public and across sectors?*

  By and large, participants felt that both sectors need to increase their level of transparency by sharing more information with the public, a request that was manifest in several ways.

  o At the forefront of this request were calls for increased transparency via additional information regarding school quality, both through a greater number of data points and through more holistic evidence used to make these assessments (e.g., extracurricular activities, school culture, school health, teacher tenure, etc.); participants felt that resolving this issue would help parents and families to measure and compare their options.
    ▪ Relatedly, many respondents also see a need for a "one-stop shop" for accessible (i.e., "less wonky") and easily understood school information.

- At present, there seems to be a general lack of clarity surrounding what data points are used and how this data is used to make decisions. Therefore, another way in which participants appealed for transparency was through the need for community input in what, where, and how school-related data is released.

- In addition, My School DC (MSDC) lottery data points are also viewed as being particularly helpful. By having access to information on what parents and families want for their child(ren) vis a vis school-level waitlist and enrollment data, participants feel that they would be better able to understand the landscape of public education.

- *Q3 –What educational challenges exist or are exacerbated by a two sector landscape?*

  Attendees tended to focus on the lack of administrative alignment between systems and the subsequent difficulties faced by families in the wake of this lack of continuity. Ranging from different calendars, school days, hours of operation, and holiday schedules to grade configuration, participants felt that the existence of so many choices across the two sectors, at times, can feel overwhelming, appear difficult to navigate, and foster a sense of competition seemingly counterproductive to decision-making.

  Along these lines, many respondents (both DCPS and PCS advocates) perceived a sense of conflict between sectors, sharing that it is challenging for parents to adequately weigh their child's options when such disjointedness exists.

- *Q4 – What does success look like for this work?*
- *Q5 – What does failure look like for this work?*

  Participants frequently stated that a successful Task Force would not only unite the two public school sectors and meet its stated goals while remaining impervious to politicking, but would also create changes that result in measurable improvements in school quality and reductions in the achievement gap. Several respondents also expressed their support for the Task Force continuing past its two year tenure to serve as an impartial citywide steering committee.

  Conversely, the most common responses to the idea of failure on the part of the Task Force pertained to the notion of maintaining the status quo. In most cases, participants equated failure with a lack of change and improvements not being made.

- *Q7 – As we begin this work, what are some of the perceptions of each sector (DCPS and Public Charter Schools)?*

  This question was deliberately omitted from the group discussion in each focus group. Instead, participants were given time to reflect individually and respond thoughtfully, honestly, and anonymously.

  Though this question was answered by each participant independently, there were certain commonalities that arose across many of the responses—in fact, both traditional public and public charter schools are perceived as lacking in accountability. In addition, respondents indicate that they feel both sectors are of low quality despite having an abundance of resources and are unforthcoming with information to each other and parents.

  To elaborate, respondents perceive

  o DCPS to be low-performing, bureaucratic, inflexible, and a "school of last resort" for students expelled or counseled out of public charter schools; and

  o public charter schools to be high-performing, nimble, and innovative because they "skim" students, do not serve special education students well, and counsel out difficult students.

- *Q8 – Are there recommendations you have on how to best engage the public in this process moving forward?*

  With their varied points of view, participants provided valuable feedback on how the DME could more effectively engage the community through the Task Force's public engagement strategy. In general, responses to this question stressed the importance of the DME making a concerted effort to go to the public to gain their trust and feedback, with suggestions including

  o utilizing the existing networks of ward-based education councils and school-based PTAs,
  o partnering with religious and community organizations working on the ground,
  o sending volunteers to schools to speak at events and student pick-up,
  o canvassing grocery stores and Metro stations during certain peak hours, and
  o visiting Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR) facilities in the community.

Key Takeaways

Of the nearly twenty-two hours of conversations had in the fourteen small groups convened, three central themes arose:

- Accountability and Transparency

- o Parents crave a better way of keeping schools—both traditional public and public charter—accountable. Defined by an ability to measure success and make "apples to apples" comparisons of schools within and across both sectors, participants felt that the information that is presently available is incomplete, inconsistent, and does not empower families to make educated decisions regarding school choice. To this end, participants voiced their desire for a streamlined, centralized source for accessing accountability data in the vein of MSDC and LearnDC.
  - o With regard to transparency, participants stated that although data is touted as being part of decision-making processes for both traditional public and public charter schools, there is a lack of clarity on what evidence is actually employed. As a result, attendees request that both sectors share what they consider to be important and solicit public input in the overall process.
  - o In addition, more diverse data points are also seen as valuable—participants want to see more types of metrics to better understand how schools are performing. Among the many suggestions for additional data to collect and disseminate, popular ideas encompassed information on
    - ▪ teachers (i.e., education, tenure/years of service, turnover rates),
    - ▪ schools (i.e., climate, culture, extracurricular/enrichment activities, student feedback, and student growth and performance), and
    - ▪ finances (i.e., budgets, allocations, etc.).

- Coordinated Facilities Planning
  - o Participants repeatedly called for both DCPS and PCSB to communicate with each other and the public and to act more transparently in undertaking facilities planning.
  - o Many expressed a desire for greater public engagement in the decision-making processes involved in planning, locating, opening, and closing schools.
  - o Similarly, there were calls for a broader vision for public schools across the city, and one that is inclusive of traditional public and public charter schools.

- Student Mobility
  - o Seen as exacerbated by the existence of two sectors, participants had many concerns regarding student enrollment stability, both between and within sectors. Several mentioned that the large number of LEAs and school options for students aggravated these challenges.
  - o Besides the logistical challenges encountered by families straddling both the traditional public and public charter sectors, there exist serious concerns as to the potential for unintended consequences. Among the many effects of mobility, attendees noted that movement is harmful to schools and students and can lead to increased segregation, schools with high concentrations of student poverty, and an overall lack of cohesion, the consequence of which is the continuation of the achievement gap.

Outcomes

All told, the focus groups were an informative and useful way of gauging preliminary public opinion on the work of the Task Force. From the conversations that were had, there are five central ideas that encapsulate the major concepts:

- The Task Force's goals are on the right track
  o Participants largely affirmed that the Task Force's five goals reflect their concerns and priorities for cross-sector collaboration and alignment.

- Tangible results are necessary
  o Participants want to see real and impactful results.

- Strengthen community outreach for future efforts
  o While the information gathered in this report is a start to the community engagement process, some focus groups experienced low registration and attendance numbers.
  o As these events continue, DME will need to continue to engage in more targeted outreach in east of the River neighborhoods, with a particular focus on Ward 8 neighborhoods.

- Creating quality is of great importance
  o Respondents are concerned with how the work of the CSCTF process is improving or can improve the quality of schools.

- Identify best way to respond to perceptions/misconceptions
  o The focus groups confirmed that misconceptions continue to exist for both DCPS and public charter schools in DC. As such, DME must devise an effective way of addressing these myths. Potential solutions include Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) documents, informational briefs, and data analysis, among others.

Appendix I – Task Force Membership

Name	Affiliation
Jim Sandman (Facilitator)	• President, Legal Services Corporation • Former General Counsel, DCPS • Former Managing Partner, Arnold & Porter
Jennie Niles (Co-chair)	Deputy Mayor for Education
Anthony Williams (Co-chair)	• CEO & Executive Director, Federal City Council • Former Mayor
Amanda Alexander	Deputy Chief of Elementary Schools, DCPS
Lars Beck	CEO, Scholar Academies and DC Scholars
Rod Boggs	Executive Director, Washington Lawyer's Committee
Evelyn B. Simmons	• Parent, SWW @ Francis-Stevens • W2 Education Network • Former member, Student Assignment Committee • President, Logan Circle Community Association
Shanita Burney	Deputy Chief, Community Engagement, DCPS
Angela Copeland	• Parent, Stuart-Hobson MS • Public affairs specialist
Charlene Drew-Jarvis	• DCPS Graduate • Senior Advisor, KIPP DC PCS • Former Ward 4 City Councilwoman
Caryn Ernst	• Parent, Watkins ES, Stuart-Hobson MS • Former PTA president, Capitol Hill Cluster School • Member, Capitol Hill Public School Parent Organization
Faith Gibson Hubbard	• Chief Student Advocate, State Board of Education • Former member, Student Assignment Committee
Erika Harrell	• Parent, DC Prep PCS • Member, My School DC Parent Advisory Council • Member, DC School Reform Now • Member, PCSB Parent & Alumni Leadership Council
Kaya Henderson	Chancellor, DCPS
Kemba Hendrix	• Parent, Elsie Whitlow Stokes PCS • Former public and public charter school teacher
Irene Holtzman	Executive Director, Friends of Choice in Urban Schools (FOCUS)
Hanseul Kang	State Superintendent of Education
Melissa Kim	• Chief Academic Officer, Secondary Schools, KIPP DC • Former DCPS principal
Anjali Kulkarni	Deputy Chief, Strategic School Planning, DCPS
Emily Lawson	Founder & CEO, DC Prep PCS

Bethany Little	• Parent, Murch ES, BASIS PCS • Education policy expert
Scott Pearson	Executive Director, Public Charter School Board
Ariana Quinones	• Parent, Duke Ellington HS, Next Step PCS • Education and human services policy consultant, Otero Strategy Group • Former member, Student Assignment Committee
Alejandra Vallejo	• Parent, Bancroft ES • Chair, Bancroft ES Local School Advisory Team (LSAT)
Karen Williams	Ward 7 Representative, State Board of Education
Darren Woodruff	• Parent, EL Haynes PCS, Benjamin Banneker HS • Chair, Public Charter School Board
Shantelle Wright	• Founder & CEO, Achievement Prep PCS • Chair, DC Association of Public Charter Schools

DC Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the purpose of the Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force?
With approximately 55% of public school students attending DC Public School (DCPS) and 45% attending a public charter school, the next chapter of improving education in DC is for both sectors to work together. Education leaders from across the city have expressed their desire and willingness to come to the table to work collaboratively, and the Task Force is a unique opportunity to do so.

As such, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) has been tasked by Mayor Bowser with establishing a task force charged with developing clear and fair recommendations on how to improve the coherence among and collaboration across public schools to improve effectiveness and efficiency. The Task Force will focus its efforts on recommending strategies and solutions for the priority issues that will have the most impact on improving student outcomes for all public schools in the District of Columbia.

For examples of issues and projects that the task force will undertake, please see the answer to the goals of the process below.

What do you mean by "cross-sector collaboration"?
The District of Columbia has two public education sectors, DCPS and public charter schools. DCPS is one local education agency (LEA) made up of over 100 school campuses. There are 63 public charter LEAs with over 100 school campuses (SY15-16). The Task Force is charged with working with leaders from each sector and the public to identify how best to collaborate and align strategies and processes to address challenges faced by schools and families in both sectors.

Essential to this collaboration is a willingness to work with each other. The My School DC common lottery (www.myschooldc.org) and the DC Equity Reports (http://www.learndc.org/schoolprofiles/view?s=dc#equityreport) are two examples of successful cross-sector initiatives that led to increased access to information for parents and families. Equity reports, in particular, have helped spotlight issue areas for schools that have resulted in improved practices.

What are the goals of this process?

The Task Force will focus its work on the following five goals. While the task force will begin with the priority projects and issues listed below, the scope may not be limited to the projects listed here.

- **Develop methods for information sharing with the public and across public school sectors.** Priority issues and projects include:
  — Promote resource sharing networks for best practices
  — Make school planning data accessible to the public
- **Develop a framework for coordinating processes on school openings, closings, and facilities planning.** Priority issues and projects include:
  — Develop guiding principles on what data and information should inform program and facilities planning
  — Establish formal processes for securing and considering public input
  — Determine decision making timelines
- **Promote enrollment stability.** Priority issues and projects include:
  — Recommend policies to decrease student mobility
  — Identify ways in which to address the challenges faced by schools that have high mobility rates
  — Explore cross-sector feeder patterns
- **Identify educational challenges that need to be addressed through cross-sector collaboration,** for instance, increasing high school graduation rates, re-engaging disengaged youth, or creating more career and technical education opportunities.
- **Improve the experience of parents and families understanding and navigating their public school options.** Priority issues and projects include:
  — Increase parent/guardian access to robust and clear data and information on school performance.
  — Enhance My School DC and Learn DC platforms to reflect meaningful information that families need to better navigate their school rights and choices.
  — Explore centralization and automation of the Universal Healthcare Certificate and the residency verification process.

How does this align with Mayor Bowser's vision for improving education for all students?

Mayor Bowser is committed to ensuring that all District residents have access to high quality public education in all eight wards. In order to have the most impact on student outcomes, both sectors must work together to tackle the city's biggest educational challenges. The Task Force will jump start a public dialogue on these issues.

When will recommendations be submitted to the Mayor?

The Task Force will be a two-year initiative. Although a final report will be issued at the end of two years, the intent is to develop recommendations in stages, as the Task Force tackles specific issues and projects. We expect to see tangible outcomes of this work along the way.

All recommendations will be informed by public input before being finalized and will be shared widely.

Who has authority to implement recommendations?

It depends on the nature of the recommendation. The Mayor has authority over DCPS, the Office of the State Superintendent for Education (OSSE), and the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) and can implement most policy changes affecting these agencies. Some policy changes may trigger a change in the DC Municipal Regulations (DCMR) and would therefore need to adhere to the applicable process. Others may require action by the City Council. Recommendations impacting public charter schools would be made to the Public Charter School Board (PCSB) and would be considered by members of the Board and charter school community.

Is this Task Force the only mechanism by which we identify ways to collaborate across sectors?

No. The role of the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) is to ensure the city is working collaboratively across public school sectors and government agencies. The DME is uniquely positioned to ensure that the city approaches the goal of building a world class education system by leveraging the strengths of both sectors and working with all stakeholders. While schools work collaboratively around practice and instruction, there is little coordination on policy. The Task Force will build on the work already in place – like Equity Reports and the My School DC common lottery – to foster a stronger foundation and better policy infrastructure for ongoing and strategic partnerships and coordination.

What is the role and structure of the Task Force?

The Task Force is charged with making recommendations to the Mayor on how best to increase transparency and coordination across and among public schools. The Task Force is made up of a diverse group of District residents and agency representatives who are dedicated to improving the educational experience for District students and families. Members include public school parents, school leaders, community members, and relevant government agency representatives. Mayor Anthony Williams and Deputy Mayor for Education Jennie Niles will serve as co-chairs of the Task Force; for a full list of members and their affiliations, please visit www.dme.dc.gov/collaboration.

The Task Force will be a two year initiative, meeting approximately nine times a year.

How were the Task Force members chosen?
The goal of assembling this committee was to identify a diverse group of individuals that can represent a wide variety of perspectives and experiences, and in response, there was an overwhelming interest from community members, with over 100 people nominated for the Task Force. After careful consideration, the DME extended invitations to 26 individuals. The following factors were considered when selecting members:

- Geographic and demographic diversity
- Sector and citywide perspective
  - A good balance of leaders and parents from both sectors as well as community members with citywide perspectives and experiences
- Content Knowledge
  - Understands the education landscape and the need for increased collaboration. This can also include professional or personal experiences that are relevant to the work of the Task Force.
- Commitment to Broader Engagement
  - Willing to work cooperatively with others, willing to engage/interact the broader public in this work, adept in navigating a variety of communities and perspectives on these issues.

Are the Task Force meetings open to the public?
In order to ensure complete transparency, the meetings of the Task Force will be open to the public.   In addition to posting our meeting agendas, materials, and meeting summaries, we will also post relevant resources on our website.

When will meetings be held?
Meetings of the Cross-Sector Task Force will be held once per month. All meeting times, dates, and locations will be posted to the DME website and noticed through http://www.bega-dc.gov/board-commission/meetings.

How can parents, students and the public participate in the process?
Public input is critical to ensuring that we develop sound and meaningful recommendations. There will be multiple ways of engaging with the DME and Task Force members throughout the process. Opportunities will include

- **Participating in a Focus Group.** Opportunity to provide in-depth input into various issues and strategies being considered by the Task Force. Stay tuned for a schedule of focus groups to be held in February!
- **Attending community meetings.** Opportunity to provide feedback on policies and strategies being considered by the Task Force. Both small and large scale meeting will be organized.
- **Participating in an online survey.** Opportunity to provide feedback on-line.
- **Testifying** in a public roundtable held by the Task Force.
- **Participating in Local Education Agency (LEA) meetings** – Opportunity for school leaders and staff to engage and provide ongoing feedback.

Details and timing of each of these opportunities will be released at a later date, with information posted on www.dme.dc.gov/collaboration.

Who do you contact if you have questions?
If you have any questions, please email collaboration@dc.gov or call (202)727-0696.

¿Con quién puede comunicarse si tiene preguntas?
Si tiene alguna pregunta, por favor escriba un correo electrónico a collaboration@dc.gov, o llame al (202) 727-0696.

Qui contacter si vous avez des questions à poser ?
Si vous avez des questions à poser, veuillez envoyer un courriel à collaboration@dc.gov ou appeler le (202) 727-0696.

如果您有问题，应当与谁联系？
如果您有任何问题，请发电子邮件至collaboration@dc.gov，**或**拨打电话号码 (202) 727-0696。

Nếu có thắc mắc quí vị sẽ hỏi ai?
Nếu quí vị có thắc mắc, xin gửi thư điện tử cho collaboration@dc.gov hoặc gọi (202) 727-0696.

문의 사항이 있으면 어디에 연락하시겠습니까?

문의 사항이 있으시면 collaboration@dc.gov 에 이메일을 주시거나 (202) 727-0696로 전화해 주시기 바랍니다.

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Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force

Focus Group Protocol

I.   Welcome and Purpose (6:00)

Hello. My name is _____and I am a _____ in the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education. I will be leading tonight's focus group and look forward to hearing your thoughts and opinions on the work and goals of the Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force. I also want to introduce, _____, who will be taking notes tonight.

The purpose of this focus group is to gather input from parents, families, and community members on the issues they feel could or should be addressed through cooperation between DCPS and public charter schools.

A focus group is not the same as a community meeting. It is a structured small group conversation directed by a discussion leader. As your discussion leader, I'm here to ask you questions and help direct the conversation. We are here to talk about YOUR experiences and opinions. There are no right or wrong answers and nothing you say will be publicly attributed to you. I may ask you for more information or may steer us back to the main topic if we get off course. I ask that everyone be mindful of the time so as to give everyone a chance to talk. I also ask that we all be respectful of each other's' opinions and perspectives – as they may differ from one another.

The comments from the session are being noted and recorded and they will be compiled, written up and given to the Task Force.

II.   Consent Form

Before we begin, I need to go over the consent form with you. I will read the form to the group and ask each of you to read and sign a copy. We also have extra copies should you want to take one for your records. The form gives the DME permission to record this conversation and, **without including identifying details**, to share what is said with the Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force. To be clear, signing this form only allows us to share your words and ideas—we WILL NOT include your name or any other personal information when discussing the comments made in this room.

Collect form. START RECORDING once forms are collected

III.   Review Agenda

 I want to quickly go over the agenda for tonight's discussion.

1. First, we will do a round of introductions;
2. Then I will provide you with some brief background and contextual information about the Task Force initiative.
3. Then I will ask you some questions about the goals the Task Force and about your experiences with the issues the Task Force will be focused on.
4. Following the questions and discussion, we will take a moment to make sure everyone has time to complete the worksheet.
5. Finally, I will ask for your thoughts on how to ensure that moving forward we are comprehensively engaging the community to ensure we are gathering feedback and input from parents and the broader community.

Do you have any questions before we continue?

IV.   Introduction to the Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force Initiative

I would like to highlight a few key elements related to the process the city is undertaking now. (NOTE: This is all in the FAQ, so feel free to skim this.)

- In August, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) launched the DC Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force. The launch included the release of goals for the work of the Task Force.
- The Task Force is charged with developing clear and fair policy recommendations on how to improve the coherence among and collaboration across public schools to improve effectiveness and efficiency. The Task Force will not focus efforts on instructional practice.
- In December, the DME announced the 26 members of the Task Force. Members are from across the city and represents diverse communities and experiences including representatives from DCPS, public charter schools, parents, and community leaders.
- Task Force meetings are open to the public for observation. Information on meeting dates, times, and locations can be found on the DME website (dme.dc.gov/collaboration). We will also be posting all meeting materials on our website.
- There are focus groups scheduled in each ward of the city throughout the month of February, the questions and processes will be the same for each.
- In addition to these events, over the course of the next 18+ months, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education will also be holding community meetings, distributing online surveys, and bringing school leaders and staff to the table to provide feedback on the work of the Task Force.

- For more information on the work of the DME and the Task Force please visit the DME website (dme.dc.gov/collaboration). Information is also included in our FAQ document that you should have received when signing in tonight.

V.   Introductions

Let's start our discussion by introducing ourselves. Please tell us your first name and what schools and/or community you are most connected to.

VI.   Background and Context

Background

- With approximately 55% of public school students attending DC Public Schools (DCPS) and 45% attending a public charter school, the next chapter of improving education in DC is for both sectors to work together.
- Parents and community members have been asking education leaders to engage in this conversation for a long time.

Goals

The Task Force will focus its work on the following five goals. These five goals were developed in response to parent and community feedback received over the last few years through public engagement opportunities held by DME, DCPS, and other education agencies. (Examples include: Student assignment and boundary process, school closures, school budget process, council hearings, etc.) While the task force will begin with the priority projects and issues listed below, the scope may not be limited to the projects listed here.

- **Improve the experience of parents and families understanding and navigating their public school options.** Priority issues and projects include:
    - Increase parent/guardian access to robust and clear data and information on school performance.
    - Enhance My School DC and Learn DC platforms to reflect meaningful information that families need to better navigate their school rights and choices.
    - Explore centralization and automation of the Universal Healthcare Certificate and the residency verification process.
- **Develop methods for information sharing with the public and across public school sectors.** Priority issues and projects include:
    - Promote resource sharing networks for best practices
    - Make school planning data accessible to the public
- **Develop a framework for coordinating processes on school openings, closings, and facilities planning.** Priority issues and projects include:

— Develop guiding principles on what data and information should inform program and facilities planning
— Establish formal processes for securing and considering public input
— Determine decision making timelines
- **Promote enrollment stability.** Priority issues and projects include:
— Recommend policies to decrease student mobility
— Identify ways in which to address the challenges faced by schools that have high mobility rates
— Explore cross-sector feeder patterns
- **Identify educational challenges that need to be addressed through cross-sector collaboration**

VII.   Discussion Questions (6:30)

I have a series of questions I want to ask the group. These questions can also be found on the worksheet. While we have some time at the end to complete the worksheets, I encourage you to write down your thoughts as we go.

> **Are charter schools public schools?**
>
> Both charter schools and DCPS schools are public schools. They receive funding from DC through a formula based on the number and type of students they serve.

Which of these goals resonates most with you and why?
- *Try to make time to go through all the goals, if possible. Try to avoid only talking about one or two goals.*

What information needs to be shared with the public and across sectors?
- *This tries to get at the second goal.*
- *Getting examples of the type of information and data is helpful, but also interested in the process by which we should be sharing this information with parents and the public is also just as important.*
- *How should information be shared? By whom?*

What educational challenges exist or are exacerbated by a two sector landscape?
- *Given our near 50/50 split of public school enrollment, we should be approaching most educational issues from a cross-sector perspective. Not every issue should be addressed by the Task Force, so we want to focus our efforts on where the lack of coordination has created the most challenges for our students and families.*
- *Some people have raised the following challenges. Do you think these are issues?*
  - *Lack of timely transfer of transcripts when students change schools*
  - *Lack of universal rating system for schools*

What does success look like for this work?
- *This can be something very specific or very broad.*

- *This helps us gauge public expectations for this work.*

What does failure look like for this work?
- *This can be something very specific or very broad.*
- *This helps us gauge public expectations for this work.*

Are there any goals that you think are missing or that shouldn't be included?
- *People may be interested in jumping to another topic or share something that is off-topic. Try to revisit between speakers… "before we get too far into this conversations, I just want to make sure no one had any goals that they thought are missing or shouldn't be included.."*

As we begin this work, what are some of the perceptions of each sector (DCPS and Public Charter Schools)?
- *PLEASE NOTE: we won't be discussing this question in the group, but would like to get your response to this on the worksheet.*
- *Your responses will help us understand what issues or topics would benefit from more information and data about them.*

VIII.   Closing (7:20)

We are coming to the end of our discussion, but before we leave, I have one wrap-up question.

Are there recommendations you have on how to best engage the public in this process moving forward?

Thank you for sharing your experiences with us today. Your input is important, so please take the last few minutes to complete the worksheets. In particular, include any points that you weren't able to make during the discussion and note the very last question that we were not able to get to during our discussion.

Again, thank you for coming this evening, be sure to leave your worksheets and evaluation sheets.

Appendix IV – Participant Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

I have volunteered to be part of this focus group conducted by Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education to discuss cross-sector collaboration.

- I understand that the purpose of this focus group is to share my opinions and ideas on the challenges that should be addressed through collaboration between District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and public charter schools.

- I understand that a focus group is a structured and guided process that works from standard questions asked of participants across multiple focus groups and so will not encompass all issues of concern.

- I understand that participating is completely voluntary and I can choose not to answer any question.

- I understand that the session is being recorded, but that the information and opinions I provide will not be linked with my name and that project staff would **ONLY** disclose information in their records for the limited purpose of preventing serious harm if someone is endangered.

- I understand that a written analysis of the session will be made available to the DC Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force and will be posted on www.dme.dc.gov. This will NOT include any information that identifies any participants.

- I understand that there may be Task Force members or governmental observers at this focus group—who will be identified.

- I understand that there is NO payment for participating in this focus group.

If you have any questions or concerns about the focus group, you may contact the project manager, Claudia Lujan, at 202-727-0696 or at collaboration@dc.gov.

_____   _____
Signature   Date

_____   _____
Participant's Name (please print)   Ward of Residence

_____
School/Community

Cross-Sector Collaboration Focus Group: Participant Worksheet

1.   **Which of these goals resonates most with you and why?**

2.   **What information needs to be shared with the public and across sectors?**

3.   **What educational challenges exist or are exacerbated by a two sector landscape?**

4.   **What does success look like for this work?**

5.   **What does failure look like for this work?**

6.   **Are there any goals that you think are missing or that shouldn't be included?**

7.   **As we begin this work, what are some of the perceptions of each sector (DCPS and Public Charter Schools)?**

8.   **Are there recommendations you have on how to best engage the public in this process moving forward?**

Appendix VI – Participant Feedback Survey

Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force Focus Group Participant Survey

Focus Group Attended:

_____

1. The structure of the session provided for discussion that was relevant to my concerns.

    O   O   O   O   O
    Strongly   Disagree   Neither agree   Agree   Strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

2. I had the opportunity to provide feedback and ideas regarding the Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force.

    O   O   O   O   O
    Strongly   Disagree   Neither agree   Agree   Strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

3. The information provided to participants was clear and informative.

    O   O   O   O   O
    Strongly   Disagree   Neither agree   Agree   Strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

4. The facilitators were helpful in guiding a meaningful discussion.

    O   O   O   O   O
    Strongly   Disagree   Neither agree   Agree   Strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

5. I have a clear understanding of how to stay involved and informed about the work of the Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force.

    O   O   O   O   O
    Strongly   Disagree   Neither agree   Agree   Strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

Please feel free to use the back of this sheet to write down any final questions, comments, or concerns you would like to share with the DME.

Appendix VII – Notes by Ward

Cross-Sector Collaboration Focus Group Themes – Ward 1

1. **Which of these goals resonates most with you and why?**

   - Data, information sharing
     - Need better ability to compare information across schools, sectors
     - Not helpful, ideal that DCPS and PCS have different reporting requirements
     - Methods for how this is accomplished need to be developed
     - Difficult to obtain information from charter schools
     - MSDC algorithm is clear for parents—can budget disclosures, school closures be similar?
   - Resource sharing
     - Questions as to why resources aren't shared between sectors
   - Better distribution of popular and/or successful schools/programs
   - Enrollment stability
     - Aligning grade configurations (entry, exit) between DCPS, PCS
     - School closures are hated by mobility, tie into mobility
     - Not closing schools due to enrollment
   - Navigating school options
     - "Budgeting" through a feeder pattern, knowing quality will be there when child gets there
   - Centralizing enrollment, verification, documentation processes
     - One set of deadlines
     - Families, people receiving public assistance not having to enroll in person
   - Improving middle school choices
   - Creating standards of staffing, levels of service, resources
     - Libraries are not universal
   - Equity in city-wide academic programming
   - Abundance vs. scarcity in choice
     - Mobility by choice, rather than by necessity

2. **What information needs to be shared with the public and across sectors?**

   - Financial data
     - Budget, expenditures for both sectors
   - Salary data
   - Per student spending
   - Facilities planning
     - A website like LearnDC for public to get information on timeline, opportunities to engage w. major planning processes
     - Information on RFO process, rubrics used in making decisions

- School health
  - i.e., energy efficiency, environmental impact, air quality
  - What is the relationship between the health of students and health of buildings?
- MySchoolDC
  - Waitlist data, results, more information for parents re: lottery process
- School culture data
- Including parent, student voice in the accountability framework for schools

3. **What educational challenges exist or are exacerbated by a two sector landscape?**

- Disparities between allocation of resources between sectors
  - DCPS has more resources to move between locations, charters do not
- Different rating systems create confusion
- Decentralized registration, enrollment processes
  - Transferring records between sectors (i.e., paperwork, certificates, etc.) is difficult
- Vaccination record system does not match healthcare system, needs more communication
- Cross-sector movement
  - Increased choice = increased mobility, instability
  - Especially at ES → MS transition; DCPS "losing" students to PCS, DCPS getting influx
  - Effects of differences in academic standards in grade promotion for students moving between sectors
- Homeless students
  - School-based homeless liaisons as FTEs
  - Specific, standard, universal services for homeless students/families
  - Better funding for McKinney-Vento
- Competition, scarcity model
  - Taking sides shifts focus from model of collaboration, does not benefit students
- PCS access to facilities

4. **What does success look like for this work?**

- Still confusion about what the Task Force is trying to accomplish.
- Need clear, actionable, measureable goals.
  - Current goals are too large, would need 5 task forces.
- Greater resource sharing
  - i.e., Facilities, professional development, data systems, etc.
- Greater dispersion of good schools, not just where there are empty buildings
  - Schools are in clusters now.
- Charters need to be incorporated into the DCPS planning process, so charters aren't just getting leftovers.
- Opportunities to co-locate DCPS and charters where DCPS has extra capacity
- Public support for recommendations

- Actual implementation of tangible changes
  - Putting policy into practice
  - Ensuring structures for making changes are in place
- No waitlists, being able to go to any school
- Reduced anxiety for parents, especially those w. children in transition grades
- Highlighting collaboration
  - Telling success stories, showcasing best practices
- Fresh thinking among Task Force members
- DC remaining leader in charter world
- Trust
- A city-wide shared vision for education

5. **What does failure look like for this work?**

- One sector being left out, not benefitting as much as the other
  - What's in it for DCPS? If DCPS does not see benefit, will CSTF work without their buy-in?
  - Success not spread across DCPS, PCS
- Charters overwhelming DCPS
- Goals that are too broad, lacking measurable outcomes
  - "Lukewarm recommendations," "watered down"
- No compromise, lack of trust
- Lack of innovative ideas
- Overtly political landscape
  - Ideas being used as political leverage
- Ideas not being communicated to stakeholders
  - Need to share timeline, results with parents
  - All schools in both sectors
- Charters are not a monolith

6. **Are there any goals that you think are missing or that shouldn't be included?**

- A city-wide shared vision for education
- Being inclusive
- Name for entire scope of public schools in city
- Transportation at the ES level
- Teacher parking
- Better cooperation among agencies, public facing cooperation
- Collaboration across sectors on athletics

7. **As we begin this work, what are some of the perceptions of each sector (DCPS and Public Charter Schools)?**

8. Are there recommendations you have on how to best engage the public in this process moving forward?

- More platforms for thorough methods of messaging
  - Through schools, using the school listservs, principals/admin, PTAs, back-to-school nights
  - Sending volunteers to schools
  - ES – A physical presence in schools (i.e., tables set up at aftercare pick up)
  - MS/HS – Social media
  - Entering community (i.e., W8 IHOP, grocery stores after benefits are released, churches EoR)
  - Using strategy of the Expectations Project.
  - Ward-specific ed councils,
  - Recreation centers
  - Engaging public who are not active users of system; sending surveys to more than parents and students
- Communications plan that runs concurrently to work of Task Force
- High level of documentation
- Majority rules for moving on an agenda

Cross-Sector Collaboration Focus Group Themes – Ward 2

1. **Which of these goals resonates most with you and why?**

   - Enrollment stability
     - Is this antithetical to goals of lottery, lottery system? Working against student mobility = against choice?
     - Stability within school > year-to-year; reducing mid-year transfer rate
     - Mid-year transfers are disruptive for schools (sending, receiving), students, families
     - Ways of promoting loyalty, adherence to a school; discourage "school-hopping"
     - Instability makes it difficult to measure achievement
     - Need to look at cross-sector feeder patterns
     - Connection between mobility, funding?
     - Using data to understand movement
   - Data sharing
     - More information for parents on school quality
     - Broader definition of quality (i.e., teacher qualification, etc.)
     - Comparison of DC CAS → PARCC

2. **What information needs to be shared with the public and across sectors?**

   - Data on mobility
     - Trends
   - Holistic view of the entire education system in one place
     - One stop shop for information
     - More easily understood information
   - Coherence among websites
     - Eliminating redundancies
   - More perfect information
     - RaiseDC data showing value add
   - School information
     - Videos of classrooms, lessons a la Friendship
     - Eliminating gaps for people who cannot make it to schools
     - Leaflets, brochures that focus on the story, rather than the scores
     - Better comparison of school extras (i.e., uniforms, schedules, before/after care, etc.)
   - MySchoolDC
     - DCPS provides good data, charters do not
     - More MSDC data, including what is driving choice
   - School culture data
   - Including parent, student voice in the accountability framework for schools

3. **What educational challenges exist or are exacerbated by a two sector landscape?**

- Gentrification ↑, diversity ↓
  - Exacerbated because charter school parents are self-selecting
  - Wealth inequality
- DCPS losing students at ES/MS junction
- "More educated" are exercising choice to go out-of-boundary; self-selecting group
- Grade configurations are a part of that
- Imperfect information sharing
- Charter schools pulling students from DCPS, leaving students in in-boundary schools
- Choice vs. sector
  - Challenges arising from choice, not because of sector
- Transportation
- Equitable allocation of resources across sectors, schools
- Inequality in curricula, extra-curricular programming
- Successful schools not multiplying
  - DCPS, PCS trying to serve students independently of each other, not learning from each other
- Competition
- Schools need to serve both at-risk, middle class families; hard to find ones serving all well

4. **What does success look like for this work?**

- Transparency
  - Administration (i.e., DCPS central office, charter boards) are "black holes" for information
- Greater resource sharing
  - i.e., Facilities for athletics, staff
- Facilities planning
  - Helping charters to secure real estate
  - Certificates of need for placing charter schools
  - Planning new sites earlier, more transparently
  - Better RFO process; releasing DCPS stranglehold, charter mobility
  - Planning w. an eye to new development, zoning
  - Framework for colocation
  - Longer range planning
- Recognizing that community, outcomes for children matter
- Funding
  - Lingering bitterness over charter school funding allowance exists
- More public commentary on LEA decisions (i.e., meetings w. public re: IMPACT)
- Ongoing community engagement
- Master vision for city

5. **What does failure look like for this work?**

6. **Are there any goals that you think are missing or that shouldn't be included?**

7. **As we begin this work, what are some of the perceptions of each sector (DCPS and Public Charter Schools)?**

8. **Are there recommendations you have on how to best engage the public in this process moving forward?**

<u>Cross-Sector Collaboration Focus Group Themes – Ward 3</u>

1. Which of these goals resonates most with you and why?

- School quality
  - Building quality across both sectors
- Encouraging alignment between schools, sectors
  - Intake years, feeder patterns
  - Class sizes; 5th grade is of particular concern, number of seats
  - Enabling parents to have better choices to choose from
  - Streamlined, centralized repository for documents, etc.
- Schools of right/feeder patterns
  - Charter schools as neighborhood schools, schools of right
- Goals need to produce short AND long-term solutions
- Goals need to improve all schools
- Enrollment stability
  - More transparent data on enrollment (i.e., where students come from/go, inter vs. intra state, DCPS vs. PCS)
  - Does data capture students leaving schools, being counseled out?
  - Challenges for receiving schools
  - Pros/cons of adjusting funding based on student movement; "money follows the child"
  - Currently no plan between sectors
- Choice vs. vs. neighborhood schools
- Joint partnerships
  - "Lab schools," colocations, teachers sharing best practices, etc.
- Overall data transparency

2. What information needs to be shared with the public and across sectors?

- Accessibility of data
  - Using different channels, methods to share information with public
  - Student data sharing (i.e., rates of homelessness, grade promotion/retention, truancy rates, etc.)
  - Test scores, rationale for policy/practice changes, teacher salary, etc.
  - Simplified, consistent data available in one place
- Inclusivity of data
- Publishing information ranging from test scores, availability of nurses, PTA, school culture, audited financial data of schools,

3. What educational challenges exist or are exacerbated by a two sector landscape?

- Mobility

- o More choices = fewer kids going to neighborhood schools
- Facilities
  - o Where are charters put? How does that work?
  - o In turn, tied to equity issues
- Competition creating winners and losers
  - o Worry that schools are "gaming" the system by manipulating scores, data
- However, some note that the winner vs. loser situation means students who were previously losing can win

4. **What does success look like for this work?**

- DME informing decisions around when a charter opens, if it is needed, etc.
- More collaboration around types, locations, facilities of charters
  - o Both sectors seeing work as beneficial (not zero sum game)
- Minimizing adversarial environment
  - o Seeing DCPS, PCS as resources, rather than enemies
  - o Treating improved education as a common problem that both sectors can work together to solve
- Task Force making everyone welcome
- Customer satisfaction
  - o Residents who are happier w. schooling options are more likely to remain in DC
- Action, consensus before end of Bowser Administration
- Continuous line of communication, increasing between DCPS, PCSB, community-based organization
- Closing gaps
  - o Achievement, racial, gender, economic
- Transparency

5. **What does failure look like for this work?**

- More bureaucracy
- Empty report, devoid of results

6. **Are there any goals that you think are missing or that shouldn't be included?**

- Underserved populations
  - o SpEd need better services, timely access to IEPs
- Community schools
- Identify areas where schools can/cannot collaborate
  - o Best practices
- School safety needs to be prioritized
- How does the Task Force relate, coincide with the Five Year Strategic Plan (WIOA)?
- Use lottery information to contact parents

- Ensuring Task Force is housed somewhere it can be reassumed post-Bowser Administration
- Both sectors need to reach out to public to consistently solicit input
    - Go to community vs. making community come to DME

7. **As we begin this work, what are some of the perceptions of each sector (DCPS and Public Charter Schools)?**

8. **Are there recommendations you have on how to best engage the public in this process moving forward?**

Cross-Sector Collaboration Focus Group Themes – Ward 4

1. **Which of these goals resonates most with you and why?**

   - Improving parent experience
     - System currently privileges people w. internet access, comfort in using platform
     - Navigation of school programs needs easier navigation
     - Different data between sectors impedes comparison
       - Need MGP for all schools, suspension rates, etc.
       - Information on what schools excel in
   - Facilities planning
     - Not necessarily "coordinating," but making things more transparent
     - Common calendar
     - More public input, transparency on big infrastructure projects, clear benchmarks
     - Clarity on costs to city in openings/closings
     - Will there be a cap on number of schools in the city?
     - Allocation of resources should be more lottery-like, rather than competition
     - Zero-sum game makes it difficult to navigate
     - Avoiding Harmony/Langley situations
     - Charters avoiding DCPS schools is difficult
       - Building searches take years and RFOs are done infrequently but PCSB approves new schools regularly—collaboration needs to happen within the sector as well
   - Enrollment stability
     - This goal gets to underlying issue of promoting investment in schools (short-term) for long-term
     - Instability is not equal across sectors, impacts each differently
     - Work from student assignment vision?
     - School choice is inefficient, promotes instability
       - Shift focus from abundance of choices to maintenance/promotion of what people have
     - Stability of quality teachers
     - Charters are "stealing" students, but do students stay at charters as well?
   - Data
     - Examining exit code data
     - School planning data
       - What is this?
       - Population, parent demand, etc.
     - DCPS has to, but appears that charters have autonomy not to
     - Data is already available, sharing needs to be at student level, instructional information
     - Performance data is coded term—actually refers to which kids attend a school
     - Parents want to know what schools offer via consistent city-wide definitions
       - STEM? Languages?
   - Resource sharing

- o Best practices?
  - PD, space, etc.
- o Classroom space, specialized rooms (i.e., science labs, etc.)
- o Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) resources
- o SpEd
  - Denver system of holding/reserving lottery spots at all schools to place high-needs kids
- Identifying educational challenges
  - o Should be addressing, rather than identifying

2. **What information needs to be shared with the public and across sectors?**

3. **What educational challenges exist or are exacerbated by a two sector landscape?**

- Inconsistencies in student information warehousing
  - o Sharing data, transcripts, grading systems would be ideal
  - o Economies of scale, buying power could be enhanced w. cooperation in this area
- Lack of consortia for "like-minded" schools
  - o Schools w. similar programming, needs, or populations
    - Arts, STEM, Montessori, high poverty
  - o What is holding this back is time. Schools need a convener and a common time to meet

4. **What does success look like for this work?**

- Healthier collaboration
- Unified charter schools
- Lots of input from citizens, increased from current level
- Thinking of what is best for sectors, city as a whole, serves students and families
- Charter schools have better access to buildings
- DCPS getting all of the children counseled, forced out of PCS
- Communication between schools
  - o Protocol on information, record sharing between schools
  - o Programs so all kids are well-served, including for mental health
- PCSB only approving charters w. plans to serve high needs students
  - o Building capacity to serve kids in need; schools could do so if they knew how many students in this population they would have

5. **What does failure look like for this work?**

- Work remaining on a superficial level, not reaching "real" issues
- More animosity between sectors
- Remaining in competition, rather than collaboration

- Imposing requirements that do not impact student outcomes (i.e., unified PMF)

6. **Are there any goals that you think are missing or that shouldn't be included?**

- Making schools the hubs of the community by promising neighborhoods wraparound services
- City has resources, making sure that they are used now, rather than paying for it later

7. **As we begin this work, what are some of the perceptions of each sector (DCPS and Public Charter Schools)?**

- Charter schools are unfairly funded

8. **Are there recommendations you have on how to best engage the public in this process moving forward?**

- What are the best channels for meaningful input?
- CSCTF needs to reach all stakeholders
  - Just because some do not attend focus groups or meetings, does not mean their input is not valuable
- Work with LEAs to engage with parents
  - Appoint a POC in each school to gather information
  - Needs have to come from within schools
- Utilizing a well-designed survey that is disseminated through multiple avenues
  - i.e., schools, churches, community organizations, etc.
- Being transparent, clear on what will happen with results of surveys, feedback
  - Uncertainty re: what will happen to information can discourage participation

Cross-Sector Collaboration Focus Group Themes – Ward 5

1. **Which of these goals resonates most with you and why?**

- Improving parent experience
  - Making the lottery feel less like a lottery and more like a choice
    - Is a smaller goal, but hopefully easy to solve
  - Remaining cognizant of the fact that not all parents are aware of the choices they have
- School openings, closings, facilities planning
  - Schools across city are not coordinated by grade level
    - i.e., grades of entry, exit do not align
  - Distribution of ES, MS, HS is uneven
    - Over saturation of some schools in one area, scarcity in others
  - Collaboration vs. competition in creating quality schools across the city
- Enrollment stability
  - Minimizing suspension, expulsion rates
- Identifying educational challenges
  - Does this involve graduation requirements?
    - Recommendations for CTE, not instructional practices
  - Reengagement of disengaged youth
  - Increased career, technical opportunities
    - Sentiment that schools no longer have the same specialties (i.e., Dunbar)
  - This is most "audacious" goal

2. **What information needs to be shared with the public and across sectors?**

- Mobility rates within schools, encompassing both students AND teachers
  - Particularly #s of TFA teachers
- Student test scores for all schools

3. **What educational challenges exist or are exacerbated by a two sector landscape?**

- Robust charter system feels like an answer for quality to some – this is distorted
- Choice vs. informed choice
  - Huge learning curves exist for parents trying to pull students from failing schools
- Differing underlying philosophies between sectors
  - Creating neighborhood schools (DCPS) vs. uncoupling students from their neighborhoods (PCS)
  - Leads to more segregated school system

4. **What does success look like for this work?**

- Higher graduation rates
- Excellent educational options that lead to success beyond HS
- Mentality of a city-wide school system, rather than a charter system or DCPS system
- Robust school choice throughout the city, in every neighborhod
  - Locating charters in areas of need
- Acknowledgement that DCPS schools have failed students for generations
  - Introducing more collaborative models for success
  - Allowing charters to collocate, fill in empty spaces within DCPS schools, take over failing DCPS schools

5. **What does failure look like for this work?**

- Continuing harmful competition between sectors
- No collaboration of sectors within schools

6. **Are there any goals that you think are missing or that shouldn't be included?**

- Goals are catered toward those in education, not easily understood by lay man
- Sharing of curricula
- Better community of practice, ability to share best practices among all educators
- Focus on family engagement citywide

7. **As we begin this work, what are some of the perceptions of each sector (DCPS and Public Charter Schools)?**

- DCPS is going downhill
- PCS cherry-pick students
  - Therefore, any success reported is inflated
- Charters have better customer service

8. **Are there recommendations you have on how to best engage the public in this process moving forward?**

- Remove politics from discussion
- Make content of Task Force relatable to average parent
  - Creating material that is easily disseminated, interesting, easy to understand
  - Provide suggestions, options, rather than blank pages for feedback
- Go to the people
  - i.e., libraries, rec centers, PTA meetings, community meetings, etc.
  - Involve community partners
- Educating parents on why cross-sector collaboration is important

- Involve students

OTHER

- Mayor needs control of the entire system if intent is to plan citywide
- Seems that city has too many schools
- City government officials politicize issue

Cross-Sector Collaboration Focus Group Themes – Ward 6

1. **Which of these goals resonates most with you and why?**

- Improving parent experience
  - Creating consolidated website to let families know all of the options that exist
  - Removing "decision branch" that exists at ES/MS junction
    - Impacts enrollment stability in specific grades – PK, K, 4, 5
- Facilities planning
  - Processes for renovations are listed, but changed when budget is released. Shouldn't this be based on need?
    - Needs of physical infrastructure, needs of enrollment
    - Schools have been pushed back multiple times; need more transparency on renovations
    - More input from community is needed
  - Consideration of proximity of new school to existing school that requires modernization
    - Opening of new school becomes especially harmful
  - School openings/closings/facilities highlight need for resource sharing
    - Illustrates that there is not good information sharing at governmental level
  - Process for opening schools is not in line w. other governmental processes
  - Rating system for facilities, state of their structure
  - Fundamental problem that others stem from
    - PCS compete with each other
    - Creates choice w. no investment
  - Schools are under enrolled and new buildings keep opening
  - Current population growth does not support number of new schools
- School openings/closings
  - When existing charters receive schools, whole community needs to move if building is not in same neighborhood
  - Charter schools are unstable, due to real estate issues
  - Better adherence to first right of refusal for PCS of DCPS closed buildings
  - More information shared w. public on PCS openings
- Enrollment stability
  - Lack of busing, explicit transit for OOB creates lots of cars on road, is not sustainable
  - Cannot compare test scores because students move from grade to grade
  - Lack of backfilling in PCS causes churn, makes it hard to compare schools
- Information sharing
  - More information for public on quality of schools
  - Student performance data
    - Disaggregated by how long a student has been at a certain school
- Academic quality
  - Charters are of higher quality

- PCS sells parents on academic rigor, have sales mentality to recruit students that DCPS does not
- Educational challenges
  - Providing more information
  - System of schools is not a school system
  - Divisions between schools do not help
  - Number of agencies means parents do not know where to turn between DCPS, OSSE, DME, PCSB
  - Differences in school funding
  - Standards around dismissing students, withdrawal, reenrollment

2. **What information needs to be shared with the public and across sectors?**

- Student rights
  - DCPS students need to know their rights
  - Need clarity, consistency
  - Students should be able to stay within PCS system when kicked out of one PCS school
  - Consistency in expulsion policies
- More wraparound services
- Neighborhood school patterns

3. **What educational challenges exist or are exacerbated by a two sector landscape?**

- Funding
  - Mechanism for facilities funding is not the same, so kids get rundown schools
  - Extracurricular activities are funded by grants, but money evaporates
  - Money does not follow child
    - Should follow from PCS → DCPS, DCPS OOB → DCPS IB
  - In-boundary schools are not compensated for taking extra children
- Misalignment of grades between sectors
- Too many MS seats
- Administrative alignment
  - No unity between calendars
  - Weather announcements are scattered
  - Need sharing of extracurriculars
- Schools should be referred to as a whole, not PCS and CPS

4. **What does success look like for this work?**

- Eliminating us vs. them mentality
  - Both sectors have advantages, disadvantages
  - No more competition

- Unified and cohesive school system
- For charters, assessments on impact of opening new schools
  - Impact on DCPS, other existing PCS
- A Task Force that doesn't end, but continues to work on issues in two sector system
  - Not ending in 18 months
- Mayor, administration following recommendations of CSCTF
  - Not just "low-hanging fruit"
- Eroding boundaries between sectors
- Sharing of lessons, best practices
  - Finding out what is working, spreading that
  - Scaling up models of success, especially in communities where need is high
- Ending distrust of DME
- Learner-centered school models

5. **What does failure look like for this work?**

- Adding more schools means that none have enough resources
- If nothing happens

6. **Are there any goals that you think are missing or that shouldn't be included?**

- Respondent shares that their community group did a brainstorming session and their ideas aligned w. existing goals
- Holistic needs of the child
- Looking at successful schools in low SES communities developing processes that work
  - Best practice sharing
- Meeting growth percentiles
- Redefining school report cards
- Registration processes
  - Streamlined in-boundary verification through registration
  - Residency verification

7. **As we begin this work, what are some of the perceptions of each sector (DCPS and Public Charter Schools)?**

8. **Are there recommendations you have on how to best engage the public in this process moving forward?**

- Gathering contact information from people calling OSSE, inviting to community events for Task Force
  - Even if do not attend, widens the net
- Process for Boundaries Committee should be a model for CSCTF
  - Whole city outreach, different times

- Ward-based education councils
- Ensuring meeting information is released to public
- Sharing results of community
  - Making information Task Force is getting available to public
- Continuing to advertise, publicize
- Keeping focus group attendees involved
- Using Periscope so public can tune in, watch
- Soliciting voices that are not heard from as often
- Flyering in backpacks
- Small group meetings
- Meetings w. school leaders

<u>Cross-Sector Collaboration Focus Group Themes – Ward 7</u>

1. **Which of these goals resonates most with you and why?**

   - Improving parent/family experience
     - More data is needed for parents to make choices
       - # spaces available, chances of getting into a school, availability of resources (i.e., school nurses, libraries, etc.), type/frequency of PD for teachers
       - DCPS provides, PCS does not
       - Data also needs to be 100% accurate
     - Information to make apples to apples comparison across DCPS, PCS schools
       - PMF is PCS-specific, need information to compare schools in grades that are not assessed
     - Information should be shared via MSDC
       - Improved school profiles
   - Identifying educational challenges
     - What are schools doing about homeless students? Disengaged youth?
       - Determining services to offer, interventions to use could reduce mobility.
       - Sharing best practices would benefit all schools
   - Cross-sector collaboration
     - Creating better methods for schools to share information with each other
     - Challenge is in determining what collaboration would look like
     - Methods for PD
       - Parents should know how much of budget, time is dedicated to teacher PD
   - Facilities planning
     - How can they be made more equitable?
     - How does funding work?
     - Renovation schedule is not transparent.
     - Some charter schools look better than DCPS
     - Charters opening in close proximity to existing schools is undermining
       - Even if community pushes back, the school still opens
     - Perceived lack of planning as to the location or siting of new schools
     - Planning process needs to involve parents, community, take into account need
       - Needed MS, but got HS in Ron Brown building
   - Enrollment stability
     - DCPS in-boundary schools receive waves of kids after October count, before PARCC testing windows
     - Destination schools then receive negative data for new students (attendance, graduation, etc.) but are rated against original schools
       - Problem is not that schools cannot/should not serve midyear entries, but issues are created
       - Paperwork, verification issues also abound
     - Do parents understand complexity of switching schools?
     - Need to understand why families make their choices

- What can help parents make informed decisions?
  - o Disheartening navigating both sectors
  - o Lack of good MS

2. **What information needs to be shared with the public and across sectors?**

3. **What educational challenges exist or are exacerbated by a two sector landscape?**

- Two sets of rules about how students get into schools; one for PCS, one for DCPS
  - o Confusing for parents
  - o MSDC is good, but more information on likelihood of getting in via lottery would be good
- Sense of unfairness amongst schools
  - o Charters make it harder for schools to improve because DCPS schools are not improving quickly enough to stop families from moving, applying elsewhere
- DCPS has internal system of teachers sharing best practices, but is locked to other LEAs
  - o Cross-sector PLCs
- Disengaged youth
  - o Schools have no incentive to work with, serve those kids
  - o Rating system seems to penalize schools that absorb disengaged youth; competitive environment makes this a bad choice
- Testing does not measure what is happening in schools
  - o Need broader metrics
  - o i.e., teacher tenure, availability of extracurriculars, etc.
- Funding
- Availability of documentation, information sharing between SIS of schools

4. **What does success look like for this work?**

- Universal school ratings
  - o Common language to describe, measure, document schools is important
- Clearer examples of collaborations between PCS, DCPS
  - o Schools need to work together to address social, emotional, educational needs
- Offering programs to other schools
  - o KIPP Saturday schools should be shared
  - o Teachers coming together
- Recommendations for legislation
  - o Political will won't cut it; need an enforceable way to implement
- Neither sector is accountable to public
  - o Both "check the box" on engagement, is not authentic
  - o Should be codified by Council
  - o Chancelor, Deputy Mayor both appointed by Mayor
- Less competition within the same sector

- Students having ability to attend nearby schools

5. **What does failure look like for this work?**

- Parents feeling that they have to choose a charter over their neighborhood school
  - If something is working at a charter, it should be shared with the neighborhood school
- More of the same, status quo

6. **Are there any goals that you think are missing or that shouldn't be included?**

- What does collaboration look like? What collaboration is already in the works.
- Transportation safety
  - Traffic jams, safe sidewalks, street crossings
  - DCPS has support from DDOT, crossing guards, PCS does not. Need to expand across sectors
- Goals assume that schools are all on an even playing field, neglect to address the achievement gap
  - Needs to be made more explicit
- Gathering input from families on school closures across sectors, making data used to make closure decisions available to public
- Exploring a neighborhood preference to charter schools
  - DCPS buildings are closed, students are displaced, and new PCS are opened in same neighborhood, but neighborhood students do not necessarily even get in.
  - What does it look like? How does it work? How would it impact schools?
  - Scenarios need to be explored
- Schools need to be properly resourced
  - Lots of schools = resources spread too thin
- Diversity in programming
- Efficiency of resources across sectors
  - Can be helped by identifying each school's strengths, highlighting them
- Disengaged youth

7. **As we begin this work, what are some of the perceptions of each sector (DCPS and Public Charter Schools)?**

8. **Are there recommendations you have on how to best engage the public in this process moving forward?**

- Surveys done through neighborhoods, at schools, or door to door
  - At school pick up and drop off
  - Surveys at big events (i.e., EdFest), using MSDC applicants
  - Incentives will boost completion rates

- o   PTA meetings, ANC meetings
- Visiting schools to engage parents

OTHER

What are the components of a plan for W7?

- Starts w. data
  - o   Needs assessment
  - o   How many families cross river to go to school? Why? Which grades do they need? What are the existing facilities?
- Engaged, transparent process, like boundaries
  - o   Many points of contact, ways of getting involved
- Cooperating with stakeholders
  - o   Ed councils, PTAs, school members, 21st Century funders, etc.

<u>Cross-Sector Collaboration Focus Group Themes – Ward 8</u>

1. **Which of these goals resonates most with you and why?**

   - Improving parent/family experience
   - Identifying educational challenges
   - Cross-sector collaboration
     o Why there needs to be more collaboration within sectors?
     o Money, politics are problems hampering
     o Education needs to be exceptional
     o SpEd across the board
       ▪ Feeders, pathways for students needing services
     o Grade alignment
     o Transportation for all kids
     o Parent navigators to help others go through process
     o City is not properly serving at-risk kids, general population very well
       ▪ Areas that require expertise, specialization are rich for collaboration
   - Facilities planning
     o Cross-sector feeder patterns
   - Enrollment stability
     o Can be solved by cross-sector collaboration
     o Can positively impact students who are transient
     o Need to emphasize stability; mobility hurts schools and students

2. **What information needs to be shared with the public and across sectors?**

   - Strategies, solutions
     o What is being done to correct problems, how to approach
   - Every school budget should be public
   - MSDC lottery waitlist data
     o Which schools are most popular?
     o Can give parents sense of where quality exists
   - City plan for projected population increases, with regard to education, schools
   - Consistent school rating system between PCSB, DCPS
   - Common record keeping
     o Better administrative coherence
   - Parity between extracurricular activities offered

3. **What educational challenges exist or are exacerbated by a two sector landscape?**

   - Transit
     o Especially when schools are on different schedules, have different operating schedules

- What happens for parents with children in multiple schools, sectors
  - LEAs making individual decisions on placement of schools
    - Need collaboration, transparency

4. **What does success look like for this work?**

   - All schools having appropriate enrollment targets
     - Clear runways for growth of high-performing programs
     - Will hopefully solve scramble for, dearth of quality schools
     - Taking parental feedback into consideration to measure success
   - Eliminating big gaps
     - Achievement gaps
     - No more cross-sector tension
   - Greater accountability
     - DCPS, PCS
   - Someone making sure recommendations of Task Force are actually implemented
   - Easier navigation of system of education

5. **What does failure look like for this work?**

   - Task Force not taking public input seriously
   - No improvements
     - Same problems existing 10 years from now
   - Still spending more money on education and continuing to get poorer results than other states
   - Status quo
   - City seems to be on upward trajectory and is easy to say that things are improving, but schools are still working individually
   - Acceleration of high-quality programs that don't share best practices to narrow gaps

6. **Are there any goals that you think are missing or that shouldn't be included?**

   - Need goal about transparency
     - How are facilities used?
     - Budget transparency
     - How to maximize resources
   - Finding quality human capital
     - Working together to find candidates can deepen candidate pool
     - Elevating programs that promote cross-sector PD

7. **As we begin this work, what are some of the perceptions of each sector (DCPS and Public Charter Schools)?**

8. **Are there recommendations you have on how to best engage the public in this process moving forward?**

- Monthly newsletter from DME
  - Serving as public record of what is taking place
- Some report on thinking that transpires in monthly meetings
- Engaging public on more personal level
  - Going to schools, speaking to parents to gather feedback
  - Improving "every day" perspective of schools
  - School engagement toolkit to LSRTs
- Consideration of SpEd, ELL students