

DRAFT ONLY

OCS Working Group: Meeting 3 (Task Force Meeting 13)

Date: 4/25/2017

Goals for meeting:

- Examine and discuss current facilities policies and processes in DC.
- Examine highlights from the Office of Planning current planning information. (if time)

Meeting Summary:

Reiterate goals, vision, and principles (slides 2-5):

Task Force member comments/questions:

- Can we revisit the middle of the Venn diagram again? These aren't the limitations on our conversations; these are just what we have discussed so far and we should revisit them. They seem to propose that transparency alone would solve the problem and support neighborhood schools. We have all agreed in our principles to support viable neighborhood schools and this is the primary issue.
 - Jenn Comey: The ultimate goal is the vision; this is what we ultimately trying to accomplish. There is time in the full Task Force to discuss a second version of the vision during tonight's meeting.
- There are problems that exist from both the DCPS and PCS perspectives and these problems are going to be different; we have to find some common ground on the areas of disagreement in order to work toward shared goals.
 - JC: In our first meeting, we laid out our hopes and fears; we discussed last time that solving for those two extremes is going to take longer than these couple months.
 - *Note: Middle section of the Venn diagram:
 - *No transparency of information from each sector on how they decide to open, close, or locate schools*
 - *Little to no advance notice so other sector can plan when other sector opens, closes, or locates.*
 - *Lack of meaningful community engagement and input into the planning process*
- The issue of viable system of schools of right is not the primary issue. The vision statement revision (slide 20 of full TF deck) includes schools of right and innovative schools of choice. In theory, all these goals might be in conflict with each other. So if you completely solve for one, you might not be able to do the others. This is not about solving for one issue; it's about moving to a better outcome.
 - Agreed; but what's in the middle of the Venn diagram is not enough to move toward a better outcome for the things we want in our vision.
 - We need to think not just about transparency of data but how we interpret the metrics in the middle of the Venn diagram.
- What we have put in the middle of the Venn diagram can start the conversation about what it is we are going to solve. But there are other areas we can capture along the way and come back to.
 - I like the idea of starting with things that are doable and then tacking on things that are more related to one perspective of the problem or the other.

The group went through slides 7-12 on PCSB's current opening, closing, and siting processes.

Task Force member questions/comments:

- Q: PCSB requires that applicants demonstrate need for the school in an area of the city; how do you determine the need in that area when you're not sure what the location is?
 - A: All charter schools are citywide schools. Some applicants write their applications with a citywide vision while others write an application that is specific to a ward or neighborhood.
 - A: There have been several examples where schools want to open somewhere and then can't find a building and then locate somewhere else
- Q: What are the standards for how a school demonstrates need in its application?
 - A: Sometimes decisions are based on how existing schools are faring on the PARCC or on how many students are having to cross the river to attend school. Ultimately, the board uses its judgement to decide whether the applicant has met the threshold for establishing need.
- Q: It sounds like each prospective charter operator defines need for their school within the context of the whole city. How could the process PCSB uses be changed to achieve improved coherence?
 - A: There is currently no standard of reference produced by a city body that indicates where there is need. I think that kind of information and guidance would help PCSB assess need.
- Q: PCSB would welcome that kind of guidance from a city body?
 - A: Yes, with caveats. We need to be humble about our ability to predict need. We don't want to shut out the opportunity to contribute to the educational landscape of the city even if a particular idea for a school is not part of an education master plan. In addition, PCSB also looks at the overall quality of existing schools; if a school is low-performing, we see a need for another school.

The group went through slides 13-23 on "School Openings, Closures, and Sitings at DCPS".

Task Force member comments/questions

- The district has stabilized from where it was; the closings of DCPS schools caused destabilization. Now we can think about creating an ongoing process for opening and closing schools.
- We need to make sure we don't have schools that are partially funded; we need to not have kids getting a diminished education because there is not enough programming at a school.
- The district needs to be thoughtful about closures and the social emotional impact closures have on a community. Schools provide consistency, particularly when a community is dealing with a tragic event. We need to understand how to improve school options without creating an unnecessary sense of loss. Communities in general are in support of school options; how do they not have to lose a school in order to gain access to options?
- In DC we have an example of a process that's different than the normal process for opening a charter school. The Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling (JBAB) community has set aside space for a school. They have assembled a group of Ward 8 parents and community members from the base. They put together a set of principles and developed an RFP. They are in the process of evaluating proposals and are going to come up with a recommendation to the base commander. The parents have done all of the heavy lifting on this before going to PCSB for approval.
- Q: They will go through the same PCSB process from there?
 - A: Yes; all the issues of community engagement and demonstrating need have already been addressed because process was so authentic and community-informed.
- We should do an analysis of the city and see what the options for students are right now. We should do this from a portfolio perspective, regardless of sector. We need to have thought through the matriculation cycle, PK through 12th grade, for particular types of programming. Quality is extremely

important and we need to scale up options that families want. We should strive to get the community excited about what's happening, similar to what happened with the base.

- The first step is Strategic Regional Analysis (SRA) to see where we are now and what we need more of. There has to be one set of data that lays out a perspective; PCSB could use it to think through decisions as well.
- Adding schools without addressing low performing schools or addressing factors that cause students to leave schools is a problem. That's the tension that has to be addressed. What's happening with this right now is not vindictive; it's real and we have to deal with it or it will become a big issue in the future. There are unintentional consequences for incrementally adding of schools.
- I can imagine a process in which the city identified that there was a need for something and then initiated an opportunity for all LEAs, including DCPS, to submit proposals. Depending on whose proposal was accepted, DCPS or PCSB would go through its process.
- When you open too many schools, then it drains kids from existing schools because you now have more schools than kids. This drains resources and leads to a cycle of decline. And this happens within sectors. Charters have closed because there weren't enough kids.
- The problem is not sector-specific. How do we give each school we've authorized the opportunity to succeed? That way, if they don't succeed, it's not because we did something that caused them to be unsuccessful.
- There is common ground here around transparency of information. The Task Force could recommend a common set of data that everyone collects and uses as a set of guidelines that we could all refer to. We could recommend that this data be shared and be a part of decision-making around school openings, closures, and siting.
 - This idea seems like the low-hanging fruit; are there any reasons why this couldn't happen?
- How do we solve the problem of not having enough physical buildings?
 - The DME office recently created a group that compiles this common data. We have some templates from other jurisdictions that we could draw from.
- Having DCPS close a school felt like an execution; we need to look at the reasons for low enrollment.
- Expanding a school model with a record of success seems to be in a different category than a new, experimental venture. Is this considered?
- There are jurisdictions that set out facilities and have the community come with ideas.
- We haven't taken advantage of economies of scale and tried to provide incentives for the types of programs we need (example: special education); either sector could take on the creation of these programs but the programs should be incentivized.
- In Denver, there is a sector-agnostic approach to serving exceptional students with autism, etc. The sectors need to collaborate on creating new types of schools for students.
- Schools should be diverse by design. It is the one thing that has been proven over time to reduce and eliminate and prevent achievement gaps.
- We should have a community-based process for dealing with schools that are having difficulties. The idea of offering up a building and then trying to figure out what the community wants and getting the community to decide could work for struggling schools as well.