

OCS Working Group: Meeting 5 (Task Force Meeting 14)

Date: 5/30/2017

Goals for meeting:

- Review the working group process so far and the information about the SRAs
- Discuss a theory of action/policy solution around a strategic citywide analysis
- Begin discussing the common issue around the timing of opening, closing, and siting schools
- Determine next steps

Meeting Summary:

Reiterate goals, vision, and principles and go over a brief recap of the off-cycle May working group meeting (slides 2-5):

Jenn Comey went over the first few slides regarding the Strategic Regional Analyses (SRAs) in Denver and Oakland (slides 7-9). She clarified that all students choose their schools in Denver, with students actively choosing in-boundary schools. She also noted that Denver makes maintaining high match rates a priority throughout its regions and has ~85% first-choice match rates.

Task Force Member Questions/Comments:

- Q: What are the recommendations that come out of Denver's SRA?
 - A: They use the SRA to figure out the facility and programmatic needs. A charter school might be approved but if it doesn't fit into the picture of the need painted by the SRA, the school won't get a building. In general, schools try to locate in district facilities but they can look for non-district facilities. DPS controls most of its school facilities.
- Q: Does the SRA directly guide facility investments in Denver?
 - A: We can check back with Denver and get clarification on this.
 - Comment: It would be good to know how their SRA relates to their facilities master plan.
 - A: We do know that the district authorizes all charters in Denver.
- Comment: It would be good to know how their charter approval process works. Who is engaged around the approve process and do community members have input?
- Q: How do they capture qualitative information about schools in their School Performance Framework?
 - A: If we look at the appendix of this slide deck, we can see some information about how Denver measures quality. There are measures around student and parent satisfaction as well as attendance, etc. They include measures that are beyond just assessment information.
- Q: How many schools are red (the lowest level on the School Performance Framework and in danger of closing) each year?
 - A: They closed three schools this year that had been on the red level for two years in a row but we can get more information from them on how many schools have been red and/or have been closed.
- Q: How are they managing growth of seats?
 - A: Through the SRA and other analysis, they have a sense of where students are going to end up each fall. As we mentioned earlier, all students must apply to their schools (even those of right) and DPS manages it so that most students are matched to their #1 top choice. They have also created enrollment policies that if students get matched to a school

- that isn't their by right school, then they lose their previous right. In the past, they were experiencing population and enrollment growth throughout the city. However, now the growth curve is starting to flatten out and they are going to start seeing more seats than students in certain areas.
- Q: I assume they have the same segregation and quality gap issues by region as we do. How do those kids get into high-quality seats?
 - A: According to DPS, there are some regions will all green and blue level (the top two levels of their SPF) seats and some regions that have much fewer green and blue level seats. Those regions with higher SES have mostly all green/blue. They've decreased the number of red and orange level (the lowest two levels of their SPF) over the years but they are still working toward their goal of having 80% of all students in a region in green and blue level seats.
 - Comment: It's worth noting that Denver recently implemented an at risk preference in their lottery. Currently 10 of their schools have it. It doesn't always work out for the at risk students because schools rank it under sibling preference and others.
 - Q: What are the transportation options for students in Denver?
 - A: The options are complicated and this is a challenge for Denver. Students who attend their boundary school and are outside of a certain area around the school are eligible. There are different size "no transport/walkable" areas depending on the age of the student. (For example, students in grades 9-12 must reside more than 3.5mi from their boundary school to be eligible.)

Jenn Comey went over the template from the working groups and read through the first problem as the group has defined it previously (slides 11-12)

Task Force Member Comments/Questions:

- Facilitator: If the problem is a lack of information, what is the theory of action once that information has been provided? What should we do with the information?
- Q: Is the problem really that we don't have common data that sectors and others can use to do smart planning? We don't have a common set of data and analyses for LEAs, agencies, non-profits, etc. to use to plan.
- It is more than that: we don't have a shared set of objectives. One of the main things we would want to accomplish is to be able to look at neighborhoods and say how is the supply of schools meeting the need for schools? How is supply meeting demand? Right now one of the problems we have is that certain areas have an overabundance of seats. That kind of growth is not being managed according to a broader analysis or set of goals. This kind of growth undermines the potential success of the schools that are already there.
- A neighborhood level analysis is good but not relevant to the charter sector because charter schools are citywide schools.
- But many people say that proximity is an important consideration for them when choosing a school, even charter families. Proximity is a value people have here. Schools draw citywide but they also draw from the around them. The analysis is certainly different for citywide schools, but we should look at what exactly is different.
- Facilitator: Looking on a citywide scale seems to be hard to measure. Census tract is too small. Is looking at the data on a ward level the right size? There is variation across the wards. We propose DC Office of Planning's neighborhood clusters because they comprise about 3-5 neighborhoods per ward.

- Could the problem we have listed say that we lack a look at data on a citywide level? We could slice it by ward or neighborhood when it's appropriate. How will we get people to engage with the analysis?
 - But we have to get down to something smaller than citywide because there is an impact on immediately surrounding schools when a new school locates in an area. If five charter schools locate in or near the same area in Ward 8, they will ultimately end up drawing from the same student population.
 - If the school they opened near is a low-performing school, isn't it good to give those students other options?
 - We are using economic terms. We are not talking about elasticity of the market; there are only so many kids.
 - Just because students leave a school doesn't mean the school they left behind is bad. I am questioning the assumption that opening schools that will draw from the same population of students isn't going to have a negative impact.
- An impact analysis needs to be done to understand where a new school is going to get its population of students. There has to be some way to look at the likelihood of students to go to certain places or not. We could create some sort of model and see where a new school will pull students and could use a variety of inputs in the model.
- As long as there are kids in schools that are under-performing, we should be creating quality seats.
- One theory of action could be to do an analysis to estimate where there are gaps in quality with the goal that we are going to improve quality in all neighborhoods.
- I have a problem with how ESSA defines quality. The way we define quality disadvantages schools with low-income students. Right now, the way the rating system was set under ESSA, it's too closely linked to proficiency. What we should look at is growth.
- It seems like this Task Force is moving toward the idea that we should not have wasteful competition within our education system.
- I think the SRA should take into account the inputs schools receive. There are enormous differences among schools in terms of money per pupil. We should include a look at school budgets or programs in the SRA.
 - It is not certain that just looking at per pupil funding from government sources will tell this story.
- It seems clear that the city would benefit from gathering and analyzing this data and cutting the data in several different ways. There isn't one correct interpretation of the data.
- If we look at the data on a neighborhood level, it can be aggregated to be on a citywide level. For the problem we are trying to solve, we are not able to see the whole picture without the common analysis.
- Data is important but it's important to remember the quote from David Moynihan, "Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not to his own facts." We will get to the values behind the data, but what you are saying is that we need to get to a baseline first.
- One place to start would be to look at those nine areas (Denver and Oakland's categories in their SRA) and see what we could put together in DC that addresses those areas.
- However, just putting the data out there is not enough; there has to be some level of analysis.
- Figuring out how to develop an impact analysis would be helpful. We should acknowledge there is an impact and we want to at least look at that impact and consider planning around it. You would need to factor in a lot of things in addition to enrollment projections, etc.; you would need to look at where schools are recruiting, etc.

- People need to acknowledge that there are gaps. We need to see where we have excess capacity; we need to see where there is a gap of certain types of programming, etc. We need to think about the gaps.
- There is tension between quality seats and excess seats. Denver has this problem too.
- Asking Denver how they made decisions about gaps might not be helpful yet. Right now we are asking “do we think the data should be available to inform decisions about gaps? Would both systems be better off with the data than without it?” The answer is yes.
- This could be our next recommendation. We would like to charge DME to work with stakeholder groups to come up with our equivalent of an SRA.
 - Could we add to that that this should tie to the MFP?
 - A: It ties directly to the MFP and would even have some of the same people involved.
- A facilities analysis should be included in our SRA. A recommendation should include those 9 buckets of data analysis.
- I still feel like everyone is going to look at the analysis and have it inform their own decisions. There’s a difference between presenting the data and presenting what the data is saying. Making clear what the data is saying is not a statement of what can or cannot be done. It is a middle step. What is the data saying from a portfolio perspective?
 - I think this is a valid concern. We can find agreement on where there is need and where there is no need.
 - The data could say a conflicting few things. Data is not neutral.
 - Technically, the DME could interpret the data with a citywide scope and put out an analysis which it then opens up for debate and conversation. We already have this all-encompassing body (the DME) that we could utilize.
- If we can all be in agreement about the gaps, then we have an opportunity for the sectors to figure it out. There is room for collaboration here.
- Impact analyses need to look at what has happened in the past. It should look at the positive and negative impacts as well as the longer term and shorter term impacts.
- There should be a shared vision for the use of the SRA and shared points of analysis. We need to come up with shared ideas about the values behind the SRA that could be added to a recommendation along with the recommendation that the DME create a strategic citywide analysis.