

Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force Retreat – DRAFT ONLY Monday, November 7, 2016

Monday, November 7, 2016
5:00-9:00pm
Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force
Retreat

Attendees:

- Amanda Alexander | Deputy Chief of Elementary Schools, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)
- Evelyn Boyd Simmons | Francis-Stevens parent; W2 Education Network; former member, Student Assignment Committee; President, Logan Circle Community Association
- Shanita Burney | Deputy Chief, Community Engagement, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)
- John Davis | Chief of Schools, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) (incoming interim DCPS Chancellor)
- Caryn Ernst | Watkins ES, Stuart-Hobson MS parent; former PTA president, Capitol Hill Cluster School; member, Capitol Hill Public School Parent Organization (CHPSPO)
- Carlie Fisherow | Executive Director, Scholar Academies and DC Scholars
- Faith Gibson Hubbard | Chief Student Advocate, State Board of Education (SBOE); former member, Student Assignment Committee
- Hanseul Kang | State Superintendent of Education
- Melissa Kim | Chief Academic Officer, Secondary Schools, KIPP DC; former principal, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)
- Anjali Kulkarni | Deputy Chief, Strategic School Planning, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)
- Emily Lawson | Founder & CEO, DC Prep PCS
- Bethany Little | Murch ES, BASIS PCS parent; Education policy expert
- Scott Pearson | Executive Director, Public Charter School Board (PCSB)
- Darren Woodruff | EL Haynes PCS, Benjamin Banneker HS parent ; Chair, Public Charter School Board (PCSB)
- Kemba Hendrix | Elsie Whitlow Stokes PCS parent; former public and public charter school teacher
- Alejandra Vallejo | Bancroft ES parent; Chair, Bancroft ES Local School Advisory Team (LSAT)

Co-Chairs:

- Jennifer Niles | Deputy Mayor for Education
- Anthony Williams | CEO & Executive Director, Federal City Council; former Mayor

Facilitator:

- Jim Sandman | President, Legal Services Corporation; former General Counsel, DCPS

Members on the Phone:

- Erika Harrell | DC Prep PCS parent; Member, My School DC Parent Advisory Council; member, DC School Reform Now; member, PCSB Parent & Alumni Leadership Council (PALC)
- Charlene Drew-Jarvis | Graduate, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS); Senior Advisor, KIPP DC PCS; former Ward 4 City Councilwoman

Members not in Attendance:

- Angela Copeland | Stuart-Hobson MS parent; public affairs specialist
- Karen Williams | Ward 7 Representative, State Board of Education (SBOE)
- Shantelle Wright | Founder & CEO, Achievement Prep PCS; Chair, DC Association of Public Charter Schools
- Irene Holtzman | Executive Director, Friends of Choice in Urban Schools (FOCUS)
- Ariana Quiñones | Duke Ellington HS, Cesar Chavez PCS parent, education and human services policy consultant, Otero Strategy Group LLC, former member Student Assignment Committee

Guests:

- Ja'Sent Brown | Director of the Reengagement Center, Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE)
- Yair Inspektor | Director of Policy and Planning, Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE)

Staff:

- Jennifer Comey | Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME)
- Hannah Holliday | Leadership for Education Equity Fellow, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME)
- Rebecca Lee | Policy Advisor, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education
- Amy Lerman | Director of Operations, My School DC
- Aaron Parrott | Data Manager, My School DC
- Richelle Russell | Education Pioneers Data Analyst Fellow, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME)

Retreat Summary:

The retreat began at 5:00pm with Jenn Comey from the DME's office briefly running through the goals for the Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force retreat and the retreat agenda. The first item on the agenda was a reflection on the group norms and shared purpose.

Reflection: (*Transcriptions of the chart paper notes)

The group first reflected on what the discussions should LOOK, SOUND, and FEEL like:

- Look
 - More active facilitation of dialogue
- Sound
 - The elephant(s) in the room are discussed
 - What needs to be said is discussed at the "table" not elsewhere
 - More healthy debate
- Feel
 - Should not just reflect interests of a particular sector, but of all children

- Should be able to bring up a sector-specific complaint, without it being immediately discounted
- Being open to legislative/policy changes, irrespective of the political climate. Members should not dismiss options because of currently legislation/policy.

Task Force members then worked in partners to discuss moments that have exemplified the group's aspirations for its conversations and moments that have felt more difficult or less productive. The group shared out the following ideas:

Comments:

- Times when the group's conversations exemplified aspirations or was productive
 - Small group breakout of the transfer process
 - Small group breakouts in general
- Times when the group's conversations were not as productive:
 - Can be hard to come back to the whole group from the breakout groups
 - Level of vulnerability/honesty gets capped when it is a public meeting (fear of something being taken out of context)

The Task Force then took a moment to reflect independently on 1) things that the Task Force should do more of or keep in mind moving forward and 2) things that the Task Force should do less of or avoid moving forward:

- What should task force members do more of or keep in mind moving forward?
 - Be open about disagreements/differing opinions
 - Put kids first
 - Reference data that we have looked in advance
 - Saying the hard thing productively
 - Adopt others perspective in order to understand what the opposite opinion is
- What should task force members avoid moving forward?
 - Being afraid of change
 - Making statements without backup data
 - Assume what people are thinking

Why Students Move: Panel Discussion

Following the group reflection, Ms. Comey framed the panel discussion as a way to explore information around the goal of reducing student mobility. The panelists were the following: Ja'Sent Brown, Director of the Reengagement Center at OSSE; Erika Harrell, member of DC School Reform Now and a DC Prep parent (task force member); and Faith Gibson Hubbard, Chief Student Advocate at the State Board of Education (task force member). Hannah Holliday also gave a summary of themes collected from a survey of school leaders currently serving on the Task Force. The purpose of the panel discussion was to provide the Task Force with information that they have learned first-hand about why students move

mid-year and to suggest what qualitative and quantitative data is still needed to support policies that reduce student mobility.

The panelists each spoke for around five minutes before taking questions from the other members of the Task Force about their experiences:

- Erika Harrell
 - Many of the families she works with are from Wards 7 and 8, and many didn't know there were high quality schools in their neighborhood.
 - Most families didn't transfer after going through DCSRN counseling.
 - Misalignment between the school culture and family culture, which leads students to withdrawal.
 - Transportation –too far or too young; some students had issues with the DC One card and were denied access; the commitment to getting to the school became too much.
 - Some students had behavioral problems at the school.
- Ja'Sent Brown
 - The Reengagement Center is a “one-stop shop” for students ages 16-24 who have disengaged or dropped out of high school; the center helps reconnect disengaged students to educational options as well as other critical services like housing, social services, child care, and employment opportunities. Employment is the number 1 barrier for students reenrolling in school.
 - Many students that have dropped out have gone through multiple transfers and have transferred mid-year.
 - Many students end up as clients of the center because issues were not addressed by the mid-year transfer.
 - Need to keep in mind the barriers for a student such as not having housing, childcare, income to feed themselves and their families need to be addressed at the school level because the issue is not always a problem with the school; 27% of youth coming to the Reengagement Center have three or more barriers (over 500 clients).
 - The first step is often getting them access to SNAP and TANF so they can get food and some kind of income to allow them to go to school.
 - Homeless youth can transfer up to 3 times in a school year
- Faith Gibson Hubbard
 - Communication challenge – a principal might not be listening or the parent can't express the need in a way that the educator understands.
 - Special Education needs that aren't being met. There are differing opinions regarding whether a student needs special education services and whether or not the child is receiving the services they need.
 - School culture is also an issue; schools are not able to express their expectations parents and parents are not sure of the school's expectations.
 - Families that don't feel that they can express their needs to educators so instead will just leave the school.

- Transportation challenges exist for both children and parents (parent doesn't get a DC One card).
- Families that aren't homeless, but move often due to the high cost of living.
- Families need counseling to decide which school is best for their child and how far away the school is.
- Families do not feel like their voices are being heard.
- School Leaders Survey (for Task Force Members)
 - Residency changes cause some of the mobility: either moving to MD or another state or into shelters.
 - Dissatisfaction with school policies and procedures also causes families to leave schools.
 - Transportation becomes an issue either because the family moved or transportation became too challenging.
 - Hardship transfers at schools that currently do them take a significant amount of time and the process is unclear.

The group discussed the panelists' answers and asked questions to the panelists:

Comments/Questions:

- Some themes that the Task Force identified:
 - School culture: parents not understanding expectations/things just not working out.
 - Communication challenges between schools and parents.
 - The "protest vote": people not trying to work things out and instead opting to leave.
 - Transportation challenges
 - Distribution and sharing the burden could run up against transportation challenges.
- Is there data on the age/grade band breakdowns for mid-year transfers?
 - There are more total elementary school students who move, but there are proportionally more high school students who move.
- Q: What prevents teachers and leaders from finding ways to connect with families and students? What can be done so that students and families are finding success?
 - A: At some schools, if a family is in need of support, the school will step in with resources. This depends on if the school has resources or not.
- The Reengagement Center should be used as a resource and as a chance to learn about policies that could be used more broadly.
- Q: Has the Office of the Student Advocate heard from families that charters "pushed out" their child?
 - A: Not directly, but there have been times where a school has told the family that they might want to find a better fit for their child. This has mostly been heard from charters, but it has also been heard from out-of-boundary DCPS schools.

- A: This also happens in application high schools; it happens at any school in which parents have to opt-in.
- Because of the DCPS enrollment team, many complaints about schools don't make it to the Office of the Student Advocate (they are dealt with internally).
- A Task Force member and SHAPPE (name spelled out) discussed the need to consolidate resources in schools that are taking large percentages of kids so they can provide wraparound services in a more focused way. There should be churn predictions created now in order to plan for systems to put into place the following year. These churn predictions could help factor into high-churn schools receiving more resources.
- Our "distribution policy" is problematic because transportation is a major issue for families; distributing mid-year transfer and enrollment students would increase transportation issues.
- Q: How can schools not be incentivized into losing students in the first place?
 - A: The Task Force does not currently have the levers available to reduce out-of-state mobility and the vast majority of movement comes from students moving into and out of state.
 - A: If there is a belief that schools have to have some level of stability, then the solution should be distribution.
 - What data is still needed?
 - Look at the schools with low exits as models.
 - Scale and scope of why students move mid-year.
 - If a student has a mid-year transfer, what is the likelihood that they drop out?
 - Are community schools keeping their students at higher rates? What is the effect of wraparound services?
 - Out of state/disengaged youth entries
 - How many times has a family been forced to move and what would the transportation costs be to get them to their school?
 - Could the policy of supporting high-churn schools create magnet schools?
 - Of the transfer themes, is there one that was the biggest? What is the low hanging fruit?
 - Are there one or two categories that families fall into that can be more readily addressed?
 - This Task Force member was uncomfortable with the idea of every school not being equipped to support all students (i.e., some schools having more resources for wrap-around services than others).
 - Another Task Force member noted that the group should keep in mind how demoralizing a mid-year transfer can be for a student and that student mobility is a major issue because of this.

Deputy Mayor Niles noted that her team would be looking into collecting more ideas about the data the Task Force needs and talking to different philanthropic organization about getting their help collecting some of this data over the next three to four months.

Mid-Year Entry, Exit, and Transfer Policy Proposal

After coming back from a 10-minute dinner break, Ms. Comey reintroduced the Mid-Year Entry, Exit, and Transfer policy proposal that the group discussed at both the September and October Task Force meetings (as well as separate breakout sessions). She noted that the Task Force members would go through each component of the proposal that still needed Task Force input and rate their agreement on a scale of one to four. As part of the reintroduction of the proposal, Ms. Comey went over the purpose of the policies.

Comments:

- The group needs to think about the incentives and disincentives regarding mobility, not just the process of mobility. How can schools be incentivized to keep students throughout the year?
 - There is a difference between incentives and disincentives for students/families and for schools. LEA payment is a disincentive for schools.
 - A centralized process could be an incentive – if there is a central process that reviews transfers, schools might work harder to serve and retain students.
 - The size of midyear mobility between charter schools and DCPS schools is low; the biggest thing is out-of-state mobility. The numbers of students leaving charter schools for DCPS schools was 638, which is less than 1% of students in the city. The LEA payment system will help address it.
- DC might not have high mobility compared to other jurisdictions, but it could be that DC has some special, hard-to-serve students. Perhaps resources should be focused on serving those students.
- The big concern is the disproportionate impact on ward 7 and 8 high schools. It does not take that many students to define a culture in a classroom. It is deceiving to focus on the statistical insignificance of this issue; one must look at the practical impact.
 - This Task Force member was curious about LEA payment initiative will do to address the practical impact of students leaving midyear. What can schools do with the money they get mid-year?
- It is important to be careful not to further marginalize communities; just because it doesn't affect everyone doesn't mean that the issue of mobility is not important. Communities are being marginalized because there is not process currently. This issue is not small. Transferring mid-year is a big issue on an emotional level for families.

Underlying Assumptions:

Ms. Comey moved the conversation toward discussing a possible implementation plan for the proposal and rating the underlying assumptions. She prompted the group to ask clarifying questions before recording their ratings of the assumptions on post-it notes.

Comments/Questions:

- Q: Is it voluntary only for charter schools? Does this mean that DCPS is required to participate?
 - A: DCPS is opt-in as well, but if they don't do it, there would be no point.
 - The assumptions assume that DCPS has already opted in because they mention neighborhood schools.
 - If a charter does not opt-in and doesn't have a waitlist, it does not have a mechanism to backfill. Over half of schools don't have waitlists.
- Q: What does the LEA payment process look like right now?
 - A: DCPS is paid on projections while charter schools are trued up on October 5. DCPS will have an adjustment against their projections and charters would also take end of year into account. There would be budget adjustments either up or down.
- Q: Is the idea that would happen within a school year?
 - A: Yes, within a school year and at the LEA level.
- Q: What about charter schools that do not participate in My School DC? How do they work in this centralized process?
 - A: The number is very small (only 2 schools that serve PK3-12 students don't participate in My School DC). We haven't addressed those two schools.
- Q: LEAs that don't participate, are they not able to transfer students out?
 - A: Students can still withdraw from them but if the school didn't participate, they couldn't show their available seats in the centralized process. There would be a listing of seats available and that school would not be on that list.
- Q: Doesn't this benefit school that opts out? They don't have the trauma of mid-year entry.
 - A: They lose money
- Q: What about special language schools? If a school could verify the students through this process, why would a school opt-out?
 - A: Part of keeping the process voluntary is to ensure that schools have exclusive control. The decision was made for the DC Common Lottery to make it opt-in but the My School DC team and PCSB made it a deliberate process to talk to schools. It ended up that almost all the schools decided to participate over the 3 years the lottery has been in existence but they didn't feel forced to be in it. The attitude about it is different because of proactive choice to join.
 - Schools need to be clear on why this process is beneficial to them; the kneejerk reaction from schools might be to opt-out, but they should have all information.

Components 1 and 2: Centralized Process and Set-Asides

Ms. Comey asked the group to rate the assumptions and then to rate component 1, the centralized process, on a scale of one to four. As there were no clarifying questions about component 1, she moved on to component 2, set-asides.

Comments/Questions:

- Q: How much of a dent will these set-asides make in student mobility? This Task Force member feels as that they are being forced into writing a "blank check" because the results are unknown.

- A: Here are the numbers from NOLA: 250 transfers were approved out of 500 hardship applications.
- The purpose should not just be on distributing the burden. The group is not in agreement on what the policy is trying to accomplish. There should be a system to provide disincentives to schools for losing kids during the year. Don't understand the implications or agreement on the overarching goals.
 - The group is putting reduction to the side because more information is needed before the group can put policies to reduce student mobility in place. The centralized process creates a framework to begin addressing mobility instead of waiting for all the reduction information before doing anything.
 - Having eyes on the midyear transfer process may reduce mobility because of the increased scrutiny.
 - There is fear that once the group moves forward, it will not come back to address the reduction issue. It is unclear how to dispel those feelings; ultimately there are two different problems to address.
 - Amy Lerman, who works on the My School DC team, noted that My School DC had to focus on creating and executing a centralized system for lottery process before taking on the waitlist process. They had to do the centralized lottery system well first to gain schools' trust. Her point was that you don't have to do everything in year 1 – you build momentum over time.
 - Incentives and disincentives should be built into this process now. The policy could be creating more incentives to move mid-year.
 - This is one narrow slice of the solution and it only partly addresses this problem; most cities with choice move toward some kind of centralized enrollment system. The District is not alone in trying to do this.

Component 3: The Waitlist Policy

The group concluded discussion on component 2 for the moment and the group members wrote their “gradient of agreement” on a post-it note. They then turned their attention to the third component: the waitlist policy.

Comments/Questions:

- The group is approaching problems from a scarcity mindset (e.g., the lottery: there are not enough seats at high performing schools to go around).
 - The system has neighborhood schools of right and choice schools; because of this, the lottery is fundamental.
 - High performing schools with waitlists are being encouraged to grow over time. They are responding to where people want to go.
- There is an element of luck involved; the lottery adds some balance.

Component 4: Open Seat Policy

Ms. Comey introduced the fourth component: Open Seats Policy (1 in and 1 out) and opened it up for group discussion and questions.

Comments/Questions:

- Q: How does this work with neighborhood schools and their seats? It seems like the policy being proposed is geared to public charter schools that have a waitlist. We may need to consider different policies for determining seats at neighborhood schools.
 - A: Neighborhood schools could have a separate process that they would just show their enrollment as of October 5 and students who live in boundary could automatically join. DCPS may have to create some sort of OOB seat option for schools with moderate or low capacity.
- Q: So charter schools would have an enrollment target and there would be a minimum set below that?
 - A: The number they report in October would count as the floor.
- Q: What does this do to schools that unintentionally could get even more destabilized by this process? Not every school is a high demand charter school.
 - A: Every school is in a quest for a certain amount of stability.

Component 5: Information and Counseling

After the group rated their agreement on component 4, the Task Force members moved on to considering the fifth component of the policy that would ensure that students, families, and schools had key information. There was no discussion after Ms. Comey presented component 5.

Task Force members posted their ratings on posters for the components. Members of the DME team collected up the posters and grouped the post-it notes by rating for each of the components.

Fifth Goal Issue Areas Pitches:

Following the discussion of the mid-year entry, transfer, and exit proposal, the Task Force began considering its fifth goal: "Identify educational challenges that need to be addressed through cross-sector collaboration." Three issue areas were presented to the Task Force and briefly discussed.

- Student safety (presented by Yair Inspektor)
 - The issue is on how to support safe passage to/from school. It is possible to support schools by connecting cross-sector to meet the safety needs of students.
 - Currently, the Safety Working Group is attempting to launch 2 sub-groups of the larger working group:
 - Implement a Safe Passage Incubation program
 - LEA Emergency Communication Network
 - Next steps regarding CSCTF: weapons abatement plan; ways the city uses School Resource Officers (SROs) and best practices

Comments/Questions:

- Q: Does Safe Passage include traffic issues while walking long distances?
 - That is largely being supported by the Transportation Working Group. Safe Passages is part of a legislation specifying safety areas.
- Q: Did the group talk about dismissal times?
 - Yes, on a case by case basis.
- At-risk students (presented by Jenn Comey)
 - Ideas for the Task Force to consider:
 - Consider an at-risk student lottery preference or weight in the DC common lottery.
 - Consider adding a “mobility weight” when calculating the number of and funding for at-risk students to better support mobile students, who are also at-risk.
 - Determine policies to better support at-risk students already in enrolled in schools across sectors.

Comments/Questions:

- Based on earlier discussions, it sounds like mobility could be added as a risk factor.
- Same for students in living areas of violence and trauma.
- Supporting Students in schools experiencing high-churn (presented by Caryn Ernst)
 - The centralized system isn’t addressing the needs directly of the student, but is rather school-focused.
 - Instead, schools identified as high churn would have additional funding in place at the beginning of the school year to help them out.
 - This would have to happen at the beginning of the school year; this doesn’t work if money follows the students because an extra \$7,500 doesn’t do much during the middle of the year.
 - The idea behind disincentives is the following: at any point in the year, if a child leaves, the charters would lose money above and beyond what they would lose with the LEA Payment Incentive. For example, they could lose part of their facility allotment. There had to be some real disincentive.
 - The funds could be used to create a welcome center/school for new/transfer students.

Comments/Questions:

- Q: If a student went from one DCPS school to another DCPS school, would that also carry a penalty?
 - A: No, that would be a within LEA transfer.
- Defining a concentrated challenge and providing the resources for it is difficult and perhaps overfunding isn’t the way to solve the issue
- At risk and high churn overlap:

- Schools get extra funding for students with concentrations of challenges, they can then use those funds to address high churn (if they have high churn) or to provide extra supports for those students with concentrated challenges.
- If a school knew that on average 30% of the school is new or mobile each year, they would need to plan for that with funding.
- There should be some strategic planning within other agencies, like Department of Health and Human Services, to help address issues like mental health, etc.
- Mobility weights might not be able to service this problem we are talking about because the pot of money is not increasing. It is more of a matter of getting other agencies involved and getting their budgets aligned.
 - Deputy Mayor Niles noted that they would need to interface with others who needed to be at the table to help support students. Like with the safety issue that brings WMATA and DDOT to the table, the Task Force would need to engage with others.
 - This Task Force member liked idea of a concentrated challenge that would combine the at-risk discussion with the high-churn school discussion. If we redefined at risk and added layers, schools would get points for concentrated challenges. A school that has high churn might choose to use their funds on high churn supports while another school could use it on its stable population to provide mental health supports

The conversation wrapped up around 8:57pm; Ms. Comey noted again that the purpose of the last discussion was to get the Task Force members thinking about what could be the next issue area. She reminded the Task Force of the meeting on November 22, 2016. The meeting adjourned at 8:59pm.