

## Student Assignment and DCPS School Boundaries Review Process

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### **What are school choice and student assignment policies?**

School choice and student assignment policies establish the access rights that parents and students have to public schools in the District of Columbia. School choice and student assignment policies determine who gets to go to which school, where and how parents and students apply to school, what rights students have to remain in a school they have chosen, and what rights students have to transfer between schools.

In the District of Columbia, school choice and student assignment policies are determined by multiple laws and regulations including but not limited to: DC Municipal Regulations and the DC School Reform Act of 1995, which governs access to public charter schools.

#### **Why update school choice and student assignment policies?**

The city's current school choice and assignment policies are complex and out of date. The new policies should reflect significant changes, including:

- Expansion of early childhood education in the District
- Enrollment trends in DCPS
- Growth of charter school enrollment and campuses
- Changes in neighborhood population growth and decline
- DCPS school closures over past 5 years
- New and modernized facilities

#### **What are the goals of this process?**

To develop fair and clear school choice and student assignment policies that reflect what families want - clarity, predictability, and access to high quality school options at locations that make sense for them.

- To clarify what rights and responsibilities families and schools have regarding access to public schools
- To update feeder relationships between schools to ensure that schools are aligned to provide a robust pipeline of students into the middle and high schools
- To ensure that the boundaries align to the DCPS facility capacity and projected population of students
- To explore opportunities to bridge student-assignment and choice policies across DCPS and charter schools

#### **How does this effort fit into the District's overall educational reform priorities?**

An infrastructure that supports both neighborhood schools and a robust choice system will help families make more informed choices and continue to improve the quality, efficiency and equity of the city's system of public schools.

### **How and when will school choice and student assignment changes be decided?**

The DC Advisory Committee on Student Assignment, with technical support from 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Fund and the Urban Institute, will prepare policy recommendations for the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME). Simultaneously, DME and the technical team will be conducting focus groups, online surveys and holding small group meetings with parents and community groups to gather information and input. This will help inform the work of the Advisory Committee. The policy recommendations will be released in spring 2014 followed by community meetings seeking broad input on the recommendations from the Advisory Committee. Revisions will be made following the community meetings and before a final plan is released. The plan will be finalized in the fall of 2014.

### **When will the changes take effect?**

Changes will begin to take effect for the 2015-16 school year, starting in August of 2015. New policies will be clear in advance of the lottery selection process that begins in December 2014. However, to support a smooth transition, “grandfathering” provisions will buffer the immediate impact on many current students and their families.

### **What is the role of the Advisory Committee?**

The Advisory Committee, co-chaired by Deputy Mayor Smith and long-time District leader John Hill, will incorporate public discussion, research, and analysis to provide the DME with fair minded, thoughtful, and informed policy recommendations. The Advisory Committee will:

- Review current citywide policies on attendance zones, feeder patterns and school choice
- Formulate guidelines and principles for public school assignment and choice policies and practices
- Listen to the community and serve as insightful interpreters of public sentiment, concerns, and questions
- Develop recommendations and scenarios for revised DCPS attendance zone and feeder patterns
- Make recommendations on how to bridge student-assignment and choice policies across DCPS and charter schools

### **How were the Advisory Committee members chosen?**

Members of the Advisory Committee were selected by the DME and include members with varied perspectives who are strongly invested in the success of the public education system and the future of our city. The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to assemble a group of people with varying experiences who will be creative and productive thought partners in this process, and who will listen to the community and serve as insightful interpreters of public sentiment, concerns, and questions. We wanted members that would be open minded, have a citywide perspective and be solutions oriented.

As we identified individual members to invite, we considered the following criteria for the Committee, as a whole:

- Parent perspective
- All wards represented
- Diverse experiences and perspectives

- Public charter and DCPS representation
- Expertise in relevant content areas (legal, urban planning, education, civil and human rights)

Although we selected members who are from every ward in the city and who have a range of professional and personal affiliations – we intentionally selected members who, while informed by their unique perspectives, will be able to approach this work with a genuine citywide focus. To see the list of committee members, please visit [dme.dc.gov](http://dme.dc.gov).

### **Will the Advisory Committee meetings be open to the public?**

Everything that comes out of the Committee’s work will be public. Agendas, meeting summaries (statements will not be attributed to individuals), documents and presentations shared with the Committee will be posted on the DME website. We have built numerous mechanisms for broader community engagement into this process so that we can solicit significant public input into the Advisory Committee’s recommendations to the Deputy Mayor, including focus groups, working groups, and large scale community meetings.

The Advisory Committee meetings, themselves, will not be open to the public. This decision was made to ensure that the Committee members convene in a safe environment where they can speak openly about their perspectives and opinions. There is a concern that if meetings were open to the public it would impact the dynamic of the Committee and some members might think twice about speaking freely so as not to risk being quoted or associated with any one comment or perspective. There is the added concern that if someone were to observe one meeting and not have the background or context of previous (or forthcoming) meetings that statements and issues could be taken out of context. There will undoubtedly be some sensitive and difficult questions that the Committee will have to grapple with, and we want to ensure that we create the space necessary to support these discussions.

### **How can parents, students and the public participate in the process?**

There are several different ways for the public to participate in the process.

- **Participate in a Focus Group.** Opportunity to provide in-depth input into various policy options being discussed by the Advisory Committee. To sign-up, visit [dme.dc.gov](http://dme.dc.gov).
- **Volunteer to join a Working Group.** Opportunity to vet policy scenarios being considered by the Advisory Committee and how they might impact specific geographic areas of the city. To sign up, visit [dme.dc.gov](http://dme.dc.gov).
- **Share your ideas and thoughts on EngageDC.org.** Online forum where the public reviews the materials from the Advisory Committee meetings and share ideas. (Coming Soon!)
- **Attend citywide community dialogues.** Opportunity to provide feedback on proposed policy recommendations released in May.
- **Participate in an online survey.** Opportunity to provide feedback on-line on proposed policy recommendations released in May.

**What is being done to ensure that the process is inclusive?**

The DME will take several steps to ensure that all parents and community members are notified and invited to participate in the process. Outreach efforts will include letters home to parents; materials and presentations on the DME website; media announcements; and communications through third parties such as school PTAs, Advisory Neighborhood Commissions and community-based organizations.

**Who do you contact if you have questions?**

If you have any questions, please email [dme.studentassignment@dc.gov](mailto:dme.studentassignment@dc.gov) or call (202) 478-5738.

**¿Con quién puede comunicarse si tiene preguntas?**

Si tiene alguna pregunta, por favor escriba un correo electrónico a [dme.studentassignment@dc.gov](mailto:dme.studentassignment@dc.gov), o llame al (202) 478-5738.

**Qui contacter si vous avez des questions à poser ?**

Si vous avez des questions à poser, veuillez envoyer un courriel à [dme.studentassignment@dc.gov](mailto:dme.studentassignment@dc.gov) ou appeler le (202) 478-5738.

**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[dme.studentassignment@dc.gov](mailto:dme.studentassignment@dc.gov)，或拨打电话号码 (202) 478-5738。

**Nếu có thắc mắc quý vị sẽ hỏi ai?**

Nếu quý vị có thắc mắc, xin gửi thư điện tử cho [dme.studentassignment@dc.gov](mailto:dme.studentassignment@dc.gov) hoặc gọi (202) 478-5738.

**문의 사항이 있으면 어디에 연락하시겠습니까?**

문의 사항이 있으시면 [dme.studentassignment@dc.gov](mailto:dme.studentassignment@dc.gov)에 이메일을 주시거나 (202) 478-5738로 전화해 주시기 바랍니다.

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