Teacher and School Staff Focus Group
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Introduction
- Facilitator introduces background of Task Force and goals
- Participant question: The task force had 26 people from different groups. What stakeholders were involved? Were there current teachers?
    - Facilitator: There were parents from all wards and LEA charter representatives, among others. Former teachers but not current teachers were on the task force but as the meetings were open, some teachers attended.

At-Risk, Objective 5
- Participant: I put the pink stick note, but I take it back a bit. I was thinking pink on first bullet as within the school from budget point, but reading in more detail is better. I like it on the macro level, but it is complicated on the per-student level.
- Participant: I thought they were both good opportunities
- Participant: It is hard to argue to not give more to students who need more.
    - Facilitator: The background of this objective is that LEA leaders serving at-risk students raised the issue. We are looking at ways that schools get funding and school level needs analysis.
- Participant: One thing that has come up for me is the complications of metrics as a school that serves high level of at-risk students. There is a big spectrum of the students. Some students have more at-risk indicators than others. There are different needs on different sides of the spectrum. There should be a way to modify who is receiving the money. For example, a student who has experienced trauma may need more, but that is hard to calculate.
    - Facilitator: I hear you saying that it has good intent but could be more refined.
- Participant: It is hard to collect trauma and specific data on all students. On some levels, it incentivizes schools to push most needy students out. There are some students who need a significant amount of support. In order to do that work in house, we would have to find serious resources. The tail end of the spectrum is important.
- Participant: I agree. You don't want to incentivize schools to get rid of highest risk students for lower need at risk students.
- Participant: I know that in New Orleans, schools often pushed most at risk to alternate set ups.
- Participant: You should want the money to follow the most at risk side of the spectrum.

At-Risk, Objective 4
- Facilitator: There are all green post-its on this one.
- Participant: Why reinvent the wheel every time that someone transfers when it's easy to share the information. This is especially important for special education students who are students that transfer more often.
- Participant: I used to be a special education coordinator, and this was a challenge that we had especially for students with severe needs. Getting all the information that was needed was often a challenge. It depended on the school that they were coming from.
- Participant: We can usually only use an IEP which doesn't contain the depth of the challenges that they are facing. Often, I end up calling the previous principal which is not a solid system and difficult if I don't know the principal.
- Participant: Often I will receive more gossip than matter of fact information, which is detrimental to the kid. Instead of hearing about triggers and challenges, I hear "oh boy good luck."
- Facilitator discusses Raise DC and the background for data and transitions. We are looking to formalize and standardize procedures.
- Participant: Something as simple as a listed point of contact and a protocol for how to answer would be sufficient.
    - Facilitator: Is it particularly a barrier reaching cross-sector?
    - Participant: It may be personal, but I have a larger network with charter people.
- Participant: There are also privacy and confidentiality issues. When you call casually, there is not an official way, which makes those issues worse.
- Participant: I often hear the kid's worst moments rather than a well-rounded picture.

At-Risk, Objective 3
- Facilitator: There is a mix of green and pink on this one.
- Participant: I don't know how bringing educators together to talk about school attendance helps solves the problem. Educators already know that attendance is an issue.
    - Facilitator: Every Day Counts has a practitioner and best practices element as well.
- Participant: I don't know what the mystery is. Teachers know kids need to be in school
- Facilitator discusses using tiered interventions done by Attendance Works and EDC.
- Participant: One challenge at the teacher level is that it's hard for teachers to own attendance at a classroom level. It may be better to have principals and operations managers to work on that.
- Participants: I think the people who will show up to the community events are not the people who have attendance issues. There are a number of barriers. There is a large distance from homeless or temporary housing to schools east of the river, which causes difficulty getting to schools. There could be a systems change like temporary transportation. This is a huge issue for us. Temporary housing or homelessness causes long stretches of kids not getting to school.
    - Facilitator: Is homelessness or attendance the issue you deal with?

- o Participant: Both. For kids who miss 20-30 days, homelessness, temporary housing or bouncing around from family members is a huge issue.

At-Risk, Objective 2
- ● Participant: I am most passionate about this one especially the bottom bullet point. One of the big things that doesn't exist in DC that exists in Boston is working across sectors. This is especially important for professional development around supporting at-risk students. We sometimes can meet informally but we only can bring in networks that we know. In Boston, schools partner to work on best practices. There are best practices that need to be shared across the city.
- ● Participant: This is also most exciting for me. I think partnering schools could be really powerful. It should not be in a way to tell what to each other what do but as a way to learn from each other. Arts organizations are adept in working with students and often have more funding than they know what to do with. It's a matter of connecting them with schools. Nonprofits can work with both sectors as well as bring them together. Nonprofits with travel can take students from both public schools and charters. Kids don't care what type of school they go to, and learning rises exceptionally because the students are operating at their highest level.
- ● Participant: What does opportunity academies mean?
  - o Facilitator: Describes the opportunity academies. It is an opportunity for both sectors could come together here.
  - o Participant: I agree with that objective.

At-Risk, Objective 1
- ● Participant: As someone who has been thru the DC school lottery as a parent, I think it is the single biggest leverage that you have to change outcomes. This is my biggest green sticky. It has a lot of power.
- ● Participant: I agree with that. I was thinking of using My School DC lottery to help disadvantaged students, which usually trends to least informed families. It would change dynamics at some charter schools throughout the city. It is generally positive. I worry that high performing schools also don't know how to handle at risk students as well as schools with a high concentration of at risk students. If you have big influx of at risk students at these high performing schools and then they just get pushed out, that's not good for anyone. It is generally good, and we want to push these schools to adapt.
- ● Facilitator discusses how that will be examined in implementation if it becomes a recommendation.
- ● Participant: You could have these high performing schools partner with schools with high levels of at risk students.
- ● Participant: My son's school is having a problem because it used to be more diverse and proportionally more white and affluent families are applying. The school is trying to be diverse but the numbers aren't working for them. This could help.
- ● Participant: There is research on the power of diverse schools. It is difficult in city that is segregated. Is a ward or zip code quota system possible in DC?
  - o Facilitator: There is consideration of a zip code lottery.

- Participant: What would the unintended consequences be of a zip code lottery? Affluent people could start buying property in underserved wards.
- Facilitator: What were your thoughts on education navigators helping to address the information gap?
- Participant: It would have to be really aggressive in finding those families.
- Participant: You have to work hard to not just get people who would already show up. Job is not just helping but finding and helping.
- Participant: I put a pink on the diversity plan because I would want to see how those works. I would hope that these things are already being happening.
- Participant: On specific point from the packet – exploring data on students that travel across cities, feasibility of buses on major routes. In New Orleans, there was citywide school busing. It did a lot to level the playing field, but it's expensive. Even if you have buses that go from Southeast to Capital Hill that would be helpful.
- Participant: In reference to Chicago, I am bias against magnets. I think they end up bringing the most informed parents into a single pot, which harms diversity of parent investment from other schools.

OCS, Discussed Together
- Facilitator: We acknowledge autonomy in both sectors. We are not going to disturb that, but we think we can make progress in coordination.
- Participant: I think that academic performance and other quality measures are a little relative or vague. Parents vote with their feet on those things. I don't think that making a decision on that is as important as looking at what parents choose to go
  - Facilitator: could you do both?
  - Participant: Yes, but its partially redundant. I wouldn't want to be in a school that is considered great by DME but no one wants to be there. I think parent input trumps other metrics.
  - Facilitator: Student demand metric would cover that. The data together helps us understand demand.
- Participant: To clarify, it's using data to make decisions on a way to open schools.
  - Facilitator: Yes. We have this data and want to share it with both sectors.
- Participant: It seems surprising that you don't already have that. How do you do that now?
  - Facilitator: Both sectors make decisions on their own. This is about making decisions out of a vacuum. The sectors won't have to make decisions together but share they can now have the same information in making decisions.
- Participant: Is there resistance? Is there a worry that there will be competition for space?
  - Facilitator: Broadly speaking, each sector doesn't want to be told what to do
- Participant: It's hard for me to imagine how that changes. With charters there are so many LEAs, excited with their own ideas and don't want to be told they can't. It seems like many charters are told that they can't do something and then they do it. And DC is DCPS's backyard so it seems hard to change

- Participant: There's a ton of value in just having that information there. Individual schools and PCSB has limited information. Even if you have competition over space, you have it at least in the right areas. The government probably has more resources and would level the playing field.
- Participant: Is objective three about scheduling?
  - Facilitator: Generally, the community doesn't know when decisions are being made and how to participate. We want to make sure that public knows when public education, not only specific sector, decisions are being made.
- Participant: I would be in favor of that. I feel that DC is more transparent than other cities. I think it's important for people to know, especially community leaders, when decisions are being made. This would take the transparency one step forward. It is hard to navigate the different education systems.
- Participant: Could you clarify the third point on OCS objective one?
  - Facilitators: We would want to sit down to make a commitment to these ideas.
- Participant: It seems difficult, but I'm in favor it.
- Participant: The agreement will be easy to write but harder to have people sign on and continue the commitment.