DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Feedback Summary from Community Engagement Division
DCPS Dialogues Spring/Summer 2019

Overview of Community Engagement DCPS Dialogues with Chancellor Ferebee

After months of connecting with stakeholders across all eight wards through a series of "Ferebee Fridays," Chancellor Ferebee wanted to engage more deeply on topics he heard mattered most to our families, students, staff and community members. From May through August 2019, Chancellor Ferebee hosted a series of small-group "DCPS Dialogue" gatherings at schools, libraries, and community centers across the District. The purpose was to host topic-specific conversations and gather feedback going into School Year 2019-2020.

Common Themes from DCPS Dialogue Events:

- The DCPS website is not easy to navigate and DCPS programming should be displayed in a way that is easier to find for parents. This allows for parents to plan/prepare their child's future with advanced timing.
- Naviance should be used at the middle school level to help chose what high school students should attend.
- EdFest is very overwhelming for parents therefore DCPS should consider other ways to expose parents to different schools throughout the year in advance of Edfest.
- There needs to be more support from Central Office for school-specific outreach.
- Video advertising will help get parent's attention about many topics and events.
- Resources need to be distributed equitably across the district.
- Leveraging relationships with parents in schools will help support initiatives that the district office is trying to launch.
- DCPS should build better relationships with other DC government agencies that help provide resources to students and families.
- Parents want access to resources to support their children in areas such as technology and special education.
- Parents are looking for staff to greet them despite the language barrier, and we need more bilingual security guards. Security guards also need to be trauma informed because students are dealing with trauma of dealing with enforcement splitting up families.
- Parents appreciate the different modes of communication from phone calls, texts, e-mails and paper copies. There is a need to ensure the level of communication is right for the parent audience and the language is accessible since most of our language tends to be more formal, needing varying degrees of education.

Summary of Feedback from DCPS Dialogue on Early Childhood Education (ECE)

Bunker Hill Elementary School, May 29, 2019, 9:00am-10:30am

Themes from attendees' comments:

- Increased access to Dual Language Programs is needed in Ward 5 and across the city.
- Programs should be accessible at additional grade levels beyond K-5 i.e. Montessori in middle school.
- Parents would like to know where they can tour a program offering.
- There needs to be a centralized place for Pre-K options (curriculum and programs) of each school (i.e. Reggio Emilia Approach, Montessori, Tools of the Mind).
- Share program and school options with parents more broadly, not just on the My School DC website.
- DCPS and My School DC websites and EdFest event are overwhelming to parents.
- ClassDojo is a great tool for parents who are tech savvy to receive information about their child.
- Students do not give paper letters/flyers to their parents.
- Parents appreciate receiving information through e-mails and text message and not solely relying on school newsletters.
- Video vignettes will help share resources and curriculum for ECE programs.
- Parents need more support in choosing programs for students with disabilities especially when many disabilities don't display until age 3 or 4.
- Central Office support on outreach would be helpful for principals.
- Host more events such as these and continue to motivate parents to build a partnership with the school.

Number of Attendees: 8

Notable Attendees: DCPS Deputy Chancellor Amanda Alexander, Councilmember McDuffie

School Communities/Organizations Represented

- Bunker Hill Elementary School
- Capitol Hill Montessori @ Logan Education Campus
- Shephard Elementary School

Summary of Feedback from DCPS Dialogue on College and Career Pathways

Eastern High School, June 3, 2019, 6:00pm-7:30pm

Themes from attendees' comments:

- It would be helpful if the My School DC booklet included the NAF academy locations in them as well as other program offerings for middle and high school.
- Utilize teachers to share the Student Guides more frequently and have more conversations with students about their career choices. If the entire school is invested in the Guide, then it will be more successful.
- The website is not helpful for families in finding information.
- Aspen is not easy to navigate for parents and does not have all the information they would like.
- Naviance needs to be utilized more at the middle school level.
- Use videos to promote events, programs, and share careers to catch parent's attention, similarly to Naviance.
- It would be helpful to know the time for each school's open house.
- Principals should use open houses to recruit middle school and elementary school students by displaying aligned programs like music or science.
- Eastern provides students with a variety of Post-Secondary Success options between career and college options, which many schools miss.
- If you add the Student Guide to the Comprehensive School Plan, it will allow teachers to be ambassadors of the Guide as well as create designated time to talk about the Guide with their students.

Number of Attendees: 15

School Communities/Organizations Represented

- Bard High School Early College
- Beers Elementary School
- Build
- Coolidge High School
- Deal Middle School
- Eastern High School
- Hardy Middle School
- IB Schools
- J.O. Wilson Elementary School
- McKinley Tech High School
- Shepherd Elementary School
- Stuart-Hobson Middle School
- Wilson High School

Summary of Feedback from DCPS Dialogue on Strengthening Feeder Patterns Roosevelt High School, June 12, 2019, 6:00pm-7:30pm

Themes from attendees' comments:

- Enrollment projections should consider 5-year and 10-year plans that pay attention to the growth in housing in Northeast and Southeast or other parts of the city.
- Consider changing cluster grouping to match school's feeder patterns with high schools at the head of the cluster.
- Staffing models are not consistent across middle schools and are typically based on the quantity of students at each school impacting the number of full-time staff employees.
- Cardozo Education Campus is surrounded by application schools and this affects its enrollment.
- Harnessing a sense of community and commitment will help parents choose neighborhood schools.
- Parents need a more proactive role to help in promotion neighborhood schools. How can we utilize parents at the school level and how can families across different race and income be integrated?
- DCPS should use professional development days to bring teachers across clusters and feeder to meet each other and learn each other's programs.

Number of Attendees: 14

Notable Attendees: State Board of Education Ward 4 Representative Frazier O'Leary

School Communities/Organizations Represented

- Cleveland Elementary School
- Cardozo Education Campus
- Hardy Middle School
- School without Walls at Francis Stevens
- Roosevelt High School
- Seaton Elementary School

Summary of Feedback from DCPS Dialogue on Technology In and Out of the Classroom

Ron Brown High School, June 25, 2019, 6:00pm-7:30pm

Themes from attendees' comments:

*Note: The DCPS Technology Initiative is formally known as Empowered Learning Initiative. For the purposes of this document, the term "ELi" will be used.

- Collaborate with DC Government and the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) to ensure all students have access to working Wifi.
- Hardware is a big problem and we need to fill in the gaps to make sure there is a true 1:1 ratio at every school.
- Everyone is focused on Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) but there are many technology challenges that hinder schools from being fully prepared for PARCC.
- The private sector can offer an abundance of resources and are eager to support around technology if DCPS leverages these relationships.
- Wifi access is not strong across all buildings/schools.
- What do we mean when we say technology? Are we referring to just computers? Standardized language on technology needs to be created.
- What will the ELi roll-out look like in underserved communities? If the playing field is already not level, then we need to think about how this new initiative will look like at schools who are currently behind.
- How can we ensure that students are ready for the real world and the use of technology in the real world? What trainings/certifications can we already be providing them with?
- Teacher training for ELi needs to happen quickly and should continue throughout the year.
- Training for Parents/Grandparents/Guardians should come with this initiative to ensure there is at-home supports for students during homework time.
- Take a deeper look at how this initiative will affect our students with special needs. What are the supports?

Number of Attendees: 16

School Communities/Organizations Represented

- Capitol Hill Montessori at Logan Education Campus
- Columbia Heights Education Campus
- Duke Ellington School for the Arts High School
- Hardy Middle School
- Houston Elementary School
- Maury Elementary School
- Phelps ACE High School
- School Without Walls High School
- Stuart Hobson Middle School

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Summary of Feedback from DCPS Dialogue on Parent and School Partnerships Around Academics Including Aspen Parent Portal

Hardy Middle School, July 10, 2019, 6:00pm-7:30pm

Themes from attendees' comments:

- Are home visits completed on a regular basis at every school or only for certain students?
- Logistics on student submission volunteer hours for community service are still unclear and the system should be improved and consistent across all schools.
- Data on community service and other indicators collected are not standardized across the district or easy to manage for families.
- Naviance results do not accurately reflect students' interests.
- Teachers do not follow the protocol for entering in grades into Aspen.
- Can principals have someone else monitor the grade reporting to hold teachers accountable to meet deadlines?
- Aspen should be required by all DCPS parents/guardians with an additional feature of text messaging.
- Student graduation requirement progress reports need to be sent out earlier allowing for students to catch up.
- Mailed Progress Reports do not accurately reflect what is in Aspen since they are constantly updated.
- Please consider having more paraprofessionals in classrooms especially elementary school.

Number of Attendees: 7

School Communities/Organizations Represented

- Banneker High School
- Hyde-Addison Elementary School
- School Without Walls High School
- Stanton Elementary School
- Wilson High School

Summary of Feedback from DCPS Dialogue on Reducing Barriers for Attendance Anacostia Library, July 17, 2019, 6:00pm-7:30pm

Themes from attendees' comments:

- Increased transparency on additional information and policy changes from the past scandals in our high schools.
- Attendance policy is different from elementary to high school in relation to the 80/20 Rule, that students are not familiar or acclimated to it once in high school.
- How do we continue to make school "the cool" option for kids and encouraging students to show up on time?
- It is difficult to have specialized appointments for our kids and adhere to the current district's Attendance policy, especially for students in Special Education.
- Communication on attendance documentation is inconsistent on both sides when showing documentation for an absence/tardy or receiving information from the school on a student's attendance status.
- There should be better options for students to get to school safely especially traveling long distances, and further research on shuttle or district-wide busing for students.
- Parents need additional assistance in transportation resources like students receiving Kids Ride Free Cards.
- Language on attendance updates need to change and be encouraging for families rather than receiving information just on absences versus congratulating students for showing up on time.

Number of Attendees: 13

School Communities/Organizations Represented:

- Banneker High School
- DC Scores
- FutureEd
- J. O. Wilson Elementary School
- Ketcham Elementary School
- Langley Elementary School
- Payne Elementary School
- Phelps ACE High School
- School Without Walls High School
- Stanton Elementary School
- Wilson High School

Summary of Feedback from DCPS Dialogue on Navigating Special Education in DCPS

Tenley-Friendship Library, August 7, 2019, 6:00pm-7:30pm

Themes from attendees' comments:

- Increased opportunities to engage with DCPS leadership on specific special education opportunities.
- Focus groups for parents of students with different abilities.
- More opportunities to meet with Central Office staff around special education, preferably quarterly or monthly.
- Break down the stigma given to students by using language such as disabilities and replace it with "different abilities."
- Create inclusive environments for students by placing all teachers in the care of students with different abilities, not just those who are identified as specialized instruction teachers.
- Increase staff supports in all classrooms and not just for Math and English Language Arts (ELA).
- Student disabilities don't show up in psychoeducational function testing, not the neuroeducation function testing and parents catch hell trying to get to the route.
- Revamping the Health and Hospital Program is critical to students with special needs who may not be able to keep up with their course work in the same way.

Number of Attendees: 16

School Communities/Organizations Represented:

- Bard High School Early College
- Excel Academy
- Hearst Elementary School
- Houston Elementary School
- Hyde-Addison Elementary School
- Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)
- Lafayette Elementary School
- Langley Elementary School
- Miner Elementary School
- Murch Elementary School
- Payne Elementary School
- Phelps ACE High School
- Special Olympics DC
- State Board of Education
- Stuart-Hobson Middle School

Summary of Feedback from DCPS Dialogue on Immigrant Family Experience

Latin American Youth Center (LAYC), August 15, 2019, 9:00am-10:30am

Themes from attendees' comments:

- We need more opportunities like today to maintain communication with the Chancellor.
- What efforts are being made to ensure there is diversity in staff across the district including security guards, front office staff, teachers, and language counselors?
- Is there an improved background check process to help our parents participate and volunteer in their child's schools?
- I feel there is a disparity in the quality of programming and staffing across the District where schools like Oyster-Adams are doing well but schools in Wards 7 and 8 are not as strong or competitive.
- The process of understanding the Special Education programming and identifying students are difficult, and many times parents need more assistance understanding their students' Individualized Education Plans, (IEPs).
- Security staff can often trigger trauma since they can be associated with immigration officials.
- What is DCPS or the district doing in planning for the upcoming Census and making sure we are getting complete data of demographics to help fund additional resources and budgeting?
- Thank you for the opportunity, and services and multiple languages your team has provided. My child's school implemented bilingual education offering Spanish, Chinese, and English. This has changed the school a lot for the better increasing parent support. This increase in communication has allowed better achievement for students at Thomson ES.

Number of Attendees: 14

School Communities/Organizations Represented:

- Barnard Elementary School
- Browne Education Campus
- Columbia Heights Education Campus
- Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)
- Latin American Youth Center (LAYC)
- Mary's Center
- Thomson Elementary School
- Whittier Education Campus
- University of Maryland