

# DCPS-BUDGET MATTERS: DEVELOPMENT OF THE FY16 BUDGET

## TABLE FACILITATOR NOTES

### COOLIDGE MEETING

JANUARY 22, 2015

The following notes were taken during the Chancellor-LSAT Budget Engagement Meetings held at Coolidge Senior High School on Thursday, January 22, 2015.

3 meetings were held over the course of 2 weeks between January 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> (meeting schedule included below). All principals, LSAT Chairs, and parent organization leaders from each school in DCPS received invitations to attend one meeting based on the geographic region and feeder high school (for instance, all schools including ES, EC, MS that feed into Coolidge High School attended the meeting on 1/22/15). Schools were seated with each other at round tables to facilitate feeder discussions as well as cross-school conversations. Specialty, selective, citywide schools attended meetings that were the closest to their respective school locations (i.e. McKinley Tech HS attended the meeting held at Cardozo EC).

Discussions centered on the Chancellor's 3 budget priorities for SY15-16; Improving High Schools, Equity in Academic Rigor, and Empowering Males of Color. There was a 4<sup>th</sup> discussion area added that allowed participants to share feedback that could not be captured within the 3 budget priority areas – the questions included: 1) What else would you prioritize at your school to improve student achievement? and 2) What should we stop doing?

While each table facilitator paid careful attention to record the conversation at each table, every note taker's style is different, which is reflected in the varying formats of the notes. In addition, participants at each table were able to select which questions they prioritized for discussion, so each table's notes will reflect this variance. Lastly, for privacy purposes, names of individuals have been redacted.

#### *DCPS Budget Meeting Schedule*

Meeting Date	Meeting Location
1/20/15	Cardozo Education Campus
1/22/15	Coolidge High School
1/27/15	Ballou High School

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## LUDLOW-TAYLOR ES

### Equity in Academic Rigor

1. What kinds of opportunities can you envision with Cornerstone Assignments in your school?
  - A science program that aligns with NGSS standards. Many schools don't get STEM programs.
  - Bring science teachers back to the elementary schools.
2. How can we position your school to be successful with Cornerstone Assignments next school year?
  - For Cornerstone Assignments, we will need to have the same definition of rigor in one class as the others.
  - We need more cohesiveness and consistency with aligned rigor.
3. Do you anticipate any complications or challenges from Cornerstone Assignments?
  - Some classrooms or grades may need themes that are specific to them.
  - Cornerstone may be better for older levels.
  - Priorities for teachers. Teachers need tools and the freedom for implementation.

### Empowering Males of Color

1. What is the biggest challenge in addressing the needs of young males of color?
  - Family-home life barriers.
  - Black males in classroom are the most truant, lowest performing and the gap is widening.
  - Students don't have fathers present at home. How do men in their lives define what it is to be a male?
  - Beyond being a positive role model, the role model may not know how to be a male. There is a skewed idea of what it is to be a male.
  - Elementary schools need for teachers and school staff to help them fall in love with school.
  - Low confidence. They don't want to take risks. Don't believe that they are smart.
  - Elementary students already define themselves as not being smart.
  - Not reading or not knowing how to read.
  - The same way we promote sports, dancing, singing, we need to communicate to parents how important it is to champion that in academics.
  - Start parenting classes.
  - Extending education programs to parents.
  - Parents of males of color have trouble understanding importance of enriching their children at home.
  - Not coming to school means that they cannot nurture their experiences/relationships with their peers.
  - Reading interest surveys—Young males hardly read for enjoyment outside of school.
  - Young males of color are not keeping up with reading comprehension as more complex books are being read in class. As a result, young males of color often find ways to leave the classroom (i.e. use the restroom or become fidgety).
  - There is a comprehension deficit. Young males of color have difficulty comprehending the concepts versus just reading the content. Expanding curiosity.
  - There is a deficit in background knowledge such as vocabulary and experiences.
2. What is one thing you believe can improve outcomes at your school for young males of color?

- Middle and high school aged males of color should mentor younger males of color using the “Everybody Is” lunch reading program model. This practice will help students understand that their older peers are there for support.
  - DCPS should incorporate more partnerships for young males of color (i.e. Duke University program).
  - There should be more ways to draw young males of color to technology by increasing their access to technological programs and projects.
  - Targeting projects for the students that need them for richer experiences.
  - Greater emphasis on themes, incorporating more art into the curriculum and moving away from everything being tied to a certain standard.
  - Every class should vote on a theme throughout the year and implement that theme throughout the school classrooms.
  - Various standards (i.e. reading a particular book) should be incorporated throughout the entire schools.
3. If you had \$100,000, what would you do with it to support this work?
- Pull out programs during the school day. Time to create or expand on projects currently aligned to classroom instruction or not.
  - “Good” Professional Development for teachers to work with young males of color.

## SHEPHERD ES

### Improving High Schools

1. What is working well at your high school that you want to see continued or expanded?
  - Incorporate rigorous programs such as the IB (*International Baccalaureate*) Program in order to allow students to be prepared to excel in college.
  - While many things are going well at Wilson, DCPS should think about the level of emphasis DCPS places on testing. An emphasis on testing is detrimental to a child's experience in school.
  - DCPS should think about expanding the vocational focus at Wilson so students who are not college bound feel as if they have equitable access to career opportunities.
  - There should be some attention paid to how students are perceived if they are in the AP track at Wilson versus non-AP. It appears as if the AP track gets an unfair advantage with smaller classes and more individualized attention.
2. What two investments in your high school should be made to support continued improvement?
  - Across the city, we need to invest in something that creates the competitive and group culture that sports leagues do, but for academics. For example, Math Leagues, Geo-Plunge, or It's Academic where students are competing against each other. An "Odyssey of the Mind" can be created where there is a healthy competition of the mind. This option shouldn't be limited to the "A" students, "B" and "C" students should be brought in to participate as well.
3. Which of the proposed funding areas is most important to your high school?
  - We need to have more color and diversity included in our teaching staff so there are more teachers of color teaching students in a district whose student population is diverse - especially males of color since boys listen to men.

## Equity in Academic Rigor

1. What kinds of opportunities can you envision with Cornerstone Assignments in your school?
  - Shepherd currently has a high level of rigor reflected through an International Baccalaureate program. As such, every month, there is a project that every student is responsible for this adds to the level of rigor and other schools should model - not just about the test and instead is a program “stretch” for the brain.
  - Cornerstone Assignments provide the an opportunity for projects that are not connected to IB - this type of project based learning is similar to Boy Scouts since you learn things for months and then go camping to execute the skill.
2. How can we position your school to be successful with Cornerstone Assignments next school year?
  - It was noted that this is already being done at Shepherd ES.
  - With there being such a focus on testing, the ability to use projects to extend learning is beneficial – there are too many tests! There is so much cynicism from the teachers since they are focused on testing and it breeds disrespect for the entire system of testing – without this, schools would be able to focus more on the rigor than the actual testing.
  - A lot of the success of higher performing schools is a result of parent support, community support, etc. so even with the Cornerstones Assignments, it will not magically happen by implementing this model.
  - Build in the projects so that schools are growing this into the curriculum.
  - Currently there are a lot of readers at Shepherd – some of the kids even read at lunchtime – to create this and replicate this across other schools can do after school at a local library where there are multiple schools and there is collaboration across schools/students to encourage a high performing culture. To do this there has to be a good librarian that is attentive and supportive.
3. Do you anticipate any complications or challenges from Cornerstone Assignments?
  - Cornerstone Assignments sound like what common core should be; with common core DCPS should be using a standard curriculum. If all of DCPS is using common core and a standard curriculum, what is the need for the Cornerstone Assignments?
  - DCPS needs more project based learning to mitigate some of the inequity in rigor. Need to have citywide rocketry contests where all students are building the same things, teaching the same things. At Deal, there are math projects in each math class and kids are doing projects at home applying the skill set that you just learned at school.
  - Up to 3rd grade, students who are behind should have extended school day; the extended school day would not be mandatory but would be available and would be more than just “aftercare”. The extended school day would not be another opportunity to teach to the test and have the principal look good.
  - Currently the system is set up in a way that focuses on kids that aren't performing and those who are sometimes neglected.

## Empowering Males of Color

1. What is the biggest challenge in addressing the needs of young males of color?
  - Parent leaders from Shepherd feel the need to empower parents to be a part of the strategy. Parent leaders don't see this focus reflected in the strategy. Shepherd feels strongly they will need that level of support from parents in order to be successful.

- We also need to have higher academic expectations of males of color in our schools. One parent leader indicated his son (male of color) was advanced, but his 3rd grade teacher expected less of him than his 1st grade teacher did. This is unacceptable.
  - Finally, ensuring there are supports outside of school to complement the mentoring that will be offered through this initiative is critical. If a child has to return home to a home with neglect, it diminishes the progress you will make
2. If you had \$100,000, what would you do with it to support this work?
    - Create internship programs to build skills and opportunities.
    - Establish opportunities for peer groups to be able to do programming, study, and travel together.
    - It is difficult to wedge additional programs in the school day so should take advantage of an extended school day and/or after school programs.

## DEAL MS/WILSON HS

### Improving High Schools

1. What two investments in your high school should be made to support continued improvement?
  - Feeder schools and HS should have collaborative PD.
  - Current Wilson students should return to speak with current students. Teachers should go to Wilson and visit former Deal students.
  - Address overcrowding at Deal and at Wilson!
  - Deal feels comfortable with the amount of tech it has but knows Wilson needs more tech and greater broadband.
  - Deal knows that its budget has a lot more flexibility in its NPS to purchase tech - what are other middle schools like, can they afford tech and to prepare students for high school?

### Equity in Academic Rigor

1. What kinds of opportunities can you envision with Cornerstone Assignments in your school?
  - Middle school students who earn high school credit by taking a certain class should have to pass an end-of-year test to qualify for credit. A number of students take Algebra I but then barely get a D, so really shouldn't be placed in Algebra II in high school. Across the district tests would make it easier to evaluate where a student should be placed
2. How can we position your school to be successful with Cornerstone Assignments next school year?
  - Concerns and worries about overcrowding and especially about where demountable would go.
  - If Wilson is increasing to 1900+ security should be increased in a corresponding manner.
  - More tech and broadband access is. Want more laptop carts and more student access (again overcrowding mentioned - more students will place more pressure on broadband).
  - Oftentimes too many students can fly under the radar if they aren't academic rock stars, athletic students or major trouble students.

### Empowering Males of Color

1. What is the biggest challenge in addressing the needs of young males of color?

- Concern on whether the EMOC initiative means that girls aren't as important to DCPS. Will DCPS take similar steps to help women of color and address issues like the pay gap and gender equality? DCPS should be aware of these things as they message the EMOC initiative.
- Addressing social issues of more rigorous classes. As you move higher up the academic scale (AP, etc.), young men of color tend to feel isolated from their peers and more uncertain
- Concern that the needs to address achievement issues mean low-performing students of a particular race are segregated from other students and opportunities.
- Gathering data on what works with students. Many of Deal's African-American males perform lower than the average Deal student although this is much higher than the district. How does Deal ensure these students are motivated, engaged and successful?
- PWP has been a major issue in past years (restrictive, clunky, etc.). Deal is interested in grant but wary of PWP.
- Solutions need to be more flexible. There are achievement issues in more areas than just Wards 7 and 8. There will need to be many solutions and programs to address the same outcome of closing the achievement gap.

2. What is one thing you believe can improve outcomes at your school for young males of color?

- There is a lot of interest in mentoring but there are many mentoring groups available. It's very easy to have a mentoring program and check the mentoring box and then have the program not be very effective.
- Mentoring groups need to address the social aspects of a student's life. Mentoring should be more than just tutoring or taking a student to one basketball game a year. Students need to be exposed to people and situations they normally wouldn't be exposed to.
- Bring back AVID program with at least one section for Latina women.

3. If you had \$100,000, what would you do with it to support this work?

- Have EMOC at the elementary level first - empower boys of color to become young men of color. Address achievement issues where they start.

### What else?

- Take a hard look at the number of interim assessments and how much they cost. In middle school and high school kids are being tested too much and place less emphasis on each test because the tests have no consequences to them (unlike midterms or end of year projects).

## ROOSEVELT HS/ROOSEVELT STAY

### Improving High Schools

1. What is working well at your high school that you want to see continued or expanded?

- Growth in academic rigor and data driven instruction – staff are increasing their knowledge on how to use assessments and reteach based on that data; reassess; and, track students' progress.
- Wrap around services need to be expanded– social, emotional, psychological supports; behavior techs; the whole social emotional element; if you take that stuff out of the way for kids, as well as providing needed supports to their families, they can be prepared mentally and focused in the classrooms. Examples include the New Heights program and social workers.

- The focus on performance standards has been increased this year with the CCSS and the SRI and looking at where students are. By having an enhanced focus to cite textual evidence or the development of a character in text, it's allowed teachers to focus on where students are. To get there, partnering with Teach Plus to train teachers on data-driven instruction is necessary. Teachers have been leading this work.
2. What two investments in your high school should be made to support continued improvement?
- School-based wrap around services for student and their families including social workers, psychologists and a medical health component. Schools need enough to pay a social worker salary, zip car account, and limited gift cards for families that need food. Wrap around services for families that need the services. Social workers who are solely focused on that.
  - Advanced classes and upper level history courses would be important. Fun courses like African American history or early American history are needed. The flexibility to talk about the diaspora but not have to use the DCPS curriculum. Look at other works. Push kids to explore and be creative.
  - Student incentives to improve attendance. Gift cards worked very well in the past. Saturday school program works very well. Trophies for student achievement.
  - Technology – more computers, better access to the internet, wireless between the classrooms (interacting between the two classes), and a student computer lab. A lot of the students don't have technology at home.
  - What we're not able to do is provide the resources for students to explore their career interests. Fund an internship program – take a \$100K and fund those experiences. That would transform our campus in a major way. You could have a 10 week experience. We have internships but need to take it to scale. To start that network, maybe tap fraternities and sororities. Tap the networks of Howard, etc. It sound not just be the top students, these opportunities should be opened to all students.
  - Mentor program for males and females – students who want to be a doctor/lawyer, etc. Some students don't know the process it takes to get at that. Observe the mentors. See what professionals do what they do.

### Empowering Males of Color

1. What is the biggest challenge in addressing the needs of young males of color?
- Family support for students to participate in a program like Rotary. Students often back out the day before the program.
  - Competing with the streets. "What can you give me? What am I getting?" It's a constant struggle of showing that you will have a better life.
  - Really low self-esteem. Females can't motivate males as well. There is a need for more visible males of color mentors and role models in the school.
  - Once the students are in the school, teachers and staff are doing a pretty good job. Staff is very comfortable with the students. The rapport of the staff is important.
2. What is one thing you believe can improve outcomes at your school for young males of color?
- Visits to HBCUs. One student's entire life was turned around by a visit to an HBCU. He was fascinated by the visit. Students need more opportunities with HBCUs, perhaps on a monthly basis.
  - Institutional knowledge or experience educating males of color is important. Roosevelt has the experience and we can take males of color and we have the infrastructure to move them forward. So the experienced schools have to work with the schools that do not have the experience.
  - Simply setting goals and tracking performance is effective. For example, 5 years ago, less than 10% of 11-12th graders were taking AP classes. We started tracking it and now 40% are taking at least 1 AP class. Of that group, 50% are males. We've been very intentional. Tracking it and having the right personnel in place who are bought in works.

- Foundation begins with the right personnel – and both schools have been working toward it.
  - Open up the doors to the community. Working with local businesses surrounding the school, church leaders, etc. is essential.
3. If you had \$100,000, what would you do with it to support this work?
- Have the city fund a site-based mentoring program like City Year to work on academics, attendance and behavior. We need mentors in the building every day.
  - City Year is an excellent program but very expensive. The schools that need it most – because it brings mentors of college age into the classroom – can't afford it. Most of the comprehensive schools can't afford it.
  - College-aged mentors from Trinity University.
  - Funding the internship experience – to scale. Every 11th grader should have a 10-week internship experience and a possibly a stipend so that the experience is more like a job.
  - For the population of African-American males, funding a music studio would be a good idea. A lot of students are connected to music. It is something the community needs. Kids would come to school if you connected with them. Maybe we could partner with Duke Ellington? Two schools working toward a common goal.

## PHELPS HS

### Improving High Schools

1. What two investments in your high school should be made to support continued improvement?
- For teachers who are interested in starting programs, they need a program handbook that will help them get through the process.
  - 8th graders need to be better prepared to come to HS. Better PD for teachers so that students are ready to transition.
  - We need to take a closer look at the PARCC standards and make sure they're what students need to be ready for HS.
  - The summer bridge program at Phelps better prepares students for the Phelps Way. The children get the experience beforehand.
  - We need a reading and math specialists for students who are struggling so that we can keep them and help them out.
  - Eliot-Hine used a transition teacher to help students before they had to transition to high school.

### Equity in Academic Rigor

1. What kinds of opportunities can you envision with Cornerstone Assignments in your school?
- Look at students working together – across the city – ensures that students are doing the same work at the same level. We are only asking for one assignment to be done exactly the same across the city. Some teachers are giving you rigorous stuff and some are not. How do you learn? By watching other people plan, teach and learn, more teachers have a better idea of what rigor looks like. It also allows us to use other learning communities.
  - Cornerstone Assignments, if project based, will give kids and parents something to look forward to.
  - Every year Watkins ES recites the MLK I Have a Dream Speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Why aren't all students doing that?



- Cornerstone Assignments across the city will allow teachers to have a different conversation around student work.
2. Do you anticipate any complications or challenges from Cornerstone Assignments?
    - One of the challenges will be ensuring the instruction also provides rigor and the skills the students need to be on grade level. What is the end product?
    - Phelps needs a Parent Coordinator. Librarians, CTE, Social Worker, Keyboarding and Communications. These staff positions should be non-negotiable.

### **Empowering Males of Color**

1. If you had \$100,000, what would you do with it to support this work?
  - Children should spend 2-3 days on a HS campus to get this experience before going to HS.
  - Phelps has a program - Young Men of Phelps (YMOP) so that students at Phelps will have mentors and role models.
  - YMOP has reached out to individuals to come into the school to host leadership workshops and to discuss various topics (writing, public speaking, careers, etc.) These are very simple, yet extremely important things. Meetings are held every Wednesday. Phelps needs resources to help fund the programs currently available. 100 Fathers Initiative, Concerned Black Men are both groups YMOP works with. There is, however, a lot of red tape with PWP.

## **WEST EC**

### **Improving High Schools**

2. Which of the proposed funding areas is most important to your high school?
  - Use of AVID strategies on Education Campuses so that students are better prepared for HS.
  - Application schools should be allowed to remove students because they don't meet standards. Banneker, SWW, Phelps and McKinley are just a few examples. If students are removed from application schools and return to their neighborhood schools, the funding should go with them.
  - More professional development and strategies such as AVID would help replace the funds we use for reading and math specialists.

### **Equity in Academic Rigor**

1. What kinds of opportunities can you envision with Cornerstone Assignments in your school?
  - Cornerstone Assignments across the city will allow teachers to have a different conversation around student work.
2. Do you anticipate any complications or challenges from Cornerstone Assignments?
  - Extended Day and Saturday School in order to help our students.
  - In Prince George's County, every 3rd grader is required to go on a nature trip to learn about nature.

## Empowering Males of Color

1. What is one thing you believe can improve outcomes at your school for young males of color?
  - PWP has too many restrictions. Use the Ed Fund if possible. It's very helpful to have outside individuals come in because students always see school staff and sometimes it's good to hear from someone else.

## OYSTER-ADAMS EC/SOUSA MS

### Equity in Academic Rigor

1. What kinds of opportunities can you envision with Cornerstone Assignments in your school?
  - Embassy Adoption – Every 5th and 6th grade student would have the opportunity to participate.
  - Designated grade level field trips.
  - Publishing a book at each grade level.
  - Common anchor assignments related to each standard in each subject that promotes interdisciplinary work that maintains the emphasis on English/Math but incorporates Social Studies and Science.
  - Identify common vocabulary words by grade level.
2. How can we position your school to be successful with Cornerstone Assignments next school year?
  - Extended day that focuses on increasing/strengthening student/staff relationships through enriching activities.
  - Continue/increase PWP funds that can be used to provide enriching Cornerstone experiences.
  - Have a lesson plan bank available to teachers in all subjects at all grade levels with rigorous lessons and activities that will move all students (including special education and ELL) towards mastery of the Cornerstone projects.

## Empowering Males of Color

1. What is the biggest challenge in addressing the needs of young males of color?
  - The role models that students currently look up to and social issues that have been raised by current events. Sousa currently has a Social Studies teacher to address social issues and the students are taking on the content with maturity.
  - It is imperative to have a male role model but many only have female role models at home and in their community.
  - African American families (and increasingly more Latino families) are fragmented (the majority of them) and that is our challenge. It is bigger than home visits. There used to be a strong family unit, this is no longer the norm, in many cases the family unit is not there. This is a challenge that leaves many speechless.
  - Finding a way to encourage males of color to come into the schools to be role models. Traditionally, this has been a struggle because the education field is female dominant.
  - In PE it is a challenge to inspire student to set goals. It is hard for students to see beyond the immediate. They don't think that there is hope. Schools work to inspire hope within the students.
  - Having teacher s reinforce males of color to know their worth.
  - Being targeted and unapologetic about services and approach.
  - Math and Latino boys.
2. What is one thing you believe can improve outcomes at your school for young males of color?

- Having a “rites of passage” to honor academic work.
  - Partnering with other schools with respect to best practices and more engagement with Howard University.
  - Sousa has adapted new enrichment clusters in which students can engage in different types of activities with different teachers.
  - Many male teachers are focusing on how to be better men, better leaders and speaking skills. This has benefited students with behavioral issues in the classroom.
  - At Sousa, we have a care team that focuses on family engagement. Looking at the type of counseling styles that are offered to males of color is important.
  - There should be a focus on the types of services that are available, specifically for males of color.
  - Having a student centered approach.
  - There should be more leadership development conferences for students to attend. If we offer students these types of opportunities, they will likely return empowered and ready to lead their schools.
  - There should be a forum of teacher/administrator/parent training on the development of the male brain.
  - Fatherhood and manhood projects such as Dads on the Black Top.
3. If you had \$100,000, what would you do with it to support this work?
- A local conference on leadership development dedicated entirely to our students.
  - District wide, we could do a better job of attracting these types of conferences to the DC area or to DCPS. With the right focus everyone nationally would want to come to these conferences. This will build our role model pool from the ground up and benefit all students. DCPS alumni could lead the breakout sessions. It is necessary to bring these conferences here. DCPS should be leading and creating the conferences and then charging for students outside of DCPS to participate.
  - Howard University doesn’t send mentors to the community, maybe the money could be used for this.
  - In order to change the narrative of fathers not being present, we should work to encourage more fathers to participate in the schools (i.e. joining the PTA).
  - In Maryland, adults are engaged in social issues discussions at schools. If adults participate they receive incentives such as shopping in the school pantry, gas card, etc. In one instance in Maryland, 110 families attended a meeting because they got a Giant gift card.
  - Another example is “Men in Kitchen” where men bring food to share and provide a sit down dinner for everyone to enjoy and discuss various topics.

## KEY ES

### Improving High Schools

1. What is working well at your high school that you want to see continued or expanded?
  - Wilson is good but articulation with the middle school (Hardy) has really been the issue. With the numbers across the city, Wilson is the cream of the crop.
2. What two investments in your high school should be made to support its continued improvements?
  - Do Wilson students have university partnerships? Allowing high achieving students to matriculate early into college or inviting professors from universities into the schools.
  - Dual enrollment at Wilson with American University. With American University being so close to Wilson it seems like a natural fit. This would be something to keep families in public system through HS if that’s an option.
  - AP courses. It would be nice to see the options expanded.

3. Which of the proposed funding areas is most important to your high school?

- Vertical alignment between Key and Hardy is essential.

### Equity in Academic Rigor

1. What kinds of opportunities can you envision with Cornerstone Assignments in your school?

- Cornerstone Assignments would be great because you're getting top notch 'anchor' assignments.
- Creating a website with video on Cornerstone Assignments is a good idea.
- A lesson where students have to count thousands of straws dumped in the middle of a classroom to understand place value – everybody across the city would be experiencing the same thing at once.
- Cornerstone Assignments can help teachers by saving time so that they don't have to go through a million different websites to find good assignments.
- Cornerstone Assignments could be rolled out like a resource base.
- Will DCPS and Cornerstone Assignments provide opportunities for professional development and cross collaboration among teachers? Cross collaboration does not currently happen enough.
- It makes sense to start cross collaboration at the grade levels within school so teachers can collaborate more easily.
- Teachers don't really have any idea how standardized learning is in each grade level or the similarities in instruction. Teachers don't even know what's different in terms of instruction.
- The Cornerstone thing is cool but the larger issue is students from different backgrounds and at different learning levels. How do you share the curriculum aside from one project?
- In this day and age a knowledge management system is super helpful.
- It's necessary to set aside time for schools that are similar to each other to get together and have these conversations. For example, Key and Janney meeting to discuss would be a good starting point for this type of project.
- A half day of school and a half day of PD.

2. How can we position your school to be successful with Cornerstone Assignments next school year?

- Currently, it doesn't seem like there's anything we'd need to do to implement.

3. Do you anticipate any complications or challenges from Cornerstone Assignments?

- Will Cornerstone Assignments be optional?
- There is initial/potential concern about standardization.
- Schools are already doing a lot of these things.
- Students from all over the city may have trouble because they don't get to have the same experiences as a lot of kids from Key.

### Empowering Males of Color

1. What is the biggest challenge in addressing the needs of young males of color?

- The most important thing is the ability to read on grade level. A lot of our males of color who are low performing are from out of boundary and don't have the luxury of coming before or after school.

2. What is one thing you believe can improve outcomes at your school for young males of color?

- If we had control of transportation, students could be brought to school earlier or taken home later. Transportation issues are causing students to miss instruction in the morning. The CHOICE program provided a bus – picked up kids from out of boundary and was funded federally but now students don't have that option for transportation.
  - Breakthroughs along socioeconomic lines. There are boys of color in our neighborhood reading on grade level and they are going to be fine. They are going above and beyond and having all kinds of success.
3. If you had \$100,000 what would you do with it to support this work?
- Transportation for low-income and kids of color to come before and after school.

### What else?

1. What else would you prioritize at your school to improve student achievement?
- Key parents are very concerned about middle schools.
  - Key is growing, bursting at the seams, and hasn't been renovated or modernized in 12 years. When renovations are made, Key needs added space. Murch is even more overdue for renovation and modernization.
  - The Key community is paying a disproportionate amount of property taxes and thus our schools should be slated for modernization and renovation sooner.
  - Key has tons of test books and work books that aren't used – they need to be recycled and not bought again.
  - Unit assessments through amplify: A lot of our teachers use their own assessments that work better, but DCPS still asks teachers to use amplify. Amplify is not relevant and takes away from instructional days.
  - Key is concerned about tight budgets. School budgets should be held so that if enrollment is not lost schools don't lose any of programming. There should be a way to cut things that aren't directly engaging the kids.
  - Work from home days for the school staff over winter break. This past winter break all staff was at school, the electricity is being used and there's no reason for it. Most of the stuff that needs to be completed can be done online from home, allowing schools to save energy.
  - Key has good facilities but they're not always cared for. For a long time there was trash everywhere. That sends a bad message to kids.
  - Key has it pretty good and the teachers/staff do not want to give anything up. Key wants to make sure they are maintaining the programming that is currently in place.
  - The Key teachers and staff are happy with the principal.
  - Families are comfortable with Wilson and the great things that are happening there but are more concerned about the middle grade options. Key teachers and staff do not want families to go to VA or MD because of the concern with the middle grade options.

## MAMIE D. LEE/SHARPE HEALTH

### Improving High Schools

1. What is working well at your high school that you want to see continued or expanded?
- The academic interventions that have been put into place. It would be good to see these programs expanded.
  - The high school students are making the greatest gains in comparison with the younger students at the school. They are learning to read and do math and we are slowly closing the achievement gap between where they are now and what their equivalent grade level would be.

- The interventions, Failure Free Reading, Lexia, and Edmark, as well as ST Math programs have all been working well.
2. What two investments in your high school should be made to support continued improvement?
    - One of the investments that would be most beneficial is professional development for teachers. Our teachers are generalists more than content specialists. They often lack some of the pedagogical knowledge, needed which become a challenge.
    - Investment in parental engagement is a necessity.
    - The students whose parents have really bought into our academic program are the ones who are really soaring.
  3. Which of the proposed funding areas are most important to your high school?
    - Students from high schools across DCPS could be fantastic mentors to students at Mamie D. Lee and Sharpe. Many students in DCPS don't even know that the special education populations at our school exist, it could be a major benefit to both groups. For example, Phelps is so close to River Terrace, that could be a great connection.

### Equity in Academic Rigor

1. What kinds of opportunities can you envision with Cornerstone Assignments in your school?
  - Equity in academic rigor. More rigorous instruction and opportunities for students to have curriculum they can follow without teachers having to modify the information they're provided would be helpful.
2. How can we position your school to be successful with Cornerstone Assignments next school year?
  - To make the Cornerstone Assignments successful in our school, the assignments will need to be tiered from the onset. Not only for the students at River Terrace, but also for other students with disabilities; they should be able to access the assignments as well.
  - It would be helpful to learn more about what the Cornerstone Assignment might entail in order to better identify ways to ensure they are designed in a way that is ultimately helpful to our students.
  - Having project based instructional units could be an effective approach for our students. For instance, our students take the NCSC assessment and have to learn about balance force. Having project based learning for the NCSC standards we teach would help our students engage with the content more than concretely. They are challenged when they are presented with concepts, it extends their learning to be able to see it, feel it and do it.
3. Do you anticipate any complications or challenges from Cornerstone Assignments?
  - We definitely anticipate challenges and barriers to implementing this initiative if the needs of the population at our school haven't been taken into account. Special educators may need to rewrite the curriculum with all of the modifications to make it accessible for our students.
  - Mamie D. Lee and Sharpe welcome the opportunity to have a conversation on how the cornerstone projects could be made accessible to all students in DCPS, inclusive of the River Terrace population.
  - The cornerstone initiative sounds like it is more projects based learning. In developing that curriculum, have you considered a modified curriculum for our students?

### Empowering Males of Color

1. What is the biggest challenge in addressing the needs of young males of color?
  - One of our biggest challenges for males of color with disabilities at our school is that they often lack role models and mentors. Because students don't get a HS diploma, only a certificate of completion, there's nothing to validate their academic experience, even if they have competency for an entry level job. So, they end up being automatically disqualified. However, this also applies to our female students as well.
  - There is a need to figure out ways to ensure that our students can access job opportunities upon graduation. Although their learning experience has been modified, it has been enriching, and has prepared them for some level of independence.
2. What is one thing you believe can improve outcomes at your school for young males of color?
  - In response to Dr. Simmons idea that all black males students should have the chance to be bilingual, it would be good to not only ensure they can learn another language, but that they have the chance to engage with others who may be even more marginalized then they are because of their disabilities. We want males of color across DCPS to be multicultural in a variety of ways.
3. If you had \$100,000, what would you do with it to support this work?
  - It is clear how students will benefit from equity and academic rigor, but for empowering males of color, what will that look like in Mamie / Sharpe / River Terrace.
  - How can we leverage the resources we currently have? The mentoring program for literacy will also be beneficial in terms of helping students learn to read, this is a critical need for our students.

### What Else?

1. What else would you prioritize at your school to improve student achievement?
  - Will the LSATs from Mamie D. Lee and Sharpe Health have the opportunity to review and engage in the budget process for the new combined River Terrace campus that is slated to open next year? If so, what will the timeline be for sharing that information?
  - Another question is how parents from both school communities will have the chance to partake in this process? If so, what will the timeline be for that?

## BROOKLAND EC @ BUNKER HILL

### Improving High Schools

1. What is working well at your high school that you want to see continued or expanded?
  - High school modernizations are helping students feel better about their environment and giving them something to be proud of. They also provide students with greater access to technology.
2. What two investments in your high school should be made to support continued improvement?
  - More rigorous courses.
  - More language offerings that include study-abroad and foreign travel opportunities.
  - Services that develop the whole child, including their creative side, their social-conscience side, etc.
  - More internship partnerships and opportunities.
  - Teachers and counselors who make themselves available to students when needed by phone and email as well as conducting home visits, when needed.

## Equity in Academic Rigor

1. What kinds of opportunities can you envision with Cornerstone Assignments in your school?
  - STEM-focused assignments that help students learn at a young age so they enjoy STEM and it allows them to be better prepared for middle and high school STEM programs.
  - Rigorous projects in elementary school that will help them be more prepared in middle and high school.
  - Real-life experiences that get them thinking about their future, including college and career.
  - Allowing students to reenact history to help them better understand what happened.
  - Using different types of media to present projects and assignments.
  - Include field trips that allow students opportunities to experience lessons first hand.
  - Creating lessons that include and involve parents and community members who are able to make presentations to students.
2. How can we position your school to be successful with Cornerstone Assignments next school year?
  - Assistance with developing partnerships.
  - Professional development for planning and use of resources.
  - Money for field trips/transportation or a relationship with Metro to gain inexpensive or free access to transportation needed for field trips.
  - Allowing parents to come into the classroom and explore these experiences with their children.
  - School based text-message alerts regarding events at the school.
  - Mobile unit to assist with getting parents and community members signed up as volunteers.
  - Provide extended day programming that allows students to dive deeper into projects with continued teacher support beyond class time/school day.
  - Provide Cornerstone Assignment instructions on a portal for parents and students to access at home.
  - Provide school-based parent workshops at the beginning of the school year to give an overview of Cornerstone Assignments students will engage in over the course of the school year.
  - Translate Cornerstone Assignments into a variety of languages for parents to access so they can provide support to students.
3. Do you anticipate any complications or challenges from Cornerstone Assignments?
  - Ensure that teachers have buy-in through having input in the development of the Cornerstone initiative.
  - When will assignments occur? Will there be flexibility at the school level or will it be a set day/days?
  - How will this align with the scope and sequence? Will this take the place of PIA/A-NET?
  - Clarity regarding grading, grade monitoring, and how the dates will be used--- school level or both school and district level?
  - Parent investment in supporting completion of assignments as well as getting their student to school.
  - There is a possibility that there will be gaps between what parents know and what their child knows.
  - There could be a lack of or no internet access at home.

## Empowering Males of Color

1. What is the biggest challenge in addressing the needs of young males of color?
  - Parent investment in supporting completion of assignments as well as getting their student to school.
  - Gap between what parents know and what students know.
  - Lack of internet access.
  - Lack of positive male role models that show them what they can become, even if it is through literature.



- Exposing students to positive male role models and examples of success to empower them to be engaged.
  - Providing more consistent mentoring.
  - Identifying resources, like literature, that is of high interest to young males of color, if they have literature of high interest they will be more motivated.
  - Finding ways of getting them engaged in the subject matter, such as being able to access the material through technology.
  - There is a lack of activities – school and/or community to keep them busy.
  - No parents at home and/or being required to raise siblings.
2. What is one thing you believe can improve outcomes at your school for young males of color?
- After school academy for males that focuses on leadership, scholarship, service, and character development.
3. If you had \$100,000, what would you do with it to support this work?
- Music programs with full-time teachers, mentoring programs and more sports activities.
  - Opportunities for success outside of classroom, including opportunities to work with their hands and learn practical skills.
  - Teaching them more about their own history and empowering them to make change.
  - Build a strong foundation of confidence in elementary school to take to MS and HS.
  - Big Brother program that is made up of recent elementary school “graduates” that can mentor.
  - Student government in elementary schools.
  - Providing positions for students to take ownership of their school and what happens there.
  - College tours.
  - Travel to different states to teach students how interact with other people and/or capstone trips.
  - Providing opportunities for students to give back to their own community/be invested in their own community.
  - Having successful males of color in high schools mentoring young students in their community or their former DCPS schools.

## BRIGHTWOOD EC

### Equity in Academic Rigor

1. Do you anticipate any complications or challenges from Cornerstone Assignments?
- Ensure that teachers have buy-in through having input in the development of the Cornerstone initiative.
  - When will assignments occur? Will there be flexibility at the school level or will it be a set day/days?
  - How will this align with the scope and sequence? Will this take the place of PIA/A-NET?
  - Clarity regarding grade monitoring and how the dates will be used--- school level or both school and district level?
  - Parent investment in supporting completion of assignments as well as getting their child to school.
  - Lack of internet access at home.

### Empowering Males of Color

1. What is the biggest challenge in addressing the needs of young males of color?
- Closing the academic gaps that exist while students are working on acquiring the English language.
  - Establishing being successful in school as “cool” and desirable.

- Establishing positive relationships with males of color that can balance/overpower other environmental/societal factors.
- Lack of positive male role models in the home.
- The challenge of embracing parents of various backgrounds as part of the solution to ending the achievement gap.
- Lack of exposure to successful men of color that are outside of the entertainment and athletic fields.
- The restrictions of only having students from 8:45 – 3:15 when often-family obligations prevent students from participating in extracurricular activities.
- Students that stay after school for extra-curricular activities often have challenges with transportation/traveling home safely when dark.
- Lack of positive male role models that show them what they can become, even if it is through literature.
- Exposure to positive male role models and examples of success to empower them to be engaged.
- Providing more consistent mentoring.
- Identifying resources, like literature, that is of high interest to young males of color, if students have literature with high interest they will be more motivated.
- Finding ways of getting students engaged in the subject matter, such as being able to access the material through technology.

2. If you had \$100,000, what would you do with it to support this work?

- Opportunities for success outside of classroom, including opportunities to work with their hands and learn practical skills
- Teaching them more about their own history and empowering them to make change.
- Build a strong foundation of confidence in elementary school to take to MS and HS.
- Big Brother program that is made up of recent elementary school “graduates” that can mentor current elementary school students.
- Student government in elementary schools.
- Providing positions for students to take ownership of their school and what happens there.
- College tours, capstone trips and/or travel to different states so students can interact with other people.
- Allowing students the opportunity to give back and be invested in their own community.
- Having successful males of color in high schools mentoring young students in their community or their former DCPS schools.

## LASALLE-BACKUS EC/TAKOMA EC

### Equity in Academic Rigor

1. What kinds of opportunities can you envision with Cornerstone Assignments in your school?

- Field trips, such as cultural trips. Explore other African American people who have done great things and paved the way.
- Competitions within the district. Previously there were competitions on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. At the competitions, students from different parts of the city had the opportunity to interact; it was a positive experience and some would exchange addresses to be pen pals. The District itself sponsored the competitions and there was a book with all sorts of contests.
- LaSalle has talked about doing a project on DC that would encompass all of the subjects (scale buildings for math, write a history of DC, etc.) and then go to Harlem and do the same thing in order to do a comparison of the cities and reinforce skills. For instance, students would visit a museum here and then one in Harlem and then would compare and contrast the experiences. They could also do this with a school and see how they are structured differently and how students interact.

- LaSalle is also interested in distance learning equipment to connect with classrooms in other countries.
  - LaSalle had great success collaborating with the Shakespeare Theater – students rewrote Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet in common vernacular and produced it at the theater. They ended up learning (and completed) how to complete various jobs associated with play production.
  - Cornerstone Assignments would encourage equity of access to materials (e.g. books) across schools & grades. It could lead to more enriching winter-break homework assignments.
  - 5th grade students could build underwater ATVs, or submarines, out of PVC pipe and other materials. They could compete against their peers, even across schools.
  - We could do more peer assessed assignments. Provide field trips that are more aligned with our curricula. Cooking activities can deliver great lessons, both life and academic. Foreign language assignments would be great.
2. How can we position your school to be successful with Cornerstone Assignments next school year?
    - Inventory what is already happening, first. Teachers need to understand the activities clearly, so they are done correctly, with quality. We need to see more guidance around this plan, in general.
  3. Do you anticipate any complications or challenges from Cornerstone Assignments?
    - With limited time in a school day, what are we going to sacrifice for these assignments? Are there contract issues with implementing standard assignments across all schools?

### **Empowering Males of Color**

1. What is the biggest challenge in addressing the needs of young males of color?
  - Many young men may not be able to see education as a means to an end right now.
  - With unstable environments, they may have low self-esteem and they may feel that they won't succeed.
  - Many students enter school already behind which contributes to achievement gaps, especially in literacy.
  - Lack of male role models.
  - Students need a positive close relationship with males. Since many teachers are female and many black males are coming from single female homes, there is a gap in male role models.
  - Many male students are also caretakers at home and then at school they have to take a subservient role which leads to conflict.
2. What is one thing you believe can improve outcomes at your school for young males of color?
  - LaSalle's PTA has thought about organizing a mentoring program where different community members (police officers, pastors, etc) can come in and work with students. Having mentorship at school would be a huge plus.
  - A gentlemen’s club with the boys to provide an opportunity for students to be comfortable with themselves. The boys could help in instilling self- confidence.
  - Elementary level guidance counselors, similar to what high schools have.
  - Social work is a different role from guidance counselors and students could use someone to talk to and who will listen to their concerns. Even grandparents who volunteer in the school could help.\
  - Bringing more college students into the school or even high school students who have gone through LaSalle. They could share their experiences of what they did after school and it’s a name that children are familiar with.
  - Increase exposure to different communities outside of Washington DC and historically black colleges.
  - Giving students opportunities for success that includes failure.

- Students need constant encouragement.
  - Provide students with choices – instead of one way of doing things; having a couple ways to produce a product or to show mastery of a skill as well as more opportunities for leadership roles.
3. If you had \$100,000, what would you do with it to support this work?
- Invite older males to speak to the students in their own private club where they can have conversations about anything; similar to a mock fraternity.
  - Parenting programs to help parents build skills and provide support on how to deal with a 13yr old son.
  - Offering training for teachers on how to communicate and interact with children of this generation as there may need to be a shift in perspective.
  - Provide more hands on learning such as having students create their own newspaper and doing interviews. For example, students could be given a topic and they would go out to complete interviews. This could also help to show students how to react to different situations.
  - Find a way to encourage students to express themselves in a positive fashion, and encourage students to share their opinions and views.
  - Create a book drive or general service project so students can feel useful and complete something that is valuable for someone else.

## MURCH ES

### Equity in Academic Rigor

1. What kinds of opportunities can you envision with Cornerstone Assignments in your school?
  - Have different schools re-work the curriculum. This could help foster partnerships within schools and would also help teachers feel like the content and curriculum speaks more directly to their needs within the classroom.
  - Great opportunities for teachers to work across content areas.
  - Bringing learning to life is going to strengthen the academic experience for students.
2. How can we position your school to be successful with Cornerstone Assignments next school year?
  - Focus on outcomes through inquiry.
  - Research model that focuses on student empowerment.
  - Elementary students want challenge and innovation; how can we leverage the Murch community, as well as organizations within DC in order to provide this?
3. Do you anticipate any complications or challenges from Cornerstone Assignments?
  - Teachers are unclear as to how assignments will be structured.
  - Teachers want to be “at the table” to discuss Cornerstone assignment creation and decision making.
  - Ability to explore partnerships across the city.
  - Could the cornerstone projects identify schools across the city?
  - Structured instructional day may limit teachers’ ability to engage in this work. What would this look like within the literacy block?
  - Teachers are concerned about the way in which greater flexibility with instruction will affect IMPACT.
  - Teachers sometimes feel penalized for trying out new approaches or lesson ideas.
  - Curriculum mapping should take priority over preparation for the test.

- With all of the emphasis on testing, will teachers be hesitant to engage in deep Cornerstone Assignments? Can the District look at the number of assessments required throughout the year and the type of information and data being produced from each?
- Cornerstone Assignments are a call for courageous leadership to do what is most important for students.

## WHITTIER EC/COOLIDGE HS

### Improving High Schools

(Collective Discussion)

- DCPS needs to address student deficits in high schools.
- High schools need more job training programs (i.e. cadet programs, police, fire, EMS, etc.), CTE courses and other courses that provide students with actual skills.
- Teachers and staff would like to see Read 180 returned to the classrooms in order to improve reading levels.
- Staffing high schools with a reading intervention teacher for students that struggle would be helpful.
- Vertical articulation between elementary, middle, and high schools to ensure students can meet levels of academic rigor.
- Ninth grade academies are controlled by central - need more autonomy/flexibility over that budget, should not be one-size-fits-all model.

### Empowering Males of Color

(Collective Discussion)

- Reading intervention teacher that is trained for age-appropriate support for all struggling students at HS level + high-interest, low-level reading programs.
- Math/numeracy labs would be helpful.

### What Else?

1. What else would you prioritize at your school to improve student achievement?
  - Different offices are making demands on principals.
  - The security force does not do anything for students.
  - Stop allocating schools on an equal footing (provide additional resources to high-need schools).
  - Not spending money on PARCC test.
  - Limit central staff positions.
  - Special needs student budget needs to be dictated by principals.
  - Limit IMPACT bonuses – schools would rather have high quality teachers.
  - Master Educators are not consistent - replace them with literacy/numeracy coaches.
  - Equity is not about every child getting the same thing, equity is about every child getting what they need.
2. What should we stop doing?
  - AVID program (study, research, literacy skills).
  - DC Heights and DC CAPS.

## MARIE REED ES

### Equity in Academic Rigor

1. How can we position your school to be successful with Cornerstone Assignments next school year?
  - Create grade level opportunities where teachers from schools with similar academic models can rate ideas and the Cornerstone Assignments. (Dual Language schools should meet together.)
2. Do you anticipate any complications or challenges from Cornerstone Assignments?
  - If the assignments are too broad there may be concern.

### **Empowering Males of Color**

1. What is the biggest challenge in addressing the needs of young males of color?
  - There are very few teachers who look like them. There are few teachers in academic positions or school leadership who reflect the background of our students.
  - It is challenging to find time outside the classroom for engagement in this work. Marie Reed could have a “Men of Distinction Club”.
  - If students aren’t able to stay after school, how can effective programs be incorporated into the school day to ensure every interested student has the opportunity to participate?
  - A lot of young men are being raised by women and need to talk with men. A mentorship club could provide the students with that opportunity.
  - Preparation is needed for teachers to engage in conversations with students about race and ethnicity.
  - PD is needed to help teachers talk about the stereotypes and biases that we all come in with. Reed would like to have an opportunity for all stakeholders together- the full staff. One challenge is finding the day and time and then finding the compensation.
  - Reed would like to use PD days in order to address this issue. It would be important to ensure that a safe place is created. If a session were facilitated, Reed would also want it to look at the full diversity of the young men of color at Reed.
2. What is one thing you believe can improve outcomes at your school for young males of color?
  - Engaging families and letting them know what DCPS’ focus is in order to support young men of color.
  - Families need to know what schools are doing. Parent workshops could help this become a community effort.
  - Focusing the curriculum on the history of people of color will help increase the pride that our young men of color feel in their background and heritage.
  - There is a big need for staff to talk about their hidden biases and prejudices because it comes out in the way teachers work with students.
  - Students also come in with biases and that needs to be addressed.
3. If you had \$100,000, what would you do with it to support this work?
  - Have speakers come in: entrepreneurs, famous men, visits to jobs, and programs for men that teach for example how to tie a tie, etiquette, going out to a formal restaurant etc.
  - Hold a staff (all school staff) retreat on a weekend that is facilitated by a guest.
  - Create community partnerships.
  - Plan college trips where students can see young men of color in higher institutions.
  - Bring the fraternities and sororities to Marie Reed to speak to the students.

## What Else?

### 1. What else would you prioritize at your school to improve student achievement?

- More usable technology; a teacher who could work directly with children on technology.
- Three teachers in all ECE classes.
- Books written in the other languages in order to support the students' literacy development in their native language.
- Better quality substitute teachers so that teachers feel comfortable leaving students. There should be a pool of Dual Language substitutes as well as ECE program Tools of the Mind classes since the programs are so specific.
- A music teacher.
- Having the arts in the building would do so much for the school; there is space but not enough staffing.
- Pre-school piece: parents do not feel like the students are getting what they need (100 book challenge, daily presentation about something from home, questioning about the presentation). Parents feel this is all due to the Tools of the Minds program focus.
- A science resource teacher or a space where students could go into a lab that would allow teachers to develop more hands-on projects and would better prepare students for science instruction in MS.
- Classes for parents: home economics, GED, English, Cooking, Financial literacy, Positive language when managing children's behavior, Resources that are available for parents within the community.
- Instructional Coach for new teachers and specifically for teachers from other countries; Instructional coaches whose specialty is working with language learners both ELLs and SLLs.
- Communication between families and teachers needs improvement; support for teachers around communicating through difficult situations.
- Clear expectations of parents coming into the community and the level of interaction parents should have.
- Vice principal of literacy is needed.
- Parents have a hard time adjusting their schedules in order to participate in school events. Advanced notice would be helpful.
- DCPS should have an app; people are so mobile.
- DCPS should have funds for before and after care both for everyday as well as school events.
- Parent suggestion: "Champions "(before and after care), this program was used at a Charter school and was very successful.
- Information sharing between ES principles on how before and after care has been secured; what has been successful; and which organizations are reliable.
- With regard to DCPS curriculum: Standards are given with texts however, the texts are not available. Extensive work is necessary in order for teachers to have something they can use when curriculum standards are issued. DCPS curriculum is a bit too skeletal. Across grades there is inconsistency. For example, misalignment of CCSS financial literacy in first grade but the students don't work with money related questions until later. There is even less provided with the Dual Language curriculum. Translations are not the goal. Original Spanish language texts and culturally connected themes are needed.
- <https://www.engageny.org/> (website for materials and resources for teachers) is user friendly. Teachers are using this regularly and would like similar work prepared by DCPS.

## STODDERT ES/EATON ES

### Equity in Academic Rigor (Collective Discussion)

#### 1. Do you anticipate any complications or challenges from Cornerstone Assignments?



- The concept is great, but this could turn into a series of “unfunded mandates” from DCPS. The schools need to have secured funding. There is concern that the onus for funding will be placed on the individual schools.
  - This focus on Cornerstone Assignments can’t force schools from giving up on other things due to funding.
  - Assignments need to be big and open-ended. Teachers might get hung “losing their autonomy”.
  - Currently a lot of funding is provided by our parents through our PTA.
  - Cornerstone Assignments seem to be mainly focused on academic activities however schools have focused on experiential learning and we need to ensure these assignments don’t take away from experiential learning.
  - From the experiential learning standpoint, part of these “Cornerstones” should go to funding a staff point person for each school to lead experiential learning. It would be useful to have one point of contact to be the person responsible for this at each classroom. Making a directory of “go to experiences” and having a point person would be helpful so schools that don’t do this regularly don’t have to recreate the wheel.
  - Will the Cornerstone Assignments truly be something that everyone across the city can do?
2. How can we position your school to be successful with Cornerstone Assignments next school year?
    - Stoddert needs buses. The school community spends so much money on charter buses.
  3. What kinds of opportunities can you envision with Cornerstone Assignments in your school?
    - Schools can tap their parent population. For example at Stoddert we have this parent population with many, many interesting jobs....they can take the day off and come in and talk to the kids about what they do for a living. A student’s father has come in and is a water quality scientist. He has come into the classroom, taken the kids to a local watershed and showed them the actual process.

## Empowering Males of Color

1. What is the biggest challenge in addressing the needs of young males of color?
  - Not enough conversations about race are happening at the school. Parents have these conversations with their kids at home but it also needs to happen in the school.
  - There is a feeling that if you don’t go to college you are failure. Going to the military is also seen as a failure. The goal for the EMOC states 100% college acceptance, perhaps this goal needs to be tweaked in terms of what the goal is about.
  - There is a need to address issues in the wider community. It goes back to economics.
  - Boys are wired differently. We teach everyone like a little girl. You’re supposed to sit school and not talk. That doesn’t work for boys. We’re trying to make boys fit into the box.
  - Offering our young males exposure to other things. If you’ve only been around the block you aren’t getting the exposure you need. There has to be something for the kids to stretch for. Most times our kids in the inner city have nothing to learn for. Our kids need a vision.
2. What is one thing you believe can improve outcomes at your school for young males of color?
  - Mentoring programs should be implanted at schools throughout the city.

## What else?

- Will the EMOC school suck away some of our higher performing students from schools like Banneker and School without Walls?



- Is DCPS prepared to do an EMOC type school for girls? There are studies that show when girls attend single gender school they are more successful than in co-ed schools.

## HYDE-ADDISON ES

### Equity in Academic Rigor

1. How can we position your school to be successful with Cornerstone Assignments next school year?
  - Inventory what is already happening, first. Teachers need to understand the activities clearly, so they are done correctly, with quality. Guidance around this plan, in general, is needed.
2. Do you anticipate any complications or challenges from Cornerstone Assignments?
  - With limited time in a school day, what are we going to sacrifice to implement these assignments? Are there contract issues with implementing standard assignments across all schools?

### Empowering Males of Color

1. What is the biggest challenge in addressing the needs of young males of color?
  - One of the main challenges is getting students to and from school, especially with the travel distance they experience.
  - Another challenge is ensuring students maximize the time between after school and bed. Some parents could use more help planning how to support their children's learning during these hours.
2. What is one thing you believe can improve outcomes at your school for young males of color?
  - More literacy supports, like reading specialists.
  - Raise expectations for our students of color to match their peers.
  - Extending the school day to provide additional education time.
  - Increase after school activities.
3. If you had \$100,000, what would you do with it to support this work?
  - Extend the school day, provide more STEM programming, work that is hands on, interactive, more rigorous after school programs, healthier snacks and transportation services.

## LAFAYETTE ES

### Equity in Academic Rigor

1. How can we position your school to be successful with Cornerstone Assignments next school year?
  - School is in a good position for this—each grade level has a few projects that they already do.
  - It is time to pay teachers to think and plan these assignments out for the long-term.
  - Utilize the summer to do the Cornerstone Assignments
  - Cornerstone Assignments must be engaging—teachers need to be invested in it- must be strong, rigorous and engage the teacher as a learner.
  - Trying to thin out what we do now—to make the Cornerstone a priority

- Cornerstones project that change every year.
  - Cornerstone activities should be almost completely student driven—so we need the money to train teachers and understand HOW to execute this.
  - Strong training so that the Cornerstone Assignments are all encompassing, project based and student based.
  - Aligning the standards and curriculum to the projects.
  - Long term planning—keeping the future in mind.
  - Level of engagement with the schools when developing the Cornerstone Assignments.
  - School will need to build the trust that the assignments are vetted through many dc officials.
  - Getting the opportunity to visit great schools—to get out of the mindset that we are not the only school doing great things.
  - Partnerships with other schools—all 3rd grade teachers come together and to about cornerstone projects.
  - Knowing the tenets of the expectations—to ensure that the delivery of the assignment is rigorous.
2. What kinds of opportunities can you envision with Cornerstone Assignments in your school?
    - Performance (not production) based assessments.
    - These may look different, but the school has had space in the instructional day to already do these.
  3. Do you anticipate any complications or challenges from Cornerstone Assignments?
    - Money and time.
    - There is concern regarding the loss of instructional time.
    - Consistency across the cornerstone projects is important.

## Empowering Males of Color

1. What is the biggest challenge in addressing the needs of young males of color?
  - Our young males of color don't have high enough expectations (academically and behaviorally).
  - Teachers/Admin need to have the expectation that they can all do the same things academically.
  - Teachers have negative mindsets about the black students.
  - Teachers have assumptions and biases that they are bringing into the classroom.
  - Teachers don't understand the culture and language pieces – teachers misread this as disinterest and students not being as smart.
  - Teachers/Administrators need race and equity professional development and/or training.
  - Relying less on assumptions and more on hard core data.
2. What is one thing you believe can improve outcomes at your school for young males of color?
  - Race and equity training for teachers and administration.
  - DCPS must do a better job of teaching explicit expectations to males of color- so there is not an underlying assumption that they do not care.
3. If you had \$100,000, what would you do with it to support this work?
  - Professional development around race and class issues.
  - Universal data references to ensure that the data of students is concrete and not based on assumptions.
  - Have teachers visit other schools.

## DUKE ELLINGTON SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

### Improving High Schools

1. What is working well at your high school that you want to see continued or expanded?
  - Having an arts program at Ellington.
  - Newcomers program- even down to the elementary level.
  - Summer retreat at Ellington (shepherding program). Three days and three nights- gender specific.
2. What two investments in your high school should be made to support continued improvement?
  - Resource teachers in the content areas for students to provide them reinforcement when they get to the general education class.
  - Themed high schools
  - Accelerated support for special education students
  - Stop the disinvestment- high schools losing money for programs every year, regardless of static or increased enrollment.
  - Programs that teach life skills for students.
  - Investing in programs to support students to return back to Washington DC ready to get a job in the community.
  - Electives that are college and career related.
  - Internships/community partnerships in the high schools.

### Equity in Academic Rigor

1. What kinds of opportunities can you envision with Cornerstone Assignments in your school?
  - More arts integration, so that there is a blending of a dual curriculum. Backward mapping (vertical articulation) ensuring that what our students are receiving at the elementary and MS level is mapped to their high school. This increases their ability to be prepared for college after high school.
  - Teachers should connect content (there is a connection between those two things).
  - Centrally- devised projects that are cross- curricular.
2. How can we position your school to be successful with Cornerstone Assignments next school year?
  - The process seems overwhelming. Give 5 years for the Cornerstone Assignments to be required.
3. Do you anticipate any complications or challenges from Cornerstone Assignments?
  - A challenge will be clear messaging across all schools.
  - Clear benchmarks.
  - Engaging community partners so that we are maximizing resources.
  - Unpacking standards, ensuring that they are aligned with Common Core, ensuring that each student is working on the same assignment.
  - Allow the students be the authors of their own learning. An authentic book where students document how they have processed their own learning in each subject area.
  - Think about how we use the summer to support curriculum planning.
  - More Professional development for teachers.

- There is a challenge with the availability of resources so that every school is successful. Ensuring each school has the same opportunity.

## HEARST ES

### Equity in Academic Rigor

1. What kinds of opportunities can you envision with Cornerstone Assignments in your school?
  - Teachers will need 2 weeks before school starts (for PD) as opposed to 1 week.
  - Teachers often have kids who are significantly behind and it would be better if there are canned projects and curriculums in front of you.
  - All classes should have the same opportunities regarding field trips and enrichment activities.
  - Establish a program that looks like our sister cities—pair schools with part of museum and rotate them every year.
  - Drawing from our more experienced teachers and collecting their expertise in a database that is available for everyone.
  - Will this create more testing? We already test enough as it is.
2. How can we position your school to be successful with Cornerstone Assignments next school year?
  - Biggest concern is time for teachers to plan to dive into instructional units.
  - There needs to be a clear understanding of what the competencies are for each grade level.
  - Every family has core competencies, spell them out. Provide the tools that are needed to reach the competencies.
  - Clear guidelines on hands on projects and extracurricular activities
  - Even organizing schedules for those collaborations at a variety of grade levels on top of everything else. The planning time needed is a real concern when front offices are often short staffed.
  - The Cornerstone Assignments align with Hearst's aspirations.
  - The funding needs to be provided. At Hearst there have been attempts to complete similar assignments and the PTA has supplemented funds so that there is a budget to get the kids on field trips that complement the units. So it's tapping into the community and resources at our fingertips.
  - Hearst has come up with a clever solution for delivering foreign language. The Spanish teacher is funded on a fellowship with free room and board at the librarian's house. Hearst's PTA collaborated with the administration to get this done. The students love it. It took a lot of work and it is not easily sustainable.
  - There is a need for transportation and additional supports after school.
  - Hearst could flexibly schedule the library to offer a school wide enrichment block to build research skills and tech.
  - Staff recently set aside 2 hours to help think through integration and cross curricular work. It takes time to have those kinds of conversations. The school is bringing in 8 subs. It takes time.

### Empowering Males of Color

1. What is the biggest challenge in addressing the needs of young males of color?
  - How do we provide transportation for the kids who are Title 1 and Special Ed? They can't partake in some activities.
  - With PWP grants, some of it helps fund local programs about the concept of citizenship and conflict resolution.

- Empowering males of color by connecting them with countries that are of color. Traveling is a good idea for their collective learning experience.
- Young males of color have to gain your trust. People consider a lot of the boys in our school as problems. Young males need to know that you're in your corner. If there is trust then they'll do anything.
- Create a safe place for all students. All students should feel safe in their community and classrooms. The barriers come down if teachers and mentors are sincerely interested in their lives. For example, a buddy system with a 5th grader and a 1st grader but also buddies for the family. Or perhaps something as simple as carpooling list.
- We can't forget about relationships that happen outside of the classroom. Often the most productive work meetings occur in semi-social settings.
- Where can we germinate the relationships? Is it thinking about small group field trips where there are hand-picked teachers to take a few kids with whom there is already a relationship to a concert or something? Are we rewarding teachers for taking the time to do that? We should rethink how to reward teachers who go that way.

## RAYMOND EC

### Equity in Academic Rigor

1. What kinds of opportunities can you envision with Cornerstone Assignments in your school?
  - Culminating activity for all ECs at the end of the year which would include field-trips or papers or real-world experiences that provide a concrete and hands-on experience. Tie into themes- current academics. Tie into units and curriculum.
  - In ES it is about their imagination – get the students to envision themselves doing more. Get them to imagine and be curious about assignments.
  - What happened to TAG (Talented and Gifted) for younger students- do we have this? Need to challenge students.
  - Let's ask the students what they think and what they want to see.
  - Performance (not production) based assessments.
  - These Cornerstone Assignments may look different, but the school has had space in the instructional day to already do these
2. How can we position your school to be successful with Cornerstone Assignments next school year?
  - Create speaking opportunities for the older students.
  - Prepare school to work in and experience the "City as a Classroom".
  - Raymond EC is in a good position for this—each grade level has a few projects that they already do
  - Time to pay teachers to plan and think about the Cornerstone Assignments- time is important- using money to pay teachers for their time.
  - Teachers can use summer break to plan and design the Cornerstone Assignments.
  - Cornerstone activities must be engaging—teachers need to be invested in it- must be strong, rigorous and engage teachers as learners.
  - Trying to thin out the responsibilities and extra work teachers do now—to make the Cornerstone Assignments a priority.
  - Cornerstone projects that change every year.
  - Cornerstone activities should be almost completely student driven—so we need the money to allow teachers to train and understand HOW to execute this.
  - Strong training so that the cornerstone activities are all encompassing, project based and student based
  - Aligning the standards and curriculum to the projects

- Long term planning—keeping the future in mind.
  - Ensuring the proper level of engagement with the schools when developing the Cornerstone Assignments.
  - School will need to build the trust that the assignments are vetted through many DC officials.
  - Getting the opportunity to visit great schools—to get out of the mindset that we are not the only school doing great things.
  - Partnerships with other schools—all 3rd grade teachers come together to learn and discuss cornerstone projects.
  - Knowing the tenets of the expectations—to ensure that the delivery of the assignment is rigorous.
3. Do you anticipate any complications or challenges from Cornerstone Assignments?
- How will the assignments look and relate to our ELL students?
  - It would take a lot of coordination across grade-levels.
  - The money and time investment.
  - Will the Cornerstone Assignments take a toll on instructional time?
  - Consistency across the Cornerstone projects- it is important that the equity is upheld.
  - Making sure all teachers know the core of the Cornerstone Assignments, so teachers can know how it all ties in, does it pull all the learning from a particular unit or is it a whole year? What are the themes and topics that matter most?
  - How will success be measured?

### **Empowering Males of Color**

1. What is the biggest challenge in addressing the needs of young males of color?
- Lack of Mentorship.
  - Absence of a male role model in the home.
  - Lack of parent workshops.
  - Commitment and consistency from families.
  - Commitment from schools to make sure that the mentor is available.
  - Having families who are willing to open up to the help and support from schools and mentors.
  - Social-emotional issues.
  - Broken homes.
2. What is one thing you believe can improve outcomes at your school for young males of color?
- Young Men's Club – need to expand it at Raymond. Right now we have guest speakers and two groups- 4th and 5th and 6th thru 8th.
  - Raymond tried separating the classes by gender. Learning styles are different between genders.
  - 8th grade transition –more exposure to career options and college options early on. We have feeder school principals coming to visit the school. We are counseling students on what is the right fit for them.
3. If you had \$100,000, what would you do with it to support this work?
- More clubs to improve oral communication skills (i.e. Athletics, fine arts and drama, Debate club, Odyssey of the Mind).
  - Citywide debate club competition. Broadcast Team could televise this. TV resources and equipment are needed. Right now Raymond has Tiger TV.
  - Expand rewarding students who are scoring proficient and above. Right now they spend day with Administrators and at Medieval Times.

- Expand the Raymond in-school marketing campaign “Fired up and ready campaign”
- Expand Engineering Program (STEM club).
- Expand the June Career Day- people are already coming in to talk to families.

### What Else?

1. What else would you prioritize at your school to improve student achievement?
  - In order to prevent or decrease learning loss over the summer, DCPS should consider year-round school.
  - DCPS should consider expanding ST Math to middle school, adding Keyboarding courses to the curriculum.
  - Schools need trailers for the expanding school population and the Imagine learning program.
2. What should we stop doing?
  - We are pretty lean at Raymond. For instance, we don’t pay for a lot of partners and recently let go of A-Net. We opted not to get an Assistant Principal and instead placed those resources in technology.

## BANCROFT ES/POWELL ES

### Equity and Academic Rigor

1. What kinds of opportunities can you envision with Cornerstone Assignments in your school?
  - Having a range of things classes could choose from would be nice (student choice vs. class choice).
  - Projects for “gifted” children or children that are academically higher functioning (challenge with 5th graders at the elementary schools).
  - Collaboration across schools and grades so that the education experience is similarly rigorous across the district.
2. How can we position your school to be successful with Cornerstone Assignments next school year?
  - Decide on core projects way in advance so that teachers can plan and develop them
3. Do you anticipate any complications or challenges from Cornerstone Assignments?
  - Showing staff how to pace the project.
  - Making the project more inquiry advanced.
  - Money for planning and resources.

### Empowering Males of Color

1. What is the biggest challenge in addressing the needs of young males of color?
  - Concerned that our schools aren’t meeting needs of males of color overall.
  - School environments aren’t really conducive but don’t know how to make it better. Have we identified all of the needs and issues of males of color?
  - Lack of relevant programs that males of color can relate to--- “school is boring.”
  - Finding literature that shows people of color as the protagonists.
  - Familial unit education/engagement, make families partners in their child’s education.
  - Distinguishing racial elements vs. economic elements and tackling each as appropriate.

- Lack of resources to build parenting skills for parents who want to “do better for their children” but just don’t know how.
  - Lack of wrap around services.
  - Lack of relationships between schools and parents (parents don’t feel like they’re able to effectively communicate with teachers because of language/education barrier).
  - Lack of teachers that look/sound/have same experiences as males of color.
2. What is one thing you believe can improve outcomes at your school for young males of color?
- Separating the successful males of color from the struggling males of color and delving into the root issues of why the students are struggling.
  - Adding culturally responsive counselors to help get at root issues for struggling males of color.
  - Developing meaningful partnerships with families.
  - Partnering with organizations that students/families trust.
3. If you had \$100,000, what would you do with it to support this work?
- Pay for home visit training and home visits (similar to Flamboyant).
  - Pay for year round after school extracurricular activities.
  - Make more culturally responsive curriculum units.
  - Adding means of recruiting males of color.
  - Fund scholarships for males of color who are interested in teaching with the promise of coming back to teach in the district.