

Chancellor's Parent Cabinet: Meeting Notes

Teachers and Families Engaging as Academic Partners

Tuesday, May 13, 2014
5:30 PM – 8:00 PM
DCPS Central Office

Overview:

Meeting Goals

1. Gain an overview of why DCPS is working to engage families as academic partners, and how we are doing it.
2. Hear how this focused work influences how teachers see their job, their school, and DCPS.
3. Share perspective with the Chancellor & staff on the topic.
4. Have an opportunity to ask questions, and to plan a next step for sharing this learning with their own school community.

Additional Resources

Materials provided in advance of meeting:

- [NPR Story on DCPS School Family Engagement Initiatives](#) (8 minutes)
- [Video on DCPS Home Visiting](#) (9 minutes)
- [Video on DCPS Alternate Model Parent Teacher Conferences](#) (12 minutes)

Materials referenced during meeting as relevant follow-up reading:

- *Beyond the Bake Sale*, Karen Mapp
- ["Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago"](#)

Attendees

- DCPS Chancellor's Parent Cabinet Members: Susan Boa, Angelina Bradley, Gary Carleton, Olivia A. Chase, Patrick Clowney, Craig DeWolfe, Kevonya Dickens, Marcio Duffles, David Galbraith, Christena Howell, Laura Levine, Rahul Mereand-Sinha, Dan Rosenthal, Andrew Rowe, Thomas Strike, Emily Walton, Martin Welles, Arthur Yarbrough
- Not in attendance: SIRRAYA GANT, Vivian Guerra, Gloria Norman-Okojie, Idella Simpson
- Chancellor Kaya Henderson
- DCPS Office of Family and Public Engagement: Josephine Bias Robinson, Shanita Burney, Jennifer Skates
- Guest Speakers: Vincent Baxter, OFPE; Melissa Bryant, Teacher at Stanton ES

Notes:

Issue	Comments
<p>Welcome and Review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent Cabinet provided written feedback on DCPS Parent Handbook ▪ If Cabinet members are still unable to access Cabinet website, contact Jennifer.Skates@dc.gov ▪ Review final calendar of topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Chancellor Chat (general updates on what’s happening in the last two weeks) ○ Chief Chats (different Chiefs or high level staff share specific programming updates) ○ Calls are optional and minutes will be taken and posted on the website
<p>Introduction of Guest Speakers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vincent Baxter is a former DCPS teacher, was an elementary school principal, and leads school level family engagement projects in DCPS. ▪ Melissa Bryant is a 4th grade teacher at Stanton Elementary school, a school that has been working hard to improve teachers’ skills in family engagement. Melissa Bryant was featured in two of the videos – the links to these videos are above. ▪ Cabinet Members are directly involved in this work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parent Cabinet member Aquila Watson was featured in the Stanton ES Home Visit Video ○ FEP Schools represented by Cabinet: Powell, Stanton, Oyster, Jefferson ○ FEC Schools represented by Cabinet: Ross, Hyde-Addison, Plummer, Noyes, Amidon-Bowen, Randle-Highlands, HD Woodson, Ketcham
<p>Focus Topic: Overview of School-Level Family Engagement in DCPS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vincent Baxter, Director of School Level Family Engagement shared the information below in a short presentation, which is available on the DCPS website • DCPS believes that part of being a highly effective teacher or principal is helping families play 5 key roles in their child’s education (have high expectations, monitor their child’s performance, support learning at home, etc.) ▪ The most effective family engagement strategies involve teachers and parents in one on one engagement, follow-up, and goal setting • Mindset and skill tend to be leading reasons behind why teachers don’t communicate as effectively with families • Family engagement is key ingredient for school turnaround – <i>Organizing</i>

	<p><i>Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCPS partners with the Flamboyant Foundation to implement one family engagement model which includes home visits and Academic Parent Teacher Team (APTT) meetings, a different model of parent teacher conferences. Description of current family engagement strategies - Trained over 600 through FEP and through FEC to do home visit - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The Family Engagement Partnership is a whole school model ✓ The Family Engagement Collaborative allows teachers who are not in a FEP school to learn and implement strategies ✓ Home Visits are voluntary for teachers & families ✓ Teachers are compensated to do home visits, and get a small budget for APTT (materials, food, childcare). ✓ We have FEP in 21 schools ✓ FEC touches 30 schools; We're about to recruit even more teachers ✓ We're training 500+ Early Childhood Teachers/Aides to Home Visit ✓ Application is required for FEP and FEC • Question from Cabinet: is this approach to family engagement something we expect of schools? • DCPS Answer: In the past we have asked schools to do everything from bake sales to goal setting talks. We are shifting ourselves organizationally to directly support activities with that direct parent-teacher-student connection. Of course, we still recognizing the importance of other activities. <i>Beyond the Bake Sale</i> by Karen Mapp and Anne Henderson provides great information in this area. • Question posed to the Cabinet from Chancellor: How do teachers communicate information to families? What works well? • Cabinet responses included web tools, digital grade books, teacher blogs, backpack letters, morning meetings, and detailed report card notes. Cabinet Members noted that communication varies widely depending on who the teacher is.
<p>Conversation with DCPS Teacher</p>	<p>Chancellor Henderson interviewed Melissa Bryant, Stanton teacher, on her experience with the Flamboyant Foundation.</p> <p>Q: What does the Family Engagement Partnership work look like at Stanton?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Home visits for all families which consist of various parts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher introduction

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent shares hopes and dreams for child • Expectations: teacher and parent each set one expectation for the other • Teacher personally invites the parent to a school event • Information gathered in home visits informs the teacher’s instruction for the student <p>2. Academic Parent Teacher Team (APTT) meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All parents in one class see data for their child as compared to the class • Teacher discusses the skill and how it’s taught to the children • Teacher provides a game or activity for families to help their children • Teachers and parents discuss and agree on goals for students <p>Q: What has this work meant for you as a teacher?</p> <p>A: Now I know parents do the best with what they’ve got. Every parent cares. I bring my best ever day.</p> <p>Q: What impact has it had on your classroom?</p> <p>A: Stanton had a reputation as the school you send your kids to if you don’t care. After home visits, our scores tripled. We were the fastest improving school. The school culture has completely changed. Families actively want to enroll their children at Stanton.</p>
<p>Group Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parents share their own experiences ▪ Cabinet Members ask questions ▪ What are suggestions? ▪ What are your own experiences, and what could we be doing more of? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment from Cabinet: Thank you. My family was one of the firsts. This program has bridged the gap for my family . . . it’s a very different environment than anything I’ve seen. • Question from Cabinet: How are those teacher-family residual relationships reinforced? Do you lose those parents once they matriculate to the next grade? • Teacher Answer: I have better conversations with families. My school community cares more. My families tell each other about how the model works. Parents also put pressure on teachers to change behavior. • Question from Cabinet: Are there places where the home visit model doesn’t work? What about families who don’t want to be visited? • DCPS Answer: It has never worked well when we mandate that a specific school must do this particular action. Asking schools to apply and compete for the program, and articulate why they are interested and how the program will be implemented, ensures that we have the necessary buy-in for the program to succeed. Principals hear success stories from their peers, and become interested. We have several contacts with families before visiting. If a family is uncomfortable meeting in their home, we can arrange an off-site visit. Teachers complete visits in pairs. The home visit approach is based on research in various places, and training includes cultural competency.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question from Cabinet: Logistically, how do you complete all visits over the summer? Don't class rosters change? • DCPS Answer: Before schools can engage in this work, we tell principals they must have class rosters finalized by early summer. This requirement is more difficult for secondary schools. • Question from Cabinet: My school is part of the FEP, but we may be losing the program next year, which worries me. How can parents do to encourage more staff to push this work? What additional barriers exist? • DCPS Answer: Each school in the FEP costs ~\$150k. We are exploring ways to expand the program, but we are working now to implement the program at schools who are ready and willing. • Question from Cabinet: How was the family engagement continuum developed? • DCPS Answer: Our partners at the Flamboyant Foundation developed the continuum based on local and national research. <i>Beyond the Bake Sale</i> by Anne Henderson and Karen Mapp provides context. • Question from Cabinet: How do you know that the Flamboyant model works? Why does it work? • DCPS Answer: We are partnering with Mathematica to evaluate the program. In addition to CAS data, we are looking at attendance data, behavior data, student retention, etc.
<p>Closing and Next Steps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Last summer, our Management Team attended a conference at Harvard with our peers from across the country. We chose to discuss family engagement. This year, Arne Duncan and Karen Mapp rolled out their plan for family engagement at Stanton ES. We are leading the country in this work. ▪ Cabinet Members will review meeting minutes before they are shared publicly ▪ DCPS will finalize meeting topic calendar ▪ Cabinet Members encouraged to attend Student Assignment and DCPS School Boundaries Review Meetings

Next Meeting Date – June 10; 5:30 – 8pm