

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT & SUPPORT COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

OCTOBER 11, 2018
MINUTES

A Student Achievement & Support committee meeting was held by the Board Committee on October 11, 2018 in the Board Committee Room in Suite 101 of the School District of Philadelphia Education Center, 440 North Broad Street.

The meeting was convened at 5:00 p.m by **Board Member and Committee Co-Chair, Dr. Chris McGinley**.

Co-Chair Dr. McGinley called the roll and announced that the meeting was being recorded by the School District of Philadelphia and can be viewed on PSTV's Comcast Channel 52 or Verizon Fios Channel 20. It was also announced that the recordings are protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States and may not be used in any manner without the express written consent of The School District. Dr. McIver announced by participating in the meeting, members of the public acknowledge that the School District may use its recordings for any purpose without obtaining permission or paying any compensation. Additionally, members of the public acknowledge that submitted comments are part of the public record and may be made available with the minutes of each meeting.

Committee Members present: Dr. McIver (Co-Chair), Dr. McGinley (Co-Chair), Board Member Fix-Lopez, Board Member Dr. McColgan, Board Member Danzy, and Board Member Egea-Hinton - 6

Board Members present: President Wilkerson, Vice President Walker, Student Representative Julia Frank, and Student Representative Alfredo Praticò

Committee Members Absent - 0

District Liaison for the Superintendent: Shawn Bird present

Co-Chair Dr. McGinley started the meeting with opening remarks. He reviewed the agenda and noted in addition to District reports at each meeting the committee will invite external partners to discuss a focus topic. He announced the focus topic for this meeting is school selection, an opportunity for middle school students and their caregivers to explore and understand the high school choices open to them. Co-Chair Dr. McGinley outlined findings from two recent reports - "Getting Into High School in Philadelphia", (2017) PEW Charitable Trust and "Separate and Unequal: A Path Forward for Neighborhood High Schools", (2015) PCCY - that identified key concerns regarding particular groups of students who faced a lack of access to competitive, special admission schools. He recognized that the District has made improvements to the school selection process over the past year. He invited **Dr. Shawn Bird** and **Karyn Lynch** to outline those recent changes.

Dr. Shawn Bird and **Karyn Lynch** provided a [brief presentation on the focus topic of school selection](#) and shared information on actions the District has taken to improve the process.

Co-Chair Dr. McGinley thanked Ms. Lynch and invited staff to present on District reports including a presentation on the District-wide Comprehensive Plan and brief updates from the Office of Charter Schools.

Dr. Bird and **Dr. Savoy-Brooks** provided a [District report on the proposed District-wide Comprehensive Plan](#) which will be submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Education by December 31, 2018.

Co-Chair Dr. McIver asked for clarification on how the District defines core standards.

Dr. Savoy-Brooks stated that the District utilizes a curriculum engine which provides the scope and sequence based upon PA Core Standards which are aligned with performance expectations for quarters throughout the academic year. Dr. Savoy-Brooks also stated that schools also receive core materials that are aligned to English Language Arts and Mathematics which are aligned to the core curriculum for grades K-12.

Co-Chair Dr. McGinley asked for clarification on core materials and whether training is provided to instructional staff along with the curriculum.

Dr. Savoy-Brooks responded stating that the District's core materials are Collections and Ready Gym for english language arts and Envision for mathematics, all of which are a collection of core materials that align with the core curriculum.

Co-Chair Dr. McGinley asked **Dr. Savoy-Brooks** to clarify that the current plan assumes that the District currently has an aligned curriculum that is accessible by every teacher and teachers are aware of how to access and implement this curriculum. **Dr. Savoy-Brooks** stated that while the District does have the structure established, work remains in the implementation

Co-Chair Dr. McGinley asked if the proposed District-Wide Comprehensive Plan will get the District to a place within the mathematics curriculum that is similar to that of literacy which currently has a plan that has a structure, a pedagogical approach, and a system to support the ongoing development of the approach. **Dr. Savoy-Brooks** stated that the District is working toward a comprehensive framework for mathematics in the same manner that there is one for early literacy.

Co-Chair Dr. McIver asked for clarification on the use of technology with Envision. Dr. Savoy-Brooks stated that technology is an positive addition to the materials that are already being provided to teachers.

Board Member Fix-Lopez shared her experience working with adult learners and highlighted the importance of ensuring teachers are willing to receive the training and implement the curriculum. She

urged the District to shift mindset and culture within schools to help teachers understand these tools are useful and evidence-based to improve student outcomes.

Dr. Savoy-Brooks agreed with Board member comments and stated the District is working to evaluate its professional development plans by surveying expectations from school leadership, instructional leads, teachers, and coaches. Additionally, she stated the District is developing professional development to ensure every student has access to grade-level content.

Board Member McColgan asked whether the District has a method to identify or assess which schools need support across standards.

Dr. Savoy-Brooks stated the District uses its Qlik database to analyze benchmark data and drive decision-making based on needs of each school. Additionally, the District reviews information for each learning network to ensure appropriate resources are provided in the areas of need.

Co-Chair Dr. McIver asked whether the Envision Math program provides benchmarks and how they are provided. **Dr. Savoy-Brooks** stated the District sets its own assessments.

Board member Egea-Hinton asked why some schools are harder to staff than others and its impact on the implementation of this plan. **Board Member Fix-Lopez** agreed and stated in order for this plan to be sustainable and effective, the District must ensure strong school leadership in each school.

Dr. Bird agreed and stated the District believes leadership is key to sustaining progress and fidelity of implementation of these strategies. The District is working to provide more autonomy to school leaders in order to retain staff and cultivate positive culture within their buildings.

Co-Chair Dr. McGinley encouraged the District to focus on engaging school-level instructional staff in the early stages of the development of this plan in the future.

Dr. Bird agreed and noted that the plan will be posted live for a twenty-eight (28) day public comment period. Any feedback received by the District will be incorporated and presented to this committee at its November meeting. The final plan is due for submission on December 31st to the state.

Board Member Egea-Hinton thanked the District for the presentation and reiterated three key aspects to ensure this plan is successful: engagement, buy-in, and monitoring.

Dr. Savoy-Brooks shared that this proposed plan also includes feedback received from school-level plans which created by school leaders in partnership with their staff.

Co-Chair McGinley noted **Board Member Fix-Lopez** had to attend another commitment and left the meeting at 6:04 pm. He also invited Christina Grant, Interim Chief of Charter Schools and Innovation, to come forward and provide a brief update.

Ms. Grant provided an update on the new charter application to iterate the application opened on September 17, 2018 and will be due on November 15, 2018. The Office of Charter Schools has provided opportunities for both in-person and webinar to answer questions from interested applicants. Non-

letters of intent are due to the Office of Charter Schools on October 15, 2018. Currently, one letter of intent has been submitted by Philadelphia Montessori Charter School. After the November 15, 2018 deadline, narratives will be posted to the Office of Charter Schools website. Public hearings will be conducted in December and January with an expected action by the Board in February.

Co-Chair Dr. McGinley questioned whether the evaluation process will remain the same as previous years. Ms. Grant confirmed the evaluation process remains the same and the Office of Charter Schools will produce similar reports.

Co-Chair Dr. McGinley asked whether applicants are required to produce academic plans that align with Pennsylvania core standards, account for access and equal opportunity for all learners, and include evidence of community support. **Ms. Grant** confirmed these items are required in the application.

Ms. Grant also shared the District has requested an extension to continue review of the one application for a Multiple Charter School Organization (MCSO). The Office of Charter Schools will provide an update at the November meeting of this committee with potential Board consideration at the November Action Meeting.

Co-chair Dr. McGinley asked who is providing guidance to the Office of Charter Schools on this evaluation and whether there are any lessons learned from the one application submitted and denied by the PA Department of Education. **Ms. Grant** confirmed the office is working with the Pennsylvania Department of Education and authorizers in other states with experience. **Co-Chair Dr. McGinley** asked about the original timeline. **Ms. Grant** stated original action was to be taken at the August Board meeting, however the Office of Charter Schools has been successful in receiving waivers from the applicant to extend their evaluation.

Co-Chair Dr. McGinley noted **Board Member Egea-Hinton** left the meeting at 6:10 pm and he opened the floor for committee members to ask questions or remarks in regards to upcoming Action Items.

Co-Chair Dr. McIver had a question about Action Item 24 - Contract with Elwyn. She asked whether the regular process was followed to identify the students and services being billed to the District. **Diane Castelbuono**, Deputy Chief of Early Education, clarified that these are early intervention students ages three to five. Elwyn is the state's mutually agreed working agreement holder to provide these services. Parents of these students chose to keep them with Elwyn for an additional year instead of District kindergarten school. Elwyn has recently started submitting more accurate invoices to the District.

Co-Chair Dr. McGinley asked a few questions on behalf of **Board Member Fix-Lopez** regarding Action Item 21 - Contract with Partners in School Innovation - How were the schools selected to receive these services and how was the vendor selected? **Dr. Bird** shared the vendor provides coaching at specific schools. The vendor was selected by these school principals. He will provide a written response for information on the procurement process as this is an extension of a previous contract.

Board Member Dr. McColgan asked whether the District uses evidence-based standards when selecting and recommending vendors. **Dr. Bird** responded to confirm the District has a robust procurement process which includes a section on evidence of impact. **Co-Chair Dr. McIver** asked to what extent the District is able to build internal capacity to provide these services.

Board Member Dr. McColgan and **Co-Chair Dr. McGinley** requested the District include additional information on justification of their recommendations when submitting Action Items to the Board. These details should be included within the description section of the Action Item.

Co-Chair Dr. McGinley asked whether the relocation request in Action Item 2 meets the standards set by Policy 406: Charter Amendments. **Ms. Grant** confirmed the application meets the standards and criteria set in the policy. Additionally, if the amendment is approved, the Office of Charter Schools will set conditions to ensure the school is ready to open and operate on time.

Co-Chair Dr. McGinley stated when the School Reform Commission approved the relocation of Ad Prima Charter School the community was not informed or in support of the relocation. He asked whether this school will be well received by the community in which it wishes to relocate. **Ms. Grant** confirmed there is community support for the relocation and the move is three blocks away from the current school location.

Co-Chair Dr. McIver began the public participation portion of the meeting and recognized that the committee has invited external partners given their interest in the focus topic of school selection. She read the full list of participants and called the first participant to address the committee.

Kristina Moon, staff attorney at the Education Law Center, has provided the committee with a written statement that summarized concerns that the ELC has with equitable access to the District's school selection process. She stated that while the District has made large strides to improve the process, there are a few specific concerns in regards to LeGare process and the waiver process.

Debra Weiner, local non profit founder, stated her concerns with the school selection process and the opportunity gap. She also suggested a model for filling empty seats in special admission schools and noted her 40 years experience in providing guidance to the District. She also submitted written remarks to committee members.

Michelle Schmitt, PEW Charitable Trust, submitted written testimony and summarized information on the findings shared in PEW's report on 2017 High School Selection Report.

Lisa Haver questioned the status of the charter schools that have pending charter renewal recommendations from the Office of Charter Schools, including Universal Audenried Charter School. One of her concerns of the School Reform Commission was their decision to go against the charter school office's recommendations. She shared the Board has a responsibility to stakeholders and questioned whether the Board plans to act on outstanding renewal recommendations in advance of the regular process this spring. Additionally, she recommended that copies of Action Items be made available or projected in the committee room in the future.

Co-Chair Dr. McGinley stated that the actions of the School Reform Commission are final decisions that were made, including charter renewals. Some of those decisions included approved charter renewals that have not yet been agreed to by the charter schools. He stated he believes this Board will act in a timely fashion on recommendations from the Office of Charter Schools.

Cecilia Thompson asked whether the services from Temple School of Dentistry are extended to students with disabilities. I want to thank the District for putting the audition dates on the website and being transparent on this. Concerned about the Le Gare process not being on the SDP websites, requesting whether the packets are being up uploaded and available to families.

Mr. Saltz identified himself as a teacher at Paul Robeson School, District parent, and member of the Caucus of Working Educators. He shared concerns about the increased level of oversight and management from central office. He also shared concerns of creating a culture of mistrust between central office and school-based staff.

Cheri Micheau shared concerns about the District's lack of accountability in meeting requirements as outlined by the LeGare process, specific to students that are English learners and students with special needs. She questioned the monitoring of these requirements and requested information be presented at an Action Meeting on how the process is monitored.

Mama Gail Clouden stated concerns about school communities where parents or caregivers are unable to support their children through the school selection process due to their lack of access to resources or knowledge of the process. She urged the Board and District to engage parents, caregivers, and community members in every process.

Horace Clouden recommended the Board review a proposal submitted in 2012 by Mama Gail Clouden on the reconfiguration of schools by grade levels served. The recommendation was to organize elementary schools with grades Kindergarten to sixth (6) grade, junior high schools for 7th and 8th grade, and push for career and technical education high schools in each neighborhood.

Co-Chair Dr. McGinley thanked the public for their participation and audience for attending the meeting. He concluded with consensus from the committee on moving forward with the Action Items discussed at the meeting for consideration by the full Board at the October 18 Action Meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:21 p.m.

Dr. Angela McIver, Co-Chair
Dr. Chris McGinley, Co-Chair
Student Achievement and Support Committee Meeting



October 11, 2018

Good afternoon School Board members and staff:

Thank you very much for this opportunity. I am Michelle Schmitt of The Pew Charitable Trusts' Philadelphia research initiative. I am here to share findings from Pew's 2017 report "Getting Into High School in Philadelphia: The Workings of a Complicated System." The report analyzed demographic and other information on 16,790 eighth-graders who were seeking enrollment in a district-run Philadelphia high school for the 2015-16 school year.

Pew is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research and public policy organization focused on a variety of issues at the local, state, national, and global levels. As part of our work in Pew's hometown of Philadelphia, we produce data-driven reports on key issues facing the city. We do not take a position on these issues and I am here today strictly to provide findings from our research that may assist in your decision making.

As we detailed in our report, the School District of Philadelphia does not require students to attend a particular high school. So, to go anywhere other than their neighborhood high schools, eighth graders and their parents must identify the schools they think fit their needs and apply to them. And there are a wide variety of choices confronting them.

Working with data provided by the School District, Pew analyzed the process of matching students who were eighth-graders in 2014-15 with district-run high schools for the subsequent school year. The analysis sought to shed light on two central topics: How the application, admission, and enrollment process worked for students applying to ninth grade—and who attended the special admission schools, presumably the most desirable of the district-run institutions. In the end, 3,468 students went to these schools, accounting for 26 percent of the ninth-graders districtwide. The system, had elements that were complex and potentially challenging for students and parents to navigate.

The analysis found that acceptance to the special admission schools for 2015-16 depended on three factors:

- The academic qualifications of the student, with test scores playing a key role. For each school, minimum applicant scores on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) test were listed in the district's high school directory; many students who did not have those scores applied anyway.
- Student and parent/guardian participation in the application process, through which they selected the schools the students wanted to attend.

Admission decisions made independently by administrators at individual schools. While the application process is centralized, the admission decisions are not, meaning that individual students may be admitted to one school, multiple schools, or none at all.

The vast majority of students participated in the centralized application process. But some eighth-graders with qualifying test scores made no attempt to get into the special admission schools. Other students, once accepted, turned down the offers, enrolling at their neighborhood schools or somewhere else. And a number of students, once enrolled, did not come to school when the academic year opened in September.

Latino students had the lowest participation rates during all steps of the application and admission process: Latino students with high test scores applied less frequently than other groups, those with high test scores who did apply were admitted to special admission schools at lower rates, and those who were admitted attended in September at lower rates than other races or ethnicities.

And even though school officials said a student's test scores are a key to acceptance at the special admission schools, some eighth-graders who lacked the minimum scores got in—11 percent of admitted students came from this group—and some who had the scores were rejected. District officials said the admission of students who did not meet the test-score criteria occurred in some cases because individual schools did not have enough qualified applicants. Rejections of students who did have the minimum scores were probably based on their grades, poor performance in an interview or audition, attendance and behavior records, or lack of space.

All of these factors resulted in ninth-grade student bodies at the special admission schools in 2015-16 that differed in a number of ways from the district's ninth-graders as a whole:

- There were higher percentages of Asians and whites, and lower percentages of Latinos and blacks. Among all ninth-graders, 56 percent were black, 19 percent Latino, 14 percent white, and 7 percent Asian. At the special admission schools, the numbers were 51 percent black, 12 percent Latino, 16 percent white, and 17 percent Asian.
- There were smaller percentages of low-income students. Although individuals receiving federal poverty assistance accounted for 60 percent of all ninth-graders, they represented 51 percent of those in the special admission schools.
- There were more girls and fewer boys. In the district as a whole, 51 percent of ninth-graders were boys and 49 percent girls, but at the special admission schools, the figures were 41 percent boys and 59 percent girls.
- Also present at lower percentages in special admission schools than in the district as a whole were English language learners and students receiving special education support because of learning difficulties or physical disabilities.

The analysis indicates that test scores were a key reason for some groups' greater success in getting into the special admission schools. For instance, 61 percent of white and 71 percent of Asian students for whom data were available—mostly eighth-graders who attended district-run schools—had the minimum standardized test scores for nearly all of the special admission schools. But only 33 percent of black and 34 percent of Latino students had the necessary scores.

In some ways, Philadelphia's high school admissions process mirrors the college application process: Students apply to multiple schools, some more difficult to get into than others, with the differences in quality having potential implications for students' futures. Each school has its own standards, and administrators at each one make decisions on the applications without knowing where else the student has applied.

School districts in some other large cities have moved to a universal enrollment process. Students file one application listing their preferences and receive admission to a single school, based on a formula with a variety of factors.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our findings. I am happy to answer any questions.