

TO: External Advisory Committee
FROM: Helen Dajer and Hardin Coleman
RE: Next Steps
DATE: October 23, 2012

As Co-Chairs of the External Advisory Committee on School Choice, we have listened to the many ideas that have been shared about choice, reviewed the data, and read the various analytic reports. We are recommending to the EAC that we take the following next steps.

Our first recommendation is that we acknowledge the failed logic that leads to busing within a small urban district. There are several assumptions that lead to a school assignment process that is not based around neighborhood schools. The first is that it reduces the ravages of racial segregation. The second is that it provides historically disadvantaged children access to quality education. The third is that it provides choices to families in a way that will be attractive to the parents of historically advantaged children and, therefore, keep upper middle class families in the system. The fourth is that the school district does not have the capability or will to improve schools so families need options. We want to suggest that a school assignment system that is organized around these assumptions is bound to fail and will always be inequitable. We recommend that we make the assumption that this community has the capacity and will to increase the percentage of quality seats in the district from ?? in 2012 to ?? in 2017.

Our second recommendation is that we acknowledge that there is no school assignment process that will increase economic or racial integration with this city given the current student population. In addition, we need to acknowledge that the community needs to be focused on satisfying the academic aspirations of historically disadvantaged families through effective school programming. The school assignment process may be able to mitigate the impact that economic and racial segregation has on schooling outcomes, it cannot solve it without explicit academically oriented strategies.

Our third recommendation is that the district use the following formula for identifying quality seats and the district's improvement rate, using the quadrant analysis.

1. Quality Seats
 - a. In 2012, the percentage of seats in quadrant 1 and 2 are considered quality seats.
 - b. In 2012, the percentage of seats in quadrant 3 are considered OK seats, (i.e., not in need of intervention)
2. Rate of Improvement
 - a. Between 2010 and 2012 what percentage of seats in the district were in schools that had demonstrable academic growth.

Our fourth recommendation is that any school assignment process have a clear articulation as to how it will provide quality programming to special needs students that is closer to their home, provides minimal disruption in their schooling, increases access to seats in schools that provide inclusive instruction, and provides predictability for families. We endorse the proposed overlay which allows for clustering of services in the geographic areas of needs.

Our fifth recommendation is that any school assignment process has a clear articulation as to how it will provide quality programming to ELL students that is closer to their home, provides minimal disruption in their schooling, and provides predictability for families. We endorse the proposed overlay

which allows for clustering of services in the geographic areas of needs, with the understanding that program will continue to follow students rather than students having to be bused to programming.

Our sixth recommendation is that any school assignment process has a clear articulation as to how it will provide quality programming to FRL students that is closer to their home, provides minimal disruption in their schooling, and provides predictability for families. We request that the district clearly articulate a strategy for increasing the percentage of quality seats in the district and options for FRL students who are in areas of the city in which their access to a quality seat is below ?? Probability.

Our seventh recommendation is that we ask the district to develop two models that address the following issues:

Model 1: Walk Zone

1. This model should be organized around a one mile walk zone
2. It should provide predictability for families
3. The district will use the SPED and ELL overlay maps to identify the schools that would have appropriate programming for those students. The district will identify strategies that provide access to quality seats for FRL students who do not have them in their walk zone
 - a. This model should consider the Paired School strategy. This would allow students who have a low probability of receiving a quality seat in the initial lottery be able to choose particular high quality schools. It also means that families within the walk zone of those high quality schools will have the paired school(s) as one of their options.
4. The order of priority in this algorithm would be
 - a. Need Status
 - i. SPED
 - ii. ELL
 - iii. FRL with no quality seats within walk zone
 - b. Walk zone
 - c. Sibling Preference
 - d. FRL with only quadrant 3 seats in walk zone

Model 2: 11 Zone with Paired Schools

1. Of the models presented by the District, the 11 zone model does the best job of balancing closer to home with equitable access to a quality seat in a way that is an improvement over the current assignment process.
2. It provides predictability for families
3. The district will use the SPED and ELL overlay maps to identify the schools that would have appropriate programming for those students.
4. The district will identify strategies that provide access to quality seats for FRL students who do not have them in their walk zone
 - a. This model should consider the Paired Zone strategy. This would allow students who have a low probability of receiving a quality seat in the initial lottery (e.g., zone 5) be able to include schools in specified zone (e.g., zone 2) that would increase their probability of getting quality seat. This would also mean that students in Zone 2 would be in the lottery for schools in Zone 5 (if that is the pairing of schools).
5. The order of priority in this algorithm would be

- a. Need Status
 - i. SPED
 - ii. ELL
 - iii. FRL with no quality seats within zone
- b. Walk zone
- c. Sibling Preference
- d. FRL with only quadrant 3 seats in home zone

Our eighth recommendation is that parents who do not receive their first choice in the initial round of the lottery be allowed to participate in a parent compact that would involve attendance in a level 3 or 4 school.

Our ninth recommendation is that we endorse the district's proposal concerning middle school feeder patterns as long as parents of 5th grade students have the option of entering a lottery system for open seats.

Our tenth recommendation is that the district increase the number of two way language K-8 schools as a way to effectively serve ELL students.

Our eleventh recommendation is that the district, by December 2014, develop and publish valid measures for the 8 indicators of quality articulated by the EAC.

Our twelfth recommendation is that the district clearly articulates the school improvement plans for all level 3 and 4 schools with clear metrics and expected timelines for improvement.