Readout of the DPS Reimagine SPF Committee Meeting

Convening dated April 8, 2020

VIRTUAL – The Reimagine SPF Committee convened virtually for its ninth monthly meeting on Wednesday, April 8. Committee members from across the district representing school leaders and teachers, parents and family, and community residents came together via Zoom video conferencing to accommodate health concerns during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As in prior convenings, the Committee members were joined by School Board members Carrie Olson and Scott Balderman, DPS staff, and community observers. External meeting facilitator Marlon Marshall led the meeting, supported by external facilitator Lynda Tran and DPS staff.

The meeting began with words of appreciation for the commitment of the Committee members to completing its recommendations to the Superintendent and School Board from Board Chair Carrie Olson and DPS Associate Chief Jennifer Holladay. After a quick warm-up test of the Slido technology tool for collaborating and capturing sentiment throughout the meeting, DPS Manager of Policy Ericka Burns provided updates on recent decisions by the state and DPS on testing and district planning.

The meeting facilitator then provided the proposed schedule of virtual meetings for the remainder of April and reviewed comments and updates to the draft SPF Committee Recommendations Framework. The facilitator indicated that this first virtual meeting would serve as an opportunity to lay out the committee’s goals for the Recommendations Framework given the impact of COVID-19 and that the Committee would spend the final two virtual convenings later this month to move toward decisions and align on final recommendations for submission to the Superintendent.

DPS staff provided an overview of the “Accountability and Reporting” structure. One Committee member raised the concern that adopting the state SPF would relinquish local control to the Colorado Department of Education and suggested the Committee revisit its prior decision to adopt the state SPF and capture additional measures for Denver Public Schools. The committee discussed that the district maintains local control with other policies and how the framework is used.

As the Committee turned to group discussion, the facilitator posed the question to the Committee via Slido: What is your recommendation on accountability and why is that your recommendation?

There was discussion of the tension between the desire to simplify the SPF and to measure school performance in a way that acknowledges the complexity and nuance inherent in District schools. Comments ranged from a desire to move on from the previous decision on using the state SPF given its simplicity to concern about whether using that framework as an academic baseline is sufficient.

DPS staff reminded the Committee that the discussion should be around how local accountability practice is informed by the state SPF -- renewals, tiering of schools, and other decisions beyond closures -- and that color coding is part of the state system.

The facilitator moved to a vote of the 22 present Committee members: The Committee’s recommendation on SPF accountability is:

Use state framework only to trigger accountability 64%
Use state framework and other to be determined measures to trigger accountability 23%
Use state framework and other academic measures to trigger accountability 14%

Given the results of the vote, DPS staff and a Committee member acknowledged that the relatively close outcome is indicative of the difficulty and challenge of creating a performance framework that meets the needs and concerns of the priority audiences represented by the Committee.

The facilitator concluded the meeting by inviting members to participate in the editing of the recommendations document ahead of the next virtual convening April 22.