DENVER – The Reimagine SPF Committee convened at North High School for its eighth monthly meeting on Wednesday, March 11. Committee members from across the district representing school leaders and teachers, parents and family, and community residents took part in a series of presentations and discussions resulting from working group meetings undertaken since the February Committee convening. As in prior months, the Committee members were joined by School Board member Tay Anderson, DPS staff, community observers, and DPS students. External meeting facilitator Marlon Marshall led the meeting along with DPS staff and included remote observation by at least one Committee member.

The meeting began with an overview of recent discussions and upcoming opportunities to hear from experts and community groups. The facilitator indicated that the goal for the final two planned convenings was to move toward decisions and align on final recommendations for submission to the Superintendent.

A Committee member shared his thinking on how to “distill and disaggregate” the experience of Latino and Black students and reiterated a concern previously raised about making a distinction between how schools are held accountable and how the school district is held accountable.

The facilitator then walked through the initial draft framework for synthesizing the Committee’s recommendations. Feedback from the Committee included:

- Needing to be clear about the rationale for adopting the state performance framework being “to meet accountability requirements.”
- “My biggest concern is that we are using a new framework that will be used the same old way. Is this for learning? What is the information going to be used for?”
- Suggestion that a mini-subcommittee rewrite the section.

The Committee then moved into its small group discussions to finalize presentations for the three working groups: Additional Academic Measures, Whole Child, and School Climate and Culture -- the previously named “Other” group.

The remainder of the meeting was dedicated to presentations by the working groups followed by questions and full Committee feedback and discussion about the proposed measurements.

The Additional Academic Measures Working Group was the first team to present their recommendations. The nominated Committee member talked through the group’s process, which began with a quick consensus that the goal should be to arrive at approximately five “top measures.” The group also gave an overview of some common themes that came up in their discussions including apathy. Ultimately, the group agreed they liked the idea of a tiering system for measures; they wanted to assess student engagement in the learning and grade-level work; there is a tension between strong supporters and opponents on K2 measures [?]; and that status is captured in the state SPF.
Other topics that came up in the presentation and subsequent full Committee question and discussion period included:

- Wanting to look at achievement and growth of language learning students on native language instruction assessments
- The accounting of IB and AP students in the measures
- Welcoming the addition of on-track measurements in the state SPF in the coming years
- The need to expand on the student satisfaction survey

The next presentation was offered by the Climate and Culture Working Group. The nominated Committee member leading the presentation discussed the group’s “purpose statement” and noted that the group began by acknowledging what students bring to the building related to their lives. Among the measurements the group weighed were:

- A category that captured resources and conveyed how well a school is maintained
- Diversity of staff and whether it correlated to diversity of students
- Readiness benchmarks and softer skills students need to be ready for success in life -- to account for group members’ feeling that checking off an ACT or SAT score doesn’t necessarily correspond to success, and getting into college doesn’t necessarily mean helping them be prepared to succeed, but that in elementary school and at each stage ensuring students are ready to go into the next phase of their education is critically important.

The group noted their list was long and comprehensive to capture things that had potential value -- but was not meant to be the actual list of what is measured. Other themes covered by the presentation and subsequent discussion included:

- The need for points so families and others can see how school is doing without “scoring” them
- High retention does not mean judging a school but is a way to see “what’s going on” and an opportunity for kids to be celebrated “getting away from punitive high stakes way that has been part of previous SPF experience”
- Comment that a previous expert resource offered by DPS and his definition of measures was “super valuable”

The final presentation came from the Whole Child Working Group. The Committee member nominated to lead the presentation walked through their detailed document and highlighted some things for the Committee to take special note of, including:

- To “ignore the notion of a screener and pay attention to the metric”
- The group broadened the notion of teacher retention to be overall staff retention
- The “indicator on equity and engagement was on attendance”
- “Ignore the color coding and try to understand the data of what might be going on”
- The group considered where the learning cycle ends and accountability begins
The full Committee question and discussion period included revisiting the debate over whether SPF should be about accountability or “diagnostic.”

The facilitator concluded the meeting with a plan to integrate the working group’s recommendations for the Committee’s feedback.