DENVER — A majority of the Reimagine SPF Committee convened at Bear Valley International School at the Henry Campus for its third monthly meeting on Wednesday, October 9. Committee members from the school leaders, teacher, and parent cohorts were present for the discussion, as well as School Board member Carrie Olson, DPS staff, and external meeting facilitators Marlon Marshall and Lynda Tran.

The convening kicked off with a brief introduction to the meeting facilitators, a discussion of the proposed process for future meetings, and a recap of the previous meetings. Several members of the Committee posed questions about the “purpose” and the “audience” for the SPF, positing that the framework should be presented — and information collected — in a way that aligns with the intent. There was not consensus around either of the questions, and the discussion was tabled for later in the meeting.

The group then participated in a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion exercise designed to build relationships in the room and provide a foundation for better understanding different viewpoints and values.

Next, Committee members were presented an overview of pre-meeting materials from DPS Associate Chief of Portfolio Management Jennifer Holladay covering the goals of the SPF, the timeline for its development, other frameworks in use around the country, and recent changes to the indicators — including and in particular to the Academic Gaps indicator previously known as the “Equity indicator.”

Following the overview, Committee members broke into groups of 4-5 to discuss their thinking on what’s working, where there are challenges, and their ideas for improving on the existing Academic Gaps indicator. Conversations in the mixed groupings of parents, teachers, and school leaders were robust (including citations of SPF language by section and code) and creative (“What if we created an Auto Trader for school that allowed parents to input the unique needs and priorities for their children?”)

When the groups reconvened for a full Committee debrief, there was an energetic discussion centered primarily on the challenges with the Academic Gaps indicator following one group citing — and others offering “snaps” — that it is a positive that DPS is concerned with equity and important for the District to discuss equity issues overall.

During the full Committee debrief, which comprised the largest segment of the meeting, members expressed common themes of frustration over the n=16 rule, concern for English Language Learners, and a shared belief that the current SPF indicator needed either marked revisions, total elimination, or some replacement to be determined. The idea of evaluating schools based on whole child and school culture indicators was raised several times. There was also a lengthy exchange about the intended audience and the purpose of the SPF, with some members of the committee advocating an approach that informs parents in their choice of schools and other members of the committee making the case the SPF should be designed solely for principals to foster learnings and improve performance among school leadership. A conversation about “norming standards” to benchmarks set by affluent, white students and the need to recognize historic inequity among students of color sparked some passionate comments from several committee members.
Some areas of consensus coming out of the debrief included:

- We all agree we need to look at equity
- We need a tool to measure how we are doing
- Measuring / comparing students of color against white students needs to be reconsidered.

Requests were made to share the new graduation requirements with the Committee ahead of the next meeting and to generate opportunities for the Committee members to continue the conversations outside of the monthly convenings.

In response to the many issues the Committee discussed about the desired changes and shifts to the SPF, the meeting closed with the Committee members agreeing to generate their ideal accountability frameworks for the district with special consideration for the specific audience and purpose of these ideal frameworks. The focus of the November meeting will be centered on these ideal frameworks. The DPS team committed to connect with the District on whether and what guardrails should be applied to the idea generation.