



MacFarland Community Cabinet Meeting Notes

October 27th, 2015

6:30 – 8:30PM

West Education Campus Library

Presenter: Anjali Kulkarni

Support: Andrew Katz-Moses, Cassandra Sanchez

Notes:

Agenda

Time	Agenda item	Key questions
6:30 – 6:35pm	Welcome/Review of Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the agenda for today?• What major questions do we plan to tackle?
6:35 – 6:50pm	Ice Breaker: Common Ground	
6:50 – 7:40pm	Discussion: Setting a vision for MacFarland Middle School, Part 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is essential for DCPS to know about the community surrounding MacFarland Middle School?• What do you and the group(s) you represent hope to see in MacFarland as a neighborhood middle school?• What do you and the group(s) you represent hope NOT to see in MacFarland as a neighborhood middle school?
7:40 – 7:45pm	Break	
7:45 – 8:00pm	Key decisions of the MacFarland Community Cabinet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What decisions does the Community Cabinet get to weigh in on?• What decisions have already been made?
8:00 – 8:30pm	Discussion: MacFarland Dual Language program in SY16-17 and SY17-18 [Parents of Dual Language students only]	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What should the Dual Language program at MacFarland during years 1 and 2 look like?

PARTICIPANT QUESTION/COMMENT	DCPS RESPONSE
	DCPS Updates
Is that 40/40 priority just for elementary schools?	No, they fall into ES, MS, EC, and HS.
How do we define alternative schools? Kids who have fallen behind?	<p>Yeah, right now that's how we define it. The issue is we don't have clearer criteria for how students enter and how we serve them. I think unfortunately alternative schools have been an afterthought for us and we need to rethink how we approach that.</p> <p>Our issue is we're trying to think about how to approach intervention in the schools. Right now the moment you pull them out they never come back in. Our definition is they're two years behind in credits right now.</p>
	<p>*Group discussion*</p> <p>Consider the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is essential for DCPS to know about the community surrounding MacFarland Middle School? • What do you and the group(s) you represent hope to see in MacFarland as a neighborhood middle school? • What do you and the group(s) you represent hope NOT to see in MacFarland as a neighborhood middle school?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enormous amount of diversity in our community. Racial, economic, feeder right. 2. Want positive school culture set by leadership of the school – you walk in and students are flourishing, happy, want to learn. Happy engaged adults. Safe, adults are child focused. Respect for kids. Consistent procedures. 3. Want to see strong social work, mental health, behavior team. Especially for kids who need that support. 4. A program for the non dual language families as dynamic and engaging as DL program. Integration of non-DL students. 5. Marketing the neighborhood part of it now – some people are assuming it's only going to be dual language and the rest is going to be whatever. 6. Rigorous academics and high performing educators. Native Spanish speakers. 	<p>Dual language at MS level doesn't look like it does in the ES level. They take two content courses, so the students really are integrated. For MacFarland we're modeling the program after Oyster's program. For the rest of their courses, they take with everyone and they are all one school.</p> <p>One thing that's nice is we have a few years to get the neighborhood model right. It'll sort of be a training wheels situation to get to get that up and running rather than having 600 students right off the bat.</p>

<p>7. Diverse staff so students can feel connected to teachers and staff represents them.</p> <p>8. If there could be a focus on hiring African American and Latino males – men in general.</p>	
Only two courses in dual language?	Math and science are the courses a student is required to take to be part of DL program. That's the model nationally at the middle school level.
Parents are viewing the two content courses as not enough for DL. Needs to be some clarity on what that DL program will look like.	We are currently trying to build out with our Language Acquisition Team and DL principals. That's going to happen soon, we can sort of marry that to specifics of dual language over time.
Is it really just two DL classes? Are there other programs or supports?	There are other supports but the idea is it's just the two classes so they're integrating with their peers. We're trying to revisit, I think they're visiting schools in Montgomery and Fairfax County to see how they do it. The idea is to start integrating our students a bit more.
DCPS and the US government in general could make it a bit easier to recruit teachers from other countries. Hard to keep them with the visa situation. If there could be a way to institutionalize those things so we could even get diversity within the Spanish speaking teachers.	
Going to piggyback on that because we lost a lot of good teachers because DCPS would not renew their visas or sponsor them in getting them renewed. If it were expanded beyond Colombia and Spain we could kill so many birds with one stone.	
Possible to have advanced classes?	That's something we're working on, there are particular classes we tend to do, or we can plan to do, are math I think and maybe a couple of others...
Well when you talk about marketing, what kind of advanced programming are you marketing to non dual language parents?	
When I talk to parents, they perceive a difference between dual language and an English only track academically.	
If the DL program were not here, what would make the program attractive to people in this community? My opinion as a computer programming person is the whole school should be dual language whether you're learning Spanish or Python.	

Some of us have options to go to Deal – what’s the pitch to us and those families?	
And why should I stay in DC? Every parent with a child in kindergarten is sitting at the table saying ‘what are we doing?’ ‘are we staying?’ are we leaving? The fact is DCPS has such bad press and our numbers don’t speak very well.	Marketing sits on our shoulders a little bit. Making a school great does not solely sit on our shoulders as many of you know who are active in your schools and LSATs, I’m thinking Powells and Wests that was because families invested. I would actually pose the challenge, especially as the MacFarland Community Cabinet, we didn’t bring you guys on so that we could sell to you. This is a group that is thinking through this together, and I want us all to be thinking about how we make this a great school. We are working on the instructional part of it every day but when families are involved and make a big stink about things that’s when things change.
But how do you fight the fatigue? You fight for the first seven years, then you gotta go fight for three more...so when I say the help from DCPS needs to be there, I worry when I look at some parents who are fighters that when the choice for middle school rolls around the choice is going to be an established community. I don’t see the support level there for the parents and community.	
I think that burnout piece is really dangerous and tremendous. I’m coming all the way from Ward 7 to send my child to good schools but I have to get out of that community to give my child a chance. I’m a little discouraged about MacFarland and still pursuing a charter, and I think there’s a bit more DCPS needs to do to convince us because I can’t tell you right now that I can do that for another parent right now, so giving you a little bit of pushback on the statement you just made. Yes we’re here to help but there’s a lot that needs to take place for this school to be what all of us are hoping it will be. I’d love to say without a shadow of a doubt my child will be coming here. If it’s not what I’m expecting she’s not going to go.	
It’s been really difficult with the whole English only and dual only – when at Powell they say ‘come to this meeting!’ but it’s not for you guys. You’re marketing to dual language but need to think about the other population.	
What schools have to offer everyone is key.	My only question with that is we don’t know everything. We’re 2.5 years away and I can commit to all those things, but a principal is going to come on and see how it goes with the school and go talk

	to every single feeder parent and a lot of that can change.
Is this school being set up for failure because it's less than a year from opening and you don't have a lot of specifics on school programming? It really sounds like you guys are focused on marketing and everything else but what does this look like?	<p>We do know what next year's going to look like. If we don't get kids in we can't offer anything. Our struggle also is that Roosevelt does not have a dual language pipeline. We're trying to do that sooner so these students hit Roosevelt sooner so we can grow the offerings there sooner. It's sort of a long view on the feeder pattern. If we had it our way we'd have opened this year but we don't have a building that can fit 600 kids.</p> <p>We do have answers on the schedule and course list, that's being finalized. The budget will be finalized for new schools within the next four weeks. Principals get budgets in February and finalize by March, but new schools are done differently because they don't have principals. Those are schools we will budget out ahead of time to ensure these schools have everything they need to start.</p>
It would be helpful for us to get some of that information.	Yes we'll get that for you in the next few weeks. We're working with architects and all that stuff, talking about rooms and operations because they'll be in a building with other students.
The lottery starts in December...	This is the next two weeks. It's happening.
On the parent engagement and us as DCPS...what decisions are we...or are you just listening to us to say that you listened to us? If that is the case we're not going to be able to help you. If we don't know you can effect some change...	So here's my question: in one conversation it's like, 'tell us what's in the school' and in another it's like, 'what decisions do we get to make?' So you can help us by telling us where you would like to have input. It's sort of a double edged sword. We'd like to have a conversation about where you'd like to plug in.
School leadership – how will that affect when things start to roll out? In Brookland you had your cabinets, you had your meetings, and now it's kind of shifted.	We didn't make many decisions for Brookland, we wanted to leave the leader some room. When it comes to specifics, like robotics and all the cool stuff that MSs get, we're pushing for a decision on what kind of position that leader will be.
Who's the day to day manager of Oyster's MS?	It's an AP. We're working with that AP now to model this.
	The Chancellor's focus is hiring internally. And the thing about hiring internally is they are already leaders in DCPS, and so if they come out and say they're looking for another job and they don't get it – they have to go back to their school community.
On the point of internal vs. external candidates, I see what they're saying, but I know DCPS does	We've had mixed results with external candidates. Sometimes watching external candidates going

national searches for stuff. They should consider recruiting people who they can point to other successes.	through our process is painful. They can't watch an instructional video and give feedback. We've had some amazing external candidates but it's been mixed.
Real quick: dual language, we're having issues with our principal not speaking Spanish so keep that in mind.	
That just worries me what you said – people from outside coming in. Do we need to look at ourselves?	We're one of the few urban districts with a very high bar on the instruction front. When you walk into a school with an instructional leader, it feels a lot different. It's not an easy thing to be an instructional coach. We can coach on the other parts.
One other thing that would help with not only marketing but choosing one of several local schools and pointing parents to what it's going to look like.	
Parent from DCI brought up a program called IB. And she thought MacFarland should put that in...	<p>This will be our last comment because it's 8:30. I saw it the same way – it is looked at as a proxy for quality. It's the quality of the educators that make it quality. IB has a little more structure and prescriptive curriculum so that can do a little bit. At the HS level is where everyone gets their love for IB. Often times the results speak for who they accept into the program. They're run beautifully. At the middle years and elementary years, those are the ones that are not so proven. We're also taking a pause to examine our IB programs to ensure those are working. Not all of our IB kids are graduating with an IB diploma.</p> <p>Feel free to email and ask us and we will bring that information or send it to you.</p>
	Closing