

## **Suggested Recommendations to Include in the Strategic Plan for Specialized Public Educational Opportunities**

### **12.19.16**

The following changes were suggested during our meetings of the Strategic Plan for Specialized Public Education Opportunities task force:

#### **Transportation**

- It was recognized that transportation to the school of choice is a significant barrier for school choice in Delaware.
- Overall, quality and availability of bus transportation was mentioned as a significant concern by members of the task force.
  - Bus companies experiencing hiring shortages was frequently pointed to as the cause of many of these issues.
- Transportation issues were also pointed to as a barrier to choice for the following groups, in particular:
  - Rural students
    - Bus transportation may not be available to choice school or would result in a very long bus ride.
  - Low income families
    - Transportation can be a barrier to low income families because these families may not have means to get the student to the hub stop or the school itself.
  - Inter- and Intra-district choice by traditional school districts
    - Currently, funding is only allocated to provide routes within existing feeders.
    - A student choosing into a traditional district would have to find transportation to the closest stop on an already existing route within that school's feeder pattern (no hub stops or stops outside of the district or school boundaries).
- Potential options to account for perceived inefficiencies in the system were offered:
  - Allowing the option to utilize public transportation to get students to their school.
  - Examination of the current overlap of routes (especially in New Castle County) by districts, charters, and vo-tech schools and encouraging sharing of resources.
  - Lack of parental confidence and satisfaction in school bus transportation has encouraged parents to provide transportation on their own.
- Aligns with PCG Recommendation: #8 "Transportation"

#### **Certificate of Necessity (CN) Process**

- Should the CN process take into account proposed and existing charters as part of the long-term enrollment projections for the school submitting the CN?
- Current CN process is not focused on programs - only on enrollment and physical space of the building.
- Aligns with PCG Recommendation: #1 "New School Approval Process"

### **Charter School Authorization Process**

- Discussion regarding the solicitation and consideration of feedback regarding community impact when authorizing a new charter school. Also discussions regarding the definition of “community impact.”
- General questions, such as “are opening schools in locations where they meet demand?” and “are these new schools fulfilling student needs?”
- Aligns with PCG Recommendation: #1 “New School Approval Process”

### **School Choice Process**

- In general, the group agreed the choice process in Delaware needed to be streamlined and centralized. To address these issues it was recommended that:
  - The state requires all LEAs to utilize Data Service Center’s online choice application portal.
    - Parents would then have one centralized method of applying to schools of choice.
    - All LEAs utilizing the same application process will result in more accurate, complete data on parental need and demand for new and existing school options.
  - An examination of the school choice timelines needs be conducted.
    - Some parents report being turned away when they wish to apply before the first Monday in November (when the school choice window officially opens)
    - Parents also have reported difficulty in registering their child at their feeder school in order to complete a choice application (this seemed to impact incoming Kindergarteners the most).
  - Parents need to be provided with relevant information on school choice options in order for them to make the best educational decision for their child.
- Aligns with PCG Recommendations: #2 “Communication and Marketing” and #6 “Disproportionate Choicing Out”

### **Vocational-Technical School Choice Process**

- Need to determine if additional vo-tech programs are needed at traditional comprehensive high schools in order to help those students who do not have access to a vo-tech high school experience.
- Determine if there is a sufficient number of seats currently available in existing vo-tech schools
- Determine if vo-tech schools are offering the needed mix of programs for Delaware’s students.
- Aligns with PCG Recommendation: #5 “Vocational Technical”

### **Traditional Districts Creating their own Programs (Magnet Schools)**

- Need to explore ways to eliminate barriers to incentivize districts to create new educational opportunities for students.
- It was determined that it is important for the state to encourage the development of informal and formal networks to encourage all types of schools (traditional, charter, and vo-tech) to share their knowledge and resources.
- Aligns with PCG Recommendation: #3 “Collaboration”

### **Admission Preferences**

- It was recommended that the work conducted by the Enrollment Preference Task Force (<http://udspace.udel.edu/handle/19716/17397>) be referenced in order to review and revise policies and practices that may contribute to marginalized access to schools of choice.
- Aligns with PCG Recommendation: #4 “Admission Preferences”

### **English Language Learners**

- It was recommended that a taskforce be created (or reference the work of an existing task force) in order to address the educational options of the growing number of English Language Learners in the state.
- Aligns with PCG Recommendation: #7 “English Language Learner Taskforce”