

Student Placement Equity and Diversity Impact Assessment: Final Report Summary

Accountability, Research, and Equity Division

November 2019

Introduction

During the summer of 2019, the Board of Education directed the Accountability, Research, and Equity (ARE) Division to conduct an Equity and Diversity Impact Assessment (EDIA) to identify and examine inequities in policies, practices, and procedures that impact student placement in MPS. This EDIA examined the extent to which MPS' polices and practices aligned to student placement support efforts to provide families with school choice and to desegregate schools across the District. ARE worked in partnership with the Engagement and External Relations (E&ER) Department to complete the Student Placement EDIA.

The Student Placement EDIA was guided by four key evaluation questions: 1) To what extent do the MPS values, expressed through policy commitments of desegregation and family choice, align to current placement procedures?; 2) How are schools' populations determined?; 3) What factors drive family requests?; and 4) How are students assigned?

Methods Overview



Families and Student

Surveys and group conversations examined families' experiences navigating the student placement and school request process.

- ✓ *Reached 1,653 families with children of color and American Indian children and 1,897 families with White children*

A survey was administered to explore what drives school requests.

- ✓ *Reached 112 sixth –eighth graders, and 50 ninth-twelfth graders.*



School Leaders and Staff

Group conversations examined school leaders' experiences navigating the student placement process.

- ✓ *Reached 73 school leaders*

Surveys were administered to examine experiences with and suggestions for improving the student placement and request process.

- ✓ *Reached 53 school leaders and 37 other school staff*
- ✓ *Reached 75 high-five teachers, and 68 eighth grade teachers*
- ✓ *Reached 49 family liaisons*



District Leaders and Staff

Group conversations examined district staffs' roles and experiences supporting the student placement and school request process.

- ✓ *Reached 7 district staff from the Office of Engagement and External Relations, Multilingual, Special Education, and Ombudsperson*

Group conversations examined experiences with and suggestions for improving the student placement and request process.

- ✓ *Reached five Associate Superintendents*



Existing/Archival Data

Existing data were analyzed, including

- ✓ *SY17-19 Student Placement Data*
- ✓ *SY17-19 Student Enrollment Data*
- ✓ *Racially Identifiable Schools List*
- ✓ *SY20 MPS Boundary Study Data*
- ✓ *Partial EDIA forms*

Overall Finding: MPS's current student placement system, including its policies and practices, does not effectively, nor consistently, support the district's goals of integrating schools and providing all families with access to meaningful school choice.

The EDIA findings fall into three categories related to student placement: (1) Systems and Policies, (2) Processes and Practices, and (3) Family Experience.

Systems and Policies



The current student placement system, which allows for families to participate in a school request process, creates unintentional competition among schools for students and resources, and the current integration strategy has minimal impact on desegregating school communities. As a result, the current system, along with external factors, leaves MPS schools largely segregated and does not provide all families with equal access to schools that meet their needs. In order to achieve MPS' overarching goals of choice and desegregation, MPS will need to make changes to student placement-related policies and work in partnership with the State to redefine its integration efforts.

Processes and Practices



The district's efforts to improve processes and practices are meant to both reduce challenges that surface and create an overall efficient system that supports all families. Based on the information gathered from our study, the district needs to improve both student placement practices and policies that govern student placement, otherwise, systemic issues will persist.

Family Experiences



The student placement process is meant to provide families with the option to enter into the MPS school system or request schools for their children that provide opportunities that are both academically challenging and supportive. Some families, however, face certain challenges navigating the process. Many families feel that they do not have the information and staff support that they need to fully understand how student placement works in MPS, or to effectively participate in the school request process. This is especially true for families who are traditionally underserved by the District, including families with children of color and American Indian children who are eligible for educational benefits (also known as free or reduced-priced lunch), who participate in the school request process at lower rates than families with White children who do not receive educational benefits. With the current system, policies, processes, and practices in place, not all families are able to gain access to schools that meet their children's needs.

EDIA Committee Recommendations

Based on these findings, the EDIA Committee recommends that MPS make both large structural changes, as well as specific changes in three areas:

- 1) *Accountability & Transparency*, for example simplifying the request/placement/registration process and more frequently reviewing placement policies;
- 2) *Communications & Outreach*, including hiring more staff and partnering with community-based organizations to better support families with the placement process; and
- 3) *School Climate & Cultural Competence*, for example implementing culturally welcoming practices at MPS buildings and getting feedback on the use of those practices from families and students. The full list of EDIA Committee recommendations is included in the final Student Placement EDIA report.