

High School Graduation Requirements Task Force Meeting #10
February 28, 2018 at 6:00 PM
441 4th Street NW, Room 1114
Washington, DC 20001

Minutes

Attendance:

HS Grad Task Force Members:

Present:

- **Erin Bibo** (Deputy Chief, College & Career Programs)
- **Tom Brown** (Executive Director, Training Grounds, Inc.)
- **Julie Camerata** (Parent, DC International, Executive Director, DC Special Education Cooperative)
- **Latisha Chisholm** (Special Education Coordinator, Anacostia High School)
- **Jerome Foster II** (Student, Washington Leadership Academy)
- **Cara Fuller** (Principal, Ballou STAY High School)
- **Cosby Hunt** (Teacher & Senior Officer of Teaching & Learning, Center for Inspired Teaching)
- **Dwan Jordon** (Senior Advisor, Friendship PCS)
- **Sandra Jowers-Barber** (Director, Division of Humanities, University of the District of Columbia College)
- **Kimberly Martin** (Principal, Wilson High School)
- **Sanjay Mitchell** (Director of College & Alumni Programs, Thurgood Marshall Academy PCHS)
- **Cathy Reilly** (Executive Director, Senior High Alliance of Parents, Principals and Educators)
- **Naomi Rubin DeVeaux** (Deputy Director, DC Public Charter School Board)
- **David Tansey** (Teacher, McKinley Technology High School)
- **Justin Tooley** (Special Assistant for Legislation & Policy, Office of the State Superintendent of Education)
- **Laura Wilson Phelan** (Task Force Co-Chair, State Board of Education, Ward 1)

Phone:

- **Carol Randolph** (Chief Operating Officer, DC Students Construction Trades Foundation)
- **Karla Reid-Witt** (Parent, Banneker High School)
- **Jimell Sanders** (Parent, Houston Elementary School)

Absent:

- **Markus Batchelor** (Task Force Co-Chair, State Board of Education, Ward 8)
- **Celine Fejeran** (Deputy Director, Raise DC)
- **Larry Greenhill, Sr.** (Vice President, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers)
- **Shenita Ray** (Director of Online Operations, Georgetown University School of Continuing Studies)

SBOE Staff:

- **John-Paul Hayworth**, Executive Director
- **Kit Faiella**, Policy Fellow
- **Dyvor Gibson**, Administrative Support Specialist
- **Paul Negron**, Public Affairs Specialist
- **Abby Ragan**, Policy Fellow
- **Matt Repka**, Policy Analyst
- **Maria Saliccioli**, Senior Policy Analyst

Executive Summary

Members of the High School Graduation Requirements Task Force (TF) reconvened for their tenth meeting. Ms. Wilson Phelan led the group in a discussion of proposed technical changes to the graduation requirements, after which the TF split into two groups to discuss the possibility of creating individualized learning plans and differentiated diplomas for District students. The TF then came back together, set a timeline for finishing their work, and identified preliminary steps in the path forward.

Ms. Wilson Phelan thanked TF members and adjourned until the eleventh meeting on March 14, 2018.

Welcome

Ms. Wilson Phelan welcomed TF members, sharing that Mr. Batchelor would not be in attendance for the meeting. She gave an overview of the agenda items for the evening: TF members would discuss proposed technical changes to the graduation requirements, consider individualized learning plans and different pathways to graduation, and make a plan for next steps.

Discussion of Proposed Requirements

Ms. Wilson Phelan called the TF's attention to the document she had requested they read prior to the meeting. This one-pager provided an overview of proposed changes to the requirements that Ms. Wilson Phelan believed were representative of general consensus from TF members. She asked the TF whether these changes did reflect consensus, adding that the TF still had the option to decline to make changes to the requirements.

Ms. Reilly said she had received a lot of feedback from the Senior High Alliance of Parents, Principals, and Educators (SHAPPE), chief among which was an admonition not to remove the US government requirement. She added that with regards to using tests to let students demonstrate math and world language mastery, the stakeholders with whom she spoke requested more specific guidance. They wanted to know whether students would receive credit for courses they placed out of, whether students would take a specific test to demonstrate mastery, and what students would need to do to receive credit. Ms. Reilly added that SHAPPE members favored allowing students to receive community service credit for internship hours, but they had questions about whether students could receive community service credit for paid internships.

SHAPPE members also agreed that teachers should not be responsible for recording all of this information, and they worried that adding flexibility to the community service requirement would exacerbate existing issues with cobbling together students' community service paperwork at the last minute.

Mr. Hunt said that he was initially supportive of the idea of increased social studies flexibility. However, Scott Abbott, Director of Social Studies at DC Public Schools (DCPS) shared that out of the city's 30,000 enrollments in social studies classes, 70% represented students who were fulfilling requirements, and the other 30% of enrollments are students in elective courses. This suggested to Mr. Hunt that there is already flexibility in the social studies requirements, and students are able to take the courses they are interested in. When students fail courses, they lose flexibility and can't take desired electives. He said that at the school level, schools could do a better job of showing students the course catalogue and talking them through their options. He believed that DCPS would be disadvantaged with greater flexibility to the social studies course catalogue, because courses were planned carefully, and if flexibility meant that world history or US government courses disappeared from schools, the work would be lost and knowledge gaps would result.

Mr. Tansey wondered, if only one world history course was required, whether schools would only teach the first half of the material, or whether they would compress everything from two semesters to one. Ms. Reilly said that these changes would result in huge knowledge gaps, and that it would be important to know why the courses were added before deciding to take them away. She added she had not heard any positive feedback about the proposed social studies changes. Dr. Jowers-Barber said she had been fielding emails and phone calls from historians and parents who were shocked and outraged about potential changes to the history requirements, particularly at this juncture in history. Mr. Hunt said he was glad the group had received a straw man set of requirements to consider, because they generated discussion. Dr. Jowers-Barber added that, given current issues within DCPS, it would be inadvisable to change social studies requirements – stakeholders are concerned that many students are not supported and are pushed through DC Schools. If the TF removed some of the courses students need to move forward, this would only exacerbate matters. She said that she had not heard support for the proposed changes to the social studies requirements, and people who have called her to complain are anxious that changes would cause students to miss out on valuable knowledge.

Ms. Reid-Witt said that she spoke to someone who said that her child's history classes weren't addressing current events, and even now, critical material must be glossed over due to time constraints. She didn't understand why public schools were unable to build a system that adequately prepared students, but she did not think the proposed changes would be an improvement; instead, she felt they would limit certain students. She suggested students should take at least world history, US history, and an elective that would develop knowledge of current events.

Mr. Mitchell agreed with leaving the social studies requirements as they currently stand; none of his colleagues supported the proposed changes, telling him that they are already pressed for time to teach history. Dr. Bibo said there were four things that she felt DCPS could support as-is, because they had been thoroughly discussed. However, from her perspective, the proposed draft featured additional changes that appeared to come from nowhere. She said that she had been

engaging her team at DCPS and asked if it would be possible to discuss some issues that had not been thoroughly vetted. She then added that if the TF needed to vote on approving or rejecting this set of changes, she would have to vote no on behalf of DCPS.

Dr. Bibo said that she approved requiring that both credits of world language would be in the same language, and she added that DCPS had gone on the record in support of this change. She was also in support of allowing students to attain some community service hours through an approved internship, but she concurred with Ms. Reilly's assertion that the language would need to be more detailed; she would like to know whether the hours could be paid, and she would want to know what constitutes an approved internship. She was glad to see that there were no changes to the number of required credits in the core four subjects (English, math, science, and social studies), adding that this is essential to ensuring students meet colleges' entry qualifications. She did not support the language for giving credit to students who demonstrated mastery through middle school work – while she was not necessarily opposed to the idea, she would want to make sure she knew what the group was thinking through.

Dr. Bibo's largest areas for objection were allowing students to earn physical education (PE) credit through participation on team sports and the changes to the social studies course requirements. She believed the social studies changes were a departure from the standards SBOE had approved, and it would move DC away from other states' decision to place more of a premium on history education. Scott Abbott had given Dr. Bibo some resources that she offered to share with the SBOE. She asked for further discussion on the proposed PE policy, noting that while she may have missed discussion on the matter, she had not seen it in either of the straw man documents.

Ms. Camerata said she ran two focus groups on the one-pager and wanted to share comments. She spoke with special education directors at charter local education agencies (LEAs) and the state advisory panel for special education, which is largely comprised of parents of students with disabilities. Both groups strongly supported broadening the world language requirement, favoring the idea of ensuring it could include coding and sign language. Both sets of focus group participants supported the idea of creating a few different diplomas - whether there was one core diploma and an elevated diploma, or, as one group suggested, creating an elevated diploma that required additional hours of community service. Regardless, the group supported the additional community service flexibility. Ms. Wilson Phelan said that she thought the special education community did not want the TF to require that students take same language for both years, and Ms. Camerata said that while the community agreed that if some students could take two different languages, that would be helpful, but they were also supportive of additional flexibility around what constitutes a world language. This would allow schools to support some students better.

Ms. Chisholm talked to her colleagues, and they voiced support for requiring two years of the same language and offering credit based on middle school mastery of math or a world language. Her colleagues felt strongly that since DC schools already offer elective PE credits that do not fulfill the physical education requirement, these courses, such as swimming and dance, should meet the diploma requirement if sports team participation did. She reached out to history teachers for feedback on the change to the social studies requirements, and she heard consensus that US government must be required. However, these teachers also supported removing DC

History from the high school requirements, telling her that most states teach their local history in elementary or middle school. Her colleagues suggested looking to other states to think about potential models for state history instruction.

Dr. Jowers Barber said that at UDC, they teach DC history, which few other institutions do. She added that these students love the class, but they frequently express annoyance at the fact that the material is new to them, saying they did not cover this material in high school.

Ms. Rubin DeVeaux shared feedback from her colleagues at the Public Charter School Board (PCSB), noting that the input was from an authorizer perspective and focused on the subjects for which schools most frequently request waivers. PCSB said that because of the frequency of student transfer across LEAs, it would be necessary to maintain flexibility in the world language requirement; she felt that students would be penalized if they started Spanish at one school and their new school only offered French, for example. She added that some students struggle with languages, and they should not be punished if they are unable to pass two consecutive courses in the same language. For these reasons, she did not want to change the language requirement. Ms. Rubin DeVeaux added that students need four high school math credits for college admissions, so advanced students who place out of algebra should still have to take four years of math. She said that this is consistent with other states' practices for advanced math students.

She wondered what the final community service reflection activity would look like; she was concerned about who would monitor the reflection, which she said many schools already require, and she thought it would add a level of bureaucracy. She loved the idea of an internship for community service credit, saying that students often drop out because they need to work, and this would help with that issue.

Ms. Rubin DeVeaux moved on to PE – she liked the proposed change, saying that many schools request waivers to allow PE credit for sports team participation. She said that students should take US history, world history, and US government to stay on track to take AP US History, and she wanted to make sure any changes to the social studies requirements would still facilitate participation in AP US History. She liked the idea of flexibility for students who are not on an AP track but need time to pursue their interests. She said that some schools ask the PCSB to waive out of DC History and have suggested combining it with AP US History, teaching units on DC after the AP test. She said that social studies departments have trouble scheduling DC History, since it is only one semester long.

Mr. Tooley said that with respect to allowing students to place into higher math courses based on mastery, it was important to flesh out that it is a pathway to higher-level math. Referring to community service, he urged the group to remember that the city must keep records on service hours, because there was significant debate about whether students were actually completing 100 hours of service. Including middle school hours could add to these issues. He thought LEAs should determine what qualifies as an approved internship, and he believed that requiring a reflection was outside of the scope of high school graduation requirements. He concluded by saying that the TF should consider what constitutes a sports team before giving PE credit for sports participation – should the teams be DC teams, and would activities such as marching band or cheerleading count? He said that the requirement should be very clear.

Mr. Tansey said that the history department at McKinley Tech had weighed in and agreed with the feedback others had shared. He added that he had also spoken to the math and language departments, and the language teachers were particularly interested in seeing whether allowing students to place out of lower-level language classes would encourage students to take advanced Spanish or whether students would simply place out of the language requirement sooner and take fewer language classes. He said some teachers raised arguments in favor of using world language mastery to provide credit and others raised arguments in favor of using mastery to simply place into higher level-courses. Teachers were excited about the possibility of teaching more advanced world language courses if students placed into higher-level courses but still needed to take two language credits in high school. However, some teachers said that while language mastery should facilitate students taking more advanced language courses, students should not be obligated to do so. Math teachers had more reservations, since they were concerned about how rigorous a mastery test would be. While they were excited about the possibility of exempting kids from re-taking courses where they already knew the content, particularly at a technical school like McKinley Tech, they were worried that this practice would cheapen qualifications for genuine mastery of a course. The content covered in Algebra I is broader now than it was before, because of the common core state standards, so teachers cautioned Mr. Tansey that it would be important to ensure that any test designed to assess Algebra I mastery was high quality.

Mr. Mitchell said that many high schools are becoming more competitive, because the admissions landscape is generally more competitive. He was concerned about requiring two years of the same language in high school, because colleges want students to take two credits of the same language. Students who start Spanish in high school and have to take two credits, even though they don't like it, would arguably then start studying a new language in college without having had a chance to try that language in high school. He was particularly worried about students who had been supported by individualized education programs (IEPs) or [504 plans](#), because these supports would not follow students to college.

Mr. Mitchell added that, if the District allows students to receive credit for Algebra I, his colleagues at Thurgood Marshall Academy (TMA) believe that it will be different to measure mathematics mastery. They were unsure as to whether middle school grades should be accepted by high schools, and they wondered if they'd have the flexibility to create their own exam to see how much students know or whether the requirements would create a state-mandated test with cutoff scores that all schools would need to use to advance students from one course to another. He wondered what would happen to students at small schools that may not offer math courses after Calculus AB, saying that this could complicate their schedules for senior year. He noted that seniors cannot afford to have holes in their schedules, because colleges want to see that students have a full course load. At small schools, A/B Calculus could be the highest math offered - if they're waived through and take it junior year, what happens with their flexibility senior year, particularly if the school doesn't allow for a half-day schedule or other electives. Mr. Mitchell said he understood that TMA may differ from other schools, but he was concerned about choice, because he felt that students would enter a track when they start 9th grade, and they would be unable to change their track as a result of these changes.

Ms. Martin said she hoped students would use the new flexibility to take high-level classes. Her SPED department was hoping that the requirements would offer students to take two years of

two different languages - she had observed her American Sign Language (ASL) teacher, and she noted there were 5 seniors taking ASL one and two simultaneously to complete their graduation requirements. These students had taken one year of a romance language but had failed the second, and they were forced to start over. TF members informed Ms. Martin that the current policy did not require two years of the same language, but Ms. Martin responded that [Aspen](#) was not set up to accept credit for two different languages. She asked that the requirements stay as they are and asked if there was not already a waiver in place that schools could use for credit flexibility. Ms. Wilson Phelan explained that the existing waiver, provided through the work of the competency-based education (CBE) task force, applies to courses, not to single students - one student cannot currently demonstrate mastery and waive out of a required class as a result.

Ms. Martin added that her counselors were not uniformly pleased with the proposed change to the community service requirements – they wanted to know the criteria for the reflection activity, when students would do it, and who would review them. They did not support the idea of middle school community service hours counting toward the high school requirements, saying that if the city truly believes in the importance of community service, it should be done in high school. Social studies teachers were very upset about the proposal to eliminate the US government requirement change and did not support the change. PE teachers did not want to permit sports to count for PE credit, but instructors who did not teach PE thought it would be a good idea. The athletic director was concerned – Wilson has 46 clubs and sports teams, and he wondered whether something like equestrian club would count for PE credit, since it is not a sport, but it is a physical activity. He and Ms. Martin wondered if DC wanted to have these fights with wealthy, well-connected parents; Ms. Martin added that she personally did not want to have these conversations.

Mr. Foster II said that he objected to the lack of computer science principles in the new requirements – he added that computers are not required to teach computer science, and it would not be a significant burden to ask schools to purchase laptops. He expressed a belief that since computer science is growing as a field, if the city supports career readiness, it must prepare students for the jobs that will be available. He also suggested green-lighting specific sports to fulfill the PE requirement, which he felt would minimize debate.

Ms. Sanders said that the feedback from the Deanwood community was similar to what her colleagues had shared – residents were concerned that work hours would not count toward the community service requirement, because many students in ward 7 need to work, and they have a hard time fulfilling the 100 hours. Since many students also need to care for their siblings, an alternative to community service would be welcome. She also heard concerns about decreasing social studies courses, but there was consensus that DC History should be a middle school course and that other courses should be taught in high school. People wanted two years of the same language. Ms. Sanders said that someone asked about whether DC could allow coding classes as a substitute for language, but the community decided that coding languages evolve quickly, so it shouldn't be a cornerstone of the education the way a foreign language, including ASL, could be.

Ms. Wilson Phelan suggested removing things from the list of proposed changes, based on what she had heard. She noted that any changes should represent general consensus, so changes may not represent each person's views about each subject. She heard that the consensus was to leave social studies alone - there were voices to the contrary and she acknowledged them, but she

noted that most people did not want to make any changes. She referenced Ms. Reilly's earlier question about what to do with non-consensus opinions, offering that they could be converted into a report that would be shared with education stakeholders. Ms. Wilson Phelan then said that, per the TF members, it might not be wise to require a final reflection activity on community service. To Ms. Rubin DeVeaux's earlier point, she said LEAs could decide whether they wanted to add a community service reflection to their requirements. Ms. Wilson Phelan noted she had also heard debate over allowing middle school community service hours to count toward the 100 required hours, and she thought TF members wanted to keep the definition of a qualifying internship intentionally broad. She said that TF members had suggested waivers for students who have special needs and are not being supported well, and she supported that idea. She had heard general consensus around requiring two years of the same world language, but she thought TF members had suggested creating a process to allow students to opt out of that requirement as needed. Finally, she said she had heard general consensus around allowing students to demonstrate mastery of math and world language, but that students should have to take four math courses in high school, regardless of whether they placed into higher-level math courses.

Dr. Bibo asked Ms. Wilson Phelan to walk through the difference between the proposed policy around mastery place-outs and the CBE waiver. Ms. Wilson Phelan explained that the waiver created by the CBE task force lets schools waive a course for a group of students. The proposed waiver, however, would create a process that would allow individual students to demonstrate mastery. Dr. Bibo noted that she didn't feel comfortable with the change. Ms. Camerata said she would advocate for students with disabilities to receive waiver opportunities for Algebra II. Mr. Tansey said that some of the McKinley Tech enter 9th grade with advanced math knowledge, and he was concerned about the school's capacity to provide four years of math for students who placed into higher math and needed to take more math courses at the school. He explained that McKinley Tech has freshmen who are taking Algebra II, and they could still take statistics, but if they take AP Calculus junior year, it is tough to require that they take yet another math course their fourth year of high school. He wanted the group to weigh in on this phenomenon, noting that, at least at his school, this was a problem that would need to be solved.

Ms. Chisholm did not agree with the suggestion that SPED students should waive out of required courses. She said that rather than offering waivers, the TF should just set an expectation that is reasonable for all students. She added that if the TF wants to allow students to take two different languages, they should add that into the requirements rather than letting some students waive out of it, knowing that most students would still choose to complete two years of the same language. Ms. Chisholm added that waivers add confusion about what is truly required, what the burden of proof is for a SPED student to qualify for a waiver, and who can afford an attorney who can help secure a waiver. She said that whatever flexibility is written into the requirements should apply to all students.

Ms. Reilly said that the TF did not yet have the language or details right – she suggested that perhaps the changes that were identified were just concepts, and the TF could decide to explore certain concepts further. Ms. Wilson Phelan agreed with this statement, adding that she was most comfortable identifying the proposed changes as concepts and committing to dive further into details later. She added that OSSE would flesh out the changes regardless of the language the TF decided on.

Ms. Rubin DeVeaux asked whether allowing students to demonstrate mastery meant they would receive credit or not. She provided an anecdote – a student who took an AP language course in 8th grade entered a charter high school, and while the student did not have any language credits, they were waived from taking an entry level language course. She suggested that students who demonstrate math mastery should not have to retake courses, but they should not receive credit, either. She added that PCSB has interpreted the list of technical changes to mean that students would receive waivers out of mastered courses, rather than credit. She added that the suggested changes were not written as clearly as Ms. Wilson Phelan may have thought they were.

Ms. Camerata agreed with Ms. Chisholm's assertion that flexibility is good for all kids who need it; she added that if others are interested in creating flexibility that is not specific to SPED students, she was in favor of that idea, but at minimum she wanted to guarantee flexibility for students who need it.

Ms. Wilson Phelan said that she had not heard consensus around letting sports team participation fulfill PE credits and wasn't sure whether the TF should move forward with that proposal or not. She said that without consensus, she would be inclined not to make a change. Dr. Bibo said that she was interested in cross-walking the academic standards SBOE had approved with the proposed requirements. Her colleagues at DCPS had questions about whether the proposed changes contradicted the state's PE standards, and they wondered to what extent all proposed changes would be cross-walked with the required standards. Ms. Wilson Phelan said that changing the PE requirements was not a point of consensus, so it would not be necessary to check the requirements. Dr. Bibo said she had misunderstood Ms. Wilson Phelan and that she was fine with leaving the PE requirements as they stood. Ms. Reilly asked what changes would be made, given that so many technical changes had been controversial with the group and would not be enacted. Ms. Wilson Phelan said she heard that the language requirements should not change, and that she had heard consensus around figuring out what mastery place-outs should look like. She also heard consensus on allowing internships to qualify for community service hours.

Ms. Rubin DeVeaux asked why changes to whether sports participation would let students opt out of PE could not be decided at the LEA level, rather than at the state level. Ms. Reilly said that waivers currently exist for students who need them, and Ms. Wilson Phelan asked Ms. Rubin DeVeaux why this was not an adequate solution. Ms. Rubin DeVeaux said she did not like waivers and that charters exist to provide different options - when decisions could be made at DCPS or Friendship or TMA, they should be made at the school level, as long as they do not lower the standards. She suggested LEAs could address the requirements more creatively than the TF could.

Ms. Chisholm said schools could decide which elective PE courses could count toward the requirement, and Ms. Rubin DeVeaux said not all charters have elective courses that could replace PE courses. Ms. Reilly asked if a course counts as a PE credit at TMA, for example, should another LEA accept the course? She said that is currently a problem with transfers across LEAs. Ms. Chisholm said that classes always count as electives across LEAs, but they might count in a different category. She supported a broader definition of PE – not one that was set by each LEA, but a definition that could encompass all LEAs' standards. Ms. Reilly said this

definition would have to be aligned with existing courses. Ms. Wilson Phelan said she thought both TF members were agreeing with Ms. Rubin DeVeaux's proposal to leave PE credit to individual LEAs. Ms. Reilly asked how this change would work with transfers. She also said that what Ms. Rubin DeVeaux proposed was not Ms. Chisholm had said, and Ms. Chisholm agreed. Ms. Chisholm said she was asking specifically about PE electives that could count toward the PE requirement, which would let charter school students who take PE electives receive PE credit at DCPS. Ms. Rubin DeVeaux said that DCPS' relatively strict PE requirement was set at the LEA level, not at the state level. Ms. Chisholm asked if the TF could write something to ask for more flexibility on PE.

Mr. Brown said that each LEA should decide what constitutes PE. He asked whether the TF could make an argument that this is a significant issue, because the charter sector educates so many students. He added that at KIPP, schools had struggled to provide equal experiences for students who transferred between the charter and public sectors. He wanted the TF's recommendations to challenge the system to work more unilaterally. Ms. Wilson Phelan said this was the genesis of the idea of a common course catalogue, but when Ms. Rubin DeVeaux looked into the issue of whether students had difficulty transferring credits, she found that it was a minimal issue. Ms. Chisholm asked which LEAs Ms. Rubin DeVeaux had examined to determine that credit transfer was a minimal issue. Ms. Rubin DeVeaux said that PCSB's transcript expert can work with DCPS' expert, and they can resolve issues across sectors quickly. She said the problem was largely a communication issue. She added that there is flexibility on how DCPS and charters interpret courses, and this needs to be massaged. Dr. Bibo said that there is an implementation solution, rather than a policy fix, to problems with transfer credits. She added that what has been working to pull PCSB and DCPS staff together to resolve existing transcript issues.

Ms. Wilson Phelan brought the conversation back to PE credits, and said that this issue might not be at the core of equity issues related to education, so the TF could move forward and include its thinking around this issue in its final report. She asked that the TF move forward and agree to work on language for course mastery and allowing students to receive 50% of their community service hours through a qualifying internship, and then move to the next topic. Ms. Wilson Phelan said that the next steps would entail coming back together with more specific language that would be developed via email or a phone call, rather than spending more in-person time hashing out specific language. Ms. Reilly clarified that the idea to require two years of the same language would not move forward. Dr. Bibo encouraged spending more face time parsing specific language out, and Mr. Tooley agreed. Ms. Wilson Phelan suggested developing a subcommittee for those who are passionate about the issue, which Dr. Bibo and Mr. Tooley felt would be a satisfactory solution.

3rd Grade Plans and Pathways

Ms. Wilson Phelan said it was important to figure out how much longer the TF would continue to meet, adding that attendance was becoming an increasingly significant challenge. She then proposed dividing the room in half to discuss 3rd grade plans and multiple pathways to graduation, including differentiated diplomas. She cautioned the TF not to get caught up on 3rd grade – instead, they should think about these plans as something that would start prior to 9th

grade and would chart a course forward so that students, their parents, and their teachers would have consensus on what the student would need to do to graduate on time. Ms. Wilson Phelan added that SBOE staff had gathered resources on other states' practices that she could share, including the one-pager she had previously shared on Indiana's graduation requirements. This could serve as a guiding document, but DC's path forward could look quite different. She noted that Anne Herr from FOCUS DC had been invited to attend the meeting and would weigh in from the charter sector perspective.

Ms. Wilson Phelan then said that ESSA does not allow states to offer lower diplomas to some students, so SBOE investigated how Indiana had created separate diplomas. They made the case that each of their options fall under the umbrella of a single diploma, but they have distinctions between them; their general diploma is just a different gradation. Pointing to the one-pager, Ms. Wilson Phelan pointed TF members' attention toward the pros and cons for offering a single diploma vs. multiple distinctions.

Mr. Tooley asked if this was part of a regulatory package, and Ms. Wilson Phelan said yes, but this could also be report language - something that accompanies the recommendations and indicates the task force's intentions if we are not able to get to regulatory recommendations. TF members split into two groups to discuss the two ideas.

Plan to Move Forward

Mr. Hunt spoke on behalf of the group discussing multiple diplomas. Group members were not in favor of a "diploma of distinction" because it would automatically make the existing diploma the lesser option. They had discussed the fact that kids who drop out of District schools do so because they are not being served well, due to a lack of options, poor fit, or lack of flexibility. Group members could not zero in on the root cause in the time they had together. They also determined that a certificate of completion for students with special needs is a disgrace and a human rights violation. Dr. Jowers-Barber spoke on behalf of the group that was weighing 3rd grade plans. Group members observed that institutions know they aren't preparing students, and the result is unprepared graduates. Teachers in the group offered personal anecdotes to illustrate this perception, saying that they had all been forced to teach at a level that was not accessible for their students. Dr. Jowers-Barber said the District needs to shift the way it thinks about these students – acknowledging, for example, that they have obligations like dropping siblings off at school and working – while also noting that teachers receive students and are not able to provide the support they need. The group decided that there must be a conversation that outlines a path forward, because high schools cannot continue to take unprepared students. Teachers are unable to bring many students up to speed, and there are insufficient support services; TF members need to identify solutions to address these issues.

Ms. Wilson Phelan suggested establishing two working groups: 3rd grade plans and different diplomas. She asked that the group take its broad ideas and work them into a set of recommendations. She suggested that the working groups would pick up where these conversations had left off, cautioning group members to stay focused on policy implications rather than on personal anecdotes. As a proposed schedule, Ms. Wilson Phelan said that it might make sense for the TF to convene its last whole-group meeting at the end of March and

otherwise follow up through phone calls and emails. She acknowledged how tricky it is to iterate remotely, adding that in the past, only a few TF members have weighed in via email and Google documents. She expressed a need to balance meeting fatigue with the fact that in-person meetings do produce better ideas. She asked the group for consensus on when to end the regularly scheduled meetings.

Mr. Tansey suggested combining the two ideas – the TF could set a deadline on when each working group should bring something mature back to the table, but to achieve this goal, the entire TF should meet again. He expressed a desire to produce recommendations before the end of the school year, and Ms. Wilson Phelan agreed. Ms. Reilly said the TF needed to find out whether its proposed changes would connect with stakeholders and ascertain whether the TF was being too ambitious with its goals. Ms. Chisholm proposed meeting through April in working groups, with a goal of finalizing recommendations by the end of April. She shared a belief that recommendations would lose their potential to make a positive impact after April. Mr. Mitchell supported the idea of meeting through April, but asked if some of the remaining meetings could be devoted to full-group discussion rather than small-group work, and others were in favor of this idea.

Ms. Reilly asked when the work would go to the public, and Ms. Wilson Phelan said community outreach would take place between meetings. She added that the recommendations would be up for public comment, which would be part of the public engagement process. Ms. Reilly asked when working group members would hear what other groups were doing, and Ms. Wilson Phelan said she would think about a process for this, which could include reserving the end of each meeting to let group members share out. Ms. Chisholm asked whether she was correct that outside working groups would meet about mastery language and community service language, and in-person meetings would focus on 3rd grade plans and pathways; Ms. Wilson Phelan said that this was the case. Ms. Rubin DeVaux then said that she didn't think two more in-person meetings reserved for whole-group discussion would advance the conversation. Mr. Hunt said he would email Ms. Wilson Phelan with suggestions for how to use the remaining meetings.

Mr. Brown said he was dismayed to think about how the valuable contributions at the table would not go beyond the room, because they would not be integrated into the final recommendations. He lauded his colleagues' thoughts and said they should be shared. Ms. Reilly said the discussion group she had participated in did want to make decisions, but they were unsure about whether or not they would improve student outcomes. Ms. Herr said she was not sure whether the TF was the right set of people to discuss making additional decisions, including implementing multiple pathways to graduation. She added that while the conversation about pathways extends beyond high school, the TF members were exclusively high school focused. She suggested adding middle school stakeholders to the conversation. Dr. Jowers-Barber said that in her discussion group, Mr. Tansey had recommended that the pathways conversation spin off into a separate task force.

Ms. Wilson Phelan said that the TF would meet as a whole group through the end of April to flesh out recommendations, which might entail writing reports that captured ideas for improving education in the District and might mean making recommendations for the requirements. She said she would email the TF about the content of the next meeting, but it would likely not center around working groups – instead, she said it would likely focus on pathways to increase

preparedness, and they would jettison the conversation about multiple diplomas. Mr. Hunt suggested that TF members should weigh in via email if they had different ideas about the content of the next meeting. Several TF members disagreed, saying they wanted to revisit the conversation about multiple diplomas. Ms. Wilson Phelan acknowledged this preference. She then asked for TF members to volunteer to work on finalizing the technical changes to the graduation requirements, requesting that they report to the rest of the TF at the next meeting.

Closing

Ms. Wilson Phelan thanked the TF for their work and adjourned the meeting. The TF will reconvene on March 14, 2018, from 6:00 – 8:00 PM.