



**To:** Dr. Esther Omogbehin, Regional Superintendent  
Margaret Calvert, Regional Superintendent  
**From:** Judy Brennan, Director, Enrollment and Transfer  
**Date:** July 6, 2022  
**Subject:** Southeast Guiding Coalition Phase 2 Process Review

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### **Background**

The Southeast Guiding Coalition (SEGC) was formed in Spring 2020 to review and advise on proposals for attendance boundary, grade configuration and special program changes. Membership consisted of parents, community members, teachers, students and principals representing more than twenty southeast school communities.

Their work was divided into two phases: Phase 1 happened from Fall 2020-Winter 2021, and resulted in recommendations for the Kellogg MS feeder pattern and Spanish dual language immersion program. Phase 2 occurred from Spring 2021-Spring 2022 and resulted in recommendations for the Harrison Park MS feeder pattern, the future location of Harrison Park K-5 and Creative Science Schools, boundary changes to increase enrollment at Lane MS and several small K-5 schools, and consolidation and relocation of Chinese and Spanish dual language immersion programs. Due to health and safety protocols, all SEGC meetings were virtual.

The Board of Education concluded Phase 2 decisions on May 24, 2022. In June 2022, SEGC members were invited to provide feedback on the Phase 2 process. We committed to sharing the input broadly with PPS leaders to help identify strengths and design improvements before launching the next phase of district-wide enrollment and program balancing. Input could be submitted in writing or by attending a final virtual meeting, and focused on four areas:

- **Process Reflection:** Considering the intended and actual outcomes of the process, what do you think worked well and what could have been improved?
- **Racial Equity Focus:** Think of an experience when you felt that racial equity was the central focus. What made this example stand out to you? How did your own racial identity impact your SEGC experience?
- **Improving the next process:** What could we do differently in future enrollment balancing to maintain greater focus on racial equity? What advice would you give to future volunteers?
- **Next Steps:** What questions do you have, or are you hearing from your community about implementation?

This memo summarizes the more than eighty comments received by SEGC members about the Phase 2 process. Full text of all comments is found [here](#).

### **General Process Reflections**

The most common feedback was about the scope and sequence of Phase 2, as captured in these comments:



“All SE schools should have been included. Both to increase positive outcomes in the work, but also the optics of leaving out the wealthiest schools was horrible, regardless of what intention the Board had for doing so.”

“Trying to tackle too many things at once and that caused too many problems at once. Boundary and programs are too much.”

Additionally, members felt that early work done in Phase 1 helped to familiarize the coalition with schools and understand RESJ impacts, but was less effective in Phase 2, resulting in particular challenges for the members who joined after Phase 1. As one member wrote, “Coming in the middle was a big deal.”

SEGC member composition and roles were not clear and representative, leading one member to ask, “did the reps reflect the community they were centering?” One member felt that “Community should have been more involved in all aspects in ALL schools.”

While there was appreciation for staff efforts, there were also suggestions for improvement regarding materials and proposals:

“Clear and consistent documentation for review. Each scenario should have the same amount of information provided for analysis.”

“The way potential scenarios were dropped on communities without context only increased negative reactions and put groups into the mindset of needing to fight.”

“Develop profiles of all the involved schools beyond numbers and percentages of the student body...Schools all have things that make them, and their community, unique. Would help members to get to know the schools they are unfamiliar with.”

### **Racial Equity Reflections**

The June 9 virtual debrief session was attended by only five members, with the fifth member joining just as the meeting was wrapping up. The other four members were all people of color, which provided a rare opportunity for dialogue that centered BIPOC voices. One member noted, “Of all the people, the BIPOC came tonight, in part because of the impact it has on our community.”

The BIPOC members at the debrief expressed a range of feelings about their Phase 2 experiences:

“I thought it was challenging to be a person of color on this committee. There were pivotal moments when it felt like the experience was centered in whiteness. Where data overtook perspective. People felt bad about what was happening to communities of color, but were detached and able to move on.”

“I felt listened to and taken seriously. Dr. O visiting Woodstock was a highlight. The community appreciated her coming and really listening.”

“I felt like there was a lot of support from PPS and BRIC to speak and be heard, but there was pushback from SEGC members.”

“Overall, I feel I was allowed to speak my truth. I was quiet a lot of the time, but space was given, and respect. If I felt upset or frustrated, it was not because I am Latina.”



Across the member comments there was consensus that the Phase 2 process disproportionately impacted schools with concentrations of students of color. Despite some strengths there were concerns that the process was not designed to effectively engage BIPOC families:

“Strength: Meeting people, hearing their stories. Main question: Why are all the schools with people of color being picked on?”

“The process was centered in whiteness. There was a disconnect with communities of color. “People's stories and feedback were disregarded.”

“Strength: Shanice's targeted outreach to specific families, really centering Black and Native American families.”

“As an Asian person it felt very triggering when talking about moving boundaries; it felt like they were saying we were going to be homeless.”

“Different for those who do not speak English fluently. Could have been done differently. Could have been other opportunities for connecting with families. Example: receive a lot of texts from schools, can overlook messages as just one more. In the BIPOC Communities those personal connections would have been better than connecting virtually.”

### **Feedback to improve the next process**

Members provided numerous suggestions to improve the next enrollment and program balancing process. Prominent themes were to have a shorter, more targeted process with improved community connections and address coalition roles and transparency.

Shorter, targeted process suggestions:

“Limit the options for community input. There were too many scenarios and the work was overwhelming. Offer fewer scenarios and more explicit parameters.”

“Look at the programs where BIPOC and students of color participate and center those programs.”

“Willingness to consider and courage to do a completely different (and much shorter) process.”

“If the work is to be centered on BIPOC/people of color, the group should be comprised entirely of people who identify as BIPOC/people of color.”

“Shorten the process! Gather feedback from prioritized, historically underserved communities in a couple of rounds. Then as a district leadership make the decision based on that.”

Suggestions to improve community connections:

“A lot of Native people here don't trust and won't open up to people. If someone who was trusted was trained in the statistics, etc. it would be better.”

“Paying school site staff and school based community advocates with relationships to the families to do the targeted outreach.”

“Go and visit the community instead of making them come to us.”



“If possible, provide meetings in the different target languages in order to facilitate a more friendly environment for families that speak other languages.”

“Kids need to be heard, as well.”

Regarding any future coalitions, one member stated that “the process would be better if all school reps were vetted to make sure they supported the whole community and not just some families,” while another suggested “clarity on voting, representation, roles and responsibilities with the guiding coalition.” Additionally, members provided words of advice for future volunteers:

“Constantly check in with your biases. Ask “is this coming from fear of change or personal bias?”

“It was really hard work. It took commitment to let go of what we personally wanted in this process.”

“Be prepared for this to be a complete distraction for staff all year. Tend to adult social emotional needs but be firm that the focus needs to remain on teaching and learning.”

“Be transparent with families in regard to your role and work with the guiding coalition.”

“Make a commitment to hear what your community has to say, and be prepared to have it be something you didn't expect. Be willing to hear everything. Hear what is working and what is not; make safe spaces to hear and to advocate for something.”

“You will get less gray hairs in the long run if you don't do it (joking)”

### **Outstanding questions and concerns**

SEGC members noted that they are hearing questions about high school boundaries and addressing other PPS K-8 schools, and wondered “What is the future plan for schools remaining under enrolled?”. They also raised questions about implementation, including how the ten FTE allocated to SE schools will be used each year and the legacy policy. Please note that at the same time members were providing input, families were receiving letters detailing impacts for their students

Members also had comments regarding the up to one year delay for changes to the Lent English program, appreciating “that Lent gets to shape part of the decision” while wondering “Why was there a delay allowed for only one community?”

### **Next steps**

I look forward to receiving your feedback. Once all your questions are answered, I hope you will share this information with other senior leaders, so that future enrollment and program balancing processes can be infused with the wisdom of the Southeast Guiding Coalition

cc: SEGC members and support staff