



Update on ACCESS Decision Process

Dear ACCESS Academy Community,

I understand this has been an agonizing process for all of you while we explore options for a new home for ACCESS Academy. This is obviously not our intent and I am sure it is difficult to standby while a completely new leadership team gets up to speed about the evolution of this program and the complex issue we are currently faced with as a result of our middle school reconfiguration. Balancing the work of doing our research in time to meet critical deadlines while keeping you all informed along the way has been a great challenge. Stephanie Cameron, our Senior Director of Communications and Public Engagement, and I continue to work on improving our communications. Please know, we are committed to keeping you informed and we continue to welcome and value your feedback.

This past week as I am finalizing my recommendation to the Superintendent, we have heard from many of you requesting more info about our process and some of the constraints we are working with. I hope this message will fill in some of the gaps and as soon as the Superintendent makes his final decision, we will share broadly.

After being assigned by the Superintendent to address the need to find a home for ACCESS in March, I established a core team from the district office. Given the very compressed time frame and history of options that had already fallen through, we felt it was necessary for this team to consist of high-level leaders with the authority and expertise to make things happen quickly. Members of this team include:

- Stephanie Soden, Chief of Staff
- Stephanie Cameron, Senior Director of Communications and Public Engagement
- Sara King, Director of Planning and Asset and Property Management
- Karl Logan, Senior Director of Grant / Jefferson Cluster
- Andrew Johnson, Academic Programs Administrator - Talented And Gifted
- Brian Baker, Senior Legal Counsel

Our next step was to establish an Advisory Group tasked with advising the leadership team in identifying a home for the program. With limited time, we agreed to focus on the short-term decision first and defined this as the start of the 2018-19 school year for a duration of we want to be no longer than 3 years. The Advisory Group was also established with a goal to assist with confirming the vision of the program and to work toward a long-term solution. This group was asked to help with input on a variety of factors involved in making a final decision including: facility capabilities, boundaries, programmatic and staffing needs and requirements for a successful implementation.

The Advisory Group includes:

School/Academy

Anh Nguyen-Johnson
Dr. Alfonso Garcia Arriola
Jeremy Johnson
Brigid Ohagan

Parents / Family representatives

Jennifer Ellis, PTA President
Grace Groom
Andrea Paluso
Scholle McFarland
Maxine Dexter
Kristi Byfield
Nicole Iroz-Elardo

The leadership team set forth criteria for suitable options and engaged the Advisory Group. This is an important step in the process and I want you all to know, we had a lot of discussion before landing on the final criteria for our short-term decision. We were thoughtful about this and where the district landed is:

- Must not displace other programs or student populations
- Space requirements must accommodate current enrollment levels
- Solution must maintain or improve current levels of service. If the short-term solution is temporary (as expected it will be), district commits to a timeline and process for outlining a long-term plan.
- Must be able to clearly identify how the location is able to serve currently and historically underserved students and in the long-term identify how to close the opportunity gap for currently and historically underserved students who qualify for this program.
- May not disrupt the opening of Harriet Tubman and Roseway Heights Middle Schools in the fall of 2018.
- Space availability will be verified by Deputy Superintendent to ensure accurate information based on use of space, enrollment estimates and program changes already underway.
- If a single site location is not available, location must be in no more than two locations with middle grades 6-8 co-located at a middle school.

I started this process, exploring an option for a single site solution with 21 classrooms that fit within the criteria above. It is probably not surprising that a single site option does not exist in the short-term. We looked at options for adding portables and also considered high schools with availability to accommodate a single site location. These options were ruled out due to the requirement for permitting that could not be done in time for the start of school. We can reconsider these possibilities for long-term solutions.

We reviewed a short list of schools which had availability and met the criteria above for a dual site option. The Advisory Group also asked if we could explore the possibility of daVinci. The Superintendent and I agreed that daVinci can be a consideration, and only if we explore the opportunity to condense space enough to co-locate without cutting into enrollment or displacing students. We also have been exploring the possibility of doing a 1-6 , 7-8 or 1-4, 5-8 configuration to see if this opens up more options for our short-term solution. To date, we have toured: Irvington, daVinci, Lane, Boise-Eliot, and Woodlawn with Advisory Group members.

Ideally we would have engaged all school communities prior to touring or even considering a location. This is the model we are striving for in the future. In these unique circumstances, we did not have the time or capacity to do so. The district opted instead to contact Senior Directors and Principals first and then share through community messages about the possibility of co-location. We are sensitive to the concerns of the ACCESS community about receiving negative feedback from other school communities as a result of the decisions made by the district. Stephanie Cameron, Senior Director of Communications and Public Engagement is aware and responding to this need and continues to work to improve this moving forward.

Again I apologize for the time it is taking to determine where your students will be going to school in the fall, and I realize you have been through a lot this past year. I will continue to move quickly, but thoughtfully through these final steps in effort to share a decision with you as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Dr. Yvonne Curtis
Deputy Superintendent