



High School Graduation Requirements Task Force Meeting #1
July 26, 2017 at 6:00 PM
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 1114
Washington, DC 20001

Attendance

High School Graduation Requirements Task Force Members:
Present:

- **Markus Batchelor** (Task Force Co-Chair, State Board of Education, Ward 8)
- **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)
- **Celine Fejeran** (Deputy Director, Raise DC)
- **Jerome Foster II** (Student, Washington Leadership Academy)
- **Larry Greenhill, Sr.** (Vice President, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers)
- **Cosby Hunt** (Teacher & Senior Officer of Teaching & Learning, Center for Inspired Teaching)
- **Senovia Hurtado** (School Counselor & Parent, School Without Walls)
- **Dwan Jordon** (Senior Advisor, Friendship PCS)
- **Sandra Jowers-Barber** (Director, Division of Humanities, University of the District of Columbia College)
- **Sanjay Mitchell** (Director of College & Alumni Programs, Thurgood Marshall Academy PCHS)
- **Shenita Ray** (Director of Online Operations, Georgetown University School of Continuing Studies)
- **Karla Reid-Witt** (Parent, Banneker High School)
- **Cathy Reilly** (Executive Director, Senior High Alliance of Parents, Principals and Educators)
- **Jimell Sanders** (Parent, Houston Elementary School)
- **Jahari Shelton** (Student, Sidwell Friends School)
- **Jane Spence** (Deputy Chief, Secondary Schools, DC Public Schools)
- **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:

- **Naomi Rubin DeVeaux** (Deputy Director, DC Public Charter School Board)



- **Cara Fuller** (Principal, Ballou STAY High School)
- **Kimberly Martin** (Principal, Wilson High School)
- **Carol Randolph** (Chief Operating Officer, DC Students Construction Trades Foundation)

Absent:

- **Erin Bibo** (Deputy Chief, College & Career Programs)

SBOE Staff:

- **Maria Salciccioli, Policy Analyst**
- **Paul Negron, Program Support Specialist**
- **Tara Adam, Policy Fellow**

Executive Summary

The Task Force (TF), led by Ms. Wilson Phelan and Mr. Batchelor, held its inaugural meeting on July 26, 2017. Group members participated in an icebreaker activity and discussed norms. After an overview of the Board’s role in educational matters, TF members split into six groups to discuss three key questions about the TF’s next steps:

- What do we as a city want our high school diploma to mean?
- How should we measure the achievement of the diploma?
- What changes should be made?

Groups shared the key outcomes from their discussions and introduced additional questions to explore in future meetings. TF members shared written feedback on the initial meeting, and the group adjourned until August 30, 2017.

Welcome and Setting Norms

At approximately 6:00 p.m., TF members were welcomed by State Board of Education (SBOE) and TF co-chairs Ms. Laura Wilson Phelan and Mr. Markus Batchelor. Ms. Wilson Phelan and Mr. Batchelor thanked the group for their participation and commitment. TF members participated in an icebreaker activity to get to know one another.

Ms. Wilson Phelan then moved toward a discussion of norms. She and Mr. Batchelor asked for discussion and collaboration, as well as high attendance rates from all TF members. Ms. Wilson Phelan introduced a set of preliminary norms:

- **Actively participate** – TF members should attend at least 80% of meetings. If he/she is unable to attend, the TF member must communicate that to Ms. Maria Salciccioli, SBOE Policy Analyst. This communication will help the team to plan ahead and include remote participants in activities.



- Represent your constituency – TF members were expected to solicit ideas and input from constituents where they lived, where they worked and/or went to school. This would ensure TF members would obtain the best set of ideas that reflect the needs of the District.
- Come prepared to meetings - TF members are expected to complete all required readings ahead of time. In the instances where TF members are expected to meet with constituent and/or survey constituent groups, TF members should arrive at each meeting prepared to report out on findings. This helps the group maximize in-person time.
- Build an inclusive environment – It is important for TF members to be aware of their own and others’ participation. TF members should encourage others with positive verbal and body language.
- Respect one another – TF meetings will start and end on time. TF members should step outside the meeting space for work or personal matters.

TF members presented additional suggestions:

- TF co-chairs and SBOE staff should ensure TF members have enough time to digest reading materials prior to meetings, at least one week. Ms. Wilson Phelan added this to the list of norms.
- TF co-chairs should send meeting agendas and other materials at least two weeks in advance. Ms. Wilson Phelan suggested that the group discussion will influence each successive agenda, making it difficult to send a new agenda more than a week in advance.
- TF members should seek to understand diverse perspectives. TF members should try to understand other perspectives and seek consensus. Ms. Wilson Phelan added this to the list of norms.
- In an effort to simplify decisions and use TF member time efficiently, TF co-chairs should synthesize the key areas for feedback rather than ask members for input on large documents that will remain largely unchanged. Ms. Wilson Phelan added this to the list of norms.

TF members raised additional considerations: how should the TF address many different opinions? Should the group strive for consensus, or should minority visions hold the same weight as majority opinions? A TF member suggested that the group should document its discussions, creating a narrative that lays out what the minority opinion is and why.

A TF member suggested a Google document or another interactive way for the group to share responses or feedback. Another TF member volunteered that consensus would likely emerge as the group continues to meet.

One TF member shared a focus on results and asked that the SBOE promote transparency by letting TF members know about any political stalemates. It is important that the discussion leads to an actionable outcome in January or February 2018.



A TF member asked how the group would incorporate feedback from high schools, and Ms. Wilson Phelan stated that TF members would be asked to bring conversations from the task force meetings back to schools for reflection and feedback. For small or specific issues, like a discussion on adding a computer science requirement, the group might only have one week to solicit feedback. As more final, substantive drafts develop, the group would have more time to connect with their constituencies.

Mr. Batchelor informed TF participants that the SBOE is making an intentional effort to engage the public on the Board's work. The TF has a [discussion group](#) on Facebook, meetings are [streamed live](#), and the TF has a Twitter [hashtag](#), #DCGradReqs. Mr. Batchelor encouraged TF members to share the work of the TF with their networks.

Ms. Wilson Phelan suggested tabling the issues of documenting conversations but noted that the group will make sure to capture minority opinions along the way. The norms document was updated to reflect the group's suggestions around transparency and efficiency, adequate turnaround time as a form of respect, and adequate time to solicit input as part of the representation norm. She noted that the SBOE is committed to ensuring TF members are able to meet with their constituencies about TF decisions.

State Board of Education Overview

Mr. Batchelor gave a brief overview of the SBOE's role within DC public education. A TF member asked about the Board's areas of influence, and Mr. Batchelor informed TF members that the Board has approval authority over academic standards, high school graduation requirements, definitions of highly effective teachers and adequate yearly progress, the state accountability plan and report card under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and the credentialing body that oversees teachers in the District.

Mr. Batchelor and Ms. Wilson Phelan emphasized that the Board cannot influence teacher practice or implementation. While the SBOE can share opinions and recommendations, authority is limited to requirements themselves. The Board does have the ability to advise and inform practitioners.

Discuss Framing Questions

TF members broke into six groups to discuss three questions:

- What do we as a city want our high school diploma to mean?
- How should we measure the achievement of the diploma?
- What changes should be made?

After the groups discussed these questions, the TF co-chairs asked each group to share their responses to one question.



Regarding the desired meaning of the high school diploma, groups one and two shared that District students should be able to access the most competitive colleges. The diploma should signify preparation for college or skills for a student's chosen career. Students should develop 21st century skills, life skills, and communication skills while pursuing a District diploma.

Groups three and four shared their perspective on measuring the diploma's achievement. These groups had more questions than answers, asking whether the task force should consider graduation tests, different diploma pathways, portfolios, and gradations of readiness. The groups also questioned whether internships should be included as part of the diploma – and, if so, should schools provide them? The group asked what eighth grade exit requirements should be, and they noted that diplomas should incorporate Universal Design for Learning principles and opportunities to demonstrate knowledge.

The TF members who were asked to speak to the changes that should be made, groups five and six, offered that schools should prepare students to be citizens, keeping academics at the center. Schools should create a better space for career and life skills. One group was uncertain about whether greater choices should be mandatory for students, suggesting electives that cover certain broad areas to ensure District graduates are exposed to a variety of experiences. The groups wondered whether the requirements should change, and if they change, what percent of students would meet the new levels. Are current expectations too far-reaching, and should schools use more competency-based assessments to see if students are meeting requirements? The group said that the question of what should be done when students do not meet the high school graduation requirements is an important one.

The whole group engaged in further discussion, with one TF member noting that it may not make sense to mandate all desirable experiences as graduation requirements. Another TF member expressed a belief that District high schools and University of the District of Columbia (UDC) should be more closely aligned. One TF member wondered if schools are equipped to offer students the flexibility they might desire in their schedules. One wondered whether the requirements are too rigid and whether there are too many.

TF members brought up additional questions before the group had to wrap up the conversation, including:

- Who is the guardian of a diploma?
- What assessment would a principal like to make regarding a student's readiness?
- What is the purpose of a high school education today?
- How do we set the standards for a high school diploma? The conversation went straight to measurement, but that assumes understanding what we want it to mean will drive standards.

Ms. Wilson Phelan and Mr. Batchelor moved the group toward the closing, due to time constraints, but noted that these questions would fuel productive conversations in the future.

Closing



TF members responded to three questions:

- What went well?
- What suggestions do you have for improvement?
- What should we discuss next time?

Each group from the discussion of framing questions also left their responses to inform the next discussion. The group opted to hold its next meeting on August 30, 2017, from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. SBOE staff will follow up with minutes, any requested reading, and next steps. The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

