The vision and recommendations of the Student Assignment Advisory Committee delivered to the Mayor in August 2014 were guided by voices heard throughout the city, the thoughtful input and diligence of the diverse Student Assignment Advisory Committee, and the support of an experienced and skilled technical and public engagement communications team. The process was possible because of the commitment and leadership of Mayor Gray and Abigail Smith, Deputy Mayor for Education.

This memo summarizes the methods and key deliverables that were important to this process. The student assignment and choice reform process combined rigorous research, data analysis, public engagement and communication. These methods were used to understand the scope and impact of the problems with the current policy and system and to engage parents, residents, and relevant agencies in developing the policy and planning reforms to address these problems.

The critical tasks that supported the student assignment and school choice reform process were the following:

Task 1: Documenting the Historical and Policy Context

Task 2: Understanding the Problems with the Current Student Assignment System

Task 3: Developing Principles to Guide Decision Making

Task 4: Analyzing Enrollment Patterns Resulting from Current Policy and Practice

Task 5: Developing and Exploring Options for Policy and Boundary Proposals

Task 6: Revising the Policy and Boundary Proposals

Task 7: Finalizing Recommendations to Submit to the Mayor

While the Tasks are presented as somewhat chronological, in fact the Advisory Committee and technical team were continually referring back to the history, context, principles, and data on enrollment patterns, to develop options, proposals and the final recommendations.

Task 1: Document the Historical and Policy Context of Student Assignment and School Choice in D.C.

The objective of Task 1 was to increase the level of knowledge of public officials, the Advisory Committee, and the public, so that the recommendations and decision making about student assignment and school choice would not just be informed by individual citizen, parent, and agency interests and concerns, but would be also informed by the District's history of student assignment, the current student assignment environment, as well as neighborhood level population projections, by age.

The technical team researched the specific policies in the DC Code and DC Municipal Regulations (DCMR). It also reviewed the history of student assignment and school choice in DC, providing a narrative of the long history of civil rights and the challenges associated with race and class presented by parental choice.

The Policy Brief #1 and its Appendices were provided to the Advisory Committee Members and to the public on the DME's website. As part of the contextual analysis, the technical team also examined, analyzed and communicated findings of the D.C. Office of Planning estimates on child population growth and prepared data sets on DCPS and charter school inventory and student enrollment patterns.

Research & Data Deliverables:
- Policy Brief #1: Student Assignment and Choice Policy in the District of Columbia, October 25, 2013
- DCPS and PCS school level data master file 2012-13 (from OSSE and MySchool DC)
- 2012-13 DCPS Feeder Patterns (from DCPS)
- 2012-13 and 2013-14 student level data for DCPS and PCS (from OSSE)
- DCPS Building Enrollment Capacities 2012-13
- Presentation Slides on Population Change and Capital Investments
- 2012-13 OSSE FARM Data
- Crosswalk between the UI-ID public school level ID number and OSSE public school level ID number
- D.C. Office of Planning Population Estimates by Age

Key Background Documents:
- Historic Washington Post Articles on Zone Changes
- DC Municipal Regulations: Title 5 DCMR § 2001,2002,2105,2106,2109,2199
- DC Code: §38-202; DC Code: §38-1802
- Charter School Neighborhood Preference Task Force Report for the DC City Council, December 14, 2012
- OSSE: A Statewide Analysis of Student Mobility in DC – Executive Overview, February 12, 2013

Advisory Committee:
- Advisory Committee Meeting #1, October 28, 2013

Communications:
- DME website: Student Assignment and School Boundaries Review Process www.dme.dc.gov

Task 2: Understand and Document the Problems with the Current Student Assignment System

The objective of Task 2 was to ensure that DC agencies, parents and the public articulated and listened to each other regarding their concerns and problems with student assignment and choice. This input was carefully documented, in order to make sure that any recommendations responded to these explicit problems and concerns and would be sensitive to issues that may be different by community or by family.

At the same time the technical team was documenting the history and current policy of student assignment and choice in DC, it worked to develop a strong understanding of the problems with the current student assignment system. The technical team compiled examples of administrative and management concerns expressed by DCPS. Starting in November 2013, a total of 22 focus groups were conducted in every ward of the city and nearly 200 parents and community members shared their perspectives and experiences on student assignment and school choice issues and provided feedback on the principles that should guide policy recommendations and boundary changes.

Public input was received via www.engageDC.org, the Deputy Mayor for Education's website and a special email address for student assignment to hear from the public directly on these issues. In addition to the focus groups, the Deputy Mayor for Education, the ODME and 21CSF staff, as well as Advisory Committee members attended and sponsored numerous meetings of community groups in all wards of the city. The technical team also began analyzing student level data to understand enrollment patterns and provided preliminary findings from data analysis to the Advisory Committee and to the public.

Research & Data Deliverables:
- Community Input on Student Assignment: Focus Groups Report and Analysis
- Advisory Committee Presentation November 19, 2013: Examples of Current Challenges

Public Input:
- 22 Focus Group Sessions
- Interactive website: www.engagedc.org
- Dedicated student assignment email communications dme.studentassignment@dc.gov
- Ad hoc meetings with community groups and representatives

Advisory Committee:
- Advisory Committee Meeting #2, November 19, 2013
- Advisory Committee Meeting #3, December 17, 2013

Communications:
- www.engagedc.org survey
- ODME website with materials from all Advisory Committee meetings

Task 3: Develop Guiding Principles and Review Policy and Practice in Other Cities

The objective of Task 3 was to make sure the final recommendations for policy and plan reforms were grounded in shared values and principles. It was important that D.C. residents accept a policy framework that embraced recommendations that, although they may not advance their personal interests, are generally acceptable because they reflect their fundamental values and principles.

While researching, analyzing and documenting the context, history and issues faced by the District of Columbia around its student assignment and school choice policies and practice, the technical team drafted a set of principles to bring to the Advisory Committee and the public. It worked with the Advisory Committee, the Office of the DME, and the public through the focus groups to rate and rank the proposed principles so that there would be a values-based framework guiding the reform of the current system of student assignment and choice.

The technical team researched student assignment and choice policy and practice from other cities— Boston, Baltimore, New York City, Denver, Seattle, San Francisco and New Orleans—as well as school districts in our metropolitan region. As part of this research, the technical team examined the values and principles guiding student assignment in other cities that have recently engaged in school assignment and choice policy change.

Research & Data:
- Principles Rating Form (Advisory Committee, Focus Groups)
- Policy Brief #2: Student Assignment Policies in Other Cities, November 19, 2013
- Advisory Committee Presentation December 17, 2013: Focus Group Overview of Principles

Advisory Committee Meetings:
- Meeting #2, November 19, 2013
- Meeting #3, December 17, 2013

Public Input:
- Focus Group Responses to Survey on Proposed Principles
- Dedicated student assignment email: dme.studentassignment@dc.gov
- Engagedc.org surveys, survey analysis, comments

Communications:
- Advisory Committee Meeting #2, November 19, 2013 Presentation
- Advisory Committee Meeting #3, December 17, 2013 Presentation
- DME website: Student Assignment and School Boundaries Review Process www.dme.dc.gov

Task 4: Analyze the Enrollment Patterns Resulting from Current Policy and Practice

The objective of Task 4 was to ensure the Advisory Committee, public officials and the public had detailed data and analysis of how families were actually behaving when it came to school assignment and choice. This data was compiled and analyzed to understand whether what the public says its concerns, interests and principles are differ from what they do. This data also serves as a baseline to evaluate the impact of policy change. Using extensive student level and school level data, the technical team prepared charts, tables and maps forpublic officials, the Advisory Committee, and the public, providing an overview of how families are accessing public schools. This analysis provided insight into whether and which families attended their assigned neighborhood schools; what schools were attended, if not neighborhood schools; how far students traveled and whether families were choosing schools with more or less diversity, better or poorer test scores or improved or unimproved facilities.

The student and school level analysis was provided publicly as an excel table, as well as to the Advisory Committee as a web-based boundary tool. The 21st Century School Fund developed www.boundaryplanner.com as an administrative tool to enable the District to view enrollment patterns on a Google map and to easily move elementary boundaries and feeder patterns and at the same time see the demographic and walkability impact of a boundary change. This meant that boundary and feeder pattern changes could be viewed and changed easily, in response to public input and concerns.

DME staff, DCPS and Advisory Committee members had various levels of access in order to view proposed boundary changes, and were all able to see and make suggestions on how boundaries might be better drawn.

Research & Data:
- Policy Brief #3: The Landscape for Student Assignment and School Choice, January 2014
- Appendix A to Policy Brief #3: DCPS and Charter Schools by Neighborhood Cluster
- Appendix B to Policy Brief #3: Boundary Participation Data Table (PDF and Excel)
- www.Boundaryplanner.com

Advisory Committee:
- Advisory Committee Meeting #4, January 30
- Advisory Committee Meeting Calls to Review Data: January 17th and 23rd.
- Advisory Committee Meeting #5, February 19.

Communications:
- DME website: Student Assignment and School Boundaries Review Process www.dme.dc.gov

Task 5: Develop and Explore Options for Policy and Boundary Proposals

The objective of Task 5 was to integrate the research, data analysis, and public guidance on principles, issues and concerns, into a set of student assignment policy scenarios and secure broad public engagement to inform revisions to these proposals. Building off of the work of Tasks 1 through Task 4, The Advisory Committee developed three different approaches to reforming student assignment policy.

Using www.Boundaryplanner.com the technical team developed the first revisions to elementary school boundaries such that every DCPS active school had a boundary and the closed school boundaries were allocated to active schools. In addition, a proposal for feeder patterns from elementary through high school was developed. The policy, boundary and feeder pattern options were discussed at two rounds of community working group meetings in April 2014. Each round of community working group meetings was held in three locations, for a total of six community meetings.

The community working group meetings started with an informational fair presenting data, research, and information on policy and practice, with a presentation of the issues and objectives of the community working groups next and finally provided extensive time when community members could react to and propose improvements to the policy scenario options as part of small facilitated groups.

Research & Data Deliverables:
- Advisory Committee Meeting #5 Presentation, February 24, 2014
  - Advisory Committee Meeting #5 Worksheet: Scenario Overview
- Advisory Committee Meeting #6 Worksheet: Scenario Summaries
- Advisory Committee #7, May 6, 2014, Presentation
- Round 1 Impact Analysis of Boundary Changes
- Impact Analysis, April Boundaries
- Proposed April Boundaries vs Current
- Round 2, Academic Program Overview

Research & Data Background:
- Policy Brief #1 Display Board: Student Assignment History Timeline
- Policy Brief #2 Display Board: Comparison Cities
- Descriptions of three policy scenario options based on Advisory Committee, Subcommittees
  - Community Working Group Round 1 Handout: Policy Example A
  - Community Working Group Round 1 Handout: Policy Example B
  - Community Working Group Round 1 Handout: Policy Example C
- April Preliminary Elementary School Boundary Changes and Feeder Patterns
- Guidance on the Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity and Avoid Racial Isolation in Elementary and Secondary Schools, U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights
- Charter Schools Program, Title V, Part B of the ESEA Non-regulatory Guidance, January, 2014

Advisory Committee:
- Advisory Committee Meeting #5, February 24, 2014
- Sub-committee meetings to prepare policy scenarios
- Advisory Committee Meeting #6, March 25, 2014

Public Input:

- Round 1 Community Working Groups April 4-8th 2014
    - Community Working Groups Round 1 Presentation
    - Worksheet Community Working Groups
    - Community Working Group Round 1 Handout: Comparison of Policy Examples
    - Round 1 Community Working Group Impact Analysis
- Round 2 Community Working Groups April 24-26th 2014
    - Community Working Group Round 2 Presentation
    - Round 2 Participant Worksheet
    - Round 1 Participant Worksheet
    - Round 1 Feedback Charts
    - Round 2 Worksheet Comment Transcriptions: Charter/DCPS Cooperation
    - Round 2 Worksheet Comment Transcriptions
    - Community Working Group Round 2 Student Impact Map

Communications:

- Community Working Groups Flier
- DME website: Student Assignment and School Boundaries Review Process www.dme.dc.gov
- Dedicated student assignment email: dme.studentassignment@dc.gov
- Engagedc.org surveys

Task 6: Revise the Policy and Boundary Proposals and Submit for Public Review

The objective of Task 6 was to analyze and integrate the input from the first two rounds of community working groups and input from other meetings and comments on the proposed policy scenarios A,B and C, and on the boundaries and feeder proposals to create a single coherent policy and planning proposal to bring back to the community. Using input from the public and from an impact analysis that examined who would be affected by the implementation of proposals and how they might be affected, the technical team worked closely with the Advisory Committee to prepare one coherent policy proposal.

The technical team also met with and responded to input from parents and citizens about the boundary proposals, reviewing online comments about boundaries, as well as responding to specific concerns raised through dme.studentassignment@dc.gov   In June 2014, the technical team prepared a DRAFT Student Assignment Policy Proposal for the Advisory Committee. It also prepared a second round of DCPS elementary school boundaries and feeder pathways.

After the release of the DRAFT Student Assignment Policy Proposal and revised boundary and feeder pathway changes, a final round of large community meetings were held in three different DCPS high school locations. At these meetings parents and residents had the opportunity to provide feedback on the policy and the boundaries and feeders.

Research & Data:

DRAFT Student Assignment Policy Proposal, Advisory Committee on Student Assignment, June 2014

Advisory Committee:

- Advisory Committee #7, May 6, 2014
- Advisory Committee #8, May 19, 2014
- Advisory Committee #9, May 29, 2014
- Advisory Committee #10, June 2, 2014
- Advisory Committee #11, June 9, 2014

Public Input:

- June Worksheet Data
- Round 2 Worksheet Tallies
- June Meeting and Breakout Notes
- June Community Meetings Presentation
- Engagedc.org; partial summary of comments
- June Participant Workseet

Communications:

- June DME Parent Letter
- June Community Meeting Flier
- DME website: Student Assignment and School Boundaries Review Process www.dme.dc.gov
- Dedicated student assignment email: dme.studentassignment@dc.gov

Task 7: Submit Final Boundary, Feeder, Policy and Planning Recommendations to Mayor

The objective of Task 7 was to incorporate the input from the June round of community meetings and the input from the second round of boundary and feeder patterns into a final set of recommendations on student assignment and school choice, elementary attendance boundaries and middle and high school feeder pathways to submit to the Mayor.

Research & Data:

- June DCPS Parent Letter
- DME website: Student Assignment and School Boundaries Review Process www.dme.dc.gov
- Community Working Groups Flier
- June Community Meeting Flier
- Dedicated student assignment email: dme.studentassignment@dc.gov

Advisory Committee:

- June DCPS Parent Letter
- DME website: Student Assignment and School Boundaries Review Process www.dme.dc.gov
- Community Working Groups Flier
- June Community Meeting Flier
- Dedicated student assignment email: dme.studentassignment@dc.gov

Public Input:

- June DCPS Parent Letter
- DME website: Student Assignment and School Boundaries Review Process www.dme.dc.gov
- Community Working Groups Flier
- June Community Meeting Flier
- Dedicated student assignment email: dme.studentassignment@dc.gov

Communications:

- June DCPS Parent Letter
- DME website: Student Assignment and School Boundaries Review Process www.dme.dc.gov
- Community Working Groups Flier
- June Community Meeting Flier
- Dedicated student assignment email: dme.studentassignment@dc.gov

Advisory Committee on Student Assignment:

The twenty-two member Committee was appointed by the Deputy Mayor for Education and made up of residents from every ward in the city, including parents from both DCPS schools, as well as parents of students in public charter schools. There were public officials on the committee representing DCPS, the Public Charter School Board, the Office of Planning and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education. The meetings were closed to press and the public, but after each meeting the ODME posted the materials, agenda and meeting summary on its website.

Technical Team:

The technical team was led by the 21st Century School Fund, and included staff support from the 21st Century School Fund and the Urban Institute. The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education also assisted in the collection, compilation and analysis of data. There was also technical and planning support for public engagement from the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, the 21st Century School Fund, the DCPS Office of Family and Community Engagement, and Reingold Link, a communications and engagement consultant firm.