Community Questions and Meeting Takeaways

The Cascadia PTA board met with Claudine Berry, Advanced Learning Department Supervisor for Seattle Public Schools, to discuss the district’s vision for highly capable services next year and beyond. Ms. Berry joined the Advanced Learning Department last year after working two years on Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). Previously, she worked 17 years as a public school principal.

Following is a digest of the main questions posed by the community and the meeting’s takeaways. Questions from the Cascadia community covered four main topics: (1) HCC identification for the 2021-22 school year; (2) the future of HCC and the cohort model; (3) HCC in middle school for elementary cohort graduates; and (4) the advanced learning department’s plans for engagement with the HCC community going forward. The advanced learning department provided an electronic copy of the presentation given by Ms. Berry at the meeting.

1. **HCC Identification for the 2021-22 school year**

   **Summary Questions:** Please explain the process for identifying students who will be eligible for highly capable cohort (HCC) services in the 2021-22 school year and how this process will ensure equity given the challenges posed by the remote learning model.

   Will SPS be offering first grade HCC education in 2021-22 given that SPS can collect only limited in-class information regarding academic/cognitive abilities of this years’ kindergartners due to the limitations of virtual learning and minimal data from previous school years?

   **Seattle Public Schools will be offering first grade HCC services under the current cohort model for the 2021-22 school year.** Identification will be different given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. New information on identification plans was released last week and can be found [here](#).

   - No new assessments will be conducted this year.
   - Identification of students eligible for HCC services will take a more holistic approach. A Multidisciplinary Selection Committee will use multifaceted indicators, including existing assessment data on reading and math at the state, district, and curriculum-based levels, as well as additional information provided by parents and teachers.
   - Teachers have been contacted about the need to provide feedback through the PowerSchool system, and the advanced learning office will reach out as additional information is needed.
   - Families can support the identification process by completing the Family Student Skills Survey.
   - In view of equity concerns, the district plans to review available data for all students identified as being furthest from educational justice.
   - Incoming students who are not currently enrolled in Seattle Public Schools will be asked to provide evidence of advanced learning needs and skills from their previous school.
   - There will be an appeals process.
The identification process will be slower this year and especially difficult for current kindergarteners given the lack of robust data. It was unclear how students’ ability to handle work at one to two years ahead would be evaluated if they do not currently have the option of working at this level. It is expected that identification will be completed before the open enrollment window ends (February 1–May 31).

2. The Future of HCC and the Cohort Model

**Summary Questions:** Is the district considering keeping the highly capable cohort or do all the plans choose to eliminate it?

If the cohort is eliminated, what is the timeline for phase-out? What will replace it? What resources and training will be offered to ensure that teachers at all schools in the district are able to provide differentiated instruction that meets the needs of both struggling students and highly capable/2E/atypical learners?

Will current cohort students be “grandfathered” in, able to complete their studies along the current model and with access to the appropriate curriculum scope and sequence (especially in math but in other subjects as well)? Or will they be sent back to neighborhood schools and be required to repeat coursework?

**Vision:** The vision of SPS is to move to a new model for delivering advanced learning services that they feel will alleviate the current discrepancy between enrollment and HC identification across racial groups.

**Model:** The proposed new model would draw on the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) approach to serve not only the core group of students (Tier I) in a classroom but also those needing additional (Tier II) or intensive (Tier III) support at either end of the spectrum (struggling learners and advanced learners). Students would be clustered within the classroom and offered similar curriculum at different levels of depth according to their capabilities/needs (though if feasible, it is unclear why this is not already done or how this links with moves to disband walk to math, for example). The district indicates that it will roll out this curriculum gradually and provide

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### Current HC Eligible Student and District Enrollment by Race, 2020-2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>HC Eligible</th>
<th>District Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>92 (1.8%)</td>
<td>8,130 (15.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>227 (0.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>663 (13.4%)</td>
<td>7,100 (13.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>3118 (63.2%)</td>
<td>24,670 (45.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>259 (5.25%)</td>
<td>7,085 (13.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural</td>
<td>799 (16.2%)</td>
<td>6,025 (12.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Pacific</td>
<td>1 (0.02%)</td>
<td>218 (0.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4932</td>
<td>54,090</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data Pull October 2020*
teachers with training on differentiation, but does not currently plan to devote additional financial resources to this effort.

Rollout: The MTSS approach will be piloted in grades K and 1 in five schools (one in each region of the city) during the 2021-22 school year. The district then proposes to roll out the approach in grades K and 1 in all schools in 2022-23, while maintaining an HC cohort in grades 1-5 in that year. In 2023-24, the district would begin rolling up the HCC cohort, e.g. offering only grades 2-5 that year, then 3-5, etc. Neighborhood school boundary changes are foreseen in 2024-25. By the 2027-28 school year, the cohort will have been disbanded and all services would be provided in neighborhood schools. There was no indication of the potential for a pause in rollout if the 2021-22 pilot were found to be unsuccessful.

Current HC cohort: Students currently enrolled in HCC would not be sent back to neighborhood schools and would be able to finish elementary school as part of a cohort (although starting in 2023-24, the school would likely be shared between the HCC program in upper grades and a general education program in lower grades).

3. HCC in Middle School for Elementary Cohort Graduates

Summary: What does the future look like for current HCC students once they reach middle school? What is the district’s plan to ensure that every student will have access to the scope and sequence appropriate to their current course progression? Will they still have access to pathway schools? If changes are to be made, what is the timeline for those changes?

The meeting did not focus heavily on middle school offerings. However, Ms. Berry indicated that work is underway to implement the district’s vision for offering a new model at the middle school level as well. She indicated that the advanced learning department is working with the enrollment planning department to evaluate long-term implications for HCC pathways.

Math: She indicated that the district remains committed to offering HC students appropriate scope and sequence (e.g. the next class in line) in math. At Washington Middle School, however, the option for 11th grade math in 8th grade (3 grades ahead) was eliminated and options for cross-enrollment in a high school course are being explored.

Science: Last week to incoming middle school families to indicate that advanced science course offerings will no longer be offered at the middle school level, and that next year’s 6th grade HCC students in all
pathway middle schools would receive curriculum aligned by grade level (e.g. 6th grade science in 6th grade). Details are available here.

The Cascadia PTA will continue to work to obtain additional information on middle school plans as they evolve, but for now it is clear that next year’s 6th graders should be eligible to attend pathway schools and to take Math 8 in 6th grade, but will no longer have access to the previous accelerated course progression in science.

4. Engagement with HCC Community

Summary Question: What are the advanced learning department’s plans with regard to engaging with the HCC community about their experiences in the cohort and at neighborhood schools, and what their students’ needs would be under a future model?

The advanced learning department responded in writing as follows: Throughout the work of the Advanced Learning Task Force, the voices of families of students at cohort schools was captured in a number of ways. Certainly, the voice of HC families was represented on the Advanced Learning Task Force and now it is represented on the Highly Capable Racial Equity Services Advisory. I was in the AL department in the fall of 2019 when a subcommittee collected family voice through cohort PTAs as part of their work in preparing the recommendations for the Superintendent. Now it is time to move forward and implement a feedback loop with all families that provides the opportunity for regular engagement on our transforming services. Student voice will also continue to be an important continuing factor in our decision-making. We will update our FAQs on our website in the next week and we will add your questions and our answers as well.

The Cascadia PTA will continue to work to expand this dialogue to ensure two-way communication between the district and the HCC community: supporting better information sharing from the district as well as communicating to the district about the needs and concerns of the HCC and 2E communities. If you have further questions, please contact the advanced learning office or email your PTA at president@cascadiapta.org.