

APS Conversation #2: Operating Models for School System Flexibility Options
August 27, 2014
Grady High School

General Comments:

- The State is rushing us to make a decision with incomplete information and to enter a binding agreement without all the information and it just does not feel right.
- People should write their State representatives if you don't agree with the process.
- It appears that the State wants to push us to IE² System or Charter System based on the names alone and the propaganda used to describe the systems.
- It would be better for the State to look at what is working and implement it statewide rather than breaking the districts into little federation across the State.
- Under any of these options, the State must fund schools adequately to allow for success.
- Under any of these options, our students need to have more rigorous education, to have high expectations of them in behavior, ability to succeed and accountability of parents!
- People in this session could process at a level deeper than what is pitched in this conversation.
- We should have heard about the formation of the Advisory Committee, and before this meeting.
- There has not been adequate communication on this initiative. There needs to be more notices going out sooner and broader.
- PS must take seriously the notion of push notifications - sending home a letter in kids bag is not enough.
- APS should blog the questions and answers!
- Stakeholder meetings should not be scheduled in conflict with other APS meetings like tomorrow night's Advisory Committee Meeting.
- Why are we just learning of this State requirement, and the process?
- I came with a different expectation about this meeting. I thought it was about "visioning." This is new to me.
- It is impossible to give intelligent feedback without knowing more details about the flexibility options
- It seems that more attention is being given to first two models and that there is a bias regarding the Status Quo Model.
- The slides for this presentation do not seem to be a very objective description of each option.

- It would be helpful to see what the Advisory Committee feels are the pros and cons of each operating system.
- Why isn't Superintendent Carstarphen in attendance?

Questions from the Plenary:

- What are the flexibility options with each operating model?
- Can you give me examples of the flexibility that a waiver might support?
- Is the Advisory Committee partial to any of the options at this point?
- After picking a model will APS have the opportunity to pick another model later?
- Will there still be traditional schools and charter schools or will they all be one way or the other?
- Will there be a web site where all the information and presentations from the Advisory Committee will be posted and accessible?
- Have Advisory Committee members spoken to districts that have already selected a model to see what the thought process and conversation was?
- Can a current charter school choose to stay as a charter school regardless of the operating model chosen?
- If APS chose to pursue a System of Charter Clusters, could APS allow some school clusters to be charter and some not?
- Will we get the waiver information before the proposal is submitted to the State? Will the waivers APS seeks be known to the public?
- Will the waivers requested by APS be made public knowledge?
- Can you choose more than one waiver with IE²?
- If schools and the State choose outcome measures and the schools don't meet the measures and as a result an outside entity takes over control of the school, would the "take over" entity be held to the same level of accountability as the district? What will be the impact of these failing schools on district accreditation?
- Will the contracts - whether performance contract or charter contract - include any accountability for the State in terms of funding or other support?
- A bullet point under Charter System states there will be school level governance - will the current requirement for 51% parent representation still be the same?
- Would waivers requested apply to every school in a district?
- What waivers does APS currently have?

- How enforceable is this whole decision if we have a new governor or new State school superintendent? Is this requirement likely to change if the leadership changes?
- What is APS doing to communicate this requirement, the stakeholder outreach and the APS process for making a decision?
- Will any of the community conversations include someone from the State?
- Are there any other school districts that feel that the State is going about this wrong?
- Is APS making any effort to form alliances with other districts who may feel the State is going about this the wrong way?
- Druid Hills had a community meeting and an APS rep was there - what is that about?
- Is there consideration of merging schools, like Druid Hills and Grady?
- Was the community voice considered in deciding the original waivers would be sought for APS?
- Why didn't we have an option to apply to be on the Advisory Committee? Why weren't we given a chance to be on it?
- Does APS have someone evaluating how our current practices align with each Operating Model? APS should develop a "matrix of congruency of current practice."
- Why are the Governor's office and the State Board of Education involved? Why two levels of State oversight?
- Who identifies where there is an opportunity for "possible savings"? And how?
- Can teacher hiring and firing be waived - is it one of the waivers that can be requested with each model?

Questions Submitted by participants:

- Meetings like this one are attended predominately by parents of well-off students. How is APS taking the concerns of less-involved, poorer families into account?
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- "Flexibility" is confusing. I need to understand how flexibility is limited in the Status Quo System model. The handout talks about customizing offerings in IE² and Charter...yet we already customize offerings in our current system. Under Status Quo will that end? What flexibilities are available under Status Quo? Which are not?
- What would be the increased/decreased costs for each model?
- What would be the change in local school control of finances for each model?
- How is QBE funding handled in each scenario?

- What are all of the waiver eligible laws, rules and regulations?
- Does APS have the necessary infrastructure to implement any of these models? How close would APS be to implementing each option?
- How does this factor into the Strategic Plan for APS?
- What is the discussion/regulation re: Maintenance of the effort?
- What role is the Mayor/City of Atlanta playing in this and to what degree?
- Number of teachers, how are they picked?
- For IE², who would set performance measures and what would be the means of assessment?
- Under the Charter System, are waivers across the school system? Is the school governance at the local school or the system level? Is the 51% parent make-up of governance bodies across the system?
- Why is the State forcing this system change?
- What is the State doing to empower and support its schools to do better in the areas of rigorous education, high expectations for student's behavior and ability to succeed and parent accountability?
- What waivers are available for limiting central office spending? Overspending and incompetent central office staff cause many of our problems. What waivers can we get to limit/stop central office debacles, such as hiring more IT staff without firing incompetent ones?
- What happens once a school is taken over and doesn't perform? Does it impact accreditation?
- What happens to current Charter Schools?
- Can you provide examples and metrics from other districts that have implemented? How have they performed since implementation compared to prior performance?
- Why only these three options? Who decided these options?
- What is the analysis of the APS administration?
- What was the process and criteria for choosing the Advisory Committee? Why didn't APS ask for nominations? Why have I heard nothing from the Mary Lin administration?
- Can we learn what worked from Gwinnett County and apply their experience to the State regulations?
- Can a Charter System be run by a non-profit or for-profit entity?
- Is "college-style delivery" a lecture class?

- What credentials would “content expert” teachers have to have to teach?
- What does “flexibility and innovation” mean? Please provide examples?
- How will larger class sizes impact standardized scores?
- How will APS assess progress?
- What is the APS administration leaning towards and why?
- If a class size waiver increases the number of kids in a room, how will that help with academic success when research supports smaller class sizes and a focus on social/emotional growth?
- Can APS create a performance matrix or information tool that could help us understand how current operations would be impacted by each model?
- Would the Status Quo System be the “same old way”, as far as parent’s involvement duties, teacher’s duties, etc.?
- How do the different models impact high school electives, such as foreign language?
- Which of the models would provide more support and awareness for foreign language programs?

Questions Pre-Submitted by CINNS:

- Once an operational model has been decided on by the board, how will the community stay involved and support the process during the implementation?

APS Answer

- If Status Quo is chosen, community input will continue through current mechanisms - PTA, Local School Councils and partnerships with the district and local schools.
- Should IE2 or Charter System be chosen, during the application writing phase we would engage the community in a series of workshops.
- Workshops would engage the community in a Visioning process around each of the big waiver buckets. Input will also be gathered via the website, where the public can leave their thoughts and ideas for each waiver bucket.
- What structural apparatus will be in place for governance at the Cluster level?

APS Answer

- The district believes that collaboration at the Cluster level is very important
- Processes are being out in place to do cluster-level planning

- The State has not provided guidance on Cluster-level governance. At this time it can be incorporated with the district submission for consideration.
- Why the short time-line?
APS Answer
 - The district was not in a position to fully address the topic. A decision was made to wait until our new Superintendent and board members were in place.
 - The State has communicated to all districts who have not made a decision to do so ASAP in order to ensure adequate operational planning and allow submittal prior to June 30, 2015.
 - Most applications take at least 3 to 8 months from review to approval.
 - So far approximately 31 school districts have chosen an operating model. At last glance, approximately 95 districts are in the process of making a decision.