

## Session 4: February 12<sup>th</sup>

### 1) What did we discuss? (Topic)

We first aligned on a set of criteria for aligning on a final recommendation, asserting that any taskforce recommendation should:

- Address a clear need in the district, supported by data and what we're learning from students, staff and families
- Be feasible to implement in all schools, given the current staffing and budgeting resources available to high schools in SPS, and any staffing/contract limitations that exist
- Create high-quality experiences for learning and connection that will have a positive impact on students – particularly those furthest from opportunity
- Be clear about what should be true for all schools, and where the district will maintain autonomy and flexibility

The Taskforce explored an initial set of options for improving the high school day, with a focus on improving the availability and quality of proactive student supports. The examples we explored included:

- Math Lab, Course Failure Prevention, Semester Recovery, Acceleration Academies, 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Cohorts and Flex Blocks

### 2) What did we learn about the potential impact and feasibility of these options?

We explored examples, scheduling artifacts, and data both from SPS and from the field on the impact and feasibility of these options that illustrated what these options might look like during the school day, the potential cost implications, and the impact schools have seen from these strategies. We then gathered initial input in small group discussions on each of the options.

Each of the models we explored during the session have seen demonstrated success in other districts and could be feasible in Seattle if prioritized for implementation. Following our breakout group conversations, **course failure prevention** and **flex blocks** were seen as promising strategies to explore further. We will continue to explore these, and other options on the table in future sessions to further test the feasibility of implementing similar strategies in SPS.

### 3) What was the feedback from the group?

The group had the opportunity to deeply discuss several of the options proposed and their initial reactions to help determine which options we want to explore more deeply.

Feedback we heard from the discussion included:

- **Desire for Proactive Supports:** The example on course failure prevention was thought of as promising, with participants highlighting it as a way to proactively address failures before they result in a lost credit, and

- **Impact on the Student Experience:** For both the Math Lab and Acceleration Academies examples, participants raised concerns about whether these strategies would have a positive impact on student experiences. For instance, is it sustainable and equitable to ask some students to give up their school breaks, or time in their schedule for electives, to provide needed student supports?
- **Need for accountability/structure during flexible time and/or advisory time:** There was significant interest in the idea of a flex block, as well as several questions or considerations for how to implement it effectively, especially if academic support is the priority. Without clear structures and expectations for how to use this time well, the time may default to being used unproductively.
- **Support for student connections:** Participants noted that several of the options support student connections (particularly 9<sup>th</sup> grade cohorts)

#### 4) Improvements for Next Time

In response to this great discussion and feedback, going forward, we plan to:

- **Go deep on feasibility:** To address some of the concerns about the operational feasibility for teachers and staff. In future sessions, we plan to iron out some of the constraints and guardrails needed to ensure quality academic support in a flexible period.
- **Focus on SPS Bright Spots:** In the following session, we plan to bring in some SPS bright spots, outlining how schools are currently designing opportunities (e.g., advisory) successfully, and how they have made it work within current resources.

#### 5) What recommendations were made (if any)?

- Several ideas were considered, but not recommendation has been made yet, as we are still exploring options for different schedule structures and recommendations. Next session, we will go deeper on some of the promising options considered in this meeting, and consider other options not yet presented to the Taskforce.