



The Empowering Males High School Community Cabinet: Frequently Asked Questions

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This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document provides more information about the purpose of the Empowering Males High School Community Cabinet and how it will work as an advisory group. It is published by the DCPS School Planning Team and the Office of Family and Public Engagement. Any questions can be directed to emhs@dc.gov.

Q: What is a Community Cabinet?

A: The Community Cabinet is a diverse group of stakeholders within a particular school community convened by the DCPS School Planning Team to help gather family and community input on new and re-envisioned school programs. The Cabinet serves as an advisory body that influences the Chancellor and school leader's decisions based on the needs and wants of the school community. It is also another way to keep the community informed throughout the planning process.

Q: How is the EMHS Community Cabinet different than those for other new schools?

A: The EMHS Community Cabinet will be unique from other school Community Cabinets in three key ways: (1) It will include members from across the city. Typically, a Community Cabinet focuses exclusively on academic programming and community outreach and is comprised of members that represent a specific school feeder pattern or boundary. Because the mission of EMHS is to serve young men throughout the city, the group will include members from all wards. (2) The EMHS Community Cabinet will also function as the SIT. When schools undergo modernization, there is a separate community group called the School Improvement Team (SIT) that focuses on facility design and implementing the academic program into the building design. SITs work directly with DCPS, DGS, and the selected architect to work through the building design and receives updates through construction. The Empowering Males High School Community Cabinet will serve both functions because school planning and construction will be happening concurrently. (3) A DCPS Facility Planning and Design Coordinator (SIT Coordinator) will work with Principal Williams to lead the Community Cabinet from its initiation. In most cases, the DCPS School Planning team leads initial Community Cabinet meetings until school leadership has been appointed.

Q: What are the goals of convening a Community Cabinet?

A: As DCPS develops new and re-envisioned schools throughout the city, we want family and community input throughout the planning process. Convening a Cabinet ensures voices from the community are reflected in how each school ultimately works. When communities are involved and invested in the planning process from the beginning, we are able to develop schools families want to send their children to.

Q: What kind of decisions will the EMHS Community Cabinet members weigh in on?

A: Community Cabinet meeting topics typically focus on one of three areas: academic programming, community outreach, or facility design and implementation. Academic program topics include school culture, community partnerships, and extracurricular activities. Community outreach topics include community partnerships and student recruitment strategies. Facility topics focus on ensuring the design reflects community culture and history while meeting the needs of its students for years to come, as well as consulting on any issues that arise during construction. Again, the Community Cabinet is an advisory group. The Chancellor and her team will make final decisions with the Community Cabinet's input. DCPS will evaluate all community feedback on the building design, but will make all the final design decisions.

Q: Which school communities have Community Cabinets?

A: Community Cabinets advise DCPS on school programming and in the case of EMHS, school facility design. Therefore, schools that are brand new or have new programming and a facility modernization are best served by a Community Cabinet. Not all schools that undergo capital improvements or full-scale building modernizations will have a Community Cabinet.

Q: Which school communities have a SIT?

A: All school communities going through a modernization with a substantial capital investment form a SIT. The SIT works directly with DCPS, DGS, the selected architect and builder to provide feedback on the building design and receive updates on construction.

Q: Who is on the Community Cabinet?

A: The Community Cabinet is a group of 20-25 members. It includes school leadership (in this case the EMHS Principal), representatives from the DCPS Planning Team and Family Engagement Division and a DCPS SIT Coordinator, school staff, parents, families, and community stakeholders who are interested in the success of their school community. DCPS makes a conscious effort to select cabinet members who reflect the diverse groups within the school's population. In the case of the EMHS Community Cabinet, we will strive to include members representing neighborhoods across the District.

Q: How will the EMHS Community Cabinet members be selected?

A: Community Cabinet members are selected through an application process run by the DCPS School Planning Team. Each applicant submits an application expressing their interest in serving on the Cabinet, and the Planning Team selects members along with the DCPS Community Engagement Division, the DCPS Facilities Team, and the School Leadership. Members are selected with the goal of having a diverse group of stakeholders that represent the entire school community.

Q: How will Community Cabinet members gather input from and share information with the larger community?

A: Cabinet members are community representatives. They reach out to the groups they represent to gather input on programming at a new or re-envisioned school and share updates from Cabinet meetings with their communities. Input from Community Cabinet meetings will be shared with the Chancellor and the DCPS leadership team. To ensure that all meetings are productive, DCPS likes to have consistent participation throughout the project. Meeting notes will be posted at <http://bit.ly/1TxcE4c> in order to keep community members informed throughout the planning process. Additionally, the DCPS SIT Coordinator will circulate bi-weekly project emails to provide updates on design and construction and meeting follow-ups. Agendas and meeting topics will be shared with Community Cabinet members prior to each meeting to ensure that members have adequate time to gather input and research the topic in advance.

Q: When and where do Community Cabinet meetings take place?

A: Community Cabinet meetings typically take place monthly, but this can vary depending on when the launch of a new or re-envisioned school takes place. Given the pace of the project, additional meetings around facility design and construction may be held. Meetings typically begin in the evening at 6:30pm and run two hours in length. Meetings will take place in public spaces in the school neighborhood, either at the library, recreation center, or another nearby place. Unfortunately, DCPS cannot provide childcare, but we will provide refreshments at each meeting.

Q: What kind of commitment does serving on the EMHS Community Cabinet require?

A: Typically, the Community Cabinet meets monthly for two hours. The members have three primary responsibilities: 1) Gather input from stakeholders in the school community, 2) Bring that input to the Community Cabinet conversation, and 3) Keep their communities informed about any new information that comes up at Cabinet meetings. Consistent attendance is needed to facilitate group rapport and to ensure all perspectives are included in the conversation.

Q: Who facilitates the EMHS Community Cabinet meetings?

A: A DCPS SIT Coordinator will facilitate all building design and construction related topics. Principal Williams and members of the DCPS School Planning Team will facilitate all non-construction related topics. We will ask participants to follow norms that ensure all members feel comfortable expressing their voices. This will help create an environment friendly to rich discussion and help make the planning process a success.