

5/28/08

Equitable Opportunities Breakout Session

Moderator: Marc Draisen

Introductory Remarks: Stephanie Everett

Equity in education and jobs

We don't talk about race and equity openly in the region. We pretend we're past that, but issues of equity are critical in the MetroFuture Plan.

Equity is critical because changing demographics of the region – the region will be 1/3 people of color and 1/5 foreign-born.

MetroFuture, rather than creating a separate equity chapter, weaves equity issues into each chapter. This breakout session is meant to help brainstorm new ways to address equity better throughout the plan.

Stephanie's Introduction:

- Education partnership – support system for the school itself
- Social partnership – partnership to help the school know what is impacting children outside of school
- Early education – unequal access to pre-K/ Kindergarten. Plan proposes mandatory early education to “level the playing field”
- After-school – strengthen these programs
- High School – match skills and job needs better
- Higher education – match skills and job needs better through loan forgiveness programs for needed skills
- CORI reform – reform how records are sealed, when they can be opened, and stricter penalties for people who abuse the records. Incentives for hiring ex-offenders.
- Immigration – increase ESL and adult basic education. Provide workplace opportunities. Connect with people through banks.

Breakout Session Comments:

Do we know the range of per pupil spending in the Metro area and would we compare that to Boston?

- Stephanie: you would have to ask each individual community.
- Marc: It's possible to find the per pupil spending, but heard to breakout
- Go to state department of education website, there's an easy to read chart. The difficulty of the question is what funding means for quality.

Concerned that we keep focused on no in-state tuition for children of illegal immigrants, but what about loan forgiveness?

We need bilingual programs and kids need more than 1 year to transition to a regular English-only setting.

Transition from high school to college. Most access is through community college, which are predominantly minority. Transition from community college to college needs to be addressed. Also, concerned that there is coordination with other efforts like the Commonwealth Compact as we approach equity in MetroFuture.

- Marc – we need a better coordination. He will do outreach with the Partnership and the Compact.

Stephanie – Wants to clarify the recommendations on schools and partnerships. We don't want the state to come in and take over the schools, the plan creates a step before the State takes over.

- BU abolished vocational education in Chelsea, which was a critical mistake but well-meaning. It was the result of involving outsiders that didn't understand. Partnerships need to have multiple players, not just one, to avoid these mistakes. Interesting models include linking schools with business.
- Can we get consolidated lessons learned from BU? Can we ask BU to evaluate their actions in Chelsea? Marc thinks it's been studied.
- Wants to know, who are the six underperforming schools? Thinks Chelsea is one of them. Underperforming is not so much determined by what's happening in the school, but what's outside. Under-educated adults in Chelsea, lots of ESL students. May need more supports to help with those sorts of issues. Also, go beyond partnerships – what are the broader social issues?
- Marc: We emphasize early childhood education in the plan because it would disproportionately benefit people in need. Is this a useful mechanism to improve opportunities for children in places like Chelsea?
- Went to Chelsea High School under BU management. Agrees with Joe that there should be more players in the partnerships. We can learn from other schools, especially charter schools. The BU partnership came in strong but deteriorated over time. We need to keep kids in the inner-city school system.

About the adult basic education system: It serves an important role in the transition between GED to community college. We need more bridge programs to do this well. Support for ABE is from the state not localities. There is a 5-year grant cycle, which allows people to look at needs state-wide instead of locally.

Multiple partnerships makes sense, especially work-study. This helps with transitional issues, distractions from bad influences, etc. Need to involve parents more. This is especially important where parents don't have a strong educational background themselves. School boards have too much influence, wasting resources.

Applauds MAPC for including equity. Equity is complex, so we must look at it comprehensively. We should identify leverage points and be aware of places where equity is being impacted in the region. Look at underperforming schools without blaming the children. The schools should adjust. We need more on school accountability. What are we doing to ensure that schools are responsive to their students? We also need to focus on the consequences of failing schools. The chapter does not capture the needs of the kids who have dropped out, or the kids who are at-risk of dropping

out. I would frame it as high standards and high graduation rates. We should be aware of incentives to push kids to drop out (to raise scores). On post-secondary: Most of our future workforce is already out of school. The strategies should expand their focus on adult ed. The financial aid recommendation should focus more on adult learners, not just traditional college-age students. Look at workers who study, not students who work. Finally, to move to adult education to good jobs, need to align training/courses with a credential. Credentials are what get people to sustaining wages.

- Stephanie: We are already doing much of this, and MAPC can share the chapters with interested people. We are especially focused on parental involvement. We are also working on recommendations on school accountability – to let schools take on some aspects of charter schools without becoming a charter.

Haitian Legislator Center – They have created a Haitian parent association which then coordinates with the Boston Public Schools. We need more support for ESL and undocumented immigrants and their kids. Focus on late-arrivers from immigrant families.

We need to help communities with their relationship with schools. People without kids don't want tax increases, schools are boarded up at the end of the day. We need to make the school the center of the community for everyone. Community School concept.

We need to look at prisons and provide opportunities for people being released.

On employment: things that work. 1) translation services as part of job training/on-the job service. 2) Micro-lending so people can start small businesses. Workshops for people to learn how to start these businesses, especially green businesses. 3) Tuition remission for people who people stay in the state. 4) Use seniors better – allow them to use their skills and credentials. Don't restrict people to uniform volunteer duties.

Marc/Richard: CDCs and non-profits do microlending, but not enough.

Policy suggestion: In-state tuition and augmented legal status for undocumented immigrants should be addressed.

The plan should also look at private higher ed. Private solutions to tuition assistance are possible. We should address head start in the plan. We should cite best practices in the Metro region.

- Marc: We need folks in the room to help us compile best practices. Education is a new area for MAPC, so we need to help learning this topic.

The region is doing ok in early grades but losing kids later on. We need to connect them to the outside world when they reach adolescence. Education is a civic-building initiative. Parents need a culture of learning for themselves and to meet their neighbors. Provide ESL clubs, help them make social connections. The whole society needs to be involved in education.

MIRA is working on some of these issues. The plan should address funding for citizenship classes.

Residential segregation denies people access to opportunity. CHAPA believes that 40B is effective for combating this. The plan doesn't address equity enough under housing: the plan opens the possibility of amending 40B, reduces the requirements towns must meet to get out of 40B. The plan needs something in affirmative fair housing. 40R: should be by-right, not a special permit.

Wants implementation strategies on how schools can reach out to the local community. Communities need help in how to connect with their schools. Ideas for school administrators.

No real relationship between spending and school quality. Affluent communities need help too. Affluent schools should be penalized for underperformance. The plan should address how to incentivize good schools.

The youth themselves should inform the education section of the plan.

On employment: 1) Link workforce development with economic development. Need criteria by which to judge public investment. What kinds of jobs would the investment bring? 2) Add language around career advancement in the goals. Lay it out more clearly how steps eventually lead to sustaining wages.

The plan doesn't include family asset building strategies across various life stages. We need creative ideas on the table, e.g., financial incentives for kids staying in school? Youth asset building includes savings for college.

Elder work – can seniors do volunteer work instead of paying taxes? Online education – need to look at what this could do, how cost effective it could be. Look at “technology goes home.” Look at how high schools can partner/be autonomous.

Stephanie – the six underperforming schools comes from a Mass Insight report. Stephanie will get that information for people who want it.

Questions on the rest of the vetting process. What happens next? What happens on the municipal level?