

CPS Continuous Improvement and Data Transparency

Data Transparency Stakeholder Advisory Group

Meeting #24 Summary

Friday, December 12th, 2025, 9:00 – 11:30 AM
BUILD (in-person)

Attendance

Facilitators & Presenters:

Jill Gottfred Sohoni (Facilitator), Felipe Perez (Facilitator), Sarah Cross (Project Team), Alejandra Sanchez (Coordinator), Joe Hoereth (UIC), Ted Canji (CPS), Katina Kopsias (CPS), Lauren Brumett (CPS Exec), Augusta Smith (CPS Exec)

Committee Members and Attendees:

Jasmine Thurmond (CPS Exec), Grace Chan McKibben (Community), Maurice Miles (Parent), Claiborne Wade (Parent), Marcelina Pedraza (LSC), Vakiea Griffith (CPS), Ryan Belville (CPAA), Daniel Anello (K1C), Erika Gonzalez (Parent), Jaqueline Vargas (Parent)

Additional Support:

Letty Perez (Translation)

Meeting Materials

[Agenda](#)

[Slides](#)

Agenda

1. Breakfast and Community Building
2. Welcome + Objectives
3. CPS Timeline + Celebration:
4. Where we have been and where we are going
5. New + Improved CIDT Introduction
6. UIC Focus Group Simulation
7. Debrief Focus Group + CIDT Review
8. Close out + Public Comment

Objectives

The Transparency Committee convened for its final meeting of 2025 to:

- Celebrate our work together in 2025
- Share the revised site to get final review
- Engage in a UIC Focus Group
- Discuss what is ahead in 2026

Welcome, Community Building, and Objectives

The meeting opened with breakfast and informal community building. A representative from BUILD welcomed the group and briefly highlighted BUILD's role as a space for youth and community-centered programming. Facilitators thanked Alejandra Sanchez for planning and coordinating the meeting logistics and flow.

Participants introduced themselves and shared appreciation for being together in person, noting the value of in-room discussion for this stage of the work. Facilitators framed the session as both a celebration and a transition point—closing out 2025 while setting expectations for the next phase of CIDT development and engagement.

CPS Timeline and Celebration: Where We've Been and Where We're Going

Facilitators reviewed the recent timeline of Transparency Committee activity and related engagement milestones:

- November 12: Transparency Committee meeting
- November 13: Mikva student session
- November 21: Close of public web feedback
- November 24–28: Thanksgiving break
- December 4: Transparency Committee meeting
- December 5: Incorporation of public and committee feedback
- December 12: Final Transparency Committee meeting of 2025

Looking ahead, CPS shared that **Spring 2026** remains the target for going live with **new indicators** on the CIDT platform.

CPS emphasized three concurrent priorities in the current phase of work:

1. Incorporating **School Year 2024–25 data** into published indicators

2. Updating existing indicators based on stakeholder feedback
3. Finalizing and publishing **at least ten remaining unreleased indicators**

As the school year continues, CPS shared that the committee's near-term focus will shift toward supporting the **successful rollout of UIC-led focus groups**, while CPS staff continue backend work on data integration and draft school profile pages. The shared goal is committee review and publication of remaining indicators by **late Spring 2026**.

New and Improved CIDT Introduction

Participants were asked to access the revised CIDT site and locate their own school profiles using the CPS integration link. CPS staff highlighted several key updates:

- A revised **site structure and left-hand navigation**
- Updated **landing pages** for indicator categories
- Improved **visual design and layout** of metric pages

Facilitators noted that these changes would be reviewed more deeply during the focus group simulation, with participants asked to engage with the site as if they were first-time users in a focus group setting.

UIC Focus Group Simulation

Focus Group Protocol & Design

- The focus group protocol is designed to prioritize qualitative depth rather than survey-style efficiency.
- No demographic requirements are applied beyond participants being 18 years or older, reflecting an inclusive recruitment approach.
- The protocol allows participation from individuals with varying levels of technical literacy.
- Consent and purpose framing emphasize transparency and ethical participation.
- The absence of a required task allows participant priorities to surface organically rather than being constrained by facilitator direction.

Strengths Identified

- Flexibility enables facilitators to adapt to participant needs and perspectives in real time.
- Open-ended prompts support authentic responses and reduce the risk of leading participants.
- The protocol is designed to capture a range of perspectives, including skeptical or critical viewpoints.

Concerns and Tradeoffs Raised

- Participants with limited technical familiarity may slow group momentum.
- Open-ended exploration may result in uneven focus across sessions.
- Incentive-driven participation (e.g., \$25 gift cards) may affect depth of engagement for some individuals, though these perspectives remain valuable.

Participant Recruitment & Composition

- Recruitment efforts aim to extend beyond existing Transparency Group networks.
- The planned scale includes approximately 125 participants across 12–15 sessions lasting 60–90 minutes.
- Students are not included in the focus groups; adult perspectives are prioritized.

Committee Feedback

- Some members expressed concern that excluding students limits perspective diversity.
- Participants noted value in both heterogeneous and homogeneous groupings.
- Suggestions were made to clarify participant expectations and the purpose of the work prior to sessions.

Considerations for Iteration

- Explore role-based prompts (e.g., asking participants to respond as parents, community members, or educators).
- Consider targeted sessions by stakeholder type to complement mixed-group discussions.

Focus Group Logistics & Facilitation

- Participants will access the CIDT website via QR code or direct link.
- Incentives will be distributed through Qualtrics upon completion.
- Facilitators can track participation and link feedback to demographic data without attributing comments publicly.
- In-person sessions will minimize slide use to keep attention on conversation; virtual sessions will include slides for navigation support.

Challenges Identified

- Time spent on logistics may reduce discussion time.
- Five minutes of independent site review may be insufficient for first-time users.
- Participants may skip explanatory text and focus primarily on headline metrics.

Debrief Focus Group + CIDT Review

Website Usability & Content Clarity

- Participants gravitated toward large visuals and summary metrics.
- Fine print and hover-based explanations were often overlooked.
- Users expected access to historical or longitudinal data when clicking on metrics.

Key Areas of Confusion

- Lack of contextual explanation for qualitative labels such as "strong."
- Limited financial or capital investment context.
- Absence of school background information (e.g., year built, structural changes).

Opportunities Identified

- Introduce clearer framing before numeric data.
- Improve visual cues that signal where explanations or definitions are available.
- Balance immediate clarity with opportunities for deeper exploration.

Usefulness & Decision-Making Potential

- Some participants indicated the site could inform school choice decisions.
- Others viewed the site as a starting point rather than a decision-making tool.

Feedback Themes

- Users value transparency but want support interpreting implications.
- Data may prompt further engagement (e.g., attending LSC meetings) rather than provide definitive answers.
- Programming differences and staffing stability surfaced as unmet information needs.

Group Dynamics & Discussion Quality

- Participants engaged with the site at varying levels, including macro-level analysis and personal experience.
- Dominant voices may unintentionally shape discussion flow.
- Some participants expressed hesitation in highly adversarial contexts.

Facilitation Reflections

- Clear framing is critical to maintain CIDT-specific focus.
- Broad prompts allow authentic priorities to emerge but risk diffusion.
- Structured follow-up questions help redirect discussion toward actionable feedback.

Overall Assessment

What's Working

- The focus group design aligns with goals of accessibility and usability.
- Facilitation choices reflect intentional methodological tradeoffs.
- Participants demonstrated genuine engagement with the CIDT tool.

Areas for Refinement

- Balance openness with light structure to improve comparability across sessions.
- Clarify expectations and purpose earlier to reduce logistical friction.
- Continue iterating based on real participant behavior rather than assumptions.

CIDT Design Updates and Committee Feedback

The group reviewed recent design updates led by CPS staff, noting three major changes:

1. Revised left-hand navigation aligned with parent priorities
2. Landing pages that provide high-level framing before metrics
3. Key data moved higher on pages, with “learn more” sections below

Participants discussed visibility issues with chart controls and comparison options, noting that data exists but is not always intuitive to access. CPS shared that chart redesign remains an active pain point.

Discussion also surfaced around comparison frameworks. While some suggested using Opportunity Index scores, CPS reiterated that the index is not intended for direct school comparison.

Participants were encouraged to leave feedback directly through the site, though facilitators emphasized that real-time committee feedback remains valuable.

Additional feedback included:

- Making contextual explanations more intuitive than hover-only “i” icons
- Balancing how much information is shown upfront versus discovered through interaction
- Mixed opinions on whether decimal precision in percentages is necessary

Participants discussed perception data from surveys, particularly confusion around labels like “neutral” when responses skew positive. CPS shared that they are in ongoing conversations with UChicago about data presentation and acknowledged known data quality issues still being resolved.

Multiple participants expressed appreciation for the progress made, noting that the site feels more holistic and improved under current leadership.

Close Out and Next Steps

Participants were asked to indicate via thumbs up, sideways, or down whether the information was sufficient to move forward. Facilitators clarified that a “thumbs up” signals readiness to proceed—not completion of the work.

CPS emphasized that feedback will continue to be gathered during the test phase and that committee input remains welcome between meetings. Facilitators thanked Joe for leading the simulation and the group for thoughtful, candid engagement.

An exit feedback survey was shared as the meeting concluded.

Appendix : Detailed Narrative of UIC Focus Group Simulation

Focus Group Design and Protocol Overview

Joe opened the session with an overview of the **UIC focus group protocol**, explaining the goals, structure, and methodological choices guiding the upcoming community focus groups.

Participants asked clarifying questions about logistics and participant requirements. Joe explained that participants will need only a **phone or computer** to access the CPS site. Some committee members raised concerns that limited tech literacy could slow sessions or detract from discussion quality. In response, Joe noted the importance of accessibility and explained that facilitators would manage participation without screening for technical proficiency.

When asked about the “ideal” focus group participant, Joe clarified that there are **no demographic requirements** beyond being **18 years or older** and willing to engage meaningfully. A question was raised about participants motivated primarily by the \$25 incentive. Joe acknowledged this reality and emphasized that the protocol is designed to work with all perspectives—including skeptical or critical voices—and that those perspectives remain valuable to the process.

Committee members suggested that clearly framing the **purpose and importance of the work** at the outset could help ground participation. Joe shared that the consent form already includes explanatory language and offered to revise or strengthen that framing based on committee feedback.

Joe shared that focus groups are expected to begin **as early as February**, contingent on indicator readiness. Facilitators have a script and probing questions designed to adapt to participant responses. If all indicators are not ready by March, Joe explained that the team may proceed with an initial round using available content and consider follow-up sessions later. CPS leadership reinforced that CIDT is an iterative process and that the guiding question is whether sufficient standardized information exists to move forward responsibly.

Joe confirmed that there is **no survey replacing the focus group**—the focus groups themselves are the primary qualitative tool.

Simulation Structure and Participant Experience

For the simulation, participants were intentionally paired so that each group included one person with a CPS account and one without, mirroring real access conditions.

Joe modeled the focus group introduction, including background context, purpose, and consent language, again inviting feedback or suggested revisions. A participant suggested providing the introduction materials **before** the session to minimize logistical time during the discussion. Joe responded that a brief demographic survey is typically completed in advance or at the start and that he is exploring ways to track completion efficiently.

Questions arose about incentive distribution. Joe explained that gift cards are distributed via **Qualtrics upon completion**, and that the system can track participation. He also shared that he can track who is speaking during sessions and link feedback to demographic data, allowing analysis of patterns without attributing comments publicly.

Joe emphasized efforts to **minimize logistics during live discussion**, noting that in-person groups will not use slides to keep attention on conversation, while virtual sessions will include slides for navigation support. Participants will access the site via a QR code or link.

Focus Group Debrief and Site Feedback

Participants were given five minutes to explore the site before debriefing. Joe then facilitated a structured discussion using sample focus group questions.

Participants shared that the principal's welcome message was appreciated but that the amount of information felt overwhelming in a short time window. Joe noted that actual focus groups will allow closer to **ten minutes** for individual review.

Several usability concerns surfaced:

- Participants expected to see **historical data** when clicking on metrics like math scores
- Five minutes felt insufficient to process the information
- Terms such as "strong" lacked immediate explanatory context
- Participants tended to skip fine print and focus on larger visuals

When asked whether the site was easy to use, participants suggested:

- Including **financial context**, such as capital investments and spending discrepancies
- Adding background information like **year the school was built**
- Highlighting how spending data might prompt families to engage in LSC meetings

Participants also raised questions about how programming differences (e.g., arts or music offerings) influence enrollment decisions and whether CIDT could help explain **why families leave CPS schools**.

Joe modeled follow-up questioning techniques, probing what specific information participants would use when choosing a school—such as test scores, school leadership accessibility, or governance structures.

Additional discussion surfaced concerns about information not currently captured, such as staffing instability. Participants questioned whether such contextual realities should appear on school profiles.

Joe paused to reflect on **group dynamics**, noting that some participants engage at a macro level while others focus on personal experience, and that dominant voices can unintentionally silence others. This led to a broader discussion about whether focus groups should be **heterogeneous or homogeneous** by stakeholder type. Participants noted benefits to both approaches.

Concerns were raised about overly broad instructions (“look at the site”) leading participants down unproductive paths. Joe explained that while task-based prompts create alignment, open-ended exploration allows genuine priorities to surface. He acknowledged the tradeoff and invited further input.

Participants noted that students are not included in focus groups, which some felt was a gap. Others suggested asking adult participants to view the site through different lenses (student, parent, community member).

Joe reiterated the importance of keeping focus group feedback **CIDT-specific**, noting that broader critiques of school programming, while valid, are outside the scope of the tool.