

September 11, 2007

Student Enrollment Process and Priorities

The Issue ...

How best to maintain equitable and well-balanced student enrollment at all of our schools has been a point of discussion recently in our district. At the start of the kindergarten enrollment period in January, some parents may spend a long time standing in line in order to be among the first to enroll their children at their neighborhood school. District policies and Administrative Regulations (AR 5116.1) regulate enrollment priorities. The Board of Education and district administration have been considering amending these regulations. One key issue is whether siblings would receive higher priority in enrollment decisions. The other key issue is whether or not 'First Come, First Served' is the best way to enroll new kindergarten students. In either case, the capacity of school facilities may be impacted by over-enrollment. *The proposed Administrative Regulations do not change the current attendance boundaries of Alameda's neighborhood schools.*

The Options ...

Maintain current enrollment process

Parents return enrollment packets to their neighborhood school on a 'First Come, First Served' basis on the first day announced for submitting enrollment packets. Under this current process, siblings have seventh priority for enrolling students.

Assign priority enrollment numbers for a school as needed

The following Regulation was proposed at the August 14 board meeting:

"Each year during the month of January, a two-week initial enrollment period (Kindergarten Round-Up) will be held. If after the initial two week period there are more students than available spaces, first enrollment priority will be given to siblings of currently enrolled students living in the zone of attendance that have returned a completed application within the two week period. The remaining students will be assigned enrollment priority numbers through a random drawing. These students will then be enrolled until all spaces are filled. The remaining students will also be provisionally enrolled, and given a notice that they may be placed at a different school. Depending on how many students a school is over capacity, the district may open an additional class at the school, or divert these students to neighboring schools. This reassignment may take place at any time between May 1st and the 20th day of the new school year." *Note: Any random drawing would only include residents of the neighborhood school.*

Proposed student enrollment priorities

The district has a policy and practice of promoting neighborhood schools. It plans to use nine priority criteria when making decisions about when students may be enrolled in a particular school:

- (1) Children living within the attendance boundaries of a particular school.
- (2) Students moved involuntarily from an over-capacity school.
- (3) Siblings of students already attending a specific school.
- (4) Fourth priority is given to parents at Title I schools in program improvement who wish to transfer their students to a higher performing school.
- (5) Students who are victims of violent crimes or whose neighborhood school is designated as "persistently dangerous." (*No AUSD schools are designated as "persistently dangerous."* Ed. Code requires this statement.)
- (6) Students approved under the district's open enrollment program (based on space available).
- (7) Children of district employees living outside of Alameda.
- (8) Children of people living outside of Alameda who are employed within the City of Alameda.
- (9) Students requesting transfers into AUSD from other school districts.

Please share your thoughts and suggestions ... You may e-mail comments and suggestions to issuesandoptions@alameda.k12.ca.us. These comments and suggestions may be used to make revisions to the enrollment policies that the school board will reconsider at the October 23 and November 13 Board of Education meetings. Parents will also have an opportunity to speak at these public meetings held at 6:30 p.m. in the Alameda City Hall, 2263 Santa Clara Avenue.