

School Board Action Report

“Every student achieving, everyone accountable”



DATE: November 4, 2009

FROM: Dr. Maria L. Goodloe-Johnson, Superintendent

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STRATEGIC THEME/

FOCUS AREA: Building an Infrastructure that Works Well – Student Assignment

TITLE AND BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The *New Student Assignment Plan Attendance Area Boundaries* document provides specific information about the attendance area boundaries that will put the *New Student Assignment Plan* (NSAP) plan into effect.

For Introduction: November 4, 2009
For Action: November 18, 2009

TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION/EVALUATION

On April 22, 2009 the School Board approved a revised Policy D 03.00 to provide overall policy direction for the development of a new student assignment plan. Subsequently (June 17, 2009), the Board approved the *New Student Assignment Plan* (NSAP) to provide details about the new student assignment plan consistent with the newly adopted policy. The *Student Assignment Plan Attendance Area Boundaries*, with specific school boundaries, will complete the new student assignment plan.

Following approval of the boundaries, a transition plan for the first year of implementation (2010-2011) will be developed prior to the end of January with a work session in December. Initial implementation will begin for students entering grades K, 6 and 9 in the 2010-2011 school year.

RECOMMENDED MOTION

I move that the School Board approve the *New Student Assignment Plan Attendance Area Boundaries*. I further move that the Superintendent be directed to: (1) develop a transition plan to begin implementation of the NSAP and these attendance area boundaries in the 2010-2011

school year, and (2) review existing policies to identify those which need to be eliminated, revised, or put on hold pending revision to bring them into alignment with the New Student Assignment Plan.

BACKGROUND

In June 2007, the School Board adopted a *Framework for New Student Assignment Plan*. This initiated the development of a new student assignment plan that would include defined attendance areas for elementary, middle and high schools; direct feeder patterns from elementary to middle school; and continued opportunities for school choice, including designated Open Choice seats at the high school level.

The revised Policy on student assignment (D 03.00) assumes that a majority of students will attend the school designated by their home address. However, school choice is preserved in the new plan, allowing students at all grade levels to continue to apply for assignment to a school outside of their designated attendance area school during an open application process. If more students apply than can be accommodated for enrollment at an attendance area or option school, seats shall be allotted according to a set of priorities (tiebreakers) as approved by the School Board.

For students for whom the District determines that their needs cannot be met at their attendance area school, a school that offers the necessary services or program will be designated as the student's attendance area school. As service delivery models change to reflect best practices (see below), services will increasingly be provided within attendance and/or service area schools to bring more services closer to where students live, and to increase predictability for students who need specialized services.

Following approval of the revised policy and after extensive community engagement, the School Board adopted the *New Student Assignment Plan in June 2009*.

BEST PRACTICES

The District has commissioned numerous program audits and received guidance from national experts as to best practices for providing various services. A consistent theme of these audits is that the District needs to shift its service delivery approach so that, to a much greater extent than presently exists, services are brought to students rather than students being moved to access services. The recommended boundaries have been designed to support implementation of service delivery changes for special education, bilingual, and advanced learning services by building in capacity (space) to provide such services closer to where students live.

The NSAP, including the recommended boundaries, will result in a coherent student assignment plan that will provide predictability for families, support academic initiatives including increased equity of access to programs and services, and contribute to meeting the District's goals for improved infrastructure.

RESEARCH AND DATA SOURCES

The School Board spent many hours in work sessions and attending community meetings leading up to adoption of the *Framework for New Student Assignment Plan* in June 2007. Subsequently, the Board continued its study of assignment plan issues through an additional series of work sessions focused on student assignment, leading to adoption of the *New Student Assignment Plan* in June 2009. This was followed by continuing work and study leading to the *New Student Assignment Plan Attendance Area Boundaries*. These work sessions included:

- February 6, 2008
- April 30, 2008
- March 18, 2009
- March 25, 2009
- April 8, 2009
- April 23, 2009
- April 29, 2009
- May 19, 2009
- June 24, 2009
- October 6, 2009
- November 3, 2009

In the adopted NSAP, the Board identified various factors to be taken into account in developing attendance area boundaries. The process of developing attendance area boundaries requires balancing various data layers. The “data layers” generated to inform the process included:

- Proximity of students to schools
- Safe walk zones
- Efficiency of school bus routing (elementary and middle school boundaries)
- Metro transportation routes (high school boundaries)
- Demographics, including anticipated changes in enrollment
- Opportunities for creating diversity within boundaries
- Physical barriers (water, etc.)
- Balanced target enrollment for each middle school and its feeder elementary schools to create predictable feeder patterns from elementary to middle school
- Availability of Open Choice seats at all attendance area high schools for students from other attendance areas to enroll through school choice.

These factors were not to be weighted, but taken into consideration as multiple factors were balanced.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Changes in various policies and procedures will be required to bring policies related to student assignment into alignment with the new plan and with each other. Staff work has already begun to identify policies and procedures that will need to be revised, eliminated, or replaced. Policies that have currently been identified include program placement and capacity management.

FISCAL IMPACT

While we anticipate savings in transportation, increased enrollment, implementation of programs and opening of schools to accommodate growth will have a financial impact on the district. The extent of grandfathered transportation will be a factor in how quickly transportation savings can be realized. Expenditure: One-time Annual

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

A number of community meetings were held leading up to the June 17, 2009 approval of the *New Student Assignment Plan*.

- Community meetings on October 23, October 27, and November 1, 2008
- Consultative meetings on November 6, 7, 14, 15, 18 and 20, and on December 2
- Quarterly community meetings about *Excellence for All* on January 12, 13, and 24; March 21, 24 and 26; and May 5, 7, and 9, and
- Meetings with various stakeholder and advocacy groups (Advanced Learning, Bilingual, Special Education, Parent Advisory Committee) during May 2009.

A complete list of meetings, and the handouts from those meetings, can be found on-line at: <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/newassign/index.html>.

After development of proposed boundaries, eleven community meetings were held throughout the city, as well as a public hearing prior to Board action. Specifically:

- October 10, 2009 Eckstein Middle School
- October 10, 2009 Washington Middle School
- October 12, 2009 McClure Middle School
- October 13, 2009 Aki Kurose Middle School
- October 14, 2009 Ballard High School
- October 15, 2009 West Seattle High School
- October 16, 2009 Denny Middle School
- October 17, 2009 Mercer Middle School (2 sessions – a.m. and p.m.)

- November 5, 2009 Roosevelt High School
- November 7, 2009 Rainier Beach High School
- November 9, 2009 Public Hearing, John Stanford Center

In addition to these meetings, individual School Board Directors engaged in numerous community meetings and school-based meetings in their own districts and throughout the city.

Extensive information was provided on the District web site so stakeholders could review information, assumptions and data related to the proposed boundaries. This is available at <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/newassign/index.html>. Families and other stakeholders could submit comment cards electronically, at community meetings, or to schools. Literally thousands of emails were received and reviewed, and the address lookup tool was accessed more than 13592 times.

In conjunction with the attendance area boundaries recommended by the Superintendent, staff has made a series of preliminary recommendations to the Superintendent about program placement options. Preliminary program placement recommendations are not typically made public. This year, however, because of the interest in programs because of the new student assignment plan, preliminary recommendations were made public. This provided the opportunity for community members and other stakeholders to see and comment on preliminary program placement recommendations.

The vote before the School Board is specifically on the attached *New Student Assignment Plan Attendance Area Boundaries* report. Once the Board adopts boundaries, staff will return to the program placement process and reevaluate the preliminary recommendations in light of the adopted boundaries. Staff will also evaluate any additional requests received for program placement. As always, the final recommendations will be submitted to the Superintendent for consideration. The Superintendent's decisions about program placement for 2010-11 will be made available to families prior to the Open Enrollment period in March 2010 for the 2010-11 school year.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the *New Student Assignment Plan Attendance Area Boundaries* be approved and the Superintendent directed to move forward with the development of a transition plan to begin implementation in the 2010-11 school year for students entering grades K, 6 and 9.

ATTACHMENTS

[New Student Assignment Plan Attendance Area Boundaries](#)