

July 5 Waitlists Update Briefing Paper



Purpose

The Board has expressed interest in receiving more information about alternative criteria for moving students off waitlists into attendance area schools. This paper provides the options and considerations for each alternative option related to budget, policy, equity, engagement and staffing.

Staff recommends continuation of the consistent past practice over the past ten years (designated here as “Option 1”), which is to move waitlists at attendance area schools only when there is opportunity to do so without negatively affecting sending schools or adding staff to receiving schools. No action from the Board is needed to continue this practice.

Staff further recommends the Board take no action to move either Option 2 or Option 3 forward.

If the Board wishes staff to change practice and make additional waitlist moves, staff requests the Board carefully consider the pros and cons and then make a formal motion to do so. Motion language is listed for each alternative option.

District Interests

In considering a fair and equitable open enrollment process we have two competing values:

- Equity: providing choice if there is an existing seat available and it does not disrupt viability in learning at (i.e. take a teacher from) another school, most often high needs schools.
- Equality: providing choice to every family possible if there is space available to hire and place an additional teacher, at additional cost and/or impact to high needs schools.

The District must balance the benefits given to individual families by increased choice with the potentially negative impacts that come with choice on schools in the system, particularly those schools where we must maintain the viability of instructional program for our higher needs students.

Background

Seattle has a long history of busing for racial equity. Many models have been attempted and failed. Most recently, the US Supreme Court struck down Seattle’s racial tie-breakers in 2007. Since that time, Seattle has worked to make high quality programs viable in every neighborhood. Seattle’s current enrollment system includes a default assignment to a neighborhood attendance area school with the potential to attend designated option schools around the District. For the past 10 years, Seattle has approved student transfers to other neighborhood attendance area schools only if the sending school is not harmed.

This year, there were 6,332 students on waitlists for 2017-18. Of these, 3,288 have been given a choice assignment, leaving 3,044 on waitlists, mostly for attendance area schools.

The following pages detail the impacts of the options of various degrees to which waitlists can be moved on:

- Option 1: Protecting viability of instruction at sending schools – many of which are Tier 1 and Tier 2 equity schools that need the highest level of instructional supports.
- Option 2: Offering choice to all families where physical space is available regardless of cost or impact to instructional program disruption.
- Option 3: Offering choice slots to unify all siblings where physical space is available regardless of cost or impact to instructional program disruption.

Next Steps

- Staff recognize the need to update the Student Assignment Plan to bring clarity to what schools should have a waitlist, what “capacity” means, and the timeline for decisions. This work will occur in the fall.
- If the Board wishes to provide definitive guidance to the Superintendent for this year’s waitlists, the Board can choose between the options detailed below. A final decision is needed at this meeting to allow schools to know their staffing allocation and hire for open positions.

“Option 1”: Baseline Waitlist Moves with Minimal Budget and Staffing Impacts

Summary: Continues current practice and causes minimal staffing and budget impacts. These moves have already begun and will happen under any scenario.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends continuing implementation of this option.

Potential Board Motion Language: No motion necessary.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfies 258 waitlist requests. • Preserves the instructional viability of programming for students at our high need schools like RBHS and Denny. • Minimizes disruption to staffing and allows us to move more quickly in filling 200+ open teaching positions. • Avoids lack of transparency and engagement that be true for Equity Tier 1 and 2 schools if we negatively impact their staff and program (under Option 2). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaves some waitlist requests unsatisfied • Does not allow schools to use waitlists to “save” teachers from enrollment / budget reductions; however, we have never used this process to save teachers at one school. • Does not give greater protection to siblings; however, siblings are always guaranteed the opportunity to stay together at their neighborhood school.

More Implications of this Option

Total students moved: 258 students

Budget: No additional cost; no staff would be backfilled.

Policy: This option continues recent practice. However, as public testimony had revealed, the District has not adequately communicated current practice. Given the lack of clarity around this process in the Student Assignment Plan, a deeper look at the language in that plan is warranted for the next update this fall.

Equity: This option does not adversely affect Tier 1 or 2 Elementary Schools. For secondary schools, there is small impact on a few Tier 1 and 2 schools due to moves to Option Schools. Franklin is impacted the most (-1.4 FTE) because of students choosing Cleveland, but Franklin also gained 1.8 FTE from enrollment gains in the updated projections, mitigating this impact.

Engagement: While it continues current practice, feedback from the community has shown that this process is not well understood.

Staffing: At the secondary level, this option causes staffing changes (positive or negative) at 15 schools, but at smaller levels (about 0.5 FTE on average).

“Option 2”: Baseline Moves + Additional Moves to Attendance Area Schools with Physical Capacity

Summary: This option includes all the moves covered under Option 1 and, in addition, moves any other students on waitlists at schools where there is physical capacity.

Staff Recommendation: Staff do NOT recommend moving motion language for this option. Staff have significant concerns about the budget and equity impact of this option and its future sustainability, concluding that this option would result in a significant amount of disruption for a minimal number of additional waitlist moves.

Potential Board Motion Language: I move that the School Board direct the Superintendent to move students on waitlists at attendance area schools where there is physical building capacity at the *[insert desired level(s): Elementary, K-8, Secondary]* level(s).

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moves more students. Satisfies 880 waitlist requests more than our present practice. • Provides more flexibility in recognizing the opening of new middle schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes a major change in practice to a more free market choice system with minimal community engagement. • Negatively impacts equity by taking staff and viable programming away from students and parents at our neediest schools, including 11 of 14 Equity Tier 1 and 2 schools at the elementary and K-8 level. • Creates significant costs to backfill (\$7M in addition to other mitigation needs). • Creates significant staff movement in 34 schools and therefore delay in staffing 200+ positions in time for school start • Creates expectation that we would continue to negatively impact high needs schools like Rainer Beach and Denny. (e.g. RB could lose 50 students per year for the next 4 years) • Implements new policy without opportunity to engage families in high need schools that will see their staffing impacted. • Creates enrollment imbalances that leave some schools underutilized and make it harder to make accurate projections. • May depress test scores and create a downward spiral for some schools.

More Implications of this Option

Additional Students Moved (not counting those moved in Option 1): 298 secondary students and 582 elementary students

Budget: \$7 million total – \$4.6m for elementary and \$2.4m for secondary. This cost covers the increased staffing at the schools that gain enrollment and backfill to hold the sending schools harmless.

Policy: This option would move the District to a more free-market system, opening up many more school choice moves in the future. Ultimately, this could put schools with poor reputations in a negative feedback spiral that decreases their enrollment year after year.

Equity: This option has a strong and unambiguously negative impact on Tier 1 and 2 Elementary and K-8 schools: 11 of the 14 Tier 1 and 2 schools would lose staff under this scenario.

For secondary schools, the equity impact is similar to Option 1, but moves Rainier Beach students to Franklin, giving Franklin a net positive in staffing from waitlist moves and Rainier Beach a higher negative impact. RBHS loses 0.8 FTE from waitlist moves in Option 1 (a loss that is negated by its increase in projected enrollment), but 2.6 FTE in Option 2.

Engagement: Very little community engagement has been conducted for this option. While school communities that would benefit from this option have been actively engaged with the Board, the school communities that stand to lose under this option are not fully aware of that possibility.

Staffing: At the Elementary and K-8 level, this would cause staffing changes (positive or negative) at 34 schools.

At the secondary level, this option would cause staffing changes (positive or negative) at 19 schools, and at higher levels than Option 1 (about 1 FTE on average rather than 0.5 FTE).

“Option 3”: Baseline Moves + Additional Moves to Attendance Area Schools with Physical Capacity for Siblings Only

Summary: This option includes all the moves covered under Option 1 and, in addition, moves any other siblings on waitlists at schools where there is physical capacity.

Staff Recommendation: Staff do NOT recommend moving motion language for this option. This has a lesser budget impact than Option 2, but staff have significant concerns about the longer-term policy implications of this option. Staff would note that families that would like to keep siblings together have the opportunity to do so at their neighborhood attendance area school

Potential Board Motion Language: I move that the School Board direct the Superintendent to move any siblings on waitlists at attendance area schools where there is physical building capacity at the *[insert desired level(s): Elementary, K-8, Secondary]* level(s).

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfies 148 more waitlist requests than Option 1. • Keeps siblings together; however, siblings can always be kept together at neighborhood schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides attendance area rights to non-attendance area schools for siblings, which is not something the District has promised to families in the past • Negatively impacts students and parents at our highest need schools by taking staff and program away. • Significant cost per student to mitigate – adding to our deficit. • Creates expectation that we would continue to negatively impact higher need schools like Emerson. • May depress test scores and create a downward spiral for some schools. • Impacts more staff negatively by late transfers.

More Implications of this Option

Additional Students Moved (not counting those moved in Option 1): 148 students, with all but a few at the elementary or K-8 level

Budget: \$1.2 million total, all incurred at the elementary level. This cost covers the increased staffing at the schools that gain enrollment and backfill to hold the sending schools harmless.

Policy: It is important to highlight that under current policies, families can keep siblings together if they choose their neighborhood attendance area school. If the Board chooses this option, it means that the families with a first child who gets into a non-neighborhood school essentially

gain attendance area rights to that school for the rest of their children, which is not something the District has promised to families in the past.

Equity: Moving siblings would negatively impact staffing levels at three Tier 1 and 2 schools: Emerson, John Muir, and West Seattle Elementary.

Engagement: Very little community engagement has been conducted for this option.

Staffing: At the Elementary and K-8 level, this would cause staffing changes (positive or negative) at 10 schools.

Data Appendix

Option 1

	Elementary and K-8 Schools	Secondary Schools
All Schools		
Total FTE of reduced staffing	0	4.6
Total FTE of added staffing	0	3.2
Net FTE gain/loss	0	-1.4
Number of schools lose staff	0	11
Number of schools gain staff	0	4
Total students moved	258 students total across all levels	
Equity Tier 1 and 2 Schools Only		
Total FTE of reduced staffing	0	2.6
Total FTE of added staffing	0	0.2
Net FTE gain/loss	0	-2.4
Number of schools lose staff	0	4
Number of schools gain staff	0	1
Schools that lose staff	None	Denny, Mercer, Franklin, Rainier Beach
Schools that gain staff	None	Washington

Option 2

	Elementary and K-8 Schools	Secondary Schools
All Schools		
Total FTE of reduced staffing	26.0	11.6
Total FTE of added staffing	17.5	10.6
Net FTE gain/loss	-8.5	-1.0
Number of schools lose staff	22	12
Number of schools gain staff	12	7
Additional students moved – not counting those moved under Option 1	582 additional students	298 additional students
Equity Tier 1 and 2 Schools Only		
Total FTE of reduced staffing	13.0	5.0
Total FTE of added staffing	0.0	4.0
Net FTE gain/loss	-13.0	4.0
Number of schools lose staff	11	4
Number of schools gain staff	0	2
Schools that lose staff	11 of 14 Tier 1 and 2 schools	Aki, Denny, Mercer, Rainier Beach
Schools that gain staff	None	Washington, Franklin

Option 3

	Elementary and K-8 Schools	Secondary Schools
All Schools		
Total FTE of reduced staffing	7.5	0
Total FTE of added staffing	4.0	0
Net FTE gain/loss	-3.5	0
Number of schools lose staff	6	0
Number of schools gain staff	4	0
Additional students moved – not counting those moved under Option 1	148 additional students across all levels, with all but a few at the elementary level	Only a few
Equity Tier 1 and 2 Schools Only		
Total FTE of reduced staffing	3.5	0
Total FTE of added staffing	0	0
Net FTE gain/loss	-3.5	0
Number of schools lose staff	3	0
Number of schools gain staff	0	0
Schools that lose staff	Emerson, John Muir, West Seattle	None
Schools that gain staff	None	None