

Date: Thursday, March 3, 2016
To: Larry Nyland, Superintendent
From: Michael F. Tolley, Associate Superintendent for Teaching and Learning
Re: Friday Memo for March 4, 2016

DIVISION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING:

Department of Special Education:

Special Education Update – The University of Washington’s Experimental Education Unit:

SPS has corresponded with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) last month in an effort to get technical assistance related to the tentative agreement with the University of Washington’s Experimental Education Unit (EEU). There are details SPS and the EEU are trying to work out on issues like funding, enrollment procedures, placement on the continuum of special education services and consultation. Late this week, OSPI provided some good news regarding funding. In regards to the financial basis for the Agreement, there would be 36 students at the applicable full day Kindergarten rate, plus 16 special education eligible students at the SPS special education funding rate. It would require us to move through this process and in order to have these students at the EEU confirmed in iGrants form package 765 (due April 15, 2016). This informs our timeline for getting the Interagency Program Agreement in place.

We have the other details related to the Interagency Program Agreement to still finalize and are working with the University of Washington each week to get this agreement ready to submit for introduction and approval.

Department of Curriculum, Assessment & Instruction

Advanced Learning Update:

Eligibility Progress:

The Multidisciplinary Selection Committee has made eligibility decisions for close to 2,000 students and are processing letters and emails for their families this week. With more than 2,000 decisions remaining, we are on track to communicate eligibility to all families by mid-March.

Family Email:

In the meantime, we have reached out to families of all referred students in grade K-7. The following communication was emailed March 3 to all of these families.

Dear family,

Thank you for referring your student for Advanced Learning or Highly Capable eligibility. We have completed the testing schedule and are in the process of mailing eligibility letters to families. If you have not yet received your eligibility letter, we anticipate that you will receive it by mid-March.

The Open Enrollment for School Choice window closed March 1, and we noted in a previous email that you could enroll your child during that window even if Advanced Learning/Highly Capable eligibility had not yet been confirmed. If, however, you did not enroll during this time, we want to provide the following information:

ALO/Spectrum for Families of Students in K-4:

All students deemed eligible for Advanced Learning are eligible to participate in Advanced Learning Opportunities (ALO) at their attendance-area elementary school. No Choice form is required, and ALOs vary by building. If you would like your child to participate in a Spectrum program at a Spectrum-designated elementary school, you will need to fill out a School Choice form. You have until May 31 to submit the form. Assignment is based on space availability and tiebreakers, and **it is not guaranteed even if your form was submitted by March 1.**

ALO/Spectrum for Families of Students in 5-7:

All middle school students deemed eligible for Advanced Learning **will automatically be assigned** to Spectrum at their attendance-area middle school, although a seat is not guaranteed. No Choice form is required. You only need to fill out a School Choice form as an “opt-out” – if you wish your child to attend a *different* middle school or K-8 for Spectrum, for example. You have until May 31 to submit the form. Assignment is based on space availability and tiebreakers and is not guaranteed.

- Exception: Newly eligible students in grades 6 or 7 who have chosen to attend a middle school outside of their attendance area must submit a Choice form to return to their attendance-area middle school for Spectrum. Assignment is based on space availability and tiebreakers and is not guaranteed.

Highly Capable Cohort for Families of Students in K-7

All K-7 students deemed eligible for Highly Capable services are **guaranteed a spot** in the Highly Capable Cohort (HCC) in their pathway elementary/middle school. You will still need to complete a School Choice form in order to enroll them in the cohort at the pathway school, but it is not due until May 31. You also have until May 31 to enroll them in the cohort in a different cohort school (not in your pathway), but that assignment is not guaranteed. It is based on space available and tiebreakers.

The School Choice forms posted to the School Choice page provide more details on the enrollment process: http://www.seattleschools.org/admissions/school_choice

Thank you for your interest in Advanced Learning.

Automated Email:

Additionally, we are providing an automated email response for families who email us about eligibility. That response links them to the following web page, which clarifies some questions about the delay and how to handle enrollment:

<https://www.seattleschools.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=627&pageId=14582>

A parent asked about the use of Smarter Balanced scores for achievement testing for Advanced Learning eligibility. Here is our response.

With the understanding that 2014-15 was the first year of the Smarter Balanced assessments, we have approached achievement testing in the following ways during this 2015-16 Advanced Learning testing cycle:

- We use the highest available achievement test scores in reading and math that are less than a year old and have been administered by school. This typically would be Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) or Smarter Balanced. And while we only use the highest valid score, we do look at the testing history to see if a low score is an anomaly or a trend.
- We use percentiles, not percentages, as the scores. This ranks students against other students. For example, a student could score 78 percent on a test, but that 78 percent could have been the highest score on that test, so the percentile ranking may be in the 99th percentile. If there were valid MAP scores available, those would have been taken into account.
- For this current testing cycle only, if a family refused to participate in Smarter Balanced assessments and no other achievement test score is available, we will provide those families with an achievement test.
- If a student participated in Smarter Balanced, but the family is not satisfied with the score, families may appeal.
- For this year's Smarter Balanced assessments, under the Refusal to Participate header on the informational web page, we include the following message:

District achievement testing in reading and math (MAP or SBA) is required to determine Advanced Learning eligibility. Candidates are required to participate in district achievement testing. Opting out of testing is a decision to opt out of the Advanced Learning eligibility testing process.