



TO: Vincent Matthews, State Administrator  
Board of Education

FROM: Kirsten Vital, Chief of Community Accountability  
Renato Almanzor, Director Family Community Office

DATE: October 31, 2007

RE: Additional Background on Intra-district Enrollment

### Action Requested

The Board is requested to adopt the following motion regarding this annual review of Board Policy 5116.1 – Intradistrict Open Enrollment. The Board, upon recommendation of staff, finds and declares, upon its annual review of Board Policy 5116.1 - Intradistrict Open Enrollment, that the current policy meets current needs of District, is consistent with law and needs no amendment or change at this time.

### Background

Intradistrict Open Enrollment permits pupils enrolled in the District the opportunity to attend a school of choice selected under the annual Open Enrollment Policy. Currently the Board Policy 5115.1 is designed to meet the diverse needs and interests of District parents and students, permits the assignment of students to any and all schools of the district based on the criteria contained therein.

For the past ten years OUSD has managed the flow of student assignments. Although we have always attempted to place a child into the neighborhood school (if the parent wishes), there have been years of operating in a “mega-boundary” situation due to:

- Space (not enough teaching stations)
- Teacher contractual maximums (OEA contract)
- Class size reduction maximums
- Education Code
- “Underperforming” and more recently Program Improvement status of the school

In 1997 Administrative Bulletin 3020, following Board Policy and Ed code, enacted the ability of parents to apply to any District school regardless of location, including specific regulations. The Coordinator of Student Assignments in the Department of Student, Family & Community Services managed the Open Enrollment process working with principals as to where there was space and establishing a “window period” whereby parents submitted applications to attend schools outside their own boundary and participating in a “lottery” if the school to which they applied had fewer spaces than the number of applicants. The Student Assignment Office:

- Coordinated the ‘School of Choice’ /Open Enrollment process
- Handled redirection of students to sites with space and published regular lists to sites telling where there was space
- Assisted in handling the monitoring for K-3 class size reduction (CSR)
- Provided guidelines to principals
- Provided forms and guidelines to parents
- Announced and advertised the ‘window period’ (usually December / January)
- Obtained the Civic Center Permit for the ‘lottery’ (held in January)
- Handled the random selection per Ed Code through a ‘lottery’

In 2002, “No Child Left Behind” legislation required districts to notify parents of the right to transfer their child from a Program Improvement School to a non-program improvement school. OUSD incorporated this requirement into the Open Enrollment/Lottery process. Since that time, parents/guardians have been:

- Noticed that their neighborhood school is Program Improvement
- Notified of the right to transfer to a Non Program Improvement school
- Notified of the ‘window period’ during which they can apply to transfer
- Encouraged to participate in the District process

Beginning in 2004, OUSD as part of ensuring that students and parents knew of the ‘Options’ at the various high schools (including Academies and Small Alternative schools), an Options Fair was held at the Kaiser Auditorium so that 8<sup>th</sup> grade parents could visit with high school principals, counseling and academy staff and students to hear about the high school options in addition to visiting the sites themselves. As part of the high school reform where large schools were broken up into smaller schools it was important for parents and guardians to understand their options in and out of their immediate neighborhood.

Beginning in 2006 the same opportunity was afforded to parents of any student (K-12) to be able to see all of the schools, talk with the principals and understand options for choosing schools. This was handled (in addition to visits to sites) through attending the Options Fair.

The first Options Fair for K-12 was also held at the Kaiser Center. The following year the fair was held at the Marriott and for the upcoming year the fair will be held at the Oakland Coliseum.

Advertising for the Open Enrollment / Options window over the years has included:

- Letters to parents / guardians informing of the law and the process
- Banners on school sites reminding them of the date(s)

- Information on KDOL informing on a regular basis of the dates and times of the 'window' and of the Fair
- Information in the Tribune and other Oakland papers
- Information on the district website

The Options Fair for the '08-'09 school year is scheduled for December 7th and 8th at the Coliseum. Sites will receive information on:

- Handing out forms
- Collecting forms
- Logging forms
- Submitting forms
- Translations
- Plans / expectations for the Options Fair
- Expectations for site visitations
- Spaces available

In addition Parents / Guardians will receive:

- Instruction for filling out and submitting forms
- Notification of PI status of the district's sites
- Information about the Options Fair
- Timelines for submission
- Brochures and map with explanations and FAQs
- Pre-printed forms if the student is in CDC, 5<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade

Public awareness has increased over time so that more families know explicitly of our open enrollment policy and the options process. Although access to information for some families continues to be a concern for staff, our strategies for community engagement have had a positive impact with more families participating in the enrollment process each year.

#### *Issues to address*

Our community engagement strategies have allowed for greater participation in the process, and we recognize that we need to address the following two areas this year:

1. Priority conflicts. This is one of the dynamics which may come into play within the broader "mega boundaries" or grouping of neighboring attendance areas. For example, because neighborhood is preference over siblings in the priorities, families in areas of town with high mobility rates are finding that siblings end up in separate schools as they move from one attendance area to another. In addition, increasing kindergarten from half-day to full day a few years ago cut our kindergarten space offerings.
2. Transparent Procedures. The other challenge is the lack of public access to information and participation. Many families are unaware of the deadlines and processes for assigning students to schools and programs. Some of the issues include: support for transitional families, waiting lists, capping, priority & lottery decision making within the

window and after the window. In addition, the complexity of school programs and strategies (e.g., dual immersion, class size reduction) enhances the placement challenges when programs fill, yet the nearest "open" school for kindergartners is a few miles away.

### *Workplans*

We have a 2007-2008 Family and Community Office workplan to begin addressing the above mentioned issues. We believe that a change of policy is not necessary at this time, and in fact need time to carry out our workplan to generate the necessary data to fully understand the most appropriate changes to be made, if any.

1. Addressing issue #1 above, our School Portfolio Management Office annually reviews attendance boundary changes as a possible solution to focus schools targeted for enrollment issues (either over crowding or under enrolled). Recommendations of any attendance boundary adjustments for the 2008-2009 school year will be presented to the Board on December 12<sup>th</sup>. Furthermore, we will analyze data around changes to the lottery priorities such as prioritizing neighborhood vs. prioritizing sibling, and what the effects of saving seats for PI transfers would be. We will also examine case studies which address these issues, class size reduction and capping.
2. Addressing issue #2, in addition to the Options Fair, the Student Assignment & Bilingual Testing staff will offer Options Procedures workshops in targeted geographical areas in December 2007 and January 2008 so that families can fully understand the procedures by which student assignments happen.
3. Addressing issues #1 & #2, the Family & Community Office will convene focus groups with principals, families and neighborhoods in November and December. These focus groups will not only generate information for the possible modifications of the 2009-2010 policy, but they will also help generate and communicate guidelines for the 2008-2009 process more clearly.

### **Recommendation**

It is the staff recommendation that the Board adopt the following motion regarding this annual review of Board Policy 5116.1 – Intradistrict Open Enrollment. The Board, upon recommendation of staff, finds and declares, upon its annual review of Board Policy 5116.1 - Intradistrict Open Enrollment, that the current policy meets current needs of District, is consistent with law and needs no amendment or change at this time.

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