



SECTION 1000: STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS

POLICY 1030: SCHOOLS AND PROGRAMS OF CHOICE

- *Date Adopted: February 20, 2013*
 - *Date Reviewed: December 1, 2021*
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POLICY STATEMENT

The Board supports the provision of educational options for parents and students that support the vision and goals of the school district.

RATIONALE

Students learn in diverse ways. Their needs can be met by providing a variety of approaches to teaching, learning, and schooling. Parents have different preferences for the type of school or program they believe will best meet the educational needs of their children. These preferences will be addressed through the provision of a range of educational options.

DEFINITIONS

- **“Choice”** is the opportunity to enrol in a school or school program selected from a variety of educational options available within the school district.
- **“Educational options”** shall include available programs within a school or entire schools based on alternative educational models (such as Language Immersion, traditional, Montessori, culturally responsive, etc.).
- **“Catchment School or Neighbourhood School”** is the school that a student would normally attend.

LEGISLATION/REGULATIONS

- *School Act, Section 2, Access to Educational Program*
- *School Act, Section 3, Entry to Educational Program*
- *School Act, Section 82 (1), Specialty Academies*



POLICY

The Board supports the provision of comprehensive educational programs at each district school, with equitable distribution of district programs to all schools in the district. The Board will continue to investigate and support opportunities to increase educational options at elementary and secondary schools within the school district and will encourage community involvement in the development and provision of additional educational options for students.

While supporting increased educational choice, the Board will also make every effort to retain the neighbourhood school concept by maintaining attendance/catchment areas for each school in the district and by maximizing the number of students able to attend their neighbourhood area school. Student transfers into a school or program approved under this policy may be limited by the procedures related to school attendance areas, noted below.

PROCEDURES FOR EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS

1. School or program proposals may be submitted by staff, parents, students, individuals, or groups within the community.
2. Those making submissions must ensure that their proposal:
 - a. meets the requirements of the *School Act*, Regulations, and Minister's Orders
 - b. meets provincial and/or Board Authorized Course requirements.
 - c. has a statement of philosophy, goals, and objectives
 - d. is open to application by any student in the district
 - e. maintains student enrolment without any transportation assistance from the district
 - f. can be accommodated in the existing school facilities without any major renovation or modification
 - g. can be sustained with a level of funding equal to that of other schools of comparable enrolment in the district
 - h. contains a staffing organization plan consistent with Board policies and the collective agreements with unionized employees
 - i. has included parents, students, and staff in the planning
 - j. contains a timeline for implementation.



PROCEDURES FOR EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS *(continued)*

3. A committee will evaluate all school and program proposals received under this policy. The committee's evaluation will be based on, but not necessarily limited to, the following criteria:
 - a. the goals and objectives of the program
 - b. the unique qualities of the program
 - c. educational research in support of the program
 - d. the need for the program in terms of the intellectual, social and emotional, and physical growth of students
 - e. support of parents, community, staff, and students
 - f. the availability and suitability of an existing district school and the impact on that school, if a proposal originates from the community
 - g. the ability to facilitate alternative school or program placements of students whose parents do not support the proposal
 - h. the ability to transfer staff who do not support the proposal to another assignment as per collective agreement provisions
 - i. the availability of resources within the district to facilitate the program development
 - j. a detailed estimate of costs involved
 - k. conformation to the *School Act*, collective agreements and district policy.
4. The committee will make recommendations to the Board with respect to all proposals that meet the evaluation criteria.
5. The final decision with respect to all proposals rests with the Board. With respect to proposals referred to the Board, the Board may:
 - a. grant approval
 - b. grant approval with a probationary term
 - c. grant conditional approval
 - d. refer the proposal back to the applicants for further work, information, or clarification
 - e. reject the proposal



PROCEDURES FOR EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS *(continued)*

6. In reaching a final decision with respect to any proposal the Board shall consider, but not be limited to, the following:
 - a. the level of parental and community support
 - b. the ability to facilitate alternative school or program placements for students whose parents do not support the proposal
 - c. the ability to facilitate transfers of staff who do not support the proposal
 - d. The attributes noted under Item #3
7. When the Board approves a school or program under this policy arising from a proposal that did not originate within a neighbourhood school, the Board, through the District Choice Committee, shall ensure that consultation with any school or neighbourhood community affected by the proposal is part of the process of determining the final location of the program or school.
8. Following the approval of a proposal by the Board, the committee will appoint an implementation team for each approved proposal.

PROCEDURES FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AREAS

9. The school and program admission process should support clarity, stability, and continuity for students' families. Wherever possible, siblings should be admitted to the same school.
10. The school and program admission process should enable school and district staff to plan the allotment of resources in ways that will best accommodate demand and minimize adjustments required at the beginning of the school year.
11. School capacities and/or attendance areas shall be determined by the Superintendent of Schools in consultation with principals, and will consider factors such as maintenance of the learning environment, physical facilities, class size agreements, class configuration, and cost effectiveness.
12. Students will be registered in a particular elementary school on the following basis:
 - a. children whose normal place of residence is within the school's community and/or attendance area
 - b. non-catchment students returning from the previous school year in that school



PROCEDURES FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AREAS *(continued)*

13. Where a parent living outside the attendance area requests a student's registration, the request will be considered after the district has allocated resources based on enrolment projections and the principal has determined that there is sufficient surplus capacity for the remainder of the year. The decision will be based on:
 - a. the operating capacity of the school as defined by the Ministry of Education
 - b. the level of staff assigned to the school by the district
 - c. the physical space in which instructional programs operate in the school
 - d. the ability of the school to provide the appropriate educational programs for the applicant and other students.
14. Out-of-catchment parents will be responsible for providing transportation for their child(ren) unless a regular bus run exists and there is surplus space on the bus.
15. If a student living within the attendance area of the school cannot be accommodated, the principal will assist the parent to obtain registration in another school. The student will go on a waitlist and will be notified if a space becomes available. Should the parent not wish to move the student at that time, he/she will be asked if he/she wishes to maintain the registration request for the upcoming year.
16. Notwithstanding the above, plans for managing enrolments in a school(s) or community may be recommended by the Superintendent of Schools, in consultation with principals, to the Board.
17. Alternate school attendance is determined by referral and availability only.

DATES FOR APPLICATION FOR ENROLMENT

18. Before the fifteenth of January each school year, the Board will establish and publish application guidelines and procedures for:
 - a. non-school district children
 - b. non-catchment area children, except for continuing school district students
 - c. children and students applying in district programs for the first time
 - d. catchment area children, other than continuing school district students
 - e. children applying for first-time entry to kindergarten programs.



DATES FOR APPLICATION FOR ENROLMENT *(continued)*

19. Out-of-catchment applications received after the date(s) established will not be considered until the process begins again the following year. They will be placed on a waiting list in order of application.
20. Non-catchment area students who have applied in accordance with the prescribed deadlines will be placed on a waitlist and will be considered for enrolment if there is surplus space as determined by the principal and Superintendent of Schools (or designate). Families will be notified as per published date as to their application status.
21. New students to programs of choice (e.g., French Immersion), will be placed on a waiting list and notified as per published date of their status. A review of the list will take place on the first Friday in September of the week that school starts.
22. Catchment area children who are new to the school and apply after the published deadline will be placed on a waiting list and notified as per published date as to their status. If there is not sufficient room in the school, students will be assisted in finding a school, yet maintained on the waiting list.
23. Kindergarten students will be processed in the same manner as the procedures listed above, depending on their status.
24. Non-school district children will be referred through District Administration for approval and placement.