

TO: Operations Policy and Planning Committee

FROM: Piet Langstraat, Superintendent of Schools

DATE: May 8, 2017

RE: Student Enrolment Priorities

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The purpose of this memo is to update the Board of Education about the work of the Student Registration and Transfer Ad Hoc Committee, including public consultation efforts to inform recommendations regarding the student enrolment process.

**BACKGROUND:**

Approved in October 2016, the Student Registration and Transfer Committee is an ad-hoc committee established by the Board of Education for the purpose of establishing student registration and transfer priorities for students attending school in the Greater Victoria School District. The Student Registration and Transfer Committee has two deliverables:

1. To recommend to the Board priorities for student registration and transfer requests, including district programs such as French Immersion and International Student Programs.
2. To recommend appropriate changes to policy and regulations.

The membership of the committee includes individuals with various perspectives related to student enrolment:

- Two Trustees appointed by the Board Chair
- The Superintendent or delegate
- District Principal of Modern Languages and Multiculturalism
- Director of International Student Program or designate
- One VCPAC representative
- Three PAC representatives (preference given to one from each schooling level- elementary, middle, and secondary) to be selected by lottery from a list of those schools interested in participating. The lottery will take place prior to the first meeting of the Committee.
- Three Principals (preference given to one from each schooling level - elementary, middle, and secondary with at least one from a dual track school)
- Two student representatives

Under the School Act, the School District is required to articulate student enrolment priorities in a policy approved by the Board of Education. Student enrolment priorities have not been reviewed in decades.

Current priorities for registration and transfer are:

1. A returning student (catchment or non-catchment)
2. Sibling of a student in attendance at the time of registration and in September of the next school year
3. A catchment area child
4. A non-catchment area child
5. A non-school district child

These priorities apply to general registration and transfer requests but do not apply to programs of choice. Programs such as sports academies and leadership programs that are open to all students in the District to apply have a selection process based on an application that must meet specific criteria.

### Current Pathways

Each elementary and middle school has a designated middle school and high school. The automatic progression from one to the next is called a pathway. Current practice is that if a student transfers to a non-catchment school they will then follow the same pathway that a catchment student would from elementary to middle school, or middle school to high school until graduation.

Each residential address has an English or French catchment and associated pathway. Should a student leave the French Immersion track but not live in the English catchment for the school they are attending, they must return to their English catchment school or apply for a transfer.

### International Student Enrolment

The International Student Program follows a separate placement process from the process noted above for local students. The Greater Victoria School District is recognized internationally for its quality education system and there are many educational and community benefits offered to our local students by having international students in our schools. Students from other countries expose students to different cultures and languages, and students form relationships that create opportunities to excel in the global economy. Placements are dispersed across Greater Victoria schools based on requests, space, programs and homestay options.

### **ISSUES AND ANALYSIS:**

As part of this review, the Committee reviewed School Act requirements, school space and facilities information, student enrolment data, as well as historical information related to registration and transfer requests at all levels. In addition to this data and background information, a community consultation process was undertaken to solicit input from parents and students about the student enrolment process. The objectives of engaging the public in this process were to:

1. Raise awareness and understanding of growing student population in the District and the need to review student enrolment priorities.

2. Support a transparent and fair process that is responsive to input received.
3. Encourage high and broad participation of over 1,000 parents across the School District in providing input.
4. Close the loop with all stakeholders by making input, recommendations and decisions accessible to all.
5. Utilize this process to capture how parents like to receive information and provide input.

The consultation process occurred from March 16 – April 10 and input was collected through an online survey for both parents and students. The survey focused on capturing what is most important when prioritizing how students are accepted when space is limited. Broad awareness was established through schools, social media, news media and working with community organizations. In addition, the survey was promoted in community centres, coffee shops and through community organization channels. The District also worked with the Inter-Cultural Association (ICA) to translate surveys in Arabic, Mandarin, Punjabi, Spanish, and Tagalog.

These coordinated efforts resulted in 3,450 respondents to the parent survey and 418 respondents to the student survey, and a 70% completion rate. In terms of parent respondents, 75% were parents of current students, 15% parents of future students and 5% self-categorized as “other” and were generally grandparents or parents of former students.

Who we heard from:

Parent respondents were geographically dispersed:

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Respondents (#)</b>	<b>Respondents (%)</b>
Saanich	1,267	39.99%
Victoria	954	30.11%
Oak Bay	453	14.3%
Esquimalt	191	6.03%
View Royal	168	5.34%
Out of District	74	2.3%
Highlands	12	0.38%
Other/Don't know	49	1.55%

The majority of families had two or more children. The family composition of parent respondents was as follows:

- 26% one child
- 56% two children
- 16% three or more

- 59% of parent respondents had children in elementary school, 33% had children in middle school and 23% had children in high school.
- 33% of respondents had a child enrolled in French Immersion.
- 32% of respondents had a child enrolled in a school outside of their catchment.

- Roughly half (55%) of parent respondents were aware of the current enrolment priorities.

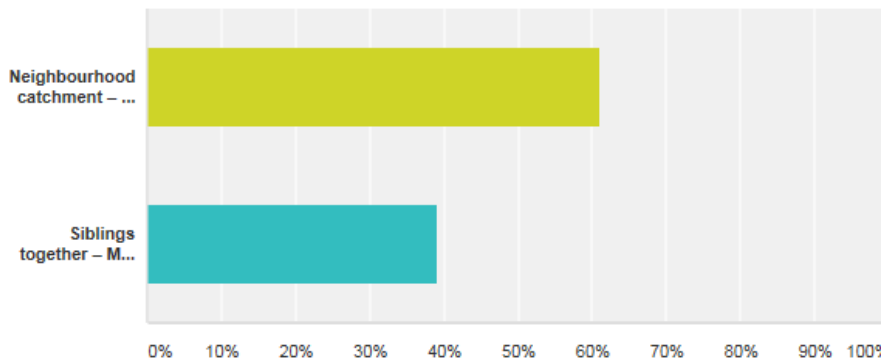
In addition to the parent respondents, 418 students responded to the student survey. 95% were high school age and 80% had one or more siblings. 31% were in French Immersion and 67% attended their catchment school. 72% of student respondents were unaware of the current priorities.

What we heard:

The majority of parent respondents felt that a child attending a neighbourhood catchment school was more important than siblings attending the same school at the same time. Although less of a majority, 54% of student respondents prioritized catchment over attending a school at the same time as a sibling.

**Which of these two priorities is most important to you?**

Answered: 2,971 Skipped: 469

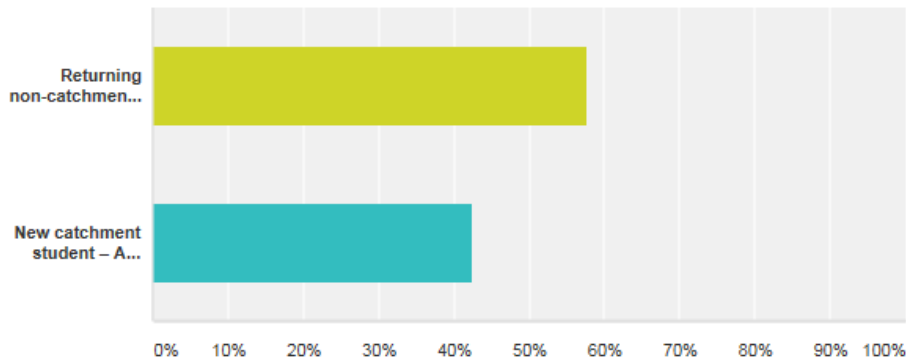


Answer Choices	Responses
Neighbourhood catchment – My child is able to attend the school in my neighbourhood catchment area	60.96% 1,811
Siblings together – My children are able to attend the same non-catchment school together at the same time	39.04% 1,160
Total	2,971

The majority of parent respondents felt a returning non-catchment student was a higher priority than a new catchment student. In addition, 72% of student respondents prioritized returning students as more important.

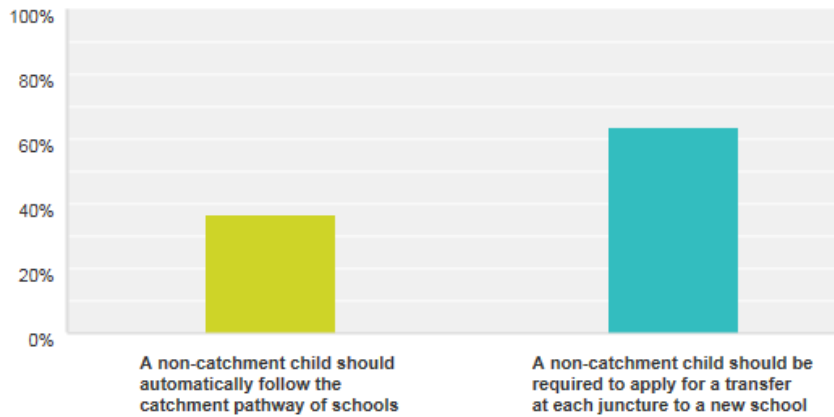
## Which of these two priorities is most important to you?

Answered: 2,971 Skipped: 469



Answer Choices	Responses
Returning non-catchment student – A non-catchment child who attended the school the year prior	57.69% 1,714
New catchment student – A child that moves into the neighbourhood catchment	42.31% 1,257
Total	2,971

In term of pathways, when asked whether non-catchment students transitioning from elementary to middle, and middle to secondary should have to apply to transfer, the majority of respondents felt they should. Student respondents were split 50-50 on this question.



Answer Choices	Responses
A non-catchment child should automatically follow the catchment pathway of schools	36.72% 1,070
A non-catchment child should be required to apply for a transfer at each juncture to a new school	63.28% 1,844
Total	2,914

In addition to the quantitative survey results, thousands of qualitative comments were offered. A number of themes emerged:

- Wide range of comments about the French immersion program
- Concerns that international students are preventing local students from attending catchment schools
- Various transportation considerations – ability to walk or bike to school, family commute routes, etc.
- Concerns about fraudulent identification practices by parents wanting to enroll students at specific schools
- Desire for improved registration process in terms of improved information and online options
- Ensuring there is a clear process and/or considerations for students with individual needs, outside of the student enrolment priorities
- Reopening of closed schools
- A perceived inequity amongst schools in terms of programs and investments being made

The Superintendent will share this information with respective staff and committees to inform other relevant processes.

#### Recommended student enrolment priorities:

Based on the review of all information related to student enrolment and community input, it is recommended that the current student enrolment priorities be revised to reflect greater priority for students living within catchment. In comparison to the current priorities, it would prioritize catchment students over siblings of students currently enrolled. The new student enrolment priorities for new registrations and transfer requests would be as follows:

1. re-enrolling students
2. a catchment area child
3. siblings
4. a non-catchment area child
5. a non-school district child

These enrolment priorities would apply to new registrations and transfer requests for English and French programs, and would apply to elementary to middle, and middle to secondary transitions.

#### Student Transitions

The enrollment priorities apply to all students in transition from elementary to middle school, and from middle school to high school. In the event space is limited and a school cannot accept all non-catchment student requests, priority will be given to those non-catchment students currently in the determined pathway of schools over other non-catchment, non-pathway students.

#### French Immersion and Programs of Choice:

The historical practice of requiring a student leaving a French Immersion track (that does not live within the English catchment for the school they are attending) to return to their English catchment school or apply for a transfer, will remain the same. This practice will also apply to any student attending a program of choice at a non-catchment school (e.g. sports academy or leadership program).

Implementation of new enrollment priorities:

The new student enrolment priorities will be applied to all new registrations, transfer requests and elementary to middle, and middle to secondary transitions for the 2018-2019 school year.

International Students

In recognition of a growing student population and to ensure an equitable placement of international students at schools across the District, the number of international student registrations will be capped at 1,050 FTE for 2017-2018 and will be reviewed annually by the Superintendent and Director of International Programs, based on annual enrolment projections.

In schools where there is an increase in catchment students, international student placements will be reduced. This has occurred at Oak Bay High School for the 2017-2018 school year, where international student placements have been reduced by 70 seats in the coming year.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That the Board of Education consider the following motions at the June 2017 Board of Education meeting:

That the Board of Education approve the following student enrolment priorities to take effect for all student enrolment during the 2018-2019 school year:

1. re-enrolling students
2. a catchment area child
3. siblings
4. a non-catchment area child
5. a non-school district child

That the Board of Education direct the Superintendent to revise the appropriate policies and regulations to reflect changes to the student enrolment priorities and process.

That the Board of Education direct the Superintendent to review the current registration process to improve registration information and documentation requirements for registration, as well as identify possible options for online registration.

That the Board of Education direct the Superintendent to cap the number of international students registrations to 1,050 FTE for 2017-2018 and the student numbers be reviewed annually based on annual student enrolment projections.