

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

September 10, 2002

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Response to Delegation Re: Random Selection Process

ORIGINATOR: A. Habinski, Executive Director School and District Services

RESOURCE

STAFF: Jenise Bidulock, Robert Craig, Faye Parker

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the request of the delegation that the random selection policy be reviewed be approved.
2. That the request of the delegation that “the catchment areas be reviewed and modified to accommodate children residing closer to schools in their own communities, where the feeder school is much further away, to prevent children from being separated from the peers they grew up with” be denied.
3. That the request of the delegation that “the board appoint a parent panel to oversee the policy changes” be denied.

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In June of this year, the board heard a delegation regarding the district’s random selection process for admitting out-of-boundary students to schools with enrolment limits. The delegation voiced concerns about the process and how it leaves students’ futures up to chance rather than a rational criteria-based approach. The delegation requested that the district examine alternative decision making processes based on criteria such as: date of application and distance of the child’s residence from the school.

The district has embraced the concept of open boundaries facilitating school choice. While every student in the district has a designated school, students are free to apply to other schools of their choice subject to space availability. The random selection policy has been the means of allocating space in schools where demand for space exceeds capacity since 1994. This practice has recently been re-confirmed in a March 2002 administrative regulation.

The district’s student accommodation policy is that preference be given to limiting a school’s enrolment prior to adding space. As a result there are some schools which have established a limit on their enrolment and which, by the regulation, must then conduct a

random selection process to determine which students from outside their attendance area will be admitted. The district currently has 57 schools with enrolment guidelines to limit enrolment. Not all schools with enrolment guidelines find it necessary to hold a random selection every year because they are not all over-subscribed each year.

The random selection process was implemented because input at the time from principals and parents confirmed it as an improved means of allocating student spaces. The prior practice of admitting students on a “first come first served” basis had caused difficulties for parents and students over the years. The random selection process is intended to treat all out-of-boundary applicants equally.

While there has been general support for random selections over the years, there has been some negative reaction to the process. For this reason, the administration proposes that a review of the process as requested by the delegation would be timely. The proposed review would employ a consultative model and would obtain input by involving key communicators, principals, students and community members. A review of the practices of other jurisdictions would also be completed to determine whether there are better alternative models available. The review would determine whether the random selection process should be modified or changed, as requested by the delegation. The target date for completion of this review is December, 2002, in time for any changes to be implemented during next spring’s enrolment process.

The rationale for recommending that the delegation’s second request to review and modify attendance areas be denied is that the need for such action will be determined by the proposed review.

The administration believes that the creation of a parent panel to oversee the review process as requested by the delegation is not necessary to ensure a fair and thorough review. There is a commitment to obtaining a broad cross section of parent and student input, and to ensuring that parents in the Mary Butterworth attendance area are consulted through their school councils.

JB:rc