Schools of Choice Committee Meeting Minutes

Monday, November 25, 2013 at 5:00 p.m. (Conference Room 20)

Minutes recorded by Joyce Roundtree, Secretary III, Family Information Center

Members Present: Dr. Susan Zola, Dr. Judy Wiegand, Stephanie Stuart, Michelle Brown, Becky Laws, Elizabeth DeGruy, Laurie Bonnett, Justin Uppinghouse, Stephanie Eckels, Gordy Hulten.

Members Not In Attendance: Maria Alanis, Trevor Nadrozny, Illeana Savely, Charles Schultz, Amy Aviram, Michelle Ham, Rachel Simmons.

Agenda Items Discussed

I. Welcome and Introduction of Topics by Dr. Susan Zola

II. Review of Schools of Choice Policy Changes
   a. Choice Staff articulated some of the changes to the Choice Policy 705.09
   b. Explanation and Reason for Choice
   c. Ranking of Choices
      i. Families are encouraged to rank all 11 choices of schools
      ii. Intended to reduce number of unassigned
      iii. Siblings are first
   d. Proximity
      i. Edulog is used to determine proximity. This is not for bus routes, but rather quickest route to school by driving, not “as the crow flies.”
      ii. Proximity – everyone has a close school (can be used for 1st choice only). If you don’t live within a 1 ½ miles of a school, you still have a close school (by mileage).
   e. Guidelines
      i. SES can be validated - Federal School Free/Reduced Lunch Guidelines.
      ii. What type of verification is done? Eight percent of families (a sampling) are checked by the Food Service Department. If the family has food stamps, they have a number that’s used to enter on the application.
      iii. Education was removed as a factor in determining SES; we can’t assume if they have an education, they have an income.
   f. Programmatic Needs
      i. If a student is in a wheelchair, she would request an override to Edison. Sometimes overrides are needed for various reasons.
      ii. If a student is deaf, he/she has to be pre-assigned to Carrie Busey because that program is nowhere else. Visually impaired is only at Westview.
      iii. How many overrides are done per year? Is it racially identifiable?
   g. Unassigned Students/Wait List
i. This year the unassigned students will not be at the top of the wait list. In the past, the former Deputy Superintendent was approached by parents who did not get their choices and they were moved to the front of the line on the wait list. This year (2013), a family lived across from the school and did not get in. People who were unassigned and did not live near the school were ahead of them on the wait list.

ii. Actually, some of the unassigned families had priority and some were non-assigned.

h. Extending Kindergarten/Magnet Registration Periods
   i. Kindergarten Registration/Magnet Registration (January 2, 2014 to March 31, 2014)
   ii. At the parent/teacher conferences, we want to reach out to existing families who have kids at home (younger siblings). We captured information from families coming this fall.
   iii. When the Choice period ended this past school year, there were 170 files still waiting to be entered in the computer. Having the registration time extended will encourage families to apply early.
   iv. Magnet School – There will be a waitlist established off the get go. This waitlist would honor the ones who come in January through March. There are not too many seats available. This wait list will go ahead of the May applicants.
   v. Gifted – those who qualify will go in as a general education student again this year.

III. Addressing Ministerial Alliance Questions
   a. The Choice Committee discussed the questions raised at the recent Board meeting from the Ministerial Alliance regarding policy changes. The new policy changes will not impact the District’s commitment to diverse schools and are primarily to make the process more user-friendly, not to change the intent of the assignment process.
   b. It should the noted the District does not balance the school by race--we have used socioeconomic status since 2009.

IV. Marketing
   a. In the past, the FIC staff has distributed to day care/child care centers, host community forums, websites, churches, Ministerial Alliance. Materials are translated into Spanish. We will continue this year.
   b. Marketing pieces for this year: Choice flyer (Community Forum, School Tours, Registration Dates), calendar of events for schools (January through February), Welcome to Kindergarten book for families, radio ads, bus ads, yard signs.
   c. Future ideas: videos featuring a virtual tour of the schools, bus tours, parents schedule individual tours or schedule group tours, on-site registration at individual campuses.
   d. How can we re-program or re-image schools so they become more highly selected? Parents are choosing outside of their neighborhoods for academic programs or new facilities, but some schools remain less selected.

V. Transparency
   a. Provide information on school discipline records.
   b. Train staff to provide answers to questions about Choice.

VI. Choice Software Development
   a. Codagami is the new software vendor.
   b. Codagami will run the assignments and then after one year, the software will belong to Unit 4.
c. They are working on the software package in order to have it ready for registration.

*Next meeting date to be determined (before or after March 2014)*