Superintendent Proposes Adjustments to New Placement Policy: Phasing in middle school feeder patterns

September 14, 2010 (San Francisco) - On Monday, September 13 at the Ad Hoc Committee of the Board of Education, Superintendent Carlos Garcia recommended that the district move forward with the elementary and high school placement policy and take another year to further develop the middle school placement changes, which would mean postponing the decision on elementary to middle school feeder patterns.

Last March, the SFUSD Board of Education approved a redesign of the district’s student assignment system which will take effect with the incoming classes of kindergartners, sixth and ninth graders in the fall of 2011. This past month the Board has been considering recommendations for new attendance area boundaries, elementary to middle school feeder patterns, and a new transportation policy.

Superintendent Carlos Garcia said “We are still committed to enacting the new placement policy in its entirety. Next fall we will have even more opportunities for middle school students and their families than those currently available and we’d like to get those in place before we institute the feeder patterns.”

More Opportunities at Middle Schools
The superintendent said that the district needs to provide families with specific school level details about the new school improvement initiatives before the district rolls out the feeder patterns. He cited many new initiatives that are in their infancy, including:

- Special Education redesign – The district commissioned an independent audit which is forthcoming regarding Special Education programs and has a new highly qualified leader of Special Education who will help shepherd improvements in these services.
- Lau plan – The district is in its 2nd year of implementing a comprehensive plan for serving English Learners (EL). As part of rolling out this plan, program options will be expanding for both EL students and other students as more language pathways between elementary and middle schools are developed.
- School Improvement and Magnet grants– Horace Mann and Everett, two middle schools in the Mission district, will be receiving millions annually starting this fall to drastically accelerate student achievement. The district is awaiting information about whether or not Horace Mann and Everett will also be receiving funding to develop magnet programs.
Community Feedback
The district has sought out and received input from community members over the past few weeks and for several years preceding the new placement policy.

Special Assistant to the Superintendent Orla O’Keeffe said that while accepting the initial assignment offer for a feeder middle school would be optional for families, some parents are concerned that their options for other middle schools would be limited.

“In the past few weeks we have heard from parents who are excited about the proposed feeder schools and parents who are very concerned about it – the concern is primarily based on whether or not currently enrolled elementary parents perceive their proposed feeder middle school as one where they would want to send their child,” stated O’Keeffe.

“Given the mixed reactions we have heard, we acknowledge that postponing the implementation of feeder patterns will be disappointing to some parents and welcome news to others,” she continued.

Proposed Revision to the Placement Policy
The Board reviewed a revised policy proposal that states that for the enrollment year 2011-2012 the middle schools choice process will give preference to applicants in transitional years (i.e., students transitioning from fifth to sixth grade) in the following order:

1. younger siblings of students who are enrolled in and will be attending the school during the year for which the younger sibling requests attendance;
2. CTIP1
3. all other students

Students who are not assigned to one of their choices will be assigned to the middle school closest to where they live that has openings.

For more information, go to sfusd.edu/enroll.

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