

**SACET Recommendations to the Superintendent on
Enrollment & Transfer Policy Planning for
High School System Design Plan
April 16, 2010**

INTRODUCTION

On March 9, Superintendent Smith asked SACET to turn its recent recommendations on focus school enrollment and neighborhood-to-neighborhood transfers into action items, with specifics on how to make necessary policy and practice changes to support the recommendations. Over the past year, SACET had reviewed the existing policy, administrative directives (AD) and board actions pertaining to enrollment and transfer (E&T). In the last 5 weeks we had in-depth discussion focused on what changes to existing policy would be necessary to support the goals of High School Redesign work. This report deals with our general observations about the E&T policy as well as provides feedback on potential changes to the policy. We have included a draft workplan that provides additional details on the potential change process, timeline and content.

SACET submits this report with the following consensus:

All member fully supporting the report.

GENERAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The current E&T policy states “families and students are the primary decision-makers for the choice of educational options”, and students have the “right to request a transfer to attend any grade-appropriate school or program in the district”. This policy has lead to harmful consequences for our schools, especially our high schools. **Given this, SACET believes that there must be a major shift in E&T policy. We must begin to prioritize the health of the system over the choice of the individual.** Enrollment balance and parity across the system should become the primary driver of E&T policy and practice, in order to insure all schools, including the new CCHSs and Focus Schools, can be successful.

Specific considerations about the E&T policy include:

1. The language of the E&T policy must be explicit in the intent of the policy. It should cover all grade levels, K-12.
2. When revising the E&T policy and administrative directives care must be taken to insure changes will not harm the structural system.

3. The E&T policy should be viewed as a tool to balance enrollment and create parity in the district. Boundary changes are another tool which can accomplish the same thing. Both tools should be used only to create movement towards the primary goal of balanced enrollment, in order to provide equitable access to quality programs.
 - Although boundary changes are disruptive and have generally been avoided by the district in the past, there are times they should be used. The District should review boundaries on a routine basis and make changes when needed. Families should be made aware of the potential for boundary changes.
 - The district should adopt a practice of long range enrollment planning. There are nine years to plan high schools for our current kindergartners, so transfer and boundary changes should not have to happen abruptly.
 - We should acknowledge and expect a level of flux in the system, and establish thresholds by which boundary change proposals can be expected.
4. The District should create explicit language pertaining to accountability of implementation of the E&T Policy, and the roles and responsibilities of the Superintendent, School Board, Deputy Superintendents, E&T Office, schools, etc.
 - Clear definitions are needed for all transfer types, programs (as they pertain to transfer) and slot availability.
 - Equitable outreach to families and transparent decision-making must continue to be a priority of the transfer system. The entire process must be fair and simple.
 - The District should adopt data-driven accountability practices, based on regular analysis of transfer trends and impacts, that may result in revision of E&T policy.
5. Table 3 illustrates a proposed timeline for accomplishing E&T policy changes at all grade levels, not only high schools. **Because SACET believes a change is needed to the philosophy behind the E&T policy, we believe that the broader K-12 review is warranted.** We think the timeline laid out provides a reasonable path to completing this work in time for the 2011-2012 school year, which is imperative for High School Redesign to move forward.

POSSIBLE ENROLLMENT & TRANSFER CHANGES

SACET reviewed five specific types of transfers (listed in Table 1) that currently exist for high school students today. In addition to the recommendations laid out below, the attached tables provide operational details of each transfer type, and the specific policy and stakeholder groups that would be impacted by change.

1. Neighborhood to Neighborhood Transfers (NTN)

There are many mechanisms for NTN transfer. The recommendations that follow concern only the Annual School Choice Lottery (“Choice”) System from a Community Comprehensive High School (CCHS) to a CCHS. These comments do **not** involve:

- NCLB transfers
- Placements (such as ELL and Special Education)
- Hardship petitions
- Transfers into or out of a Focus Option School
- Potential transfers to programs that are part of a Community Comprehensive High School (CCHS)

The four NTN transfer change options reviewed by SACET are listed in Table 2. We continue to wrestle with the issue of NTN transfers and the potential impact on the goals of the High School Redesign. We genuinely feel that NTN transfers are a key factor which led to the enrollment disparities that now exist amongst our high schools.

Staffing at our schools is currently based on enrollment and, thus, program offerings at schools are directly affected. This leads more families to flee our underenrolled schools, seeking schools which “have more to offer”. It is our belief that until enrollment, staffing and programs can be balanced and stabilized at every school, there is little hope for making all of our schools desirable. Under the new model for CCHS, all schools should have essentially the same enrollment numbers and course offerings. Enrollment Floors and Ceilings for all high schools (CCHS and focus) need to be determined, in order to identify when use of CCHS to CCHS transfers might be appropriate.

SACET believes only limited transfers between CCHS should be allowed, based on space availability, so long as those transfers increase and not decrease enrollment parity between schools. The number of transfers in a particular lottery cycle might be zero for some schools under this model. We believe this is necessary to insure that NTN transfers do not harm the system as a whole. **Ultimately the number of CCHS transfers available should be driven by the needs of the system.** Based on the needs of the system, families may have an opportunity to apply to transfer between CCHS’s during an Annual School Choice Lottery.

2. **Focus Schools**

SACET submitted a report last November with recommendations on an enrollment and transfer policy for focus high schools. The recommendations were limited because there were a lot of unknowns about focus options: how many would be proposed, at what attendance level, with what foci, where located, etc.

Since that time, we have no new information, and therefore cannot formulate more specific recommendations. Our views have essentially remained the same:

- Focus school enrollment should be structured so that students and resources are not drained from community high schools. We continue to believe that a floor for both attendance and resources at CCHSs is a good idea.
- At-risk students should not become more concentrated at either community schools or focus option schools. NCLB students should not be given priority weighting in a lottery for focus options, with the possible exception of small schools that fill the space between community schools and alternative schools.
- Focus schools, when appropriate, should have admissions criteria, which would help ensure that students are attending because of the focus, not as an escape from their community school.
- We think that a two-round transfer system may be part of the solution to help balance geographic attendance at focus option schools.
- To ensure real equity of access to focus schools, central locations near mass transit are essential.

We look forward to additional work on this important issue as soon as more specific plans are released.

3. **Immersion**

The committee does not have sufficient information to explore the options for maintaining, changing or ending immersion articulation patterns. When decisions are made on how immersion will be structured under High School Redesign, SACET would like to participate in further discussions on the enrollment and transfer implications.

4. **Right to remain at a school after a move**

SACET believes it can be beneficial to allow a student to remain at a high school through graduation. The District's goal when creating this policy was to provide stability

for students to support their academic and social growth. This can be especially important for some of our most vulnerable students. However, this longtime Portland practice raises some concerns:

- The District currently does not have data to analyze the number or demographics of the students subject to this policy
- This policy could lead to enrollment imbalance at schools
- It has potential to be abused by families using fraudulent or temporary addresses to gain access to specific schools
- It is unique among the region's school districts

Until specific data on this issue can be gathered, SACET believes the current policy of allowing a student to remain at a high school should continue. Since mobility disproportionately affects low SES/vulnerable students SACET feels the potential for damage to students' academic/social progress is greater than the potential benefit of balancing enrollment. SACET recommends this policy be reviewed once the District is able to obtain data on this issue.

SACET also believes greater effort should be made to identify abuse of this policy by families who enroll students in a high school using a fraudulent address. As we undergo boundary changes and the High School Redesign, we anticipate there may be increased abuse of this policy by families trying to remain at a specific school. An Administrative Directive should be developed which creates a system for checking, and responding to, false address. This will require the District to improve record-keeping to help identify fraudulent addresses. The District should ask for and verify addresses more routinely, and enforce the policy when fraudulent addresses are discovered.

5. Elementary/K8 /Middle Schools

As stated earlier, SACET believes the E&T policy needs to be examined as it applies to all grade levels. As such, it is premature to recommend any specific transfer changes without the benefit of a comprehensive data review and community input process. We believe the need to complete this work should be acknowledged when the High School Redesign plan is released, and a workplan should be developed to accomplish this in a timely manner.

TRANSITION PLANNING

One of the challenges of moving from our current system to the new paradigm for high schools is the issue of how we create robust comprehensive high schools in all neighborhoods during the period of time that enrollment moves from current levels to target levels. **SACET believes the district needs to strategically use one-time money during this transition period to assure a full program - both academic and extracurricular - is in place at all high schools regardless of enrollment level.** Once families are able to see their student can access a robust core curriculum, career and AP courses, and a variety of interesting electives and extracurricular activities at their neighborhood school, they will be more likely to attend that school. This in turn will build enrollment to target levels, allowing the program to become self-sustaining.

Another concern during the transition phase is what will happen at current neighborhood high schools after the April 26 announcement on which schools will be re-purposed. SACET is concerned that staff and students will elect to "abandon" those schools in the coming school year, with unjust impact on the program and experience available to the students and staff who remain. SACET urges the district to plan carefully for these schools, and to again use one-time money as needed to insure students have access to a meaningful academic and extra-curricular program in the 2010-2011 school year and beyond.

SACET wants to reiterate our previous recommendation to place community liaisons at all high schools to facilitate community-building, outreach and blending of existing communities.

IN CLOSING

SACET supports the move toward a strong neighborhood CCHSs complemented by focus schools and other options. We acknowledge the concern of community and board members that the proposed High School Redesign Model will eliminate choice. **We, however, believe the new model does offer a range of transfer options for high school students.** These include transfers to focus, charter and alternative schools as well as opportunities for transfer between CCHS based on individual students' needs for programs or exceptional circumstances. We also support offering transfers between CCHS based on space availability, so long those transfers support the broader system goal of enrollment parity between schools. **We believe these proposals will allow the District to strike an appropriate balance between Portland's desire for both strong neighborhood schools and choice.**

Table 1: Potential HSSD Enrollment Transfer Change Process

What could change	How will it change			Who will be involved in the change			When will the change occur		
	Policy	AD	Procedure	Central staff	School staff	Community	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
1. Limit transfers into community high schools	Rewrite 4.10.051	Rewrite 4.10.054	*Website information *Lottery logic *Transition letter campaign	*ETC *Comms *IT *Genl Counsel	*Principals *Counselors *Teachers *Secretaries	*Partner orgs *SACET *students/families grades 6-12	Draft Pol/ADs	*Adopt policy/AD changes (fall) *Info campaign to students/parents through schools/counselors (Fall/winter) *Update website (fall/winter) *Changes to lottery engine (fall/winter)	Continue outreach to students and parents through schools/counselors
2. New lottery weights/process for focus schools	Rewrite 4.10.051	Rewrite 4.10.054	*Website information *Lottery logic *Transition letter campaign	*ETC *Comms *IT *Genl Counsel	*Principals *Counselors *Secretaries	*Partner orgs *SACET *students/families grades 6-12	Draft Pol/ADs	*Adopt policy/AD changes (fall) *Info campaign to students/parents through schools/counselors (Fall/winter) *Update website (fall/winter) *Changes to lottery engine (fall/winter)	Continue outreach to students and parents through schools/counselors
3. Change or end immersion articulation patterns	Rewrite 4.10.051 (If ending)	Rewrite 4.10.054 (If ending)	*Website information *Transition letter campaign	*ETC *Comms *ESL-Immersion *Genl Counsel (if ending)	*Principals *Counselors *Secretaries	*Partner orgs *SACET *students/families grades 6-12	*Draft Pol/ADs (If ending) *Determine new articulation patterns	*Adopt policy/AD changes (fall-if ending) *Info campaign to students/parents through schools/counselors (Fall/winter) *Update website (fall/winter)	Continue outreach to students and parents through schools/counselors
4. Limit right to remain at a HS after a move to one year	*Rewrite 4.10.051 *Rewrite 4.10.045	*Rewrite 4.01.054 *Rewrite 4.10.047	*Website information *District resource manual	*ETC *Comms *IT *Genl Counsel	*Principals *Counselors *Secretaries	*Partner orgs (PTA, CPPS, PAT, SuperSAC, etc) *SACET *students/families grades 6-12	Draft Pol/ADs	*Adopt policy/AD changes (fall) *Info campaign to students/parents through schools/counselors (Fall/winter) *Secretary training (fall/winter) *Update website (fall/winter) *Changes in student data systems (Fall/Winter)	Continue outreach to students and parents Continue secretary training
5. End lottery transfers into neighborhood elementary, K-8 and middle schools	Rewrite 4.10.051	Rewrite 4.10.054	*Website information *Lottery logic *Transition letter campaign	ETC Comms IT Genl Counsel	*Principals *Counselors *Secretaries	*Partner orgs *SACET *All grades students/families	Draft Pol/ADs	*Preliminary engagement with stakeholders *Adopt policy/AD changes (fall) *Info campaign to students/parents through schools/counselors (Fall/winter) *Update website (fall/winter) *Changes to lottery engine (fall/winter)	Continue outreach to students and parents through schools/counselors

THESE STAFF DOCUMENTS ARE WORKING DRAFTS. As PPS develops an implementation plan for high school redesign, staff are researching and evaluating many different hypothetical options for program distribution, school locations and other decisions. Due diligence requires exploring all options prior to staff recommendations for the Superintendent's approval and Board consideration.

Table 2: E T Change Option Details

What could change	Change options	Description:	Benefits	Concerns	SACET Comments
1. Limit transfers into community high schools	a. No NTN transfers except NCLB, programs through 2012	-No basic community school lottery until 2012 -NCLB lottery, if necessary -Assignment through program placement (SPED, Immersion) only	-Maximize enrollment stability for new system -Consistent and simple -Decisions about degrees of choice made after other major changes	-Loss of families who value choice -Boundary change as only lever for balancing enrollment & diversity -Decisions about degrees of choice made after other major changes	Date seems unnecessary and confuses the issue.
	b. Limited NTN transfers open to underenrolled schools from overenrolled schools (NCLB, program transfer available)	-Lottery into schools with <1350 projected enroll -Transfer applications only from students assigned to schools with projected enroll >1350 -SES weighting applied in lottery: students from low SES blocks have priority into high SES blocks & vice versa	-Keeps an open choice mechanism -May help balance enrollment and diversity	-Projections needs at grade level, not school level -Unlikely to be used by many	The most appealing of the options presented. Because most current transfer requests are into oversubscribed schools, question whether this option will be seen as realistic choice.
	c. Limit NTN transfers to a percentage of incoming class (NCLB, program transfer available)	-A lottery for a % of enrollment in and out of the 9th grade class -SES weighting applied in lottery: students from low SES blocks have priority into high SES blocks & vice versa -NCLB transfers (if needed) would have priority in, no limits out	-Keeps an open choice mechanism -May help balance enrollment and diversity	-May unbalance enrollment if more students transfer out than in	Although limited in number, this option will further the trend of more involved families seeking other schools. This option does not support the underlying goals of HSSD.
	d. Limit NTN transfers to equal trades between schools (NCLB, program transfer available)	-A lottery for students approving only matching transfers (out of school A and into school B matches with out of school B and into school A) -If multiple potential matches, SES weighting applies	-Keeps an open choice mechanism -Enrollment neutral	-May be limited to a very small pool of applicants: not real choice	While this sounds good in concept, it is doubtful this option would be utilized systemwide.
2. New lottery weights/process for focus schools (note: options listed could be combined, depending on the desired outcomes)	a. Add weighting for interest/experience	Applicants will submit letters of recommendation and/or go through an interview or portfolio presentation. The resulting score will increase or decrease their approval chance	Assures most qualified students are approved to a program	May result in SES/geographic imbalance	Not enough information on structures and desired outcomes of focus schools to respond to these suggestions.
	b. Increase weighting for SES balance	Applicants who will improve the diversity of a focus school (or of the student body of all focus schools) will receive a substantially higher lottery weight than the current lottery logic provides	Assures that SES is balanced across community and focus schools	May result in students with less interest/experience approved to a focus school	
	c. Add geographic weighting	Students from regions with few focus school applicants will have an increased chance of approval over students from regions with high numbers of applicants	Helps balance focus school enrollment with students from across the district	May result in students with less interest/experience approved to a focus school	
	d. Create separate lottery rounds to address interest/experience and SES/geography balance	-The first round of approvals (25%-50% of slots) will include weighting for interest/experience -No weight for interest/experience in second round of approvals (remaining % of slots) -SES/geography weighting in both rounds (siblings?)	Allows multiple preferences Promotes diverse enrollment and best-fit for students	-Complex -May not achieve balance if applicant pool is heavily skewed toward one geographic or SES category	
	e. Eliminate sibling preference	No weighting/preference for sibling attends the same school	More slots available to achieve diversity/best-fit goals	Separates students in the same family to different schools	
	f. Create geographic preference zone to promote local attendance	Students residing in an area close to a focus school will have preference to attend that school	Students have easier access to a nearby school	-May result in students with less interest/experience approved to a focus school -May result in geographic/SES imbalance between focus and community schools	

Table 2: E T Change Option Details

Draft: 4/14/10

What could change	Change options	Description:	Benefits	Concerns	SACET Comments
3. Change or end immersion articulation patterns	a. Students enrolled in an immersion program in 8th grade will be assigned to their community HS	No automatic assignment for incoming 9th graders to a HS with an immersion program	-Helps sustain community school enrollment -Promotes strong foreign language programs in a community schools	-Students may not have access to all languages on all campuses-equity concern -Breaks up student cohorts	Not enough information on structures and desired outcomes of immersion articulation patterns to respond to these suggestions.
	b. Students enrolled in an immersion program in 8th grade will be assigned to a community HS to continue immersion	Automatic assignment for incoming 9th graders to a HS immersion program--May not be their community school	Maintains immersion program with existing cohort	May lead to enrollment imbalance between community schools	
	c. Students enrolled in an immersion program in 8th grade will be assigned to an immersion focus high school	Automatic assignment for incoming 9th graders to a HS immersion program located at a focus school	Maintains immersion program with existing cohort	-May lead to underenrollment at community schools -Students may opt out due to limits of electives/activities at focus schools	
4. Limit right to remain at a HS after a move to one year	a. Students who move out of a neighborhood would be required to attend their new neighborhood school by the start of the next school year	Automatic assignment at the end of the school year to the new neighborhood school, unless a student will be in 12th grade	Promotes maximum number of students attending their assigned community school	-Academic disruption -Unknown impact on enrollment	Least preferred option, due to academic disruption, disproportion affect of mobility on low SES students.
	b. Students who move could remain at their current school in future years if space is available and student is in good standing	-Students who have moved can apply to remain, must have good attendance, grades and behavior. -If more applicants than space, lottery determines approvals -SES criteria could apply	-Limits academic disruption -Consistent with interdistrict transfer process -Could help enrollment at current schools	May lead to underenrollment at new community school	Option not preferred, as concern for academic disruption, disproportion affect of mobility on low SES students, outweighs benefits of enrollment balance.
	c. All students who move may remain at their current school through the highest grade	-Students who have moved may remain at their current school, regardless of space or other conditions	-Limits academic disruption -Maintains current policy	May lead to underenrollment at new community school	Most favored option.
5. Limit lottery transfers into neighborhood elementary, K-8 and middle schools	a. Same options as 1.a-d	same as 1. a-d	same as 1. a-d	-same as 1. a-d -increase in hardship petitions	Recommend K-8 grades be included in E & T transfer changes. However, not enough information on structures and desired outcomes of K-8 transfers to respond to these
	b. Allow NTN transfers between schools within a cluster (NCLB, program transfer available)	Students could apply to transfer to other schools within their cluster; approvals based on space availability, sibling preference and SES weighting	-Allows choice within a limited region -HS feeder patterns remain stable	-Enrollment imbalance between schools in a cluster	

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Table 3: E T Policy Change Timeline

DRAFT: April 14, 2010

2010 Enrollment & Transfer Policy/AD change timeline

Action	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
SACET report to Supt on workplan/specific change language									
Staff makes Initial edits based on SACET input									
Review: SACET Central staff Principals									
2nd round of edits									
Broad input: School staff, Parents/community members, Students, SACET, CSAC									
3rd round of edits									
Executive committee/ General Counsel review									
Final edits									
Superintendent recommendation									
CSAC meeting									
1st Board reading									
Board revisions									
2nd Board Reading									

Color key =

Staff work group action
 SACET/community action
 Staff non-work group action
 Board actions

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