

## Excerpt from D.C. Policy Brief #2 — Work Group 1

### Contents

Denver, CO.....	1
San Francisco, CA.....	3
Student Assignment in the Washington Metropolitan Region .....	6

### Denver, CO

#### Denver: By zone & residence with choice overlay

##### GOALS:

- Attendance at a school close to home
- Avoidance of major streets and hazards
- Balancing of school utilization rates (managing capacity)
- Diversity of student bodies within schools
- Some school choice for families

##### APPROACH:

- Assignment by residence & attendance zones (ES, MS, and HS).
  - When you leave your assigned school, you lose your right to return by right
- Some choice is also available through a city-wide lottery for available seats in all DPS schools and charter schools

##### PREFERENCES:

- In-zone students
- Siblings
- Students attending low-performing schools under NCLB

The Denver Board of Education and Denver Public Schools (DPS) operate 162 schools serving a total of 73,000 students. The Denver Board of Education is also the chartering authority for Denver city/county, and has granted charters to an additional 41 schools serving approximately 12,000 more students. DPS statistics accordingly aggregate the data for traditional DPS schools and charter schools.

Between 2005 and 2012, Denver traditional and charter public schools gained more than 11,000 students.<sup>1</sup> Of the 11,000 student gain, charter schools picked up 5,000 and traditional DPS schools picked up 6,000. While the economic recession beginning in 2007 is likely to have factored heavily into this recapture, DPS has attributed its gains to successful turnaround/improvement efforts in its middle and high schools. This assertion is supported

---

<sup>1</sup> Between 2000 and 2010, DPS K–12 enrollment increased 1.2% per year compared with a 0.4% annual growth rate for Denver's ages 5–17 population. DPS states that its loss rate between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades declined from 15% in 2000 to 12% in 2012 and its loss rate between 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades declined from 23% in 2000 to 17% in 2012. DPS Strategic Regional Analysis (Spring 2013).

## Excerpt from D.C. Policy Brief #2 — Work Group 1

by the 16% increase in DPS's middle-school enrollment since 2007 despite a total increase of only 2% in the city's population of 5-17 year-olds between 2000 and 2010.<sup>2</sup>

### Strategic Planning

Denver Public Schools and the Denver boasts an Office of Planning & Analysis (OPA) with a staff of six who conduct demographic and market analyses, create enrollment projections, and develop long-term forecasts for facilities planning. At least once a year since 2010, OPA has produced a Strategic Regional Analysis that has informed the community engagement around and management of Denver's portfolio of traditional and charter schools and its student-assignment policies.<sup>3</sup>

### Current Student-Assignment Policy

Denver's student-assignment policy is a residence-lottery hybrid that provides a neighborhood school of right but is increasingly facilitating and even promoting choice as a strategy to attract more Denver families and provide families with schools that they desire. In Denver, each student is assigned to an attendance-area DPS elementary, middle, and high school of right based on his or her residence. Attendance areas are created and updated based on "demographic data and projections, proximity to a school, major streets and hazards, geographic features, equalization of capacity among sites, current boundaries, and student diversity, consistent with available capacity."<sup>4</sup>

A student may either attend his or her attendance-area school or may submit by late January a SchoolChoice application listing up to five ranked schools. Students may choose city-wide from all neighborhood schools, magnet programs/schools, and charter schools. Charter schools have the ability to set school-specific application requirements, deadlines, and student-admission procedures that may vary from the standard DPS policies. Students are assigned to their highest-ranked choice at which space is available. In 2012, 70% of applicants were assigned to their first-ranked choice, and 86% were assigned to one of their five listed choices. If the number of requests for a school exceeds the seats available, DPS uses tiebreakers that give priority to applicants as follows, with random selection employed within each category:

**Table 3: Denver Public Schools Student-Assignment Preference Criteria**

	Entering PK-3/PK-4	Entering Kindergarten	Entering Grades 1-12
1.	Students who reside in the neighborhood boundary of the school	Denver residents who have a currently-attending sibling who will also be continuing at the school	Denver residents who are currently attending the school
2.	Denver residents who have a currently-attending sibling who will also be continuing at the school	Denver residents who are currently attending the school's 4-year-old ECE program	Denver residents who have a currently-attending sibling who will also be continuing at the school
3.	Denver residents who are currently attending the school's 3-year-old ECE program	Children of full-time employees at the school	Students seeking to return to their boundary school
4.	Children of full-time employees at the school	All other Denver resident students	Non-Denver residents who are currently attending the school's 4-year-old ECE program OR have a currently-attending sibling who will also be continuing at the school
5.	All other Denver resident students	Non-Denver residents who are	Children of full-time employees at the

<sup>2</sup> DPS Strategic Regional Analysis (Spring 2013); U.S. Census 2000 and 2010 Census data.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://planning.dpsk12.org/analysis/strategic-regional-analysis>.

<sup>4</sup> DPS Policy JC (June 30, 2010).

## Excerpt from D.C. Policy Brief #2 — Work Group 1

	Entering PK-3/PK-4	Entering Kindergarten	Entering Grades 1-12
		currently attending the school's 3-year-old ECE program OR have a currently-attending sibling who will also be continuing at the school	school
6.	Non-Denver residents who are currently attending the school's 3-year-old ECE program OR have a currently-attending sibling who will also be continuing at the school	All other students who are not Denver residents	All other Denver resident students
7.	All other students who are not Denver residents		All other students who are not Denver residents

Once a student has been accepted into a school based on a choice application, the student obtains the right to continue at that school through its final grade and loses the right to attend his/her attendance-zone school. To return to the attendance-zone school, the student must submit a SchoolChoice application in a subsequent cycle and win an available seat pursuant to the priorities in the table above.

DPS provides transportation to approximately 26,000 general-education students as follows:

- ES students living more than 1.0 mile *walking distance* from their attendance-zone school;
- MS students living more than 2.5 miles *walking distance* from their attendance-zone school; and
- HS students living more than 3.5 miles *walking distance* from their attendance-zone school.

DPS also provides transportation to/from selected magnet schools and charter schools.

## San Francisco, CA

### San Francisco: Citywide Lottery

(Implemented in SY2011-12)

#### GOALS:

- Facilitate diversity
- Reduce racial isolation
- Provide students with equitable access to opportunities
- Create robust enrollments at all schools,
- Be transparent and easy to use
- Improve predictability for families
- Support efficient use of resources

#### APPROACH:

- Elementary and middle school attendance areas
- Elementary to middle school feeder patterns
- City-wide application process for all new and transitioning students
- Seats assigned according to defined criteria and weighting

#### PREFERENCES:

- Sibling of student already attending the school
- Attending a school whose students are eligible for NCLB school choice
- Attending feeder elementary school
- Resides in census tract with average test scores in bottom 20% of city
- Resides in attendance area
- Random-number lottery

## Excerpt from D.C. Policy Brief #2 — Work Group 1

As of October 2012, San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) had an enrollment of 52,900 students in 102 public schools, with 2,894 additional students attending 13 in-district charter schools and 570 attending five county school sites. SFUSD's student population is 33% Chinese, 24% Latino, 12% White, 10% African-American, and 21% other race/ethnicity, with 27% of the total being English-language learners (ELLs). In 2010-2011, 61% of SFUSD students were eligible for free/reduced-price meals.

### Current Student-Assignment Policy (SY 2011–12 and thereafter)

In 2009, the SFUSD Board undertook a public-engagement process to develop a new student-assignment system. SFUSD's stated goals were to:

- facilitate diversity,
- reduce racial isolation,
- provide students with equitable access to opportunities,
- create robust enrollments at all schools,
- be transparent and easy to use,
- improve predictability for families, and
- support efficient use of resources

Through extensive research and data analysis as part of its 2009 policy revision process, San Francisco arrived at some key findings that bear recounting here:

- Neighborhood schools are limited in their ability to reverse the trend of racial isolation and the concentration of underserved students in the same school.
- However, city-wide lotteries are also limited in their ability to reverse the trend of racial isolation and the concentration of underserved students in the same school because
  - the applicant pools for individual schools are racially isolated, and
  - all families do not have the same access to information and time to maximize the opportunities of a city-wide lottery system.
- To reverse the trend of racial isolation and the concentration of underserved students in the same school through student assignment alone, the [SFUSD] Board would need to assign students to schools they have not historically requested and to schools far from where they live.
- SFUSD staff concluded that a new student assignment system is one part of creating educational environments in which all students can flourish. ***School quality is the paramount concern, and a student assignment system alone cannot ensure school quality***, although it does have a role to play in creating diverse learning environments and robust enrollments in all SFUSD schools.<sup>5</sup>

SFUSD's new policy, which was approved in 2010 and took effect for SY 2011-2012, adjusts the SFUSD city-wide lottery preference criteria to include a low weight for living in the elementary or middle school attendance areas. Preferences were retained for siblings, students entitled to NCLB choice options, students living in a census tract with low academic test scores<sup>6</sup>, and residing within the attendance zone of the school.

All new or transitioning students must submit an application listing up to seven desired schools in priority order. Students may request any public schools in the city that offer the appropriate grade level. Applications are due in late January, although there are additional rounds in March and May, as well as an August "Waiting-Pool" round. Students already attending a school may automatically continue in that school until they complete its final grade level. Students applying to enter a school (generally at the transitional grades of K, 6, and 9) are

---

<sup>5</sup> 2011-2012 SFUSD Annual Report (3/5/2012).

<sup>6</sup> SFUSD calculates a Census Tract Integration Preference ("CTIP") based on average K-12 California Standards Test scores.

## Excerpt from D.C. Policy Brief #2 — Work Group 1

assigned to their highest-ranked request so long as there is space available at that school. If demand exceeds available seats at a school, tie breakers are applied to the requests in the following preference orders:

**Table 2: San Francisco Unified School District Student-Assignment Preference Criteria**

	Entering Kindergarten	Entering Grades 1-5	Entering Grade 6 <sup>7</sup>	Entering Grades 7-8	Entering Grade 9*	Entering Grades 10-12*
1.	Sibling of student already attending the school	Sibling of student already attending the school	Sibling of student already attending the school	Sibling of student already attending the school	Sibling of student already attending the school	Sibling of student already attending the school
2.	Attending SFUSD Pre-K within attendance area	Attending a school whose students are eligible for NCLB school choice	Attending feeder elementary school	Attending a school whose students are eligible for NCLB school choice	Attending a school whose students are eligible for NCLB school choice	Resides in census tract with average test scores in bottom 20% of city
3.	Resides in a census tract with average test scores in bottom 20% of city	Resides in a census tract with average test scores in bottom 20% of city	Resides in a census tract with average test scores in bottom 20% of city	Resides in a census tract with average test scores in bottom 20% of city	Resides in a census tract with average test scores in bottom 20% of city	Random-number lottery
4.	Resides in attendance area <sup>8</sup>	Resides in attendance area	Random-number lottery	Random-number lottery	Random-number lottery	
5.	Random-number lottery	Random-number lottery				

\* Not applicable to the two high schools with special academic/audition-based admissions criteria.

SFUSD's algorithm looks first at all first-ranked requests, applies tiebreakers as needed, and then moves to the remaining students and processes second-ranked requests (and so on). If the application of the tiebreakers does not result in a placement for a student, the student is placed at the school nearest to his home that serves his or her grade level and has an available seat.

SFUSD's current transportation policy provides for very limited general-education transportation services for the purposes of supporting diverse learning environments, equitable access to opportunities, and reasonable access for attendance-area residents to their attendance-area school. Busing is provided only upon request, and is approved on a per-student basis. As SFUSD moves towards implementing ES-to-MS feeder patterns, the district expects to reduce the busing it provides. In SY 2011–12, SFUSD operated 38 buses serving 2,280 students (4.3% of total enrollment) attending 52 elementary and middle schools. For SY 2012–13, SFUSD planned to operate only 30 buses serving approximately 2,000 students attending 46 schools. As a result, the costs of transportation that accompany the city-wide lottery in San Francisco fall primarily on families.

<sup>7</sup> The listed tie breakers for students entering grades 6-8 apply for the 2012-2016 school years. Beginning in 2017, entering 6<sup>th</sup>-graders will be initially assigned to the middle school to which their elementary school feeds. Students will be able to apply to other middle schools if they so choose.

<sup>8</sup> For the eight SFUSD elementary schools that are city-wide (magnet) schools, the attendance-area tie breaker does not apply.

## Excerpt from D.C. Policy Brief #2 — Work Group 1

### Student Assignment in the Washington Metropolitan Region

#### By geographic zones and student residence

The public school boundary and assignment policies in the small cities and large suburban jurisdictions surrounding Washington D.C. are based almost completely geographic zones and the residence of the student. With limited exceptions, students in Arlington, Alexandria, Prince Georges' County, Montgomery County, and Fairfax County expect simply to attend their attendance-zone schools. For the most part, choice is limited.

In Alexandria, Arlington, and Prince George's County, there are efforts to provide alternatives to the strictly neighborhood-based systems. In Arlington in particular, elementary school choice is provided through specialized elementary and middle school programs that are available regionally or district-wide in addition to International Baccalaureate and access to a magnet high school in Fairfax. Both Prince George's County and Alexandria provide for region-wide, specialized, and magnet programs. However, not infrequently, families are required to provide their own transportation to these special programs and schools.

Montgomery County and Fairfax County in particular operate some magnet and specialized programs, and Montgomery County allows for some choice across a selection of high schools within regional "consortia" of high schools. Within these consortia, students have the right to attend their zone school but may also request any of two to four other nearby high schools. The district takes into account students' sibling status, free/reduced-price meal eligibility, and gender as it evaluates requests in order to maintain "comparable demographics" and manage utilization at the schools within the consortium. Except for Washington, D.C., each of the jurisdictions listed above provides bus transportation for students living more than a specified distance from their school. Some districts provide bus service to stops within ¼ mile of a student's home, while in other regions a child may be required to walk a mile to the nearest school bus stop. In Washington, D.C., DCPS provides busing only for high-needs and out-placed special-education students and for a small number of students whose schools have recently been consolidated with another school.

Although easy to navigate, student-assignment policies in the Washington suburbs do not necessarily provide predictability or stability because school districts frequently re-draw attendance-zone boundaries in order to equalize enrollment pressures in areas of rapidly increasing school populations. Absent grandfathering policies, these boundary changes can force some students to change schools every few years.