

South Orange Maplewood School District
Policy Committee of the Board 2021
April 14, 2021 - 5:30 pm
Agenda

Superintendent: Dr. Ronald Taylor

Committee Chair: Susan Bergin

Members: Elissa Malespina, Erin Siders, Courtney Winkfield, Lily Forman

Administrative Liaison: Dr. Melody Alegria, Assistant Superintendent for Special Services

1. Intentional Integration Update- Michael Alves & Dr. Taylor

- Mr. Alves provided a brief overview of what has been done and shared the maps for the Intentional Integration Initiative (III).
 - Information has been shared as we've gone along.
 - Over 40 years experience in this area.
 - Familiar with the issue of student assignment and student integration.
 - Started in 1975 as project director for desegregation assistant in MA.
 - In 1987 along with a colleague, designed a plan for Seattle.
 - Promoting multi-faceted socially economic integration - have done this around the country, assigning students with social economic status, which provides racial integration.
 - We analyzed what Berkeley has been doing over the years and had to make some adjustments.
 - Key is to identify the social economic status of students.
 - Normally would have parents indicate their income status. We relied upon analysis of census data, a census tracking. The block group - we collect information from census - income, other information from census - averages of people who reside there but not individual families.
 - You have low, medium and high income folks in the community. Usually neighbors are not as well educated - as families with masters, doctorate degrees.
 - 29% in low, 31% in medium, 40% in high income range;
 - "What if" simulations completed -- if we adopt simulations and what school a student would go to for kindergarten. You allocate your seat based on those percentages. Each group is assured a seat in a school. Keith was excellent at providing data. Using 403 students, they tried to simulate where they would go to school using this model. Will have no variants. Looked at plus or minus 5% and then 10% variables.
 - Results were sent to us. The actual algorithm is very important.
 - Sibling priority is important for students to attend the same school.
 - Also Special Education and ELL students to meet their educational needs
 - Built into the model that those students would be preassigned for their program.
 - Rule established that sibling students would need to be attending the same school at the same time.
 - Sibling preference piece was key - in previous years, the meaning of sibling preference had different meaning.

- Non-sibling priority applicants - this was most of the kindergarten students. Concerns about student transportation costs were discussed.
- For non-sibling applicants, students assigned to the school nearest their home for their social economic group. Lowest ES will be assigned to the school nearest their home - same with medium and same with high. These are administrative assignments - not mandatory, based on recommended criteria. The hope is that this would not be disruptive to student transportation.
- Analyzing block group data and SES tiers.
- Nancy McArdle provided additional information:
 - Wanted to follow our direction to use the Berkeley model, the types of neighborhoods, educational attainment, household income, etc..
 - Used income data.; Used census block group - smallest level of geography used by census.
 - We constructed indicators for the 3 variables and needed to create an overall diversity score - measured in different units.
 - We had an overall diversity score - 8 block groups, 345 families.
 - Equal number of groups - mapped them. Created with 3 characteristics and another diversity score calculation - education and income not racial data, to see how it came out. Didn't want anything to be constitutionally challenged.
 - When done without race, categories were almost identical so it didn't make much of a difference; continued to use the Berkeley model.
 - We did not have info about students before they were assigned.
 - Looked at free and reduced lunch students to see how that correlates with where they lived - which was highly associated.
 - In low 1:5, high 1:50 eligible for F&RL.
 - In the future we can ask parents about their status, education and income.
 - Combined with info on sibling preference, preassignment for certain groups.
 - Questions:
 - Do we have the data from the parents? Recommend getting that data from the parent or think we're okay not having it.
 - Recommends that moving forward with students already registered, we ask information in ranges, start assigning the students now according to this algorithm.
 - In year 2, strongly recommends parents to voluntarily provide income and number of children and adults in the family. Number of adults is important, looking for single parents. Single parent correlation between lower ES. Will look at the block group -- where they live, their neighborhood context - combine the two for a refined algorithm.
 - Don't want to be disruptive to the community. Does not make sense to do that -- not worth it.
 - Transition to integration initiative - that's what the county needs - diversity conscience without disrupting the community.
 - Not worth the risk of upsetting the community.
 - Question:
 - Data was from current kindergarten class - much smaller due to pandemic. Will that change the tiers - are children in private kindergarten and probably in a higher tier?
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- It doesn't matter -we assign the students here' students who come after the initial round, will be assigned; the algorithm is designed to work regardless of how many students syou have -- cannot be kept out of school.
- Whatever the percentage is, they will be allocated a seat.
- The number of students was 405 - we averaged between 500-550 on a normal year.
- Concern is whether they were all coming back.
 - Question:
 - We're doing this one year at time for kindergarten. Will they be assigned to their geographical zone school or based on the algorithm?
- If students are new to the system, they fall under the new policy.
- There's no point in unduly disrupting students.
- With new grades coming in for the first time, it's best to use the same method to assign in a school closest to their home.
- There were deep conversations on this - so many scenarios - committed to keeping students together. Tried to speak to zoned schools for families entering the district but not kindergarten -- will do the most reasonable approach - as well as managing class size.
 - Question:
 - Will Mr. Alves be present for the next board meeting?
- Don't want to have a normal presentation. If we do full board, we can send the questions to Dr. Taylor and answers can be incorporated into a presentation.
- Dr. Taylor shared the spreadsheet SES Diversity
- Results of the simulations based upon the variances.
- Recommendation is that 5% achieves the social economic diversity assignment of children - meaningful.
- NO child assigned to a school based on their race.
- As you go along, we can make adjustments. The distribution of social economic will stay the same.
- Dr. Taylor shared the maps - version 3A
- Backgrounds are diversity tiers/race of students and where they live.
- Has ramifications for transportation issues; some were close, some were outliers.
 - Question
 - Jefferson is a 3-5 school, which will eventually include kindergarten. Was Jefferson taken into consideration when it became a K-5 school?
- Will do an algorithm that factors in 6 elementary schools. Just need the number of students.
 - Question:
 - There is a concentration of ELL students in Clinton -- will that continue? Is that a plan to move Special Programs and integrate it more?
- We had those conversations. Speaking with SEPAC, students in ELL and SS programs are placed first. The design of the ELL program can be changed - will have more teachers assigned. Smaller number now and a limited number of teachers to provide services -- will need to travel if we spread the students out. Percentages may grow and will need multilingual programs.

- Having ELL together enhances the services they are receiving.
- Statement from Mr. Alves:
 - Advantage with moving forward, show that we can be intentionally diverse without being disruptive to the community - commends the district on this. Likes this model - administrative assignments with regard to ELL and special services; it gives flexibility.
 - Doesn't matter what grade a student is coming in, they will be able to be assigned based on the algorithm.

2. Board Policy Reviews and SLT (and Administration) Input

Policies for Second Reading (review any comments received)

0164 - Conduct of Board Meetings

- Some changes from Annemarie. Adding definition of what the meetings are; how to get items on the agenda, consistent language.

Question:

Why is the "two board member" language needed for an item to be placed on the agenda?

5350- Pupil Suicide Prevention (C&I working on revisions)-PULLED

- Ready for 1st read but is being held for a closer look.

8600- Student Transportation (FFT)

- Suggestions already made about the shuttle - CHS.
- Concerns - Keith ran a report. Any high school student zoned for Seth Boydent will be zoned for a shuttle. Can be problematic - 400 students (8th - 12th graders)
- We have addresses that are not 2 ½ miles. Need to let families know early enough.
- Some of the conversations, the importance for changing this policy is to make sure we take care of integration needs. Initial conversations would be a hard restart on all exceptions provided previously.
- One way is for families to obligate themselves for the shuttle. Weather also impacts this.
- A better way to address the shuttle for South Mountain may be to write it in a regulation rather than in a policy or we can start in the middle of the year rather than in September.

Dr. Taylor agreed to the South Mountain, CHS/Seth Boyden shuttle. CHS guidance department has been advocating for this for students to show up to school - there's an achievement gap; lack of ability for students to participate in the school. Suggests we try with one bus on a loop and see what the participation is and then adjust.

Will need to have more parameters - the time of the shuttles, the traffic at Seth Boyden; will work with transportation to come up with parameters.

Question:

- Can we look at DeHart community center?

Discussion:

- Just needs to put in the policy the Seth Boyden neighborhood as opposed to the Seth Boyden school.
- Not sure we committed to a policy versus a regulation.
- The regulation gives us more of an out as opposed to a policy which provides more of a commitment to serve the communities that need it.
- Can rewrite the language to make it more vague and not provide such specificity.
- Hazardous routes - removed hazardous routes. Policy needs to list the hazardous routes - they are now 18 years old. Looking at the integration plan, students are going in directions they haven't gone before. Transportation is going to become a place where parents are not going to be affected by current hazardous routes due to sibling preference.
- Mr. Joshua met with Sheena [Collum] and Frank [McGehee] -- will not be written in the policy but will be noted;
- Board wants there to be a process to point to.
- We forwarded maps that Tammy forwarded and more details were requested and will provide that to the township shortly.
- Discussion of Marshall/Jefferson bus route - routes over a mile.
- Bussing proposals related to the current programs while they wind down - transitional. Proposal is for 3 years.
- For Jefferson/Marshall students - impacts less than 70 students; may impact Seth Boyden students. 40 students for Seth Boyden.
- District-wide, question of how many students are on buses.
- Proposing that everyone should be 2 miles or more, include Marshall/Jefferson in that calculation. We want Marshall/Jefferson to comply with state law - exceptions are the shuttle.
- Grandfathering important approach to this. Not creating an off ramp for parents, but for a specific program for a commitment made for a specific length of time.
- Tighten up the language as much as possible - keep a three year commitment.

9713- Recruitment by Special Interest Groups (FFT)

- Hold the policy for another month.
- Shannon will add more language.

Policies Sent to Committees to Prepare for [First Reading](#)

2415- Every Student Succeeds Act (FFT) (series of 7 policies)

5120- Assignment of Students

- Question of whether the policy should say that new students transferring in the district are subject to the algorithm for placement.
- No exceptions - the clearer the better. Will be a timely highlight.
- Will add language about the algorithm.

5124- Internal Student Transfers- PULLED

- Should have this policy in May. Parents cannot use the policy

5533- Student Smoking (C&I)

- Question whether vaping counts and it does count?
- Correct parent/guardian references.
- Two references for students suspected to be under the influence.
- Remove medical evaluation and refer to substance abuse policy.

5519- Dating Violence at School (C&I)

To be held.

5751- Sexual Harassment (Ms. Butler reviewing new SE draft, back to first read)

- Strauss Esmay rewriting the policy based on the standard of review by the Title IX;
- Hold and redo for 1st reading again.
- Inclined to go with preponderance of the evidence.
- Concerned that sexual harassment not in the code of conduct.
- Will add the 5751 policy to the agenda again for 1st reading for April.
- Will review the Code of Conduct as soon as sexual harassment policy approved.
- Adding training of staff on sexual harassment.
- Updating the CHS code of conduct for sexual harassment.

5756- Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students (C&I)

- Spoke with Shannon - a few items will be added to the policy.
- Will go to Cuttle's version.

7441-Electronic Surveillance on School Buildings and on School Grounds (FFT)

- This policy came on first read and then was pulled because concerns raised around civil liberties. Having cameras that stream. We have the MOU which is a global MOU.
- Problem with law enforcement initiating the feed.
- Don't want to hamper access to the feed - having to contact the superintendent prior to accessing the feed in an emergent situation.
- We have the capability to give live stream access. It rarely happens.

6311- Contracts for Goods and Services Funded by Federal Grants (FFT)

- Working to get additional clarification on the policy - no changes from Strauss Esmay but auditors recommended some changes.

6112- Reimbursement of Federal or Other Grant Expenditures (FFT)

- No changes - ready for first reading

2415.02- Title I Fiscal Responsibilities (FFT)

- The Library policy - looked at surrounding districts; wants books to mirror our district.
- Cross reference with the fines policy. Abolish the policy and rename to the correct policy number.

Policies sent to Personnel regarding leave: 4431.1, 3431.1, 1643, 4431 - one new policy will remove 2 existing policies

2. New Business

- How are policy changes communicated to staff?

3. Old Business

- Status of Migration to Strauss Esmay: what services have we paid for? Does Strauss Esmay have everything it needs from SOMSD?

Meeting adjourned at 8:12 pm