

Alameda Unified School District
Office of Student Services and Alternative Education

*Answers to “Enrollment Issues & Questions”
from Edison School Neighborhood Network
(Submitted September, 2007)*

A. General Questions

1. Of the ~56 Kindergarten enrollments over projections this year (2007-2008), what sites exceeded projections and by how much? And what sites added classes? (For example, we know Edison added an entire class, and Ruby Bridges had space for 100 but apparently ~105 were expecting to enter.)

The Edison kindergarten class was added last spring---This fall we added new kindergarten classes at Earhart, Lum, Washington, and Ruby Bridge, for a total of 5 additional classes.

2. Of these 2007 Kindergarten students, how many must be diverted? From where? To Where?

Nine kindergarten students were diverted this year—5 from Bay Farm, 3 from Lum and 1 from Haight. As of October 5, all kindergarten students have returned to their home school except one who chose to stay at the school where they were diverted.

3. How many kindergarten students were diverted each of the last several school years? Of these, how many were able to return to their neighborhood “home” school in the same year, or the following year?

We have not specifically tracked how many students are diverted across the district. We do know that currently there are no students that were diverted last year who have not been returned to their home school.

4. Does the District track redirected students to see how they do (vs. rest of students)? (example: whether they leave AUSD rather than be redirected, or whether their attendance is different) *No.*
5. What sites added Kindergarten classes in the past years? Were additional first (and later second and/or third) grade classes added in subsequent years at that school?

See answer to question # 1. In subsequent years classes are added or combination classes are created to accommodate partial classes. Per teacher contract we cannot make combination classes that include kindergartners, except at Paden School where there is a developmental K-1 program and a waiver to the AEA contract in place. School capacity is also a factor in our ability to add additional classrooms.

6. What sites could AUSD add Kindergarten classes to next year? And in 2009-2011? Is AUSD reaching or has AUSD reached capacity at any elementary schools? Is there an “accurate facility capacity study”?

This will be addressed by the task force that will be looking into school facility capacities and potential needs.

7. What is the entire proposed policy by the District? How do “priorities” reconcile with policy on “Issues & Options” handout. Some seem to conflict.

The only proposed changes to the policy are consideration of a random drawing for kindergarten enrollment at a school that is over capacity, and giving siblings a higher priority when placing students.

8. Will District share all questions, comments, and suggestions and the District’s response online, as was done with the Budget issue last year?

The District will provide updates from school neighborhood enrollment policy meetings in Issues and Options which will be posted online, www.alameda.k12.ca.us. The first update was published October 15.

9. Has AUSD considered creating an early or pre-registration process for Kindergarten, possibly using online or mail-in “intent to enroll” forms? If gathered in November-December, this data could help with planning prior to the Kindergarten Roundup in January, and might show that capacity will be adequate, or might indicate earlier that additional classes will be required. There would be neither lines nor hardship on individuals who couldn’t participate on a particular day at a particular time.

The District is working with the school and parent community on data collection to better identify our future enrollment numbers. An online “Intent to Enroll” process is a good suggestion. However, we would need to consider issues such as parent access to the Internet and reliability of “Intent to Enroll” data. Decisions around adding facilities to increase capacity and/or possible boundary changes are being addressed in the Superintendent’s comprehensive planning process currently underway.

B. Policy Questions:

1. Could a priority system be set up that would allow for a buffer/flex zone between schools in order to allow for shifts in enrollment year to year? A flex zone could encourage community to help improve all schools by creating kinship schools, and maintain home values.

Policies for enrollment can be set up in many different ways, as your example shows. AUSD has not considered such a plan in the past, but it could be an outcome of the Superintendent’s elementary facility capacity task force.

Example: The Price Laboratory School in Iowa utilizes a basic zone and buffer zone. Their priority system is stated online at <http://www.pls.uni.edu/pls/plsinfo/enrollment.html>utilizes, and includes the following description:

NOTE: Cedar Falls Enrollment ONLY - Place of resident is an important consideration in determining admission priority. The basic and buffer area have been defined for purposes of establishing admission priority. Admissions are granted on a first-come, first-served basis in the following order:

1. *Basic Area - other family members enrolled*
 2. *Basic Area - no other family members enrolled*
 3. *Buffer Area - other family members enrolled*
 4. *Buffer Area - no other family members enrolled*
2. Could a priority system be set up with a residential “master list” where families with children register with the district as soon as they move in (by purchase or rent), and families with new children add their names to the list upon the birth of the child? Such a list would remove all uncertainty, and give the District much better control with capacity planning.

This system would need to be evaluated to see if it provided any more accurate information than we have now, across the district. However, such a system would still not help us address kindergarten enrollment procedures and sibling priority.

3. If the District is trying to make a policy to deal with “two’s and three’s”, as the newspapers have been saying, then what is the plan for the years that they have more than three? At what number (X) would a new class be added?

In each case, adding a new class depends on how many students we are over and the capacity of the school. The number of seats available in the surrounding schools must also be taken into account.

4. Is there a way to recruit students from other schools to fill a class if there are between X and 19 numbers of students? Could a provision be included to create a split K-1 class if there are between 3 and X students over?

We currently keep a transfer request list in Student Services and move students where space is available. We ask for volunteers to transfer if we are over enrolled when school starts. K-1 combination classes are not allowed by our teacher contract, with the exception of Paden School’s developmental program which has a waiver to the AEA contract in place.

5. Where would re-directed students be placed? Is there a way to look at giving parents a choice of schools if their child is diverted? For example, could parents consider comparable API score, proximity to home/work, or they may wish to choose a school near their babysitter/relative if transportation is an issue.

Students are always offered a place at the nearest school that has space. When we divert students we give as many choices as school that have space.

6. Will AUSD offer transportation to diverted students? What if families can't arrange for transport to the more distant school?

AUSD has no funding source for the transportation of regular education students.

Example: Transportation could be difficult for a parent or caregiver who relies on walking to their neighborhood school because they don't drive, or if they rely on their neighborhood support system to watch a napping baby for the few minutes it takes to walk two blocks to pick up or drop off a sibling.

Transportation would be discontinued if a redirected student was offered a slot due to an opening at their home school mid-year and choose not to accept that slot.

7. Will AUSD ask for volunteers to transfer to another school of choice (assuming there is capacity), before they involuntarily redirect students?

Yes, this is our standard practice unless a parent chooses to be diverted before school begins.

8. Could a system be put in place to keep all the diverted Kindergarten students from one school together thereby minimizing transportation costs? Is it possible to send all diverted students to the same classroom?

Yes, if there were sufficient space at the receiving school. However, we believe that parents may want to make this decision individually.

9. Will AUSD keep a waiting list for diverted students to return to their "home" school when there's an opening (that year, next year, whenever there's space) and notify the family of that opening? How will parents of diverted students be notified of such an opening?

A list of diverted students is kept at the home school. As soon as an opening occurs, the school secretary calls to see if the student wants to return. If the student chooses to stay until the end of the school year, we send a letter in May asking if they would like to return in the fall. Their return depends on if there is now space at that grade level.

10. How could we ensure that a child is not diverted for more than one year? Can the prioritization policy be stated so that children who were redirected in a prior year from their local school have the **highest** priority, over and above any new children who register with the school district mid-year, including even those who might be younger siblings of a student who is accepted into a higher grade if a sibling policy is in place?

Example: Mid-year, a 3rd grader is enrolled in the school into a class with space. They have a 4-year old sibling who will attend K. Will the policy be clearly stated that the sibling cannot enter the Kindergarten before those on the redirected list have a chance?

Currently policy gives the highest priority to residents, followed by diverted students. At this time we are not proposing any change to the way we divert or return diverted students.

11. Could a policy state that a student (or family) would not be involuntarily diverted for more than one year in their elementary career?

We cannot guarantee that a space will always be available after only one year. However it's unusual for a student to be diverted for more than one year.

12. If a student is diverted in kindergarten, then returns to their "home" school when there's space, and if in a subsequent grade (e.g., 1st grade) students again need to be diverted, then will the student that just returned to their home school be treated as the last registered, and therefore the first to be diverted again or would a student that had been previously diverted be "protected" and not required to be diverted again during elementary school?

Once a resident student is enrolled at their home school they are not diverted again.

13. What is the policy of the District regarding siblings of diverted students? Would they be expected to attend their local "home" school, or would the family be given the choice of bringing all their children to the same school? Will families with diverted students be allowed to have siblings on a waiting list at their "home" school as well as the diverted school? If the sibling priority is raised, it would not seem fair to families with diverted students to then have no subsequent priority for younger siblings to attend either school, because the older student would not be attending the "home" area school, and the diverted student is not in the normal attendance area of that school.

If a student is diverted and the parent wants to voluntarily transfer the sibling to that same new school, and there was space to do so, we would accommodate them. Parents can make transfer requests for as many schools as they choose.

14. Is the District only willing to consider a sibling priority in conjunction with a lottery, or could the issues be considered separately so that families with multiple children receive the benefits of attending the same school while single-child families are not subject to the uncertainty of a lottery?

It could be considered either way.

15. If a higher sibling priority is in place, and a Special Day Class is at a "home" school (e.g., Edison), would SDC families also receive sibling priority at that school?

Special Day Classes (SDC) are district-wide programs and are not subject to attendance zones. If an SDC student lives in the home zone, their sibling has resident status. If The SDC student lives in another attendance zone, their sibling would have sibling status under our proposed enrollment priorities.

16. Could it be stated that once a school or grade reaches a certain percentage of its capacity (90 or 95%) that no inter or intra district transfers will be accepted at that school?

No. This would greatly restrict our ability to divert and transfer students to the next closest school. It would also inhibit our ability to maximize our student teacher ratio.

C. Capacity Related Questions:

1. Could special programs be moved from oversubscribed schools to schools with capacity?

It depends upon the particular program. Some special education programs and Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) for special education students are school specific.

2. Could incentive programs be utilized to “draw” students to schools with capacity?

Secondary “magnet” programs will be examined as part of the Superintendent’s Pathway to Excellence and Equity Task Force.

3. What steps will the District take to ensure that a student actually lives at the address that they have registered under?

Principals or secretaries that suspect a false address refer this to the district Child Welfare Specialist for investigation. Typically, the district investigates hundreds each year.

4. Can AUSD establish and advertise an “anonymous hotline” so that parents and community members can report fraudulent use of addresses?

People already place anonymous calls to Student Services with this kind of information: 337-7072. All such reports are investigated as long as the information is specific.

5. What is the current penalty for fraudulently using an address? Is there or can there be a fine or a penalty greater than child being returned to “home” school or “home” district?

We have no authority to issue fines or citations to parents for fraudulent information. We are unaware of any local school districts that have been able to prosecute under such circumstances.

6. Under Class Size Reduction, must all classes be 20:1; can some be 22, 23 and average 20:1 across District?

No. Although the requirement for a 20:1 ratio is an “average of the daily enrollment counts for each individual class, from the first day of instruction through April 15,” enrollment can exceed 20:1 only for “limited periods of time, as long as the daily average through April 15 does not exceed 20.44.” (California Department of Education K-3 Class Size Frequently Asked Questions) Any non-compliance with these ratios would jeopardize the district’s Class Size Reduction funding.

7. Could Class Size Reduction be utilized in a more creative way, such as described in FAQ page of the California Department of Education K-3 CSR?

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cs/k3/csrfaq.asp>

example. Option 2, combination classes, half-day or AM/PM Kindergarten.

“Option 2 combination classes, half-day or AM/PM Kindergarten” was not selected at the time AUSD began Class Size Reduction due to consideration of the AEA contract.

8. Could the District qualify for “emergency portables” under CSR guidelines?

We do not qualify for “emergency portables” under CSR guidelines.

9. Has District considered temporarily re-aligning grades at middle and high (e.g., moving 5th grade to middle and make middle grades 5, 6, and 7, then high 8-12)?

The District will consider this and other options as part of the superintendent’s Pathway to Excellence and Equity planning process.

10. How would adjusting boundaries be approached, from a community standpoint (for any grade/school)?

If changes to boundaries would be considered, proposed boundaries would be shared through a community meeting process and Board of Education agenda items. Any changes would need a majority vote of the Board.