

Citizen's Budget and Finance Advisory Committee
January 5, 2009
7:00 PM – 9:00 PM
Administration building
360 Colborne Street

Present: Angel Thomas, Jo Ann Clark, Kevin Huepenbecker, Mary Doran, Peter Hendricks, Lois Rockney, Jill Cacy (Guest)

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm.

Members introduced themselves.

Approval of 12/10/2008 joint meeting with CEAC.

SPPS School Choice System:

Jill Cacy, Director of SPPS Student Placement Center was present information via power point on SPPS School choice.

Summary of presentation:

There are two seasons for time choice. 1) The on time season (January-March) and the on-going season. The on time school choice process is the basis for school enrollment. The placement center saw 65 new students the day of this meeting. The length of time it takes to place new students depends on the situation. A student can come to intake one day and start at new school the next day. Factors such as ELL testing, mantoux, testing, IEP, etc will affect the length of time it takes for a student to be placed.

There are two types of Elementary schools, neighborhood schools and magnet/citywide option. Each address is assigned to a school, (with the exception of Maxfield/Galtier and the West side Elementary schools).

The first magnet school started in the mid 1970's. Magnet schools were created to help desegregate schools. The system for enrolling students during this time used race as a factor. SPPS no longer uses race as a factor to decide where students go to school but the system is still in place, reassignment schools help balance this.

Currently any student can enroll in any school depending on space at the school. New this year is a universal application. The universal application requires that all students fill out an application. If there are more applications than space available a tie breaker is done.

Something else new in 2009 is the length of time waiting list are kept. The placement center used to keep waiting list for a full year. Now the waiting list expires September 15. This allows maximum options for late and or new students applying after Sept. 15. The placement center does not accept faxed applications because they are not always reliable.

Secondary students have access to apply to any SPPS secondary school via application, city-wide transportation is available, preferences are given.

There are preferences given for both Elementary and secondary. Preferences include

- sibling preference- around for about 10 years;
- Geographic- live within half a mile, (varies), of school, (Ex. JJ Hill, Arlington, Capital Hill.). No attendance area if geographic.
- Articulation- ex. If you go to Adams you get preference to Highland Jr and Sr High.
- Attendance Area- if you reside in the schools attendance area.

When application was turned in, available space, preferences and random number are factors that determine acceptance to a school.

Applicants are entered in database and random number is assigned. Around 9,000 applications are received on time.

Parents can come into placement center at anytime for assistance. Parents can make any changes to school choice applications up to the deadline. Once school starts students only change schools if they move and don't have transportation or for special circumstances.

Some spots at schools are saved for students moving into the area after the deadline- esp. neighborhood schools. The placement centers intake numbers are up because they are servicing more kids- example: 4 year old programs.

SPPS is only paid for those kids that are actually present on the day the revenue or ADM is counted. Students are in and out. The revenue is not set on any particular day. The placement center works to be accurate and aggressive because if they say no or think about it the families will go somewhere else.

Elementary school assignment notification goes out via mail in late march. Secondary school assignment notification goes out via mail from school in early may.

What does placement center need to get notifications out earlier? They need better technology- hope new system will help, a simpler system, more user friendly system for parents.

The placement center works with parents, schools and communities through outreach programs where staff visits groups and offers presentations and information on the SPPS school choice system. They seek to determine what works best for schools and parents.

How does NCLB affect school choice? Schools have to offer choice if placed on needs improvement list- Families have until August to change schools. July is the placement centers busiest month.

The goal is to have as many students in desk that will remain in these desks for the rest of the year.

The placement center tracks where students are coming from but it is not compiled. The placement center makes the initial request for records.

Currently there is a statewide submission called MARRS. SPPS must report data to the state of MN. However we don't have access to other districts info via MARRS and other districts report their data in a different format.

Some comments and questions from members:

- Parents didn't like the k-8 system because of less choices, no science lab, science requirements, etc.
- How are we informing parents on the curriculum, student learning styles and test scores?
- Curriculum is same among schools because of high mobility.

Other news:

We are scheduled to have assessment completed late March/early April.

Make recommendations as to how enrollment is going to affect the district. The report can be as long as we want but recommendations should be kept brief- too many will become overwhelming. The final report due in June.

Next meeting :

Feb 2, 2009 will be a joint meeting with CEAC. State demographer will be present as a guest. We need to review what we have seen and heard at previous meetings and presentations and start a list of recommendations. Lois will bring current enrollment data to next meeting. We need to break data down by grades and other factors. We will receive report that will show how many students are enrolled and how many students the school can hold.

Upcoming meetings:

Upcoming first and third Monday's - Feb 16 (meeting canceled due to Presidents Day), March 2, March 16, April 6, April 20.

Meeting adjourned at 8:59.