



REPORT TO

REGULAR BOARD

## ADMISSION AND PLACEMENT OF ELEMENTARY PUPILS

*“In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps.”*

*Proverbs 16:9 (NIV)*

Created, Draft	First Tabling	Review
October 20, 2015	October 22, 2015	<a href="#">Click here to enter a date.</a>
John Volek, Senior Coordinator Planning Services Mario Silva, Comptroller, Planning and Development Services		
<b>RECOMMENDATION REPORT</b>		

### **Vision:**

*At Toronto Catholic we transform the world through witness, faith, innovation and action.*

### **Mission:**

*The Toronto Catholic District School Board is an inclusive learning community rooted in the love of Christ. We educate students to grow in grace and knowledge and to lead lives of faith, hope and charity*



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## **A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Staff have investigated the elementary admissions process for several school boards across the Province and the Country, in an effort to understand how their processes differ from the TCDSB's current elementary admissions model. The results revealed that the overwhelming majority of Boards employ a model very similar to the TCDSB—one that includes fixed attendance boundaries, a series of priorities, and the use of time and date of application to establish cut-offs. The Calgary District School Board is the only board out of 20 surveyed with a different elementary admissions model.

Arising from dialogue and direction from the October 13, 2015 Governance and Policy Committee meeting, staff have summarized two alternate elementary admissions priority models that attempt to incorporate the criteria of “walk zones” and the geographic distance between home address and school.

The option of simply considering admitting everybody regardless of where they live was also suggested.

## **B. PURPOSE**

To provide a simple, easy-to-read explanation of the current elementary admissions policy and two alternate options for the Board to evaluate and discuss.

## **C. BACKGROUND**

1. At the Governance and Policy Committee meeting of October 13, 2015, staff were directed to follow-up with 3 school boards that were previously surveyed by the Planning Department to confirm their admissions policies and to determine whether or not they employ a “lottery system” as part of their admissions protocol. An additional board was also surveyed.
2. The school boards in question are the Calgary District School Board, the Ottawa Catholic District School Board, the Toronto District School Board and the Simcoe County District School Board.

## **Calgary District School Board**

In January of each year, elementary students who fall within designated “walk zones” are admitted along with all siblings. In February of each year, all students who fall within their larger designated “bus zones”, but outside of the designated walk zones, are admitted using a lottery system regardless of date and time of their application. Students are selected from this lottery until all remaining classroom spaces are filled. Students outside of designated bus zones are not admitted except under exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the local area Superintendent.

This process has been in place for over 20 years and is widely considered “effective and fair” as it is a long-standing, well understood system-wide process. However, not all parents are satisfied, especially those that apply early, reside within the respective bus zones and then submit to a lottery (“luck”) to secure a spot for their children at their designated home school.

Aside from the uncertainty in eligibility, another downside to this model is that designated over-flow schools may not be close by.

There are no plans to change this process in the near future.

## **Ottawa Catholic District School Board**

This Board does not employ a lottery system for student registration. Its model is similar to the TCDSB’s current elementary admissions process, utilizing boundaries and a series of priorities as criteria for eligibility. There are no plans to change this process in the near future.

## **Simcoe County District School Board**

This Board does not employ a lottery system for student registration. Their model is similar to the TCDSB’s current elementary admissions process, utilizing boundaries and a series of priorities as criteria for eligibility. There are no plans to change this process in the near future.

## Toronto District School Board

TDSB's model is similar to the TCDSB's current elementary admissions model, utilizing boundaries and a series of priorities as criteria for eligibility.

However, the TDSB also uses a lottery system for special optional attendance areas only. Students are selected from a lottery until all remaining classroom spaces are filled. This lottery process is similar to the unique optional attendance areas recently established at Our Lady of Perpetual Help. The TDSB has no plans to change their admissions process in the near future.

3. The TCDSB's current Elementary Admissions Policy utilizes a model which consists of the following priority sequence of steps:
  1. All siblings are admitted, regardless of their home address, where space permits.
  2. **If** there's available space, students whose primary residence falls within the Board approved boundary are admitted.
  3. **If** there's available space, students registered at a licensed child care within the Board approved boundary are admitted.
  4. **If** there's available space, students in a non-licensed (private) child care within the Board approved boundary are admitted.
  5. **If** there's available space, students residing outside the Board approved boundary, within the City Toronto, are admitted.
  6. Lastly, **if** there's available space, students from outside the City of Toronto are admitted.
4. The TCDSB's elementary admissions priorities noted above are fully consistent with the TDSB.
5. Furthermore, the TCDSB's current elementary admissions priorities, as noted above, are filtered by time and date of application ("time and date stamp"). This simply means that where overall demand for admission, at any priority level, exceeds available classroom space, students are admitted

based on the time and date of their completed application until all remaining classroom spaces are filled.

6. In-boundary students who are unsuccessful in gaining admission to their designated home school are given the option of being placed on a waitlist in order of priority and by time and date of application. At a designated time each year, the Board “releases the waitlist” and any space that becomes available (for whatever reason) will be offered to a student on the waitlist by order of priority and the time and date of their completed application.
7. There are no guarantees of admission at any level of priority, however, the Planning and Facilities department will make every effort to ensure that space at any school is fully utilized. Furthermore, any school where there is potential for the temporary placement of portables will be assessed in an effort to accommodate as many students as possible. Facilities staff will also assess schools with pupil accommodation challenges and make any suggestions for internal modifications in an effort to increase overall capacity. The overriding objective is to accommodate all in-boundary students wherever possible.
8. Furthermore, opportunities for boundary adjustments will be considered in an effort to keep pace with demographic change. The Governance and Policy Committee has recommended to Board changes to the Elementary School Attendance Boundary Policy in an effort to expedite the review process. However, it is important to note that unless the Board of Trustees are prepared to waive the common practice of grandfathering existing out-of-boundary enrolled students, no boundary adjustment, on any scale, will have sizeable or significant impacts on enrolment for several years. This is because out-of-boundary grandfathered students must graduate out of the school to free-up space for new in-boundary students and any new siblings.
9. It is important to raise the fact that the Board’s current Elementary Admissions Policy was the result of several comprehensive public consultations in May of 2014. Any substantive changes to the current admissions policy will require further public consultation and feedback.
10. Some of the major themes that originated from the public consultation process in May of 2014 were:

- a. Geographic boundaries are a means to filter entrance eligibility and will ultimately result in a more efficient use of school facilities.
  - b. Boundaries and “time and date stamp” criteria help administrators and school staff manage admissions and eases communication.
  - c. Boundaries and “time and date stamp” criteria allow for greater public transparency.
  - d. Boundaries and “time and date stamp” criteria foster a greater sense of community among eligible students and families.
  - e. Boundaries limit the need to redirect students who are in-boundary even if a school is oversubscribed.
  - f. Boundaries are constructed by staff in an objective and practical manner and do not take into consideration socio-economic factors, and therefore allow for a heterogeneous student population—this is consistent with the Catholic value of inclusivity.
  - g. Boundaries in the admissions process does not discriminate, but rather provides an equitable approach to determine eligibility.
11. Based on Trustee input, staff have assembled two alternate elementary admissions policy scenarios below, for review and discussion. Please note that neither of the following options are being recommended for approval.

### **Elementary Admissions Policy Priorities – Scenario 1**

Note: Prior to the start of the elementary admissions process, the Principal, in consultation with the local area Superintendent and the Planning Department, will establish an appropriate “holdback” of classroom spaces, specific to their experiences and professional judgement, in an effort to accommodate in-boundary late applications.

1. In January of each year, all siblings are admitted, regardless of their home address, where space permits. Every opportunity will be made to ensure that all siblings are admitted.
2. **If** there’s available space, students whose primary residence falls within their Board approved boundary are admitted. This window of registration ends on the last business day of April. If demand exceeds available space, students are offered the opportunity to be placed on a wait-list for consideration in June.

3. On the last business day of June, a second registration opportunity is made available to accommodate wait-listed in-boundary students (as per priority #2 above) AND in-boundary students who have completed an application AFTER the original April registration cut-off.
  - a. Students will be automatically selected based on the distance between their home address and the school.
  - b. The number of students selected for admission will be based on the number of available classroom spaces as per the established holdback. Ties (*multiple students at the same distance*) will be decided by “time and date stamp” of completed application.
  - c. **If** demand exceeds available space, students will be offered redirection to a nearby school with space. Admissions staff will continue to work diligently so that students are appropriately accommodated.
4. **If** there’s available space, students registered at a licensed child care within the Board approved boundary are admitted.
  - a. **If** demand exceeds available space, students will be offered redirection to a nearby school with space. Admissions staff will work diligently so that students are appropriately accommodated.
5. **If** there’s available space, students in a non-licensed (private) child care within the Board approved boundary are admitted.
  - a. **If** demand exceeds available space, students will be offered redirection to a nearby school with space. Admissions staff will work diligently so that students are appropriately accommodated.
6. **If** there’s available space, students residing anywhere outside the Board approved boundary, within the City of Toronto, are admitted.
7. Lastly, **if** there’s available space, students from outside the City of Toronto are admitted.

## **Elementary Admissions Policy Priorities – Scenario 2**

Note: Prior to the start of the elementary admissions process, the Principal, in consultation with the local area Superintendent and the Planning Department, will establish an appropriate “holdback” of classroom spaces, specific to their



experiences and professional judgement, in an effort to accommodate in-boundary late applications.

1. In January of each year, all siblings are admitted, regardless of their home address, where space permits. Every opportunity will be made to ensure that all siblings are admitted.
2. **If** there's available space, students whose primary residence falls within their Board approved 1 km Walk Zone boundary (*an established sub-boundary within the larger boundary*) are admitted. This window of registration ends on the last business day of April. If demand exceeds available space, students are offered the opportunity to be placed on a wait-list for consideration in June.
3. **If** there's available space, students whose primary residence falls within their Board approved boundary and outside the 1 km Walk Zone boundary are admitted. This window of registration ends on the last business day of April. If demand exceeds available space, students are offered the opportunity to be placed on a wait-list for consideration in June.
4. On the last business day of June, a second registration opportunity is made available to accommodate wait-listed in-boundary students (as per priority #2 and #3 above) **AND** in-boundary students who have completed an application **AFTER** the original April registration cut-off.
  - a. Students will be automatically selected based on the distance between their home address and the school.
  - b. The number of students selected for admission will be based on the number of available classroom spaces as per the established holdback. Ties (*multiple students at the same distance*) will be decided by "time and date stamp" of completed application.
  - c. **If** demand exceeds available space, students will be offered redirection to a nearby school with space. Admissions staff will work diligently so that students are appropriately accommodated.
5. **If** there's available space, students registered at a licensed child care within the Board approved boundary are admitted.



- a. **If** demand exceeds available space, students will be offered redirection to a nearby school with space. Admissions staff will work diligently so that students are appropriately accommodated.
6. **If** there's available space, students in a non-licensed (private) child care within the Board approved boundary are admitted.
  - a. **If** demand exceeds available space, students will be offered redirection to a nearby school with space. Admissions staff will work diligently so that students are appropriately accommodated.
7. **If** there's available space, students residing anywhere outside the Board approved boundary, within the City of Toronto, are admitted.
8. Lastly, **if** there's available space, students from outside the City of Toronto are admitted.

#### **D. RECOMMENDATION**

That the Director of Education continue to monitor the impact of the current admissions process and assess its implementation after two full admissions cycles are completed.