

Student Assignment Plan Fact Sheet **January 2008 Status Report**

Background:

In 2007, the United States Supreme Court affirmed that there is a compelling governmental interest in achieving diversity in our schools. The Court upheld that race conscious measures could be used to diversify schools but that race could not be the sole factor in an individual student's school assignment. In his Opinion, Justice Anthony Kennedy captured the importance of diversity:

“This nation has a moral and ethical obligation to fulfill its historic commitment to creating an integrated society that ensures equal opportunity for all of its children. A compelling interest exists in avoiding racial isolation, an interest that a school district in its discretion and expertise may choose to pursue.... The decision today should not prevent school districts from continuing the important work of bringing together students of different racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds.”

The Jefferson County Board of Education has affirmed its commitment to provide a high quality education in a diverse environment and has adopted six guiding principles-- diversity, quality, choice, predictability, stability, and equity—that must be present in any modified student assignment plan. The Board also broadened the definition of diversity to include all minorities as well as socio-economic status.

What families need to know:

There are no changes to the student assignment plan for the 2008-09 school year. A Board-approved, modified elementary plan would go into effect in 2009-10 and would primarily involve elementary students' assignment.

The student assignment scenarios being considered preserve opportunities for choice. They do not affect magnet/optional programs or traditional schools. These student assignment scenarios may create additional magnet/choice programs in the future for our elementary schools.

Research and Analysis:

The scenarios under consideration represent hundreds of hours of study and research that were conducted with national experts. Staff has considered a variety of options for revising and improving the district's student assignment plan. These student assignment scenarios are tentative and may change based on Board of Education feedback and direction.

Scenarios Being Considered:

We believe that the two proposed scenarios comply with the Supreme Court ruling and reflect all six of the Board's guiding principles of diversity, quality, choice, predictability, stability, and equity. While only one change is required of the District's student assignment plan--no longer assigning individual students

based on their race--the Board has embraced the Court's recommendation that a broader definition of diversity be used.

This student assignment study reviewed a variety of possible plans. Some addressed the Board's guiding principles better than others. The study considered possible plans that provided racial and socioeconomic diversity in district's schools. In affirming our commitment to diversity, the study examined factors that more accurately reflect the community in terms of race, socioeconomic makeup, and educational attainment of our families. In addition, racial diversity in JCPS has been broadened to reflect not only the African-American student population, but also all minority students. This shift more accurately reflects that our district population encompasses 47.9% African American and other minorities as defined by state law.

The modifications at the elementary level would promote socioeconomic and racial diversity by assigning students to schools based on geographical areas instead of individual racial status.

The proposed scenarios have the following factors in common:

-In keeping with the Board's guiding principles of stability and predictability, the scenarios move a minimal number of students at the elementary level.

-In keeping with the Board's guiding principle of choice, the scenarios group multiple elementary schools much like our current plan. This ensures that elementary parents will continue to have several schools to choose from when enrolling their elementary child. There are no boundary changes under either scenario.

-In keeping with the Board's guiding principles of diversity and equity, schools would maintain diversity by applying a 15-50 % guideline for serving students from an assigned geographic area.

-In keeping with the Board's guiding principle for quality schools, the scenarios reduce socioeconomic gaps among student populations that will improve student achievement as supported by research compiled by national desegregation experts Gary Orfield and John A. Powell.

Scenario 1: Contiguous Boundaries:

This scenario modifies the current cluster format of elementary schools and redefines assignments based on geography instead of racial status. This scenario connects geographic areas to have contiguous boundaries. This plan would involve the movement of approximately 3,500 elementary students (3.5% of the total student population). The contiguous boundaries might eventually provide opportunities for an area's elementary, middle and high schools to be aligned and work more closely together. The connecting boundaries also might result in some potential transportation savings.

Scenario 2: Non-Contiguous Boundaries:

This scenario is very similar to the current cluster format and uses geographically defined diversity instead of racially defined diversity. This plan would involve the movement of approximately 1,700 elementary students (1.75% of the total student population).

Middle and High Schools:

Middle and high schools currently manage diversity based on geographical satellite assignments. Under either scenario being considered---shared or non-contiguous boundaries-- there may be no change in the current assignment plan. Any future boundary adjustments would be phased in over time for the middle and high schools.

Other Options Studied:

Staff researched two additional scenarios but determined that these scenarios did not meet the Board's six guiding principles. These scenarios have the potential to cause major student disruption in terms of movement and assignment impacting stability. A magnet plan allowing total choice was reviewed. This plan would be cost prohibitive, take many years to develop. Most important, this plan cannot ensure diversity or equity.

Staff also researched a neighborhood school plan that would return students to their resides school. This plan would create capacity problems for one-third of the elementary schools and would require redistricting of resides boundaries. Literally, all elementary students would be impacted in terms of stability. This plan would require the movement of approximately 23,000 (45%) of elementary students and would lead to a racially and socio-economically segregated system.

Because of the limitations of these scenarios and because they do not meet the Board's guiding principles of quality, diversity, choice, predictability stability, and equity, the Superintendent is not recommending these as possible options.

Sharing Information with the Community:

Based on Board feedback and direction, staff will make modifications to these scenarios if requested. Staff will then take the scenarios to the community to inform them about the scenarios and collect their ideas and questions. We also will survey parents and the community at a minimum of four community information sessions. At each session, a survey developed by the University of Kentucky Research Center will be administered. The same survey also will be posted on the JCPS website for the general public. In addition, the JCPS voice poll system will be available for phone surveys and lastly, UK will conduct a 1,700-person random sample survey. The results from the information sessions and surveys will be presented to the Board in April 2008. JCPS will begin sharing information about these opportunities in February 2008.

