

SOCIOECONOMIC INTEGRATION D1 WORK GROUP

FINDINGS AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

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Defining Socioeconomic Integration

The research and best practices that were reviewed by the SEI Work Group strongly recommend that D1 should adopt a race neutral *multifaceted* definition of socioeconomic integration that includes the following factors:

Socioeconomic Status: Students' SES status should be determined by their family's gross annual income and their parent[s] or guardian's highest educational attainment level.

The SES Status of all newly enrolling students in D1 elementary schools would be determined by their family's gross annual income and their parent[s] or guardian's highest educational attainment level. Best practices recommend that the District should utilize a two-tier grouping of "Low" and "Non-Low" SES students. The "Low-SES" group would include all the low-income students that are eligible for a Free or Reduced priced meal and whose parents' have attained only a high school diploma, GED or less. And, the "Non-Low SES" group would include the paid lunch students whose parents have attained a high school diploma or GED and all of the District's other newly enrolling students whose parent[s] have attained an AA, BA, MA or advanced degree. The research-based rationale for these groupings is that a parent's educational attainment level has become the primary factor in determining their family's income potential and socioeconomic status.

The information pertaining to family income and educational attainment level would be self-reported by parents' when they apply for their child's choice-based assignment and this information would be used as the basis for defining socioeconomic integration and allocating the District's available elementary schools' seats by SES status. In the event that a parent does not volunteer to self-report this SES related information, their child's SES Status would then be determined by the demographic characteristics of their residential neighborhood's most current block group census tract data.

Research and best practices also recommend that the District should identify the newly enrolling students that are most "at risk" regardless of their SES status, which includes student's from single parent households, students in temporary housing, English Language Learners and students with disabilities. And, once identified these "at risk" factors should be "weighted" into the District's socioeconomic choice-based lottery assignment algorithm.

Racial and Ethnic Integration

Although a student's race or ethnic classification will not be used as a factor in assigning students in the District's multifaceted SES choice-based student assignment policy. It is permissible for the District to establish racial and ethnic desegregation goals so long as the assignments to the elementary schools to achieve these goals are not based on an individual student's race or ethnic group.

Key Features of Successful Choice-Based SES Student Assignment Plans

The following are key features of successful SES choice-based student assignment plans that were reviewed by the SEI Work Group and should be incorporated into the Work Group's recommendations for the District's SES choice-based student assignment plan:

- **Grandfathering:** Students already enrolled in the District's elementary schools would be allowed to remain in their currently assigned school and would not be involuntarily reassigned to another school.
- **Sibling Assignments:** All newly enrolling siblings would be assigned to the same school with an older sibling provided the siblings are attending that school at the same time.
- **Diversity:** All assignments would be subject to the District's definition of socioeconomic integration.
- **Choice:** All of the District's elementary schools would become diversifying schools of choice and all parents would be allowed to choose the schools they prefer their children attend by their own rank-order of preference.
- **Proximity Assignments:** Students who reside nearest to their first-choice school would be given a priority to attend that school for their SES grouping.
- **Scope of Assignments:** All newly enrolling elementary students and students that request to be transferred to another District elementary school would be assigned according to the District's SES choice-based student assignment policy.
- **Stability of Assignment:** Once enrolled no student would be mandatorily reassigned to another school.
- **School Improvement:** Schools that are under-chosen and/or are having difficulty attracting a diverse student enrolment will be targeted for research-based school improvement measures.
- **Facilities Utilization and Available Seats:** Enrollment capacities would be established for each elementary school's entry-grades and no school would be allowed to become overcrowded by enrolling students beyond its available seats.

- **Student Transportation:** Student transportation services will be provided as needed in accordance with the DOE’s student transportation policy.
- **Family Resource Center:** Responsibility for ensuring that all parents are able to make informed decisions about their rank-ordered schools of choice would rest with the District’s Family Resource Center that would be conveniently located and accessible to all parents.

Deficiencies in the DOE’s “diversity blind” assignment lottery

The following are my preliminary findings pertaining to the deficiencies in the DOE’s “diversity blind” student assignment lottery. The findings are based on my analysis of the District’s 2010-11 to 1015-16 PreK and K applicants and assignment data that was provided to the SEI Work Group by the Office of Student Enrollment on January 26, 2016. Further analysis of these lotteries is dependent on obtaining the additional data that was requested by Superintendent Phillips on February 9, 2016.

- As a consequence of the DOE’s diversity blind assignment lottery, applicants are “matched” to a school of choice before any diversity related information is known about the student. As indicated in the DOE datasets information pertaining to the students’ ethnicity, FRL eligibility, ELL, SWD and temporary housing status is only obtained and entered into the DOE’s ATS system *after* a student is registered in their matched or assigned school. This practice is incompatible with a diversity conscious choice-based student assignment policy that requires newly enrolling students to register in the school district before they are assigned to a school. And it is during this registration process when parents are requested to provide their child’s and family’s SES related information.
- Analysis of the DOE lottery datasets clearly show that the socioeconomic and racial/ethnic stratification of D1 elementary schools begins with the assignment its PreK and K students as evidenced by the fact that the eight of the District’s least chosen elementary schools have the highest concentration of FRL students and have enrolled either none or less than 9 white students over the past five school years. And there does not appear to be any indication that any efforts have been made to make these schools attract a more diverse student applicant pool.
- The above findings strongly support the need for District 1 to adopt a diversity conscious choice-based student assignment and targeted school improvement plan.