

Following is an encapsulation/summary of my speaking notes from the last Board meeting in December.

I was one of the parents at the meeting in April, 2010, raising the issue of the lack of sibling priority during the sibling registration process. My first question today concerns the bewildering discovery by members of the Board or trustees, shortly after that meeting, that we were working from an old version of Policy 5119. In fact, it turns out that our concerns were misplaced, and that there had indeed already been a revision to the policy in 2008 that addressed sibling priority. However, instead of informing us of the mistake, actions were taken over the subsequent months to REMOVE the portions of the policy that aided kindergarten students in attending the same school as their older siblings. These same portions of Policy 5119, so diligently inserted in 2008, effectively never saw the light of day. WHY were we not simply informed that our concerns had already been addressed? And WHY was the most recent version of policy 5119 not then immediately available through the SD57 website???

My second point addresses the issue from a perspective opposite to that most often used - i.e. not from the perspective of who gets FIRST priority, but who gets LAST priority. When a school administrator finds themselves in the unenviable position of having more students applying than can be admitted to the school, who is it that doesn't get in? When all is said and done, this is in fact what matters most, instead of who is admitted first, second, tenth or 15th. At that point, we must ask ourselves, on what basis is it most fair to preclude a student from entering a school of their choice?

Is it the student of the parents who type more slowly?

Is it the student who perhaps has a longer name than average?

Is it the student who is a twin, and whose parent couldn't even start on their application until the application of their sibling had been completed?

These questions seem absurd, and yet they illustrate the dire need for an exact, unambiguous list of admission priorities, based on criteria that make sense - families already fully committed to the school, families already in the community, etc. Sibling priority can either be a distinct element of such a list, or can be explained in an over-riding statement (ie siblings of students attending the school will be placed at the head of the admission list). Either method would work, but the unambiguous delineation of how admission priority is decided needs to be written into Policy 5119, with every possible permutation of geographic proximity (catchment / non-catchment / non-school district), and social aspect (sibling of current student, daycare in-catchment) accounted for.

The argument has been made that giving younger siblings priority is in some way inequitable towards oldest or only children. I completely disagree with that argument, as every family has a first child, and therefore every family will, once, be competing against other families who are enrolling younger siblings. The situation is therefore perfectly equitable.

I personally have no young children waiting to enter the school system, and count myself lucky as a result.

However, the principal of this matter, that of keeping families together, is one of the principal tenets of human society, and it is an offense against that tenet that I feel as I read the proposed changes to Policy 5119. I urge the Board to place sibling priority in an elevated position in the Kindergarten admission process.

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