

To: Superintendent McLaughlin, Vice-Superintendent Spaeth, School Board Members
Date: March 9, 1995
From: Bruce Wicinas

cc: Nancy Greenman, Bob Tryon, Kathryn James

Re: **Status of School Assignment Software: March 9 Update**

The choice assignment needs decisions on the following.

Immediate Decisions required:

1. **The grade configuration: School capacities by grade level.** The exact capacity figures are required for the final, binding run of the software. I want to receive a copy of the numbers signed by the Superintendents and by each Board Member.

"Grandfathering" and racial balance are starkly at odds at some sites. The numbers appear to indicate that we must "bump" some number of attending students from their sites.

2. **"Overbooking" - A Strategy for dealing with the onslaught of insincere applications from non-BUSD parents.** We have more applications that we have seats at some grade levels. We know that not all of these people are going to show up. What strategy should I use? A poor approach to this will undermine the validity of the whole assignment process.

3. **Proximity Preference** It's too late to do this now, right?

4. **TO** I have heard that children cannot be "assigned" to TO. Do we have to do something different about TO?

Finish Date

The software is nearly ready to run. Its main deficiency is that its operation has not be verified by anyone but me. I am still waiting for some data, including some corrections as well as the LEP and Special Ed designations.

If I can get the data and the above decisions by the end of Friday March 10, then we can make the final software run first thing Monday morning, March 13. Staff and I must spend a couple of hours examining the "assignment chronology" to verify that it behaved properly. Then we can begin making the outcomes public, by late Monday or perhaps most prudent, Tuesday morning March 14.

Software Status

The software is the culmination of concerns of the School Board, BUSD administration, and of Berkeley parents. It now contains many mechanisms to address. More testing is needed to assure they all must run perfectly.

- 1) The task of random assignment to schools based upon first, second and third choices has become only the core of what the software does. (This is the scope of work for which I thought I signed on!)
- 2) The software handles the Board's hierarchy of five priorities.
- 3) It handles "grandfathering," in more than one way.
- 4) It handles siblings, in more than one way.
- 5) The software uses the student's address to automatically identify each child's zone.
- 6) Zoning consists of three different schemes: the three K-5 zones, no zone for 6th, and Williard-King zones for 7th.
- 7) The software automatically detects siblings using parent phone number, because the District's Student Information System has no way of recording the sibling connection.
- 8) Applicants to grade 6 and to grade 7 are processed in a manner that differs from that of K-5.
- 9) The software must exclude LEP student from random selection while saving capacity for them.
- 10) It must include non-resident children of district employees while excluding other non-resident applicants.
- 11) The program must be specially instructed about 8th grade siblings Williard/King 8th graders because their records are not included in our runs.
- 12) The program must prepare a waiting list.
- 13) The program produces a assignment chronology to allow humans to check its function.
- 14) The software will produce statistics describing the outcome of its assignments.
- 15) Finally, the software must feed the outcome to a "mail-merge" program of an outside mass mailing contractor, via a means yet to be determined.

Responsibility

The Board and the Administration must be comfortable with taking responsibility for this process and its outcome. You must allow yourselves the time to know what's going on.