



Memorandum

vancouver school board

VSBC

April 8, 2013

Item 1

To: Management Coordinating Committee (Committee One)

From: Scott Robinson, Associate Superintendent

Re: Enrolment Tracking and Analysis UPDATE

INTRODUCTION:

This report is for the information of trustees and committee members. No follow-up on the part of the Board is required at this time.

BACKGROUND:

Over the past five years, as has been the case with almost all other metro area school districts, the Vancouver School District has experienced a steady decline in enrolment. There continues to be significant interest in determining the scope of and reasons for this decline. As was reported at the December 10, 2012 meeting of the Management Coordinating Committee, district staff believe there is evidence to support the theory that a significant portion of the enrolment decline can be attributed to demographic and population-related factors which exist in the City of Vancouver.

It is also acknowledged that there are very likely other factors impacting enrolment that the District has varying degrees of control over. Accordingly, district staff are taking a number of steps to determine what these other factors might be, and the degree of impact they may be having on enrolment.

At the October 9, 2012 Meeting of the Management and Coordinating Committee, it was suggested that the district:

1. *Conduct a survey to obtain answers as to where and why students leave the district and what students look for in public education;*
2. *Request useful data from other school districts, independent schools and the provincial government; and*
3. *Continue to focus on ensuring that families are provided with a welcoming approach during their first contact with schools.*

Further, at the July 3, 2012 Meeting of the Board, a report entitled *Sectoral Review – Recommendations* was approved by the Board, which contained the following:

- 1. The district centralize the data entry process for kindergarten registration while retaining the importance of the home school as the main contact for families.*
- 2. An examination be done of the enrolment patterns between September and February counts to determine the reason for the decline.*

This report is intended to update the Board and members of the Committee on progress made to date with respect to each of these recommendations.

ACTION TAKEN TO DATE:

1. DATA TRACKING:

The District has a detailed and coordinated approach in place to provide accurate enrolment projections. A significant feature of this projection process is the analysis of historical enrolment data to understand existing trends that have predictive value in determining the number of students who will likely attend VSB schools at each grade level from year to year.

Another dimension of enrolment projection currently being explored by the District is tracking student movement in order to gain a more developed understanding of enrolment patterns. There is currently a particular interest in using student data/information to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the following areas:

- Overall migration patterns of students (inflow and outflow)
- The flow of students specifically between public schools within the Vancouver School District and independent schools.
- The flow of students between public schools within the Vancouver School District and schools in other metro area public school districts.
- The migration patterns of students within certain categories such as students of Aboriginal ancestry.

As such, a number of initiatives are currently underway which are designed to provide information about enrolment and the movement of students:

Ministry of Education Data:

- At the request of VSB staff, the Ministry of Education has provided a raw data set from the past three school years that will allow staff to track students by their Personal Education Number (PEN). This will give the district the ability to identify the whereabouts of any student who was enrolled in a VSB school between 2009 and 2012. It is anticipated that this data will be primarily useful for tracking student movement between the Vancouver School District and other public school districts as well as the independent school sector.
- Preliminary analysis of this data indicates that the net outflow from the Vancouver School District to the independent sector is relatively minimal, as reported earlier, however a more detailed analysis is currently underway which will provide more exact figures.

- This data will also allow staff to track students by certain identifiers, such as Aboriginal ancestry, which will assist in providing more effective transition planning for these students as they move in and out of the District.
- Staff will continue to analyze this data set and will report back to the committee with a more detailed analysis.

Metro Public District Sharing:

- At the instigation of VSB senior staff, agreement has been reached amongst all metro Vancouver public school districts to share enrolment data. The short-term goal of this project is to give the District access to data relating to students who live within the boundaries of the Vancouver School District but choose to attend school in another metro public school district. Long term, it is hoped that districts can work with the Ministry of Education to provide this data centrally and in a more refined form.
- VSB staff have invited representatives from all metro districts to a preliminary information sharing session in early May, at which time it is anticipated that a formal plan for data sharing will be set up.
- Staff will analyze the data provided through this project and will report back to the committee with a more detailed analysis.

Internal Data Tracking and Analysis:

1701 Data Analysis:

- The District is currently able to analyze movement amongst Vancouver School District schools using our 1701 enrolment data. This approach is particularly useful for developing a more complete understanding of transience of certain subsets of our student population such as students of Aboriginal ancestry.

BCeSIS Admission and Withdrawl Code Tracking:

- Currently, student movement into and out of the district is recorded in BCeSIS using a coding system. Although this provides some useful data, there are limitations on the reliability of the data as many system users default to the 'reason unknown' code. Steps are being taken on a systemic level to reduce clerical use of this code and to increase the use of more specific withdrawl codes in order to provide more accurate and reliable data.

Paper and Electronic School Withdrawl Logs:

- Currently, secondary records clerks and some elementary office administrative assistants maintain an electronic or paper based 'logbook' of students who withdraw from their school. Steps are being taken to standardize and make electronic these systems in order to provide more accurate and reliable data that can be easily accessed at the District level.

Secondary Withdrawal Forms:

- Currently, when students withdraw from a secondary school during the school year they are required to complete a withdrawal form. All forms have a space to indicate the reason for withdrawal. Withdrawal forms are currently not routinely used at the elementary level.

September No-show Data:

- Schools currently use a variety of systems for gathering information regarding the whereabouts of students who are registered to attend but do not show up for school in September. Typically, informal 'no-show' information is collected at the classroom level and provided to school administrators who then attempt to follow up on each 'no-show' student. Currently, there is no one common approach either at the secondary or elementary level and staff are therefore pursuing the idea of developing a more systemic approach to this aspect of enrolment tracking.

2. SURVEY DATA COLLECTION:

Two surveys are currently being developed which are designed to provide information about why parents choose initially to enroll their children in public or independent schools at the early primary level and why they may choose to leave public schools once their children are enrolled there.

Pre-K Parent Survey:

- Staff are currently in the process of developing a survey to be administered to parents of children who are of pre-Kindergarten age. The purpose of the survey will be to determine what factors parents of children not yet of school-age consider when making decisions about whether to enroll their children in public or independent schools.
- It is anticipated this survey will be administered later this spring. Staff will analyze the data provided and will report back to the committee with a detailed analysis.

Exit Survey:

- Staff have also designed a draft survey which will be provided in either paper or electronic form to all families who leave their school in the Vancouver School District to register outside of the District. The purpose of this survey is to determine the reasons why parents have chosen to leave their VSB school. Reasons may vary from changes in job location or other family circumstances, to dissatisfaction with the experience in their current school.
- It is anticipated that the survey will begin to be used later this spring. Staff will begin to analyze data as it becomes available and will report back to the committee with a detailed analysis.

3. APPLICATION PROCESSES:

Several initiatives are underway to streamline the application processes relating to enrolment and registration within the district. It is hoped that centralizing these processes and making them electronic will provide the district with valuable, easily accessible data with respect to where and when students are registering and wanting to transfer.

Online Kindergarten DSAP Registration:

- Currently, Kindergarten registration for District Specified Alternate Programs is done through a decentralized paper-based process. Given the volume of applications and the number of clerical staff involved, the system currently contains a level of potential for error that needs to be addressed. The system is also cumbersome and requires parents to go from school to school to submit applications. In addition, it is not possible to track applications centrally or to determine the level of priority that parents place on each of their applications to multiple District programs.
- Staff are investigating the possibility of moving to a centralized electronic Kindergarten DSAP application process. This would allow parents to complete their application(s) online and would allow the District to accurately track DSAP applications on a real-time basis. This process would also address some of the concerns relating to the current system such as the potential double-counting of students by schools and margin for error given the volume of paper being transferred among multiple school sites.
- Staff will continue to investigate the possibility of a centralized system and will report back to the committee.

Online Cross-boundary Application:

- The *School Act* provides parents with the ability to register their child in any school in the district, provided there is space. As a result, parents frequently choose to apply for a cross-boundary transfer in order to have their child attend school outside of their home catchment. Currently, parents apply for a cross-boundary transfer through a decentralized paper-based process that requires them to go to each school they are applying to in order to drop off their application forms.
- Staff are investigating the possibility of the District moving to a centralized electronic cross-boundary application process. This would allow parents to complete their application(s) online and would allow the District to accurately track cross-boundary applications on a real-time basis. This process would address some of the concerns relating to the current system such as the double-counting of students by schools and margin for error given the volume of paper being transferred among multiple school sites.
- Staff will continue to investigate the possibility of a centralized system and will report back to the committee.

4. ENROLMENT ANALYSIS:

As part of the overall analysis of internal enrolment patterns, staff have examined Secondary enrolment patterns between September and February using PEN data. The following has been noted:

- Over the past five school years, enrolment has decreased between September and February by an average of approximately eight students per secondary school per year.
- A significant majority of these students are in grades eleven and twelve
- The decline appears to be attributable to several factors:
 - a. Families moving out of the Vancouver School District
 - b. Students transitioning to Continuing Education programs
 - c. Students leaving to attend independent schools located within the boundaries of the Vancouver School District

Additional analysis of the September to February decline in Secondary will occur when staff have the ability to analyze corroborating data from other data sources which have recently become available.

5. RECEPTION OF NEW FAMILIES:

Currently, there appears to be widespread difference in practice amongst schools in terms of how new families are received when they enter a school for the first time. The majority of families report a warm and friendly welcome by the staff who they first encounter at the school. Occasionally, however, families report that, for a variety of reasons, their feelings about their first encounter at a school have not been particularly positive.

A number of factors appear to impact the initial reception experience that families have, including their ability to understand the English language, factors relating to their own school experience as children and subsequent fear or hesitation in entering a school for the first time, as well as the approach taken by site-based personnel. Regardless, in an era in which parents have an increasing number of options to choose from, it would not be wise for the District to take the approach that parents 'have no other choice' and are guaranteed clients. It is important, therefore, that the District take steps to ensure that a strong orientation of customer-service is promoted in all District sites.

- Staff are currently developing a plan of action designed to assist all personnel in providing a welcoming and helpful first encounter with parents in our District. The development of this plan is likely to include administrative and clerical staff as well as parents. Staff will continue to work on this initiative and will report back to the committee with a concrete plan to be implemented for the 2013-14 school year.

CONCLUSION:

Enrolment is a major focus of the Field Services team and will continue to be for the foreseeable future. It is clear that there is a significant amount of useful information to be gleaned from the initiatives discussed that will allow the District to make decisions based on information on an increasingly regular and systematic basis.

It is anticipated that Field Services personnel will provide an update to this report at the June meeting of the Management Coordinating Committee.