

C01- 363

**CHAIRMAN**  
MAYOR ANTHONY D. GALLUCCIO  
**VICE CHAIR**  
E. DENISE SIMMONS

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
454 BROADWAY  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138  
**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**  
Tel. (617) 349-6620 • Fax: (617) 349-6624

**MEMBERS**  
ALFRED B. FANTINI  
JOSEPH G. GRASSI  
SUSANA M. SEGAT  
ALICE L. TURKEL  
NANCY WALSER

--IN SCHOOL COMMITTEE--

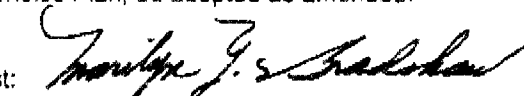
December 18, 2001

ORDERED:

That Superintendent's Recommendation #01-168. Approval of Modifications to the Cambridge Public Schools Controlled Choice Plan, be adopted as amended.

A true copy:

Attest:



Marilyn Y. Bradshaw

Executive Secretary to the School Committee

cc Superintendent

# **CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

## **CONTROLLED CHOICE PLAN**

**December 18, 2001**

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## **CONTROLLED CHOICE PLAN**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Cambridge Public Schools' Controlled Choice Plan ("the Plan") was first implemented in 1980. The Plan was modified in 1981 and again in 1989. Adjustments were made to the operational procedures in the 1990s. The modifications in the 1990s included changes to the "walk zone" and the proximity provisions of the Plan.

In 2000, the Cambridge Public Schools ("the CPS" or "the District") began a review of how the Controlled Choice Plan was being implemented to determine whether any additional changes were necessary. This included a review of: data relating to the implementation of the Controlled Choice Plan, relevant case law and educational research.

In reviewing the implementation of the Plan, the CPS examined strategies used to recruit students and to determine whether these recruitment strategies had been effective. In addition, the CPS analyzed whether there were schools that had been overchosen or underchosen, what strategies had been used to assist schools that were underchosen and whether these strategies were successful. The analysis of underchosen schools was particularly important because one of the major features of controlled choice is program improvement; an indicator that program improvement may be necessary is whether a school is consistently underchosen.

As part of its review of the Controlled Choice Plan, the CPS also looked at the growing body of research that shows that high concentrations of students of poverty in a school may have a negative impact on achievement of students of poverty within that school. For example, this research shows that many of the conditions accompanying poverty, particularly extreme poverty, present significant challenges for principals and teachers in developing high levels of achievement for students who are impacted by these conditions, as compared to students for whom these conditions are not present. As a result of its examination of the research, the CPS decided to determine whether there were schools in the CPS with high concentrations of poverty and, if so, whether there were any strategies that could be implemented to reduce high concentrations of poverty in these schools.

As a result of the review of the implementation of the current Controlled Choice Plan, the CPS has decided to modify its Controlled Choice Plan. The changes include improving the strategies that are used to recruit students to schools and expanding the factors that are used and those that are considered in assigning students to schools. For example, based on the research that was reviewed on the impact of poverty on achievement, the CPS has determined that it will use socioeconomic status, as measured by a student's eligibility for free and reduced meals, as a factor in assigning students to schools. In addition, a key component of the revised Plan is to implement a program improvement process for those schools that are not meeting the District's student achievement goals and/or are not drawing diverse student enrollments. The CPS will implement these changes to the Plan for the 2002-03 school year. The revisions to the Controlled Choice Plan that are detailed in this document are designed to provide all students with equitable educational opportunities, improved achievement and the opportunity to attend school with students of diverse backgrounds.

Below are the five sections of the revised plan. Section II, “Student Recruitment,” identifies student recruitment strategies that the CPS will implement at both the District and school level to attract diverse groups of students to each school within the District. Section III, “Program Improvement,” discusses the process that will be used by CPS to improve achievement for students of all racial, ethnic and socio-economic groups and programmatic changes to address schools that are underchosen and those that do not attract diverse groups of students. Section IV, “Student Assignment Methodology,” details the diversity factors, preferences and process that will be used to assign students to schools. Section V, “Hardship Appeals,” describes the process by which parents/guardians may appeal a student assignment or a student transfer if the parents/guardians believe that such student assignment or student transfer constitutes a hardship for their child. Section VI, “Annual Review,” explains how the CPS will monitor and review the implementation of the revised Plan.

## **II. STUDENT RECRUITMENT**

This section on student recruitment is divided into three parts – strategies to be implemented by the Family Resource Center, strategies to be implemented by each school and on-going monitoring of recruitment strategies. The goal of all of the student recruitment strategies is to increase access of parents/guardians to information and knowledge about all schools in the District and to provide opportunities for all schools, particularly those that are underchosen, 1/ to recruit students from throughout the CPS.

### **A. Strategies to be implemented by the Family Resource Center**

Beginning in the fall of each school year, the Family Resource Center will implement recruitment strategies, such as the following:

1. Develop, in consultation with firms with marketing expertise, a District-level plan to recruit students to schools, particularly those schools that are underchosen;
2. Analyze and disaggregate the applicant pool for each school and identify the schools that are underchosen and overchosen, with respect to both total number of applicants for a school and the diversity of the applicant pool. The Family Resource Center will then develop a plan to address schools that are underchosen;

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1/ A school is considered underchosen if the number of kindergarten applicants for a school is less than the number of seats available at that school. A school is considered overchosen if the number of kindergarten applicants for a school exceeds the number of seats available at that school. Also, a school may be underchosen by a particular diversity factor (*e.g.*, socioeconomic status or race and ethnicity).

3. Enhance the information packets that explain the programs offered at each school and the registration enrollment process and provide this packet to all parents/guardians;
4. Continue to open the Family Resource Center until 7:00 p.m. at least one evening per week, and continue to operate the Family Resource Center from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on all other weekdays;
5. Rotate on a monthly basis displays at the Family Resource Center of the programs offered at each elementary school and display prominently at information sights, the information packets that explain the programs offered at each school and the registration enrollment process;
6. Participate in the Harvard School Fair, which is an informational fair organized and hosted by Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology to provide participants with information about the various public and private schools in Cambridge and Boston, and assist each elementary school in developing marketing materials to be used at the Harvard School Fair;
7. Conduct kindergarten informational meetings at various community locations, such as in Cambridge public housing, clinics and community centers, and at the conclusion of these meetings, provide parents/guardians with information packets and with the opportunity to register their children for kindergarten and to complete a mailer form indicating the various programs or schools about which they would like to obtain additional information;
8. Participate in Family Fun Day at City Hall, which is a community fair focused on literacy and fun that is sponsored by CPS Title I Office. District-level and school-based staff will attend and will explain to parents/guardians who attend about programs offered at each elementary school and will provide marketing and information materials about each school and about the registration enrollment process;
9. Coordinate appointments for parents/guardians to visit and tour schools;
10. Conduct two city-wide kindergarten informational meetings in November, during which staff from each school will be present to meet with parents/guardians and to provide parents/guardians with information packets and with the opportunity to register their children for kindergarten and to complete a mailer form indicating the various programs or schools about which they would like to obtain additional information;
11. Collaborate with the Early Childhood Transition Team to conduct kindergarten information meetings at all private and public pre-schools in the City of Cambridge, and, at these meetings, provide parents/guardians

with information packets and with the opportunity to register their children for kindergarten and to complete a mailer form indicating the various programs or schools about which they would like to obtain additional information;

12. Advertise all kindergarten informational meetings in the *Cambridge Chronicle* and on the Cambridge link line, Cambridge cable television, and linguistic minority radio and television stations;
13. Coordinate an “Adventures in Learning” series at each elementary school. These series provide parents/guardians with the opportunity to learn about the content and programs provided at various schools and about ways to support and reinforce at home what their children are learning in school;
14. Post on the Cambridge Public Schools website the dates of the kindergarten informational meetings, information on the programs offered by each elementary school and the kindergarten registration process; and
15. Continue to co-sponsor “Ready-Set-Go,” which is a celebration for kindergarten children and their families at the Children’s Museum that features an array of activities highlighting the children’s entrance into kindergarten and provides information to parents/ guardians about the various programs at the elementary schools.

#### **B. Strategies to be implemented by each school**

Beginning in the spring of each school year, the principal at each school, with the assistance of the Family Resource Center, will develop a plan to recruit students to the school for the following school year. The plan will include: recruitment goals; strategies to attract diverse groups of students, including students from groups that are underrepresented at the school; identification of the individuals who will implement these strategies; support, if any, that will be needed to carry out the strategies; a timeline for implementing the strategies and a process for determining the success of the strategies.

#### **C. On-going monitoring of student recruitment strategies**

The Family Resource Center will review annually the effectiveness of its District-level and school-based student recruitment strategies. As a result of this review, the CPS will revise both the District-level and school-based strategies to be used the following school year.

The CPS also will develop a process for monitoring the kindergarten applications received during the recruitment period so that additional strategies can, if necessary, be implemented prior to the end of the first registration cycle.

### III. PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

Program improvement is a key component of the CPS' Controlled Choice Plan. As a result, as part of its review of the current Controlled Choice Plan, the District reviewed data to determine if there were elementary schools that met one or more of the following criteria: schools that were rarely among the top choices of parents/guardians of incoming kindergarten students; schools that had a consistently declining enrollment; and schools that had a student enrollment below 300.<sup>2/</sup>

As a result of this review, the CPS found that some Cambridge elementary schools meet one or more of the three criteria. That is, some schools are rarely selected among the top three choices by parents/guardians of incoming kindergarten students and some schools consistently have had a declining student enrollment and/or a student enrollment under 300.

Based on these findings, the Superintendent has determined that it is necessary to provide an opportunity for schools meeting one or more of the criteria to implement new educational programs designed to make the schools more attractive to a greater number of parents/guardians. Schools meeting one or more of these criteria also may propose to merge with one or more schools and to implement a new or enhanced educational program to attract a greater number of parents/guardians to the merged school.

To facilitate the process of identifying educational programs that might be attractive to a greater number of parents/guardians, the CPS will survey the parents/guardians of students who currently are in a pre-school program in Cambridge. In addition, the CPS will survey parents/guardians of students who are currently attending elementary schools in CPS. Specifically, the survey will ask parents/guardians if they would be interested in their child attending a school that offered one of the following educational programs: Arts; International Baccalaureate; Math, Science & Technology; Montessori; and Multiple Intelligences. In addition, parents/guardians may list on the survey any other educational program that might be of interest. The CPS will conduct these surveys during October and November 2001. Based on the results of the surveys and research from other school districts, the Superintendent will identify the types of new educational programs that may be implemented by schools that meet one or more of the three criteria.

The Superintendent will ask staff at the eligible schools to participate in a request for proposal ("RFP") process. Eligible schools that want to propose implementing a new

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<sup>2/</sup> With regard to the criteria of a school consistently having an enrollment under 300, the Superintendent included this as a criteria because in 1998 as part of its 1998-1999 Annual Budget, the School Committee adopted a policy that schools that do not meet the minimum enrollment target of 300 by FY2000-01 will be placed in a process for being closed or merged with other schools. With respect to the school selected for program improvement for the 2002-03 school year, there will be a three-year period for the school to meet the minimum enrollment target of 300.

educational program for the 2002-03 school year will develop and submit proposals to the Superintendent in December of 2001. Eligible schools that want to propose a merger for the 2003-04 school year will develop with another school in the district a joint proposal. An elementary school that does not meet one or more of the three criteria detailed above also may, if interested, develop a joint merger proposal with one or more other schools in the district for the 2003-04 school year. All joint merger proposals will be submitted to the Superintendent in January of 2002.

In developing the proposals in response to the RFP, the principal at each of the eligible schools will involve staff at the school or schools and the site council at the school or schools in determining the educational program at that school and in developing a plan to implement the program. Eligible schools that want to submit a proposal for program improvement must select an educational program identified by the Superintendent or may propose another educational program that they wish to implement. Eligible schools that select the latter alternative must explain how the proposed program improvement will result in an educational program that is more attractive to a greater number of parents/guardians than the current programs being offered at the school. Schools that want to submit a joint proposal for a merger may select one of the educational programs identified by the Superintendent or may propose another educational program that they wish to implement. Schools submitting a joint merger proposal must explain how the proposed merged educational program will result in an educational program that is more attractive to a greater number of parents/guardians than the current educational programs being offered at the schools that propose to merge.

The Superintendent and key staff will review the proposals and will recommend to the School Committee the proposals that should be approved. Schools whose proposals are approved will, subject to approval by the School Committee, be given additional funding for up to three years to assist in implementing the new educational program.

Pursuant to Section VI of this Plan, the Superintendent shall monitor the implementation of the RFP process, including the effectiveness of the new programs in accomplishing the goals of this Plan. Should the programs not prove to be effective in accomplishing the goals of this Plan, the Superintendent may implement additional strategies to improve the program at a school. The Superintendent will, based upon the annual review of this Plan as it is detailed in Section VI, recommend whether additional schools should participate in an RFP process in future years.

Notwithstanding the RFP process detailed above, the Superintendent has authority to eliminate or modify educational programs at schools, to implement new educational programs at schools or to recommend a merger or closure and to hold school leadership accountable for improved educational programs. If the Superintendent exercises this authority, the Superintendent will provide appropriate supports to schools to facilitate the process.

#### **IV. STUDENT ASSIGNMENT METHODOLOGY**

This section outlines the methodology that will be used to assign students to schools. As discussed more fully below, this includes choice by parents/guardians, diversity factors,

assignment preferences, the process to be used to assign students to schools and the appeals process.

### **A. Choice**

Choice by parents/guardians will continue to be an important component of the Controlled Choice Plan. In addition, the CPS will continue to encourage parents/guardians to learn about all of the elementary schools in the District through a variety of methods, including visiting schools and reviewing information about the programs offered at each elementary school, and to select three schools that they would like their children to attend. The CPS also will continue to classify parents/guardians' choices as "First Choice," "Second Choice" and "Third Choice" and will process these requests according to how parents/guardians have ranked their choices.

### **B. Diversity Factors and Assignment Preferences**

The CPS will use a variety of diversity factors and assignment preferences in assigning students to school. The diversity factors and assignment preferences that the CPS will use are discussed below, but are not necessarily discussed in the order that they will be considered in the assignment process. The CPS believes that the use of a range of diversity factors and assignment preferences will result in a multi-faceted diversity in each school that will provide all students with equitable educational opportunities and with improved achievement. As discussed in Section VI, the CPS annually will monitor the implementation of all of these diversity factors and assignment preferences in the assignment process to assess whether changes or adjustments need to be made in the future.

1. Socioeconomic Status. One of the diversity factors that CPS will use in assigning students to schools is socioeconomic status ("SES"). The CPS has determined that there are significant educational reasons for using SES in the student assignment process. For example, many of the conditions accompanying poverty, particularly extreme poverty, present significant challenges for educators in developing high levels of achievement for students that are impacted by these conditions in comparison to children for whom these conditions are not present.

The CPS will determine the SES of students by using the free and reduced price meals eligibility status of that student. The CPS has selected free and reduced price meals as the indicator of poverty to be used because it is the most readily available indicator.

At the time that parents/guardians complete their application form requesting the schools that they would like their children to attend, parents/guardians will be asked to indicate voluntarily their eligibility for free and reduced price meals by completing a free and reduced meals application form. There will be no obligation for any parent/guardian to release free and reduced price meals information for assignment purposes.

In addition to requesting information about whether students are eligible for free and reduced price meals, the free and reduced meals application will contain the following information release authorization:

#### VOLUNTARY INFORMATION RELEASE

The Cambridge Public Schools' free and reduced meals officials may give information concerning my child's eligibility or non-eligibility for price meal benefits to the Cambridge Public Schools Family Resource Center. The Cambridge Public Schools' Family Resource Center may use this information to help determine the placement for my child. I understand that the Cambridge Public Schools' free and reduced price meals officials will be releasing eligibility information to the Family Resource Center from the Price Meal Benefit Form for my child. I give up my rights to confidentiality for this purpose only. I understand that I am not required to release this information. I understand that if I elect not to release this information, the Cambridge Public Schools Family Resource Center will consider my child as non-eligible for free and reduced meals when using this information to help determine the placement for my child. I have read this release and understand its terms and sign it voluntarily.

The goal for school year 2002-03 is for each grade in each school to be within a range of plus or minus 15 percentage points of the District-wide kindergarten through grade 8 percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced price meals. The goal for school year 2003-04 is for each grade in each school to be within a range of plus or minus 10 percentage points of the District-wide kindergarten through grade 8 percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced price meals. The goal for school year 2004-05 and each school year thereafter is for each grade in each school to be within a range of plus or minus 5 percentage points of the District-wide kindergarten through grade 8 percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced price meals. As described more fully in Appendix B, seats may be held in an individual school based on free and reduced meals in order to achieve socioeconomic diversity.

The CPS will determine the District-wide kindergarten through grade 8 percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced price meals in January preceding the start of each school year. For example, in January of 2001, 48% of the students in CPS were eligible for free and reduced price meals and 52% were not eligible for free and reduced price meals. Therefore, if the CPS had used SES as a factor for assigning students to school for the 2001-02 school year, the range would have been between

33% and 63% for free and reduced price meals and between 37% and 67% non-free and reduced price meals. <sup>3/</sup>

Prior to the implementation of the goals for school year 2003-2004 and any year thereafter, the Superintendent shall undertake a 30-day review of the implementation of this Plan, including the progress of the program improvement, student assignment and recruitment sections of the Plan, and all other aspects of the Plan. The Superintendent shall make a recommendation to the School Committee no later than September 30 of the school year in question regarding the socioeconomic diversity goals and how to proceed on implementation of the Plan for the following school year. The School Committee will vote on the Superintendent's recommendation no later than the first regular school meeting after September 30.

2. Siblings. The CPS will continue to assign siblings to the same school when requested by parents/guardians, to the extent that space is available and that the assignment does not negatively affect the diversity at the school being requested. The CPS will continue to use siblings as an assignment preference because many parents/guardians believe that assigning siblings to the same school allows them to be more involved in their children's education.
3. Proximity. The CPS will continue to assign students to one of the two schools closest to where students reside only when requested by parents/guardians, to the extent that space is available and that the assignment does not negatively affect the diversity at the school being requested. The CPS will continue to use proximity as an assignment preference because some parents/guardians believe that they are more likely to be involved at the school their child attends if the child attends a school near their home.
4. Race or Ethnicity. The CPS believes that it is important to have the option to use race or ethnicity as one of the diversity factors in order to avoid the harms of racial/ethnic isolation and to provide students the benefits of learning from students who are of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. <sup>4/</sup> In determining whether to use race or ethnicity in a narrowly tailored manner as one of the diversity factors for school year 2002-03, the CPS will determine, after using the other race neutral factors,

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<sup>3/</sup> If this Plan is approved for the 2002-03 school year, the CPS will use the January 2002 District-wide kindergarten through grade 8 free and reduced price meals percentage.

<sup>4/</sup> A recent study conducted by Dr. Gary Orfield has found that students in Cambridge benefit from having the opportunity to attend school with students with different backgrounds. Dr. Orfield's research is consistent with similar research that he has done in other school districts in the United States.

whether the applicant pool at a grade at a school is within a range of plus or minus 10 percentage points of the District-wide kindergarten through grade 8 percentage of White, African American, Latino, Asian and Native American. If, after using the other race neutral factors, the applicant pool at a grade at a school is not within plus or minus 10 percentage points of the District-wide kindergarten through grade 8 percentage of White, African American, Latino, Asian and Native American racial/ethnic categories, then race or ethnicity will be used as one of the diversity factors.

5. Special Education Status. The CPS has determined that there are educational reasons for considering special education status as a diversity factor. For example, CPS wants to make sure that special education students have equitable access to all schools in CPS, to the extent that the needs of special education students can be accommodated at a particular school. In addition, if there are large numbers of special education students in a school, the special education students will not have the same opportunity to be mainstreamed with students who have not been identified as in need of special education services. The goal is to have the percentage of special education students in each school approximate the percentage of special education students in the CPS. The CPS will not initially use Special Education Status as a diversity factor, but will monitor this diversity factor to determine whether it needs to be incorporated in the future into the student assignment process.
  
6. English Language Learner Status. The CPS has determined that there are educational reasons for considering English Language Learner (“ELL”) status as a diversity factor. <sup>5/</sup> For example, in addition to specific language acquisition strategies, ELL students benefit from, and need interaction with, students who are native speakers of English as part of the language acquisition process. The goal is to have the percentage of ELL students in each school approximate the percentage of ELL students in the CPS, except for those CPS schools with bilingual programs. It is expected that the schools with bilingual programs will exceed the District-wide percentages of ELL students. These schools will not be considered in computing the District-wide average. *See Appendix A* for list of CPS schools with bilingual programs for the school year 2001-02. The CPS will not initially use ELL status as a diversity factor, but will monitor this diversity factor to determine whether it needs to be incorporated in the future into the student assignment process.

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<sup>5/</sup> An ELL student is defined as a student who has limited English proficiency (i.e., a student who has no English proficiency or limited English proficiency or whose predominant language is not English).

7. Gender. The CPS has determined that there are educational reasons for considering gender as a diversity factor. For example, students benefit from, and need interaction with, students of different genders as part of the educational process. The goal is to have the percentage of students in each school by gender approximate the percentage of students by gender in the CPS. The CPS will not initially use gender as a diversity factor, but will monitor this diversity factor to see whether it needs to be incorporated in the future into the student assignment process.

### **C. Process for kindergarten assignment**

The CPS' Family Resource Center will continue to be responsible for coordinating, administering and monitoring all aspects of the assignment process. Below is a summary of the assignment process that will be used for assigning kindergarten students for the 2002-03 school year.

1. CPS will determine the number of seats available for kindergarten students at each school. This determination will take into account the junior kindergarten students and "appeals" students continuing in kindergarten for a second year.
2. As discussed in Section II above, beginning in the fall of each school year, the CPS shall actively recruit students for the kindergarten class for the following school year. As part of the recruitment, CPS will encourage parents/guardians to submit three choices and to submit their applications by January 31. The CPS will stress the importance of parents/guardians submitting applications by the January 31<sup>st</sup> deadline in order to increase their chances of receiving one of their choices.
3. The Family Resource Center will process all applications received by January 31<sup>st</sup> of each school year (First Registration Cycle) and shall notify parents/guardians of the results no later than March 31. The applications received between February 1 and March 31 (Second Registration Cycle) will be processed in early April and parents/guardians will be notified by the end of April. For applications received between April 1 and May 31 (Third Registration Cycle), Family Resource Center will process applications in early June and parents/guardians will be notified by the end of June. The applications received between June 1 and July 31 (Fourth Registration Cycle) will be processed in early August and parents/guardians will be notified by the end of August. The Family Resource Center will process applications received after July 31 on a first-come, first-serve basis.
4. The procedures to be used for the assignment of kindergarten students for the school year 2002-03 are described in Appendix B.

5. Kindergarten Wait List

- a. If the District is not able to accommodate any one of the parents/guardians' three choices, then the Family Resource Center will assign the student to another school, where there are seats available and consistent with the diversity factors in this Plan. Prior to such an assignment being made, the Family Resource Center will contact the parents/guardians receiving such an assignment for their child to discuss with and counsel parents/guardians about the schools where there are seats available, consistent with the diversity factors. Parents/guardians will have the option of requesting any school that the Family Resource Center has identified as having a seat available. The Family Resource Center will facilitate the process of parents/guardians contacting and/or visiting these schools that have seats available and will provide principals at the schools that have available seats with the contact information for the parents/guardians. If the parents/guardians request a school that has been identified by the Family Resource Center, the Family Resource Center will assign the child to that school. If the parents/guardians do not request any of the schools identified by the Family Resource Center, then the Family Resource Center will assign the student to a school where there are seats available, consistent with the diversity factors of this Plan.
- b. A child who is not assigned to one of the parents/guardians' three choices will be placed automatically on the waiting list for his or her parents/guardians' three choices and the child will be given priority placement on such waiting lists over a child who has been assigned to one of the parents/guardians three choices. A child who is assigned to one of the parents/guardians' three choices will be placed automatically on the waiting list for any of the choices that are higher than the one to which the child was assigned. If parents/guardians wish their child to be placed on a waiting list for a school other than their three choices, they may request that wait list placement instead of one of their three choices and will then be removed from the wait list for the choice they designate.
- c. If parents/guardians are offered a seat for their child to attend the school for which their child is on the waiting list and if they decline to accept the seat, their child's name will be removed from the waiting list for that school.
- d. All waiting lists will expire by April 1 of each school year. If a parent/guardian wishes to have their child remain on the wait list and retain their place on the wait list, they must notify the Family

Resource Center in writing by no later than April 30 of each school year. This may be done for up to three schools. Requests to continue on the wait lists received by the Family Resource Center after April 30 of each school year will be treated on a first come, first serve basis, and will be placed after those already on the wait list.

- e. Parents/guardians who are not satisfied with their child's assignment may appeal that assignment if they can show a hardship for their child. *See* Section V below for a definition of a hardship and the procedures for an appeal.

## 6. Special Education Placements

Except as described below, the CPS shall assign special education students in accordance with the process and procedures described above for assigning non-special education students. To assist the Family Resource Center in making assignments for special education students, the Office of Special Education will provide the Family Resource Center with information on special education programs, levels of inclusion and specialized services that are available in each school.

If the Office of Special Education determines that a special education student's needs may not be addressed by using the process for assigning non-special education students, the Office for Special Education will convene an Individual Education Program ("IEP") "planning meeting" with the parents/guardians and appropriate School Department personnel. At this meeting, parents/guardians will have an opportunity to discuss their child's documented needs and to review the current programs, levels of inclusion and specialized services that are available at each school. The final determination of the services/support/program for the child will take place at the IEP "planning meeting," and the Family Resource Center will assign the child to one of the schools requested by the parents/guardians if the IEP Team determines that one of the schools requested by parents/guardians has adequate existing resources to meet the student's identified IEP needs and/or additional resources can be provided at one of those schools to meet the student's IEP needs. In the event that the student requires a specialized program that is not available in one of the schools requested by parents/guardians, then the Office of Special Education will designate a school to which the student will be assigned that will meet the student's IEP.

## 7. Olà Program and Amigos School

The CPS will assign students whose parents/guardians list the Olà program, which is housed at the Harrington School, and the Amigos School as one of their choices according to the guidelines adopted by the

Cambridge School Committee. These guidelines, which are consistent with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Education's guidance on two-way bilingual programs, provide that students shall be assigned to the Amigos School and the Olà program at the Harrington School based on language dominance/proficiency. *See Appendix C* for the guidelines adopted by the Cambridge School Committee.

8. Bilingual Program Placements

In addition to the two-way bilingual immersion programs, students may be eligible for other bilingual program placements. Based on the language proficiency of students, students shall be assigned to such programs without being placed in the applicant pool.

**D. Process for transfer and waiting list for grades one through eight**

1. **Request for a transfer or to be placed on a waiting list for next school year.** Parents/guardians of a child in kindergarten through grade eight may request that their child transfer from his or her assigned school to another school in the Cambridge Public Schools or for their child's name to be placed on a waiting list for a school for the next school year. A resident of the City of Cambridge whose child in kindergarten through grade 8 does not currently attend Cambridge Public Schools also may request that his or her child's name be placed on a waiting list for a school for the next school year by filing an application with the Family Resource Center. To make a request for a transfer for their child or for their child's name to be placed on the waiting list for a school for the next school year, parents/guardians must come to the Family Resource Center and file a request. The child's name will be placed on a waiting list for a school for the next school year. Parents/guardians may request that their child's name be placed on up to three wait lists at any one time. All wait lists will expire by April 1<sup>st</sup> of each school year. A request for a transfer or to be placed on a waiting list may be made beginning April 2<sup>nd</sup> of each school year. If a parent/guardian wishes to have their child remain on the wait list and retain their place on the wait list, they must notify the Family Resource Center in writing by no later than April 30 of each school year. This may be done for up to three schools. Requests to continue on the wait lists received by the Family Resource Center after April 30 of each school year will be treated on a first come, first serve basis, and will be placed after those already on the wait list. If a transfer request is granted, parents/guardians may not request another transfer for their child for that school year. The name of a child whose parents/guardians make a request for the name of their child to be placed on a waiting list will remain on the waiting list until April 1st of the next school year, except if a child is assigned from the waitlist or declines an assignment.

2. **Request for a transfer or to be placed on a waiting list for current school year.** Parents/guardians of a child in kindergarten through grade eight may request that their child transfer to another school or for their child's name to be placed on the waiting list for a school for the current school year by filing a request in person at the Family Resource Center up until April 1. A resident of the City of Cambridge whose child in kindergarten through grade 8 does not currently attend Cambridge Public Schools may request that his or her child's name be placed on the waiting list for a school for the current school year by filing an application in person at the Family Resource Center up until April 1. Parents/guardians may request that their child's name be placed on up to three waiting lists at any one time. If a transfer request is granted, parents/guardians may not request another transfer for their child for that school year. The waiting list will terminate as of April 1 of each school year.

**E. Assignment process for students in grades one through eight entering CPS for the first time prior to the start of a new school year and for students in kindergarten through grade eight entering CPS for the first time during the school year**

1. Students in grades one through eight who are being enrolled in the District for the first time prior to the start of a new school year will be assigned on a first-come, first-serve basis to schools where there are seats available, provided the assignment does not negatively affect the diversity of the grade level of the school being requested.
2. Students in kindergarten through grade eight who are being enrolled in the District for the first time during the school year will be assigned on a first-come, first-serve basis to schools where there are seats available, provided the assignment does not negatively affect the diversity of the grade level of the school being requested.

**V. HARDSHIP APPEALS**

This section details the process that parents/guardians must follow when filing a hardship appeal. It also outlines the procedures for review of the appeal.

**A. Filing a hardship appeal**

Parents/guardians of a kindergarten child whose child has not been assigned to one of the three choices indicated on the application form and who can show that the assignment to the school to which their child has been assigned will cause a hardship may appeal the assignment. Similarly, parents/guardians of a child in grades one through eight whose request for their child to transfer to a school other than the one to which the child is currently assigned may appeal the denial of the transfer if the parents/guardians can show that the denial will cause a hardship for

their child. In order to show a hardship, parents/guardians must show that the child has extraordinary educational needs that cannot be met at the assigned school and can only be met at the requested school or that requiring the child to attend the assigned school will subject the child to an unsafe learning environment.

Parents/guardians who want to appeal an assignment or a denial of a transfer must complete the hardship appeal form. This form requires the parents/guardians to explain and provide documentation to show the hardship, as defined above. The parents/guardians must submit the completed form, with appropriate documentation, to the Family Resource Center.

The Director of the Family Resource Center will review the form and the documentation for completeness and may consult with the parents/guardians or other individuals if further clarification is needed. The Family Resource Center shall submit the completed appeal form and other appropriate documentation to the Hardship Appeals Board.

### **B. Review by the Hardship Appeals Board**

The Hardship Appeals Board shall consist of three administrators appointed by the Superintendent. In order to make a decision, a majority of the Hardship Appeals Board must be present. The Hardship Appeals Board shall review the information submitted to it by the Family Resource Center. Using the definition of hardship defined above -- unsafe learning environment and extraordinary educational needs -- the Board will recommend whether the appeal should be denied or granted. The Hardship Appeals Board will submit this recommendation to the Superintendent in writing. The Hardship Appeals Board will make every effort to submit its recommendation to the Superintendent within 10 days of receiving the appeal application and documentation from the Family Resource Center.

### **C. Decision by the Superintendent**

The Superintendent shall review each recommendation by the Hardship Appeals Board and shall make a determination regarding whether the appeal will be granted or denied. The Superintendent will notify the parents/guardians in writing regarding the decision as to whether the appeal was granted or denied. The decision of the Superintendent is final.

## **VI. ANNUAL REVIEW**

The Superintendent shall review annually the implementation of the Controlled Choice Plan. This review shall include:

- analyzing the applicant pools and enrollments for all schools with respect to each diversity factor and assignment preference;
- assessing the impact of each of the diversity factors on student achievement;

- assessing the success of the Plan in ensuring equitable access to programs and schools for all students and providing all students the opportunity to attend school with students of diverse backgrounds;
- evaluating the effectiveness of recruitment strategies implemented to attract diverse applicant pools to all schools, and considering other diversity factors that may be used to support the goals of the Plan; and
- evaluating the effectiveness of the RFP process and the educational programs implemented pursuant to the RFP process.

If based on this review, the Superintendent determines that administrative changes are necessary, the Superintendent will make appropriate administrative changes to the Controlled Choice Plan and will notify the Cambridge School Committee of the changes.

## **APPENDIX A**

Listed below are the schools that are offering either transitional or modified bilingual programs for the 2001-02 school year.

Graham & Parks School – Haitian Creole transitional bilingual program

Morse School – Korean modified bilingual program

King School -- Chinese modified bilingual program

Listed below are the schools that are offering two-way bilingual immersion programs for the 2001-02 school year.

Amigos School – Spanish two-way bilingual immersion program

Harrington School – Olà Program – Portuguese two-way bilingual immersion program

## APPENDIX B

Below is a description of the procedures for the assignment of students that will be used during all registration cycles for the 2002-03 school year. After conducting a review and evaluation of these procedures, the Superintendent may, as necessary, make adjustments to these procedures during subsequent school years.

1. Procedures for Assignment of Kindergarten Students in First Registration Cycle
  - a. The CPS will determine the number of seats available for kindergarten students as follows:
    - i. The total number of available kindergarten seats will be determined based on budgeted classrooms and class size policies;
    - ii. The total available seats will be sub-divided in two socio-economic categories based on the January 2002 District-wide percentages of:
      - a) students eligible for free and reduced price meals based on federal eligibility standards; and
      - b) students not eligible for free and reduced price meals;
    - iii. The plus or minus 15 percentage point range, discussed in Section IV.B.1 of the Plan, will be applied to each category (free and reduced price meals and non-free and reduced price meals); and
    - iv. Current year junior kindergarten students and kindergarten appeals students, both of whom will be continuing in kindergarten in the next year, will be subtracted from the available seats determined in subsection ii. above and the remaining seats are used for the process described in subsection b. below.
  - b. The CPS will use a computer program to assign all students in the First Registration Cycle. The computer program will use the process described below:
    - i. First choices for all schools will be processed first, followed by second choices and then third choices;
    - ii. Bilingual-eligible students and special education students with school-specific education programs will be assigned first;
    - iii. Sibling and proximity preferences will be applied in the assignment process for students whose parents/guardians have

indicated that they want such preferences, provided that seats are available within the free and reduced and non-free and reduced range described in subsection 1.a. above;

- iv. The remaining first choice pool of applicants for each individual school will be analyzed to determine if the pool is within the established diversity goals. This analysis will take into account the students continuing in a 2<sup>nd</sup> year of kindergarten (current junior kindergarten and appeals) and students already assigned in subsections ii. and iii. above. *See also* Section IV.B. of the Controlled Choice Plan;
- v. If the applicant pool for a school is within the diversity goals, students in the pool will be randomly assigned to fill the seats in the school, provided that seats are available within the free and reduced price meals and non-free and reduced price meals range;
- vi. If the applicant pool for a school is not within the diversity goals of SES (+/- 15 percentage points) and, if necessary, race/ethnicity (+/- 15 percentage points), then additional weight (by virtue of appropriate computer algorithms) will be given to those factors that are outside the goals. Students will then be randomly assigned from the "weighted pool" of applicants, provided that seats are available in the free and reduced price meals and non-free and reduced price meals categories. Seats will be held, if necessary, in the individual school based on free and reduced meals status in order to achieve socioeconomic diversity.
- vii. If students cannot be assigned through the weighted pool process without exceeding the diversity goals of SES (+/- 15 percentage points) in a school, then the students will be assigned to another school as discussed in Section IV.C of the Controlled Choice Plan.

## 2. Procedure for Assignment of Students in the Second and All Subsequent Registration Cycles

- a. Prior to processing applications received for the second and all subsequent registration cycles, the kindergarten wait list will be reviewed and, if a seat is available, an offer will be made in accordance with the procedures set forth in Section IV.C.5 of the Controlled Choice Plan.
- b. Once any assignments have been made from the waiting list, the computer program will be used to assign all students in the registration cycle in accordance with the process described for the first registration cycle, taking into account all students previously assigned and the remaining available seats.

## APPENDIX C

**ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES FOR THE ASSIGNMENT OF STUDENTS  
TO THE AMIGOS SCHOOL AND THE OLÁ PROGRAM AT THE  
HARRINGTON SCHOOL**

**I. RATIONALE**

The Cambridge Public Schools believes that two-way bilingual programs are an effective vehicle for bringing native language and English home speakers from a variety of linguistic backgrounds together for the purpose of fostering close, cross cultural friendships and developing the academic and linguistic skills of participants in two languages. In order to achieve these goals and maximize the effectiveness of the Amigos School and Olá program, it is desirable to have a mix of i) English speaking students, ii) Spanish or Portuguese speaking students, and iii) bilingual students. To determine where a student fits on this continuum, a student's language dominance/proficiency is determined through the administration of English and target language assessments. Students are then given a "Lau" designation based upon their linguistic and literary skills in the tested languages. The Lau designations indicate the following:

Lau A or B	Primary Spanish or Portuguese Speaker
Lau C or D	Bilingual
Lau E	Primary English Speaker

Ideally, from kindergarten through the third grade, a two-way bilingual program would have approximately equal numbers of English (Lau E) and non-English speaking students (Lau A or B) with the number of students who are bilingual (Lau C or D) increasing as students progress from kindergarten through the third grade. As students

progress in the Amigos School or Olá program and develop linguistic and literacy skills in their non-native language, the number of bilingual students in each classroom naturally increases, such that, by the time students reach the fourth grade, the majority of program participants are bilingual (Lau C or D).

To ensure the continued success of the Amigos School and Olá program, it is critical for the student selection process to allow placement of students in accordance with their language dominance/proficiency. Presently, student assignments for the Amigos School and Olá program are made in accordance with the Cambridge Public Schools' Controlled Choice Plan. The Family Resource Center assigned students to the Amigos School and Olá program pursuant to this Plan for the 2001-2002 school year. The proposed administrative selection guidelines mandate that all vacancies in the Amigos School and Olá program during the 2001-2002 school year, as well as all assignments to the Amigos School and Olá program for the 2002-2003 school year and beyond, be based on the language dominance/proficiency of the students interested in these programs. These selection guidelines will help ensure the continued success of the Amigos School and Olá program while affording the opportunity for the maximum number of interested students to participate in these programs.

**II. ASSIGNMENT OF STUDENTS FOR THE 2001-2002 SCHOOL YEAR TO THE AMIGOS SCHOOL AND THE OLÁ PROGRAM AT THE HARRINGTON SCHOOL**

- A. The student assignments made as of this date by the Family Resource Center in accordance with the Cambridge Public School's Controlled Choice Plan for the 2001-2002 school year shall not be disturbed.**
- B. The language dominance/proficiency of each student currently assigned to the Amigos School and the Olá program at the Harrington School shall be assessed and this information communicated to the**

Director for Bilingual Programs and the Family Resource Center.

- C. Any vacant seat in the Amigos School or the Olá program at the Harrington School shall not be filled in accordance with the Controlled Choice Plan, but shall be filled so as to meet the goals set forth in Section III below.

**III. ASSIGNMENT OF STUDENTS TO FILL VACANCIES IN THE AMIGOS SCHOOL AND THE OLÁ PROGRAM AT THE HARRINGTON SCHOOL FOR THE 2001-2002 SCHOOL YEAR AND FOR THE 2002-2003 SCHOOL YEAR AND BEYOND**

**A. Recruitment of Students to the Amigos School and the Olá Program at the Harrington School**

- (1) The district will develop a plan to recruit students to the Amigos School and the Olá Program at the Harrington School. The plan will include strategies to attract diverse groups of students, individuals who will be responsible for implementing these strategies, a timeline for implementing these strategies and a process for determining the success of these strategies.
- (2) With the assistance of the Family Resource Center, staff at the Amigos School and the Olá Program at the Harrington School will develop a plan to recruit students to the Amigos School and the Olá Program at the Harrington School. The plan will include strategies to attract diverse groups of students, individuals who will be responsible for implementing these strategies, a timeline for implementing these strategies and a process for determining the success of these strategies.

**B. General Guidelines for the Assignment of Students to the Amigos School and the Olá Program at the Harrington School**

- (1) Once a student has been assigned and accepts a placement in the Amigos School or Olá program, the student shall remain assigned to such school or program until the parent or guardian submits a transfer form to the Family Resource Center requesting that the student be transferred.
- (2) Parents or guardians of students presently enrolled in the Amigos School or Olá program and/or parents or guardians of students who

wish to have a student considered for placement in the Amigos School or Olá program must comply with all procedures and deadlines established by the Family Resource Center for student assignments or transfers.

- (3) The goal of the Amigos School and Olá program is to have at least two classes of 20 students at each grade level from kindergarten through the eighth grade.
- (4) The percentage goals set forth below to achieve the desired mix of English and non-English speaking students, may be modified by the Superintendent, for the educational benefit of the students currently participating in the Amigos School or Olá program, or for the educational benefit of students awaiting placement to the Amigos School or Olá program.
- (5) On an annual basis, the Bilingual Department will determine language dominance proficiency for all students currently enrolled in the Amigos School and Olá program and will provide the Family Resource Center the information necessary to make assignments consistent with these guidelines.

**C. Assignment of Kindergarten Students to the Amigos School and the Olá Program at the Harrington School)**

- (1) For each class of 20 students, the goal is to balance students linguistically so as to have approximately:
  - (a) 30% of students who are Lau A or Lau B, plus or minus 10 percentage points;  
and
  - (b) 20% of students who are Lau C or Lau D, plus or minus 10 percentage points;  
and
  - (c) 40% of students who are Lau E, plus or minus 10 percentage points.
- (2) Where there are more applicants in any one of the three categories than there are available seats, students will be selected to fill the vacant seats by random lottery within each category.
- (3) Where there are fewer applicants in any of the three categories, the Director, Assistant Director of Bilingual Education programs and/or School Principal, in conjunction with the Family Resource Center, shall recruit students from the under-represented category.

**D. Assignment of Students Grades 1 through 3 to the Amigos School and the Olá Program at the Harrington School**

- (1) For each class of 20 students, the goal is to balance students linguistically so as to have approximately:
  - (a) 35% of students who are Lau A or Lau B, plus or minus 10 percentage points;  
and
  - (b) 30% of students who are Lau C or Lau D, plus or minus 10 percentage points;  
and
  - (c) 35% of students who are Lau E, plus or minus 10 percentage points.
- (2) Parents or Guardians of students who were not enrolled in the Amigos School or Olá program for kindergarten, may request a transfer to the Amigos School or Olá program. Parents or guardians must comply with all procedures set forth by the Family Resource Center.
- (3) Students will be assigned to vacant seats in the Amigos School and the Olá program at the Harrington School based on their linguistic dominance/proficiency as set forth in Paragraph C(1).
- (4) Where there are more applicants in any one of the three categories than there are available seats, students will be selected to fill the vacant seats by random lottery within each category.
- (5) Where there are fewer applicants in any of the three categories, the Director, Assistant Director of Bilingual Education programs and/or School Principal, in conjunction with the Family Resource Center, shall recruit students from the under-represented category.
- (6) Parents or guardians of Lau E students (primary English speakers) will be required to meet with the Director and/or Assistant Director of Bilingual Programs, the City Wide Family Liaisons for the Spanish and Portuguese Communities and the School Principal for program orientation prior to the placement of a Lau E student in the Amigos School or Olá program.

**E. Assignment of Students in Grade 4 through Grade 8 to the Amigos School and the Olá Program at the Harrington School**

- (1) Provided there are vacant seats available, any Spanish-speaking student designated Lau A or Lau B shall be permitted to transfer to

the Amigos School and any Portuguese-speaking student designated Lau A or Lau B shall be permitted to transfer to the Olá program at the request of his/her guardian.

- (2) Provided there are vacant seats available, students designated Lau C or Lau D will be admitted to the Amigos School or the Olá program on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the Bilingual Department and School Principal. The consultation regarding enrollment will cover areas, including motivation and attitude toward learning a second language, English and Spanish/Portuguese literacy levels and the expectations and goals of the two-way bilingual program.
- (3) Provided there are vacant seats available, students designated as Lau E will be admitted to the Amigos School or the Olá program on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the Bilingual Department and School Principal. The consultation regarding enrollment will cover areas, including motivation and attitude toward learning a second language, English literacy levels and the expectations and goals of the two-way bilingual program.

**E. Timing of Transfers and Removal from Wait List**

The transfer process and wait list process for the Amigos School or the Olá program will be in accordance with the processes outlined in the sections above. The applicable timeframes for the transfer process and the wait list process will be the same as those set forth in the Cambridge Public Schools' Controlled Choice Plan.

**F. Annual Review**

The Superintendent shall review annually the implementation of these administrative guidelines and shall make appropriate modifications to these guidelines.