

2010/2011 DIVERSITY PLAN**LEARNING COMMUNITY OF DOUGLAS AND SARPY COUNTIES**

GOAL: The goal of the diversity plan is to annually increase the socioeconomic diversity of enrollment at each grade level in each school building within the learning community until such enrollment reflects the average socioeconomic diversity of the entire enrollment of the learning community.

- I. **STRATEGY:** Create and administer the Open Enrollment process to be utilized by the eleven member school districts of the Learning Community in accepting Open Enrollment applicants (§ 79-2104).
 - A. Develop procedures and criteria by which each member school district shall establish a maximum capacity for each school building within the Learning Community.
 - i. Facilities, staff and programs are the general factors recognized in determining a maximum capacity of a school building. Growth issues are considered through recognition of member school district policies pertaining to instructional staff, class size and unassigned instructional space. Specific criteria consistent with the general factors will be set forth in the Enrollment Capacity Data Sheet Instructions.
 - ii. Adopt the Enrollment Capacity Data Sheet for use by member school districts, which sets forth the specific criteria and procedures by which member school districts identify a maximum capacity for each school building.
 - 1) The Enrollment Capacity Data Sheet includes school building data sheets for elementary, middle and high school buildings and directions and definitions for use by the member school district as it completes the applicable school building data sheet.
 - 2) The column titled “Enrollment Capacity” on the school building data sheet identifies the maximum capacity for the designated school building for the upcoming school year. Space has been provided to note unique circumstances having an impact on enrollment capacity.
 - 3) The Enrollment Capacity Data Sheet for each school building shall be signed and dated by an authorized representative of the member school district before it is submitted to the Learning Community.
 - 4) Create procedures and definitions specific to elementary, middle and high school buildings by which member school districts will identify a maximum capacity number for each school building.
 - a. Elementary Enrollment Capacity Data Sheet includes:
 - i. Enrollment capacity is a function of the number of assigned grade level classrooms and allowable class size.
 - ii. Building capacity in elementary schools includes grade level capacity.
 - iii. Rooms utilized for resource, supplemental instruction or specialized curriculum instruction does not add to building capacity.

- iv. Rooms utilized for special education needs when service is provided to students for the majority of their school day are included as capacity generating spaces.
 - v. Projected enrollment cells for one year and five year projections are provided. The five year projection column is optional based on a member school district's projection capabilities.
- b. Middle School Enrollment Capacity Data Sheet includes:
- i. Middle school facilities have middle school team configurations. The educational program in a teamed middle school is typically a combination of core curriculum instruction in combination with exploratory or elective course offerings.
 - ii. Enrollment capacity is a function of the number of assigned classrooms and core curriculum teams, allowable class size and scheduled teaching periods for instruction.
 - iii. Building capacity in middle schools includes grade level capacity.
 - iv. Rooms utilized for special education needs when service is provided to students for the majority of their school day are included as capacity generating spaces.
 - v. Rooms utilized for resource, supplemental instruction or specialized curriculum instruction does not add to building capacity.
 - vi. Projected enrollment cells for one year and three year projections are provided. The three year projection column is optional based on a member school district's projection capabilities.
- c. High School Enrollment Capacity Data Sheet includes:
- i. Enrollment capacity for high schools and buildings utilized as combined junior/senior high schools is a function of the number and assigned use of classrooms, average classroom enrollment and the number of class periods each day the room is scheduled for instruction.
 - ii. Rooms utilized for special education programs are considered capacity generating spaces if they are utilized as a regularly scheduled classroom.
 - iii. Computer labs, media centers, gymnasium areas and other special function areas are considered capacity generating spaces if they are utilized for an instructional function for the majority of the school day.
 - iv. Projected enrollment cells for one year and three year projections are provided. The three year projection column is optional based on a member school district's projection capabilities.

- B. Identify the order of intake for Open Enrollment.
- i. First preference will be given to siblings of students who will be enrolled as continuing students in a school building or program for the school year for which enrollment is sought.
 - ii. Second preference will be given to students that contribute to the socioeconomic diversity of enrollment at each building as defined in statute:
 - 1) A student who does not qualify for free or reduced-price lunch when, based upon the certification pursuant to § 79-2110, the school building the student will attend has more students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch than the average percentage of such students in all school buildings in the Learning Community.
 - 2) A student who qualifies for free or reduced-price lunch when, based upon the certification pursuant to § 79-2110, the school building the student will attend has fewer students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch than the average percentage of such students in all school buildings in the Learning Community.
 - iii. Thirdly, students who do not contribute to the socioeconomic diversity of such school building up to the remaining capacity of such school building.
 - iv. Option Enrollment
 - 1) Option enrollment applicants who are siblings of students who will be enrolled as continuing students in such school building or program for the school year for which enrollment is sought are processed under the first preference in *Strategy I.B.i*.
 - 2) The Learning Community will work with member school districts regarding additional issues related to Option Enrollment.
- C. Develop a uniform form and instructions for applicants.
- i. The Open Enrollment application will be developed and approved by the Learning Community and distributed to member schools districts on or before January 15, 2010. Member school districts may attach building specific information to the Open Enrollment application, but may not amend the content of the Open Enrollment application or request additional information from the applicant.
 - ii. The Open Enrollment application will be made available to the general public by member school districts on or before January 15, 2010.
 - iii. Completed Open Enrollment applications shall be submitted to the applicable member school district in accordance with the deadlines set forth in *Strategy II.A*.
 - 1) If all school buildings identified on the Open Enrollment application submitted to a member school district are at maximum capacity but said district has school buildings offering the same grades which have remaining capacity, the member school district to which the Open Enrollment application was submitted shall contact the parent/legal guardian/emancipated minor and identify those school buildings within said

district which have capacity, which applicant may substitute for one or more school buildings identified on the submitted Open Enrollment application.

2) Socioeconomic Diversity Qualification

- a. In order to be considered for the socioeconomic diversity intake preference, parents/legal guardians/emancipated minors must provide requested information on the Open Enrollment application to determine, as of the date of submission, whether the applicant would qualify for free or reduced-price lunch based upon the current federal income guidelines for free or reduced-price lunch. If requested information is not provided on the Open Enrollment application, the applicant will be presumed not to qualify for free or reduced-price lunch for purposes of Open Enrollment. (*Strategy I.B.ii.*)
 - b. Each year a member school district shall randomly select 3% of Open Enrollment applications received by the school district and selected for Open Enrollment for verification of free and reduced lunch or non-free and reduced lunch status. The Learning Community will work with the member school districts on this verification process and timeline.
- iv. Member school districts must submit all Open Enrollment applications received by said district, with Section 3 thereof completed indicating the member school district's decision on said application, to the Learning Community on or before April 5th of each year.

D. Establish consistent selection and operational guidelines for Open Enrollment.

- i. For schools other than focus schools and programs other than focus programs:
 - 1) If the projected enrollment of a school building for the following school year is less than the maximum capacity established for such school building pursuant to the Enrollment Capacity Data Sheet, the member school district shall admit students who have applied to attend such school building through Open Enrollment in the order of intake set forth in *Strategy I.B* up to the remaining capacity of the school building.
 - 2) If the number of students of the same preference who have applied to attend a school building exceeds the remaining capacity of said building, the member school district shall select amongst applicants of the same preference by random selection up to the remaining capacity of said building.
 - 3) If applications received for a school building exceeds the remaining capacity of a school building, the member school district shall establish a "wait list" order for all "excess" applications by random selection. Enrollment slots which become available shall be filled from the "wait list" in order.
 - 4) A member school district may, at its discretion, accept applicants in excess of the maximum capacity of the school building in question in order of intake preference as set forth in *Strategy I.B.*

- ii. For focus schools and focus programs established through the Learning Community:
 - 1) Enrollment in each focus school or focus program shall be designed to reflect the socioeconomic diversity of the Learning Community as a whole. §79-2110(3)
 - 2) Selection of students for focus schools or focus programs shall be on a random basis from two pools of applicants: students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch and students who do not qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.
 - 3) If, after selection of students for a focus school or focus program in accordance with this *Strategy I.D* is completed, capacity remains in a focus school or focus program, the member school district which operates said focus school or focus program shall randomly select applicants up to the remaining capacity of the focus school building or focus program or until all applications have been processed.
- iii. Acceptance or rejection of an application by a member school district shall be in accordance with the procedures and criteria set forth in §79-2110(2)(a).
- iv. When an Open Enrollment application is accepted, the family/legal guardian/emancipated minor in question must notify the Open Enrollment member school district of the acceptance of the Open Enrollment slot for the applicant on or before April 25th on a form provided by said member school district. Said notice must be postmarked by April 25th or personally delivered to the member school district by 5:00 p.m. on April 25th. If such notice of acceptance for an applicant is not received by April 25th, the member school district in question shall make at least two documented attempts to contact the family/legal guardian/emancipated minor in order to determine the status of the application. If Open Enrollment applications were submitted to and approved by more than one member school district, only one Open Enrollment slot may be accepted per applicant. If a member school district either does not receive a notice of acceptance of an Open Enrollment slot or is unable to make contact with the family/legal guardian/emancipated minor by May 1st, the Open Enrollment slot for the applicant shall be determined vacant and if applicable, shall be filled from the “wait list” set forth in *Strategy I.D.i.3*.

II. STRATEGY: Adhere, communicate, monitor and respond to compliance of procedural deadlines established by the Learning Community Diversity Plan and deadlines noted in statute:

A. Deadlines are as follows:

- i. January 15, 2010 –
 - 1) The date by which Open Enrollment applications for next school year shall be made available to the general public by member school districts.
- ii. February 15th –
 - 1) Deadline for requests from parents/legal guardians of students who will complete the grades offered at a school building outside their attendance

area prior to the following school year to provide notice to the school board of the member school district containing such school building if such student will attend another school building within such district as a continuing student and which school building such student would prefer to attend. (§ 79-2110)

- iii. March 1st –
 - 1) Deadline for member school districts to provide notice to parents/legal guardians stating which school building or buildings the student shall be allowed to attend in such member school district as a continuing student for the following school year. If the student resides within the member school district, the notice shall include the school building offering the grade the student will be entering for the following school year in the attendance area where the student resides. This deadline does not apply to focus schools or programs. (§ 79-2110)
 - 2) Deadline for member school districts to complete and submit an Enrollment Capacity Data Worksheet for each school building in said district to the Learning Community Coordinating Council, reporting the maximum capacity and total projected enrollment, including intra-district transfers, if any, before Open Enrollment for such school building for the following school year.
- iv. March 15th –
 - 1) Deadline for completion and submission to member school district of Open Enrollment application by parents/legal guardians/emancipated minors requesting to attend a school building outside their attendance area. (§ 79-2110)
- v. April 1st –
 - 1) Deadline for member school districts to accept or reject Open Enrollment applications. (§ 79-2110)
- vi. April 5th –
 - 1) Deadline for member school districts to notify parents/legal guardians/emancipated minors in writing of the acceptance or rejection of an Open Enrollment application.
 - 2) Deadline for member school district to submit copies (with Section 3 completed) of all Open Enrollment applications to resident school districts and the Learning Community.
- vii. April 25th –
 - 1) Deadline by which families/legal guardians/emancipated minors, on a form provided by the accepting member school district, must notify the Open Enrollment School District of acceptance of the Open Enrollment slot.
- viii. May 1st –
 - 1) Date on which an Open Enrollment slot may be declared vacant by a member school district in accordance with *Strategy I.D.iv.*

- ix. September 1st –
 - 1) Deadline for member school districts to submit annual Open Enrollment reports (electronically and in hard copy) of all applications received, including the number of students who applied at each grade level at each building, the number of students accepted at each grade level at each building, the number of such students that contributed to the socioeconomic diversity that applied and were accepted, the number of applications denied and the reason(s) for each denial, and other such information as requested by the Learning Community Coordinating Council. (§ 79-2110)
- x. Moving, emergency or hardship
 - 1) An applicant who moves to a new residence within the Learning Community after April 1st may apply directly to the school board of a member school district within the Learning Community to attend a school building outside the attendance area where the student resides. Said application must be submitted within ninety days after the applicant moves to the new residence. (§79-2110(5))
 - 2) Parents/guardians of a student who wishes to change school buildings for emergency or hardship reasons may apply directly to the school board of a member school district within the Learning Community at any time for the student to attend a school building outside of the attendance area where the student resides. (§ 79-2110 (6))
- xi. Receiving member school districts shall provide notice to resident school districts of accepted Open Enrollment slots.

- B. Unless otherwise indicated, compliance with a deadline shall be achieved by either a postmark by the deadline date or by personal delivery to the required recipient by 5:00 p.m. on the deadline date set forth in *Strategy II.A.*
- C. Communicate with member school district superintendents the deadlines established by statute and by the Learning Community Diversity Plan and the compliance expectations.

III. STRATEGY: Explore focus and magnet schools, programs and pathways.

- A. Gather information from each Achievement Subcouncil to identify and describe focus and magnet schools, programs and pathways currently available.
 - i. Make this information available to the public
 - ii. Learning Community focus programs, focus schools, magnet schools, and pathways shall be as described in §79-769.
- B. Research unmet and high demand/interest program needs within the Learning Community.
 - i. For example: Survey area employers, students and families for what is needed or areas of interest and address this at a public forum
 - ii. Collect data regarding waiting lists for current programmatic offerings with limited capacity.

- 1) Explore how long the waiting lists are and where (geographically) the highest demand for specific programs exists.
 - a. Work with member school districts to identify high demand programs and expand same into school districts where high interest is demonstrated.
 - C. Establish a process to work with member school districts interested in opening a Learning Community approved focus or magnet school, program or pathway.
 - i. Approval process would involve the Learning Community early on in the research/development stage of exploring a potential focus or magnet school, program or pathway.
 - 1) Learning Community has the potential of investing up to 50% of capital costs associated with approved projects.
 - 2) Learning Community would want to verify research, interest, and operational plans proposed for project/s prior to approval.
 - D. Promote a collaborative approach between Learning Community member school districts and other sectors of the community to develop focus or magnet schools, programs or pathways.
- IV. STRATEGY: Create and implement, in collaboration with member school districts, promotional efforts to encourage Open Enrollment participation, provide information about school buildings in the Learning Community, and regularly monitor and evaluate Open Enrollment results.
- A. Annually conduct fairs, forums or other venues to market and inform the public about Open Enrollment and educational opportunities in school buildings within the Learning Community.
 - i. Work with other community partners in planning and promoting student choices through Open Enrollment
 - 1) Promotional efforts may include but are not limited to:
 - a. School fairs
 - b. Website promotional efforts
 - c. Direct mail/Flyers/Posters
 - d. PSAs
 - e. Paid advertising
 - f. Documents produced in more than one language
 - g. Information regarding transportation qualifications and options
 - h. Provide informational support regarding completing and sending in Open Enrollment applications.
 - 2) Provide information regarding other complementary components to Open Enrollment and efforts to impact student achievement
 - a. Information regarding additional programmatic offerings before/after school or during the summer months through ELCs and other agencies/supported programming
 - b. Information regarding specialized services including special education and English Language Learner services.

- B. In order to permit parents/legal guardians to make informed decisions with regard to Open Enrollment, member school districts shall make available to the general public on or before February 15th certain information for each school building operated by the member school district.
- i. Required information for each school building includes, but is not limited to:
 - 1) Grades offered
 - 2) Special programmatic offerings by building including:
 - a. Special education services offered
 - b. ELL services offered
 - c. Special instructional programs or methods of instruction
 - d. Programs targeted to advanced or high ability learners
 - e. Magnet, focus, pathway, or other specialized programming offered within a building
 - 3) For elementary schools, the duration of kindergarten offered (half day or full day)
 - 4) For high schools, the scheduling model used
 - 5) School calendar including instructional day
 - 6) Information regarding accessing the Nebraska Department of Education website and the school performance information contained within that website.
 - ii. The member school district shall send the required information set forth in this *Strategy IV.B* to the Learning Community on or before February 15th for dissemination to the general public.
- C. Gather data annually regarding socioeconomic diversity. This data shall be provided to the Learning Community Coordinating Council consistent with state and federal privacy regulations for all member school districts and to Achievement Subcouncils for those member school districts or buildings within their geographic area. Diversity Plan reports are to reflect the diversity needs of each Achievement Subcouncil and of the Learning Community as a whole.
- i. Member School District Reports include:
 - 1) § 79-528 (2) – End of the School Year Annual Statistical Summary Report
 - 2) § 79-201 (5) - Truancy Report
 - 3) § 79-1013 (1) and § 79-1014 (1)- LEP/Poverty Plans
 - 4) § 79-528 (4) – Fall Membership Report
 - 5) § 79-528 (3) – Annual Financial Data
 - 6) Other data as requested

- ii. Connect socioeconomic diversity data to student achievement data and monitor and report how increased socioeconomic diversity is impacting student achievement.
 - D. Respond to the data gathered and prepare reports for the Learning Community Coordinating Council and, as required in even numbered years, on or before December 1st to the Education Committee of the Nebraska State Legislature.
- V. STRATEGY: Exercise ongoing oversight, administration, evaluation and modification, as necessary, of the Diversity Plan.
 - A. Continuing administration and oversight of the Diversity Plan and the implementation thereof by the member school districts.
 - i. Create a standing subcommittee of the Learning Community Coordinating Council to implement *Strategy V*. Consider the creation of one or more advisory committees to the subcommittee that may include non-council members and representatives of various interest groups and organizations such as, but not limited to: parents, teachers, business community representation.
 - B. Evaluate the reports provided to the Learning Community by member school districts and the Nebraska Department of Education.
 - C. Hold public forums addressing the Learning Community Diversity Plan.
 - i. Each Achievement Subcouncil shall at least annually hold a forum to address special diversity needs of its community and report findings to the Learning Community Coordinating Council or a designated subcommittee.
 - ii. The Learning Community shall at least annually hold a forum to discuss the Learning Community Diversity Plan implementation and progress.
 - D. Evaluate the Diversity Plan and identify modifications or revisions thereto to achieve the Goal.
 - i. Establish a process for Achievement Subcouncils to provide ongoing input regarding provisions relating to each Achievement Subcouncil district.
 - ii. Identify and work with the Legislation and Policy Subcommittee to pursue legislation necessary to achieve the Goal.
 - E. Continue to research and evaluate programs and services relating to increasing socioeconomic diversity offered by member school districts and other Nebraska school districts as well as potential models operating in other regions nationwide.
 - F. Report on the progress of the Diversity Plan to the general public and other required and involved entities.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LEARNING COMMUNITY COORDINATING COUNCIL
IN FURTHERANCE OF THE DIVERSITY PLAN:

- 1) Support legislation to permit the Learning Community and member school districts to establish collaborative focus schools.
- 2) Support legislation to ensure funding for transportation of students who contribute to the socioeconomic diversity of Learning Community school buildings.
- 3) Although the Learning Community Coordinating Council is not responsible for determining intra-district transfer policy, to the extent a member school district provides for intra-district transfers, it is encouraged to utilize the intake preferences set forth in *Strategy I.B.* above