



Final Documents

School of Choice Update Part 1 by

Ray Gaer

Over the next couple of weeks, I will be describing the process and progress of the District School of Choice Committee. I am the ABCFT representative on this committee along with representatives from AFSCME, CSEA, Administrators, as well as community members that have been appointed by the ABC Board Trustees. There are fifteen members in total for this committee. For the next couple of weeks, I'm going to take you through what has been discussed and accomplished in the last five months. If you have the need a question about what is presented in this report, please write to abcft@abcusd.us.

In the Spring of 2018, the ABCUSD School Board agreed to form a district committee on the issue of school of choice. Many of the citizens who were against supporting the bond made the case that school of choice was responsible for the school district's desire to put a facilities bond on the ballot in November of 2018. These citizens were correct that there was a need to have a discussion about school of choice politics and realities but it is a false assumption that declining enrollment was the reason that the district decided to propose a bond to the ABC Community. There are some committee members who in the beginning of the SOC meetings didn't trust what the process of selection for SOC nor the need for students from other districts in ABC. Over the past five months, I have witnessed a change in their attitudes as we get deeper into the data.

The **first meeting** was held on November 29th, 2018 and in this meeting we discussed the meeting norms, rules, and the purpose and scope of the committee. The second meeting was on January 10th and was a pivotal meeting because the committee began to discuss what data we would have access to over the timeframe of the committee. I felt this was a crucial meeting because every member of the committee agreed that there needs to be more transparency on how the lottery for SOC functions, the impact of the federal magnet application process, how military, Title 1 students, homeless students, foster students, and students in danger are all treated in the laws mandating schools of choice. [For the meeting minutes and the power point presentation click this link.](#) If you have the time, take a look at slides 12-14 on page six entitled Demographic Data and slide 16 on page 8 with the performance data. The performance data clearly shows that these students are not a drag academically on our schools. They have lower special education percentages, lower chronic absences, and are college bound in compared to students living in the ABC attendance area. It is definitely food for thought.

School of Choice Update Part 2 by

Ray Gaer

Last week I wrote about the first couple School of Choice meetings that took place in November and January. Those two meetings discussed the legal requirements for school of choice, how the lottery was used to choose students, and the demographic data of the 3,000 interdistrict transfers we get from other districts. There is a direct correlation between the amount of LCAP and supplemental funding ABC receives due to these interdistrict transfers since a majority of them qualify as non-duplicated students (a term describing students who are either foster youth, homeless, ELL, and free and reduced lunch). To see the first part of this article go to the school of choice article in [Review for March 8, 2019](#).

The third meeting for the School of Choice Committee was a broader discussion among the participants about the actual numbers of students that are the intradistrict school of choice placements in every school (these are placements of students who live within ABC boundaries). In addition, there was a discussion about the process of placing interdistrict transfers (from other districts) to fill spots that are not taken by intradistrict transfers. [You can find the minutes for the February 7th meeting, the question replies, and the School of Choice placement data here.](#) It should be noted that interdistrict transfer permits for a school happen only after a deadline window for intradistrict (ABC residents) closes in late Spring. Residents of ABC are given first priority but if they refuse the school of choice placement after the deadline it opens these slots up for interdistrict permits (out of

district). When you look at the data, you will see that a big majority of our school of choice students are interdistrict transfers. You will find the data for each school on page 14 of the document. Also included in this document are the school board policies and the CA Ed Code numbers that spell out the process of intra and inter-district transfers.

What I thought was most important at this meeting was that it busted the myth for some of the north side parents who thought that it was the out of district students who were filling up the schools. I think it was eye-opening for the committee to look at the data for each school. When you look at this data in conjunction with the enrollment trend data you begin to see a picture forming about what is happening in our schools. However, hold on for next week when I discuss the demographic data that was just approved by the school board last week. To be honest, the demographic data I'll post next week will blow your mind because it will tie all the pieces together.

I hope that you are finding this ad hoc committee reports interesting. As teachers, we can usually only make assumptions about our students and how they ended up in our classrooms. I think it's important that teachers have a good idea about how and why a student is at your school so that we can better meet the needs of the students and their parents. Understanding the community we work in can only be helpful in understanding where our parents are coming from. Look for part 3 of my School of Choice report next week.

School of Choice Update Part 3 by

Ray Gaer

Each week I will be describing the process and progress of the District School of Choice Ad Hoc Committee. I am the ABCFT representative on this committee along with representatives from AFSCME, CSEA, Administrators, as well as community members that have been appointed by the ABC Board Trustees. There are fifteen members in total for this committee. **To see the first part of this article go to the school of choice article in Part 1 [Review for March 8, 2019](#), Part 2 [Review for March 15, 2019](#).**

In the past couple of reports, I've covered the topics of the process for school of choice selection, the language directing why and how school of choice is administered, the number of interdistrict transfers (out of district transfers), demographic and academic data on interdistrict transfer students, and some information on the timeline for issues of permits for interdistrict transfers after intradistrict transfer placements (ABC residents).

Over the last two meetings in February and March for the SOC Committee, there have been more discussions about the fiscal importance of inter-district transfer students and how the monies collected from these students are critical for the support of many student support programs throughout ABCUSD.

Rather than give a commentary on the documents, take a look at the notes we took during the last meeting of the School of Choice Committee. [You will find our notes here](#). What is important to look at here are the number of students from an area, the number of students in attendance, and the total number of students. I believe you will find some interesting data points. These notes are an introduction to the overall [demographic study that the ABCUSD School Board recently recognized \(click this link\)](#).

School of Choice Update #4 by Ray Gaer



This week has been a week of confusion, aggravation, and disappointment for ABC employees who have children and have signed up for the ABC School of Choice lottery. Many teachers, principals, and classified employees were surprised by ABCUSD's sudden priority change for employees who were participating in ABC schools of choice. Employees who had been given the top priority in

the SOC lottery suddenly found out that they no longer had the top priority and that they would not be placed till after June 1st. Why?

The short answer is that the district reverted to the board policies in place to make sure that they did not violate any policies that currently describe the School of Choice procedures. In the ABC School Board procedures, there is currently no language that gives ABC employees SOC priority over district school of choice intradistrict transfers. For the last two years, there has been a practice where employees were given top priority. This was happening because the district committee which convenes every year thought that giving employees the top priority would streamline the process and encourage employees to not only commit to staying in ABC as employees but also offset declining enrollment and allow ABC to collect the additional ADA (money) for programs. The logic of this decision is sound and this is just another way for the district to provide incentives for employees to invest their career time and children in ABC.

School of Choice Update #5 by Ray Gaer- repeat



This Thursday I attended the meeting of the School of Choice Ad Hoc Committee and I'll write about the content of that meeting in next week's Review. **If you have been negatively impacted by the dramatic procedural change for ABC's School's of Choice lottery, I would encourage you to write to Tim.Catlin@abcusd.us**

[The previous updates and information](#)

[can be found here when you click this link.](#)

As promised for this weeks School of Choice update I wanted to share with you the information and presentations that were shared with the SOC committee members on April 11, 2019. As you look at these materials you will understand why there was so much confusion about why the district decided over Spring Break that they would revert the SOC priority to school board policy midway through the process. There are a number of employees that were caught by surprise and now have their children on wait lists for SOC schools. More than one teacher wrote to Tim Catlin at the district office expressing their frustration, the unfairness of the situation, and how this stressful situation is impacting their ability to do their teaching. Not knowing where your kids will go to school and having no alternative districts to go to because the SOC window is closed it more than unfair for the ABC employees, it's downright disgraceful. More than one teacher told me they were thinking about leaving ABC so they can avoid a childcare nightmare because of the prospect of having their kids in multiple schools.

[Click here for the April 11 notes that I am referring to in the paragraph below.](#)

If you look at the powerpoint presentation you will notice on page 11 that there is a priority list for the school of choice that has been used for the past two years. In contradiction to what is stated in the school board policy, the priority chart has school employees and over-enrollment listed as the top priority in the SOC lottery. This powerpoint was developed before there were questions from school board members and community members about the validity/legality of having employees as a top priority. The District Administration was forced to look at the school board policy for SOC for the specifics of priority. In the school board policy, it is not spelled out that employees are a top priority and the reality is that a annual subcommittee for the school of choice lottery had made the decision to place employees as a priority without changing the actual school board

language. It's my understanding that the district had to revert to what is legally defensible but as I've repeated too many individuals, I just don't understand why the change was made this year so that employees have no other options. The choice to change the lottery this year is unfortunate since employees were misled on the priority in the SOC lottery and it will take years before employees recover from the sting of this decision.

Next week, I will report about the May 9th meeting and what the committee is looking at for future school of choice changes.

If you have any questions please write to me at abcft@abcusd.us.