

## **Admission to SK Immersion from Waiting Lists**

### **Background:**

Two parents have been in contact with the FSLAC over the past few weeks after having determined that applicants lower down the waiting list than their children had been admitted to SK Immersion at their designated school and that priority was given to applicants who live closest to that school.

### **SK Immersion Protocol:**

The protocol for admission to SK Immersion states that in the event of there being more applicants than space, a lottery will be held. Placements are given in the order in which names are drawn in the lottery. Once the classes are full, the rest of the applicants are on the waitlist in the same order as drawn and are offered placement if anyone changes his mind. This backfilling of spots takes place until June 15 at which point the spots available across the system are reviewed and waitlisted applicants are then offered bussing to the nearest school with space. The waiting list is maintained until the end of school in December. This system means that all families within the SK catchment have an equal shot at a spot regardless of their home school. Students already attending the dual track school that houses the program do not have an advantage in the application process.

### **SK Immersion Entry for September 2007:**

The SK immersion program and the protocol for admission and the lottery were explained to applicants at information meetings held at each SK immersion school. The Board chose on January 31/07 to leave the protocol for admission to SK immersion in place for Sept 07 due to the pressures of the primary cap.

Between the lottery and April 15, decisions were made around the primary cap and additional spots were added in at least 3 SK Immersion sites: Jackman, Allenby and Howard. The TDSB decided to allocate these additional spots by proximity and chose applicants from the waitlist to jump the queue who lived closest or were in the English catchment. On April 15, the applicants remaining on the waitlist from feeder schools that are further away were offered bussing to SK Immersion schools outside of their catchment.

Note: The January 31/07 motion meant that the grade 4 admission protocol was changed and the lottery was eliminated. Parents applying for grade 4 Immersion/Extended were informed of the pending changes and their potential impact at those information evenings and were very happy to accept the bit of upheaval in exchange for a guaranteed placement and the end of the rationing of educational opportunity.

### **Issue:**

The TDSB did not follow its admission protocol for SK Immersion.

### **FSLAC Advice on Resolving the Issue:**

1) TDSB needs to do a written communication to the affected families giving an explanation of what was done and why.

Only parents who have done a lot of digging are even aware that the rules changed part way through the process. Their disappointment in not being able to have spots in their designated SK Immersion school, combined with the failure of the TDSB to follow its own rules, needs to be addressed in a meaningful way.

Also, the TDSB needs to clarify what position on the waiting list people now hold and who gets to backfill in the case of spots opening up between now and the end of December.

2) The Board needs to review the situation to find an equitable solution for these parents whose position on the waiting list was not respected.

Piercing the cap by offering placements at the original SK Immersion school to the applicants who were denied equal access within their SK Immersion catchment is a fair solution . At Allenby, the 9 students could be added to the existing 3 classes and at Jackman, the 11 students could be added to the existing 3 classes. The cap has already been pierced in some SK Immersion sites as the MOE funding document allows for special consideration for congregated programs such as early immersion. This would be in keeping with the Board motion of January 31, 2007 allowing for SK Immersion classes of up to 30.

The situation at Howard is different, as the 2 intake classes are already at 30. Full consideration needs to be given to opening a 3<sup>rd</sup> class.

#### Conclusion:

The FSLAC brought this matter forward to PSSC on May 2, 2007. It may seem insignificant in terms of number of students affected, but the decisions taken to change the admission protocol midway through the process put the system before the needs and hopes of our families and broke the high level of trust that Junior Kindergarten parents have in the TDSB. The negative impact on the system from resolving this in favour of the affected families will be minimal. With proper communication and a generous spirit, this difficult situation can be turned around so the children can have the opportunity to be in their SK Immersion in their catchment.