

Voluntary Public School Choice

April 2009 Choice Workshop

CHOICE DEFINED:

As a group, district choice administrators worked together to create an exhaustive list of choices that students use to access schools or programs other than those to which they are zoned are found below.

District Choice Offerings:

- Magnet
- Choice
- Fundamental
- Charter
- McKay
- Title I AYP
- Military
- Opportunity Scholarship Program
- Corporate Tax Credit/FL Pride
- FL Virtual/District Virtual
- IB
- Career Academy/Tech Ed

Parental Options:

- McKay
- Transfer (Capacity)
- Hardships (Program)
- Magnet (Open enrollment)

Alternative Education Options:

- Private Home School
- Home School
- Private

Grand Fathering Options:

- Inter District

BARRIERS/CHALLENGES:

The group then defined the barriers and challenges for school choice which focused on five primary stakeholder groups: 1) Family, 2) Community, 3) Business Partners, 4) School Site, 5) District. The challenges for each of these groups was unique as explained below.

INFORMATION AND MARKETING is an area of challenge:

Family = Accessibility-Families are challenged to have access to resources and media to adequately learn about choice options

- Education of families that are interested in choice is a challenge with different languages and cultures. Due to this challenge, awareness of options may be non-existent for some groups.
- Materials in the languages or dialects represented are not readily available and are difficult to get translated.

Community = Preconceived Ideas-Communities have preconditioned opinions about schools based on past experiences even when new choice programs are being implemented at the new choice school.

- Communities and schools are challenged to break past preconceived paradigms regarding school academics, behavior or commitment.
- Real estate developers are not easily swayed to develop areas where there is a history of a troubled school because it is difficult to market the property.

Business Partners = Want to partner with high achieving schools but when marketing a new choice program there is no baseline for high achievement and it can be difficult to secure partnerships.

School = Enrollments increased burden on site based personnel by adding additional students to a school through a choice program

- Staff feelings about programs come to play in the fact that they may or may not be committed to the philosophy and goals of the choice option.

District = Budgets are tight and finding money to implement new choice programs is hard to come by

- Consortium & Public Relation Firms are good resource for getting ideas on marketing a choice option
- Magnetize signs on district service Vehicles (\$650/Wrap) are another method that may be used to get the word out about a new choice option at a school.
- Work toward common district framework for types of choices which provides a streamlined approach to the umbrella of specific choice program offerings that are available in a district
- Informational choice guide – all choices are in one resource guide book/directory to provide information on all choice options in a district

IMPLEMENTATION AND EXPANSION is an area of challenge:

- REPLICATING SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS
- SUSTAINABILITY

Family = Depth of Waiting List leaves the family feeling like there is no hope of ever getting in and for the district this provides data for the need of replicating a successful program

- Zoned schools are perceived as the only option for families facing deep waiting lists

Community= Program desires or theme vary by community – communities are not uniform in what they embrace

- Desirability of new program is different by community and cultural group.

Business Partners = Business partner funding across more schools results in greater replication

- Planning with developers when siting new schools results in new facilities for choice programs

School = FISH (Florida Inventory of School Houses) capacity limits how many children can be added to a site to expand or add a choice option

- Concurrency is another facilities discussion that directs the thresholds for new construction on a school facility.

District = Budget must be prioritized to reflect choice priorities of district leadership teams

- Vertical alignment of curriculum and program assist in making programs stronger and more viable
- Feeder patterns and flow schools create a recruitment tool for schools as they can guarantee where the student will flow upon graduation from the highest grade offered at the site.

TRANSPORTATION is an area of challenge:

Family = Access to after school programs is limited at choice schools and thus affects the amount of families that select the program

- Travel Time is too great for some students as bus rides may be greater than an hour in duration
- Students on different school start times for elementary, middle school and high school provide another challenge for families that have children at multiple levels; i.e. an elementary student and a middle school student with different start and dismissal times.

Community =Some schools utilize community or public transportation for students.

Business Partner – Place Public Relation documents on magnetized signs inside school bus as a way to get the word out about business partners in education.

School =There is an increased number of student accessing and enrolling in choice options at schools

- Staggered start time model helps families with students in elementary and secondary schools so parents can accommodate different pick up and drop off times for students.

District = Duval runs after school activity buses to provide access to programs for families.

- Buses are only provided for middle school and high school age students in Duval for after school activities at choice schools.
- There is a perception that it costs a great deal to transport students for choice programs when the reality is that these students will be transported at a cost to the district regardless of program of access.

DISTRICT – SUSTAINABILITY – SCHOOL

There must be a sustainability factor between the district and school in order to ensure its survival rate beyond the first year of operation.

DISTRICT – LIABILITY - SCHOOL

There lies a liability factor between the district and school transporting students regardless of activity or start or stop time.

Overlay of ridership

The examples below show some of the ways that districts must provide transportation to students outside of choice options. For this reason, choice transportation may be provided under an umbrella that does not include choice. This bolsters the discussion that a district will be transporting these students regardless of choice program.

- ESE
- HARDSHIP
- AYP
- OSP