

FY 2008 QUESTION NUMBER: 10

QUESTION:

Referring to the testimony by Mr. Campbell/Northeast Consortium, what are we doing in the Northeast Consortium (NEC) to ensure balance of demographic characteristics at each NEC school? What outreach do we undertake so families are aware of all opportunities?

BUDGET PAGE REFERENCE: N/A

ANSWER:

Last year the “ever” Free and Reduced-price Meals System (FARMS) status was used as a factor in the student assignment process in the Northeast Consortium (NEC), in accordance with the Board of Education’s resolution of September 13, 2005. As a result, there is a greater balance of demographic characteristics in each school. The lottery process this year will again comply with that resolution which should result in more balance in the diversity of the three Northeast Consortium High Schools. The computerized lottery will assign students based on criteria including honoring base area selections, sibling link, maximizing first choice, and creating student populations at all three consortium high schools that are similar in terms of gender and FARMS percentages.

As detailed below, the outreach to the families of the NEC middle school students regarding the opportunities at the NEC high schools is extensive.

- In spring 2006, all NEC households of Grade 7 NEC students received in the mail a *Signatures* booklet, which provides an overview of the programs at each NEC high school, along with a multi-language DVD that highlights each of the schools.
- Consortia staff responded to PTSA requests for spring-time information meetings regarding the *Choice* process and Signature programs.
- In fall 2006, multiple one-page information mailings in English and Spanish went to the homes of Grade 8 students promoting the information meetings and open houses.
- In October three evening information meetings were held to inform parents and students of the programs of the NEC high schools.
- Each of the schools held a well attended open house in November where the programs and the students were showcased.
- During November, students from the high schools along with a representative of the Division of Consortium Choice and Application Program Services (DCCAPS) made classroom presentations to Grade 8 students. This initiative is highly effective in that “alumni” from that middle school share the advantages and positive experiences of their Signature programs and high school.
- Later in November a detailed booklet that described the academic pathways of the various Signature and academy programs was mailed to each home along with the *Choice* form.
- Lessons have been developed and each middle school counseling team implements an awareness opportunity to inform students of the *Choice* process and Signature programs.