

Toronto District School Board

Operational Procedure PR545

Title: **OPTIONAL ATTENDANCE**

Adopted: October 27, 1999

Effectuated: October 27, 1999

Revised: December 15, 2000, February 4, 2003 November 12, 2003,
December 15, 2004, October 24, 2005, October 18, 2006,
January 7, 2008, February 17, 2009, June 2014, June 2015,
September 2018, October 15 2019

Reviewed: April 2012

Authorization: Executive Council

1. RATIONALE

The Optional Attendance Procedure (the "Procedure") supports implementation of the Optional Attendance Policy (P013). The Procedure allows students the ability to access schools and programs that are available to them outside of their designated attendance area as defined by residential address.

2. OBJECTIVE

To outline the process for optional attendance at regular and specialized schools and programs.

3. DEFINITIONS

Board is the Toronto District School Board, which is also referred to as "TDSB".

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4. RESPONSIBILITY

Associate Director, School Operations and Service Excellence

5. APPLICATION AND SCOPE

This Procedure applies to students, parents/guardians and TDSB staff involved in the application and registration processes for students seeking a space in a school that lies outside of their designated attendance area.

6. PROCEDURES

6.1. Regular Schools and Programs

- 6.1.1. The school will accommodate students from within its designated attendance area. Designated attendance boundaries will be approved by the Board.
- 6.1.2. Students will be provided with opportunities to access schools and programs when space is available, outside the designated attendance area in which they reside. (See form 545A for elementary school students and 545B for secondary school students)
- 6.1.3. Projected enrolment patterns for a three-year period will be used in the determination of those schools recommended for inclusion on a list of schools closed to optional attendance.
- 6.1.4. A list of schools closed to optional attendance will be prepared by the Planning Section, Facility Services, and distributed to schools and trustees during the first operating week in January.
- 6.1.5. Applications for optional attendance are to be completed and signed by the parent/guardian or student 18 years of age or older and returned to the school the student currently attends (home school).
- 6.1.6. The home school principal or a designate will sign the application.
- 6.1.7. The parent/guardian or student 18 years of age or older will forward or deliver the application to the requested elementary or secondary school. (See Appendix A)
- 6.1.8. Students will be accepted by the requested school according to the admission priorities defined in the Optional Attendance Policy. The students will be assigned to priority categories based on the criteria outlined in the policy. Admission of students will be determined by addressing each priority category sequentially, beginning with Priority One, and examining the number of requests in a priority category and the space available. If space is available for the requests in a priority category, all the students in the category will be accepted before addressing the next priority. If requests in a priority category exceed the space available, students in that

category will be accepted through a lottery¹ (no further priority categories would be addressed).

- 6.1.9. A lottery will be held for elementary and secondary schools and conducted by the requested school (see Appendix A).
- 6.1.10. The requested school principal will complete and sign the application indicating the decision and forward a copy to the parent /guardian or student. (See Appendix A)
- 6.1.11. Parents/Guardians or students 18 years of age or older must inform the requested school of acceptance. (See Appendix A)
- 6.1.12. Forms for students who accept the offer of admission will be forwarded to the TDSB home school.
- 6.1.13. For secondary schools, the date no student will be admitted under optional attendance is the first Monday in March. After this date, schools can no longer offer placements whether on a waiting list or not. All waiting lists become null and void (see Appendix A).

6.2. Specialized Schools and Programs

- 6.2.1. Supplementary applications for attendance at specialized schools or programs will be available from the principal of the specialized school or program.
- 6.2.2. Supplementary applications for specialized schools or programs will contain an outline of the admission criteria for the school or program and the internal timelines and procedures related to acceptance or rejection of the application, including timelines related to the lottery, should one be required.
- 6.2.3. Applications are to be completed and signed by the parent/guardian or student 18 years of age or older and returned to the home school.
- 6.2.4. The home school principal will sign the application.
- 6.2.5. The parent /guardian or student 18 years of age or older will forward or deliver the application to the requested school.
- 6.2.6. The requested school principal will complete and sign the application indicating the decision and forward a copy to the parent/guardian or student.
- 6.2.7. Parents/Guardians or students 18 years of age or older must inform the requested school of acceptance.

¹ See Section 6.7, Lottery Procedure

- 6.2.8. Forms for students who accept the offer of admission will be forwarded to the TDSB home school.
- 6.2.9. If the specialized school or program does not fit the student's needs, the student is free to return to his/her home school at an appropriate intake opportunity without reapplying through the Optional Attendance process.
- 6.2.10. For a complete list of Elementary and Secondary specialized schools and programs, see the TDSB website.

6.3. Alternative Schools

- 6.3.1. Supplementary applications for alternative schools and programs are available from the principal or designate of the alternative school or program.
- 6.3.2. Supplementary applications for alternative school and programs will contain an outline of the admission criteria for such schools and programs and the timelines related to acceptance or rejection of the application, as well as timelines related to the lottery, should one be required.
- 6.3.3. Applications are to be completed and signed by the parent/guardian or student 18 years of age or older and returned to the principal or designate of the Alternative school or program.
- 6.3.4. The requested school principal will complete and sign the application indicating the decision and forward a copy to the parent/guardian or student.
- 6.3.5. Parents/Guardians or students 18 years of age or older must inform the requested school of acceptance.
- 6.3.6. Forms for students who accept the offer of admission will be forwarded to the TDSB home school.
- 6.3.7. If the alternative school does not fit the student's needs, the student is free to return to his/her home school at an appropriate intake opportunity without reapplying through the Optional Attendance process.
- 6.3.8. For a complete list of Alternative schools and programs, see the TDSB website.

6.4. Immersion/Extended French Programs

- 6.4.1. Access to the Immersion/Extended French programs is determined by PR597: French Immersion/Extended French.
- 6.4.2. Students in Immersion/Extended French programs will have a designated school for entry and a designated pathway for continuation of program.

- 6.4.3. Should a student choose to access other than their designated French school or pathway, all procedures covered by the Optional Attendance Policy and the Administrative and Operational Procedures for Regular Schools and Programs will apply. An application to attend the requested French Immersion/Extended school will be required and admission will be subject to availability, as outlined in Section 5 of this procedure

6.5. Child Care (for child care operators and principals)

- 6.5.1. Every child who is eligible to attend school has the right to attend a designated school based on the home address of his or her parent(s) or guardian(s).
- 6.5.2. Every child enrolled in a school-based, licensed child care centre has the right to attend the host school, even when it is not the child's designated school by home address.
- 6.5.3. Children are considered "in district" as long as they attend the child care centre located within the host school; these children should not be required to complete an Optional Attendance application. If children are withdrawn from the child care centre, they will be required to return to their designated school based on home address. However, if space is available at the host school, an application to remain may be made through the Optional Attendance process.
- 6.5.4. In the case of Immersion and Extended French programs, placement is determined by home address, not by child care location. Child care operators are encouraged to explain this to parents at the time of registration to ensure that the implications of having children attend a child care centre outside the home school are fully understood.
- 6.5.5. It is recommended that schools and school-based child care centres work together to coordinate registration and admission practices in the following ways:
- a) Child care operators are encouraged, wherever possible, to give priority to children living in the school's designated attendance area.
 - b) In early January of each year, child care operators should advise the principal of the number of children (according to licensed capacity) likely to enter school from that child care centre. This will assist the administration in school planning.
 - c) Child care operators should provide a current list of the names and addresses of all children enrolled in the child care centre who will be attending the school. (Parental

approval to share information must first be obtained through the Information-Sharing Consent Form, 692A, which should be part of the child care registration package.) This list will serve as verification that those children living outside the school's attendance area are registered in the school-based child care centre and will assist the school in maintaining an up-to-date record of out-of-area students.

- d) The school will provide a letter to the parents/guardians of children living outside the school attendance area, stating that should the child be withdrawn from that particular child care centre, the child will be required to return to the designated school based on home address, or the parent/guardian may apply to have the child remain at the current school through the Board's Optional Attendance process. The letter also provides information regarding registration in French programs. (See sample letter, Form 545C.)

6.6. Lottery Procedure

- 6.6.1. Each student who applies will be assigned a number for the lottery process. For specialized schools and programs, each student who applies and meets the requirements for the school or program will be assigned a number.
- 6.6.2. The Optional Attendance Policy lists seven priority statements to be followed in the lottery process. The school implementing a lottery process must consider which priorities apply to that school. The school principal will ensure that these priorities are followed, for example, the sibling rule: if there is space all siblings may be admitted without a lottery, but if there is not sufficient space for all the siblings who have applied, it may be necessary to run a lottery of the sibling population.
- 6.6.3. The lottery process will be run in the school. The following people should be present for the lottery:
- the school principal
 - the school superintendent, if possible
 - the school trustee, if possible
 - the chair of the school council
- 6.6.4. A random number software package could be used to rank order the student names in the lottery. As each number is generated by the software program, the associated student name will be entered on the list. All students in the lottery will be placed on the master list. A line will be drawn on the

master list after the student name that fills the last vacancy. All students above the line will be offered a placement in the school and all students below the line will be placed on the waiting list. As students above the line decline acceptance, students below the line will be offered the available spaces. No student will be offered a placement after the first Monday in March. Should a random number software package not be available, some other form of random selection must be followed.

7. EVALUATION

This Procedure will be reviewed as required, but at a minimum every four (4) years after the effective date.

8. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Important Dates

9. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

- Optional Attendance Policy (P013)
- French Immersion/Extended French Procedure (PR597)
- Admission to Specialized Programs and Schools Procedure (PR612)
- Form 545A Application for Optional Attendance at an Elementary School
- Form 545B Application for Optional Attendance at a Secondary School
- Form 545C Optional Attendance and Withdrawal from Child Care (Sample Letter)

IMPORTANT DATES**Elementary Schools (for the 2020-2021 school year – applying for September 2020 admission)**

- (a) Optional Attendance forms will be made available on the first Monday of November. Applications may be submitted to the school following release of the Optional Attendance forms, but no offers of admission can be made prior to February 17, 2020. Any offers of admission before February 17, 2020 will be considered null and void.
- (b) Applications must be received by **Friday, February 14, 2020.**
- (c) A lottery, if necessary, will be held the **first week of March 2020.**
- (d) Parents/guardians will be informed of acceptance or non-acceptance prior to **March Break, but no earlier than February 17, 2020 and no later than Friday, March 6, 2020.**
- (e) Parents/guardians must inform the requested school of their acceptance of the offer by **Friday, March 20, 2020**
- (f) No student will be admitted into an elementary school through Optional Attendance after **Friday, April 3, 2020.**

Secondary Schools (for 2020-2021 school year – applying for September 2020 admission)

- (a) Optional Attendance forms will be made available on the first Monday of November. Applications may be submitted to the school following release of the Optional Attendance forms, but no offers of admission can be made prior to February 3, 2020. Any offers of admission before February 3, 2020 will be considered null and void.
- (b) Applications must be received by **Friday, January 31, 2020.**
- (c) A lottery, if necessary, will be held the **first week in February 2020.**
- (d) Parents/guardians or students 18 years of age or older will be informed of acceptance or non-acceptance prior to **Friday, February 14, 2020 but no earlier than February 3, 2020.**
- (e) Parents/guardians or students 18 years of age or older must confirm the offer of admission by completing a course selection sheet by **Friday, February 28, 2020.**
- (f) No student will be admitted into any secondary grade levels through optional attendance after **Friday, February 28, 2020.**

Note: It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to deliver this application (no faxed or scanned copies) to the school or schools of choice.