

1st draft  
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Comparison of alternative approaches  
to achieving desegregation goals  
on grouping of students.

Here are some of the factors mentioned in various discussions. You may have others. All these methods require transportation to achieve desegregation goals. These ideas apply primarily to elementary schools.

THE EXISTING SYSTEM

PLUSES

It exists.

People have come to accept its shortcomings.

MINUSES

It does not work. It fails to achieve the desired plus-or-minus 5% in 2/3 of the cases.

It is difficult to determine which portion of the imbalances result from changes in the composition of the zones and which portion are created by the transfer policies.

Special pleading for transfer using unclear rules are the norm; the balance of power between BUSD and parents is shifted heavily in the direction of BUSD.

Only about 1/3 of the families in the system clearly have found ways to circumvent the limits that are perceived as undesirable.

The people who do not know how to work the system to circumvent its perceived limits are denied an opportunity that is available to others. The BUSD system perpetuates unequal treatment.

It is incorrectly perceived as being the only way to do things -- as the only way to achieve desegregation. It freezes into place what are considered independent variables in most other districts, such as grade configuration.

NEW ZONES  
WITH GREATLY RESTRICTED TRANSFER POLICY

PLUSES

Temporarily, BUSD could achieve the desired plus-or-minus 5%. It would give the appearance of solving the problem.

It builds off what people already know.

It validates the past: "the zone approach was right all along."

It reduces the numbers who manipulate the system.

MINUSES

The composition of the zones is known only once a decade --when the census comes out. About 15% of people move each year (the percentage is higher the lower the income) therefore the zones are always changing. The normal shifting of the composition of the zones would create ethnic imbalances within a school.

The only way to adjust for large scale shifts is to reassign zones among schools. This guarantees "periodic zone reassignment trauma" at the community level. Which zones get reassigned? Where?

It precludes magnet or theme schools that operate city-wide.

It permits people to continue to confound what are really three independent variables: desegregation goals and school assignment method and school organization.

Placing total discretion in any bureaucracy is not consistent with other social trends taking place in America. People want a shift in the balance between their authority and the authority of "the system."

The only sure way to change schools is to change residence.

The system would have to restrict a transfer action based on the other reasons why people may want to have their child in a particular school; e.g. proximity to work, transportation, or after-school child care. These would not be equal to zone-of-residence in terms of weighting for school assignment purposes.

Plus or minus 5% may not be workable under a zone system; plus or minus 10% probably is.

## CONTROLLED CHOICE

### PLUSES

BUSD can assure compliance with the plus-or-minus 5% group distribution goal. Or plus or minus 1%.

It is the least traumatic method of adjusting ethnic balance; there would be no "annual zone reassignment trauma" in the community. Adjustments could be made through new enrollments, interdistrict transfers, i.e. incrementally through individual actions not through group actions.

All reasons why people would want to send their child to a school are considered equally legitimate, e.g., the program, a teacher, proximity to work or parent's transportation are all equally valid reasons for you to want your child there.

All parents would have an equal chance of having their child selected to attend a school.

The parents who now "work the system" would be on the same footing as all others. BUSD would have to treat each parent equally.

It permits magnet or theme schools. It permits development of other programs that might attract a parent to a school (after school child care, etc.)

In most systems of choice, about 70% of parents get their first choice. 95% get one of their first three choices.

Choice provides a mechanism for balancing three sets of interests:

1. community-wide values on desegregation; controlled choice insures that goals can be met.
2. city-wide community-of-interest in a particular type of educational program, e.g., arts magnet can be provided.
3. geographic community-of-interest. Most people who put a school as their first choice live near it.

Choice provides public schools with a competitive advantage over private schools; there is more to choose from.

For people entranced with zones -- each family in effect becomes its own zone.

Those of us who were in the Army remember the dramatic differences in attitude between the draftees and the enlistees. People who are someplace because they want to be are much happier than those who are not.

BUSD can track trends in parental interest by determining the numbers and reasons as to why people select particular schools. This can be an input into improving school quality.

MINUSES

Many people do not know how it works. There is always suspicion of the unknown.

BUSD would have to provide information about each school to each parent.

Transportation becomes somewhat more complicated. However we know this is do-able because thousands of school districts do it.

## How a Controlled Choice System Might Work in BUSD

Control is exercised over two sets of variables:

- I. factors used for creating the subgroups from which selections are made, (e.g., ethnicity),
- II. the sequence in which the subgroups are used to make assignments to available openings.

HOW THE SYSTEM MIGHT WORK. This is a composite of factors from other choice systems. It identifies some of the variables on which policies would have to be formed.

All parents would be given information in writing, at community meetings and through a Parent Information Center about the schools in the district and how the selection process works.

In the spring of the preceding year, all parents who are interested in their child attending a specific school would identify it as their first choice. They also list a second choice, and a third choice. (Some districts go to 5 choices, most go to 3. Parents MUST list alternatives; they may not list the same school all three times.)

All children are identified by ethnicity. (Some districts permit a parent to change the ethnicity of their child -- **once** -- with justification -- appearing personally to make the request.)

All reasons for wanting your child to attend a particular school are considered to be equally valid. The most typical reason why people list a school as their first choice is geographic proximity. More than half the people requesting a school do so because it is near their home. Other do so because of a program, a teacher, proximity to work or after school care. A choice system does not require that schools be "magnets."

Lets say there are 300 children in the school. Under the desegregation grouping standards adopted by SOTF, the first sub-grouping for selection purposes would be a two-by-two table of ethnic groups and number of slots allotted to that group. Under the distribution rule, the initial target for Berkeley would be 39% black and 32% white. (A Board policy could be adopted that sets the targets elsewhere within the plus-or-minus 5% range.)

If we assume that Berkeley would approximate the nationwide average of 70% of parents getting their first choice, then the "perfect distribution" of first-choice numbers would be:

	# slots	# applicants	# selected
black 39%	117	167	117 (70%)
white 32%	96	137	96 (70%)
other 29%	87	124	87 (70%)
	300		300

The selection process identifies the people from each subgroup who will go to that school up to the number established for that subgroup.

If a random-selection process is used, then all will have exactly as much chance as the others in their subgroup of being selected.

Obviously the numbers who apply from each group will vary from school to school. Some subgroups will have too many applicants, others not enough. So the percentages of people from a particular subgroup who get first choice will vary from school to school, being above 70% at schools that are under-requested and below it at schools that are over-requested.

Those not selected would be shifted by the computer to their second choice. They would go into the ethnic subgroup for that school. If that ethnic subgroup was "short" the person would automatically be selected. If that ethnic subgroup was "long" the parent would go to the subgroup at their third choice school.

If they were not selected there, they would be assigned by the district. About 5% of people are assigned to a school other than one of the three on their list.

All parents are notified in writing of their assignment in the late spring. (Some districts ask for parent confirmation of the assignment by postcard or phone. Some districts call those who do not respond. Some districts even do a reconfirmation process in the summer.)

All choice plans have appeal processes.

Most choice plans have a "waiting list" process, in which the people who do not get their desired choice can be wait-listed and given a preference over, for example, new entrants to the district.

Most "waiting list" transfers are made only if (a) the transfer helps the ethnic balance of the sending school and does not negatively affect the ethnic balance of the receiving school, or, (b) it helps the ethnic balance of the receiving school and does not negatively affect the ethnic balance of the sending school, or (c) it has no negative impact on either school.

In the above example, ethnicity was the primary factor used to create subgroups. Other PREFERENCE FACTORS can be used to create

subgroups, such as but not limited to:

residence (either zone or absolute distance)  
other special program needs,  
sibling preference,  
time on wait list,  
promptness (first come first served)

For example, under the policies being proposed by the SOTF, the people exercising the "family linkage preference" would move to the front of the list within each ethnic subgroup.

A PREFERENCE FACTOR can be utilized:

before other criteria are used,  
within subgroups formed by other factors, putting that  
preference at the start of the list for that  
subgroup,  
as wait list factors but not initial assignment factors,  
after other criteria are used,  
and so on.

If there is interest in proceeding to the design phase, these are some of the matters that would have to be addressed.