Frequently Asked Question – How is Projected Enrolment Calculated

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The Board's Planning Staff utilize a variety of information in developing enrolment projections for pupil accommodation reviews (PARs), capital planning, and attendance boundary/program related studies.

The primary method used to project school-by-school enrolment is termed a 'cohort retention methodology'. This methodology analyses the historical grade-to-grade movement of students by program, predicting future enrolment based on a school's current enrolment and historical trends.

The 'cohort retention methodology' incorporates a number of factors, including:

- program choice - students who choose to register in a new program at a particular point (for example, Middle French Immersion in Grade 4 or Gifted in Grade 5);

- program attrition - students who choose to transfer out of a particular program (for example, movement from Early French Immersion to English);

- school choice - students who choose to attend a school other than that to which they are designated (i.e., the approval of a student transfer);

- market share - historical changes in the number of students who choose to enroll in the OCDSB or who choose to attend a coterminous Board school or a private school;

- on-going new residential development – for example, the construction of new homes or apartment units at a rate which is consistent with historical figures for the area and resulting student yields; and

- historical migration and residential unit occupancy change – cohort retention captures year to year changes in the occupancy of existing residential units within a school's attendance area and the resulting enrolment impact.

In addition to examining a school's grade-by-grade retention history, staff utilizes other data to project future enrolment.

Junior and Senior Kindergarten enrolments are projected using a variety of data. Historical trends in enrolment and registrations are examined. Trends in the number of births and the level of migration in the 0-4 age group within a school's local area are also significant indicators of future enrolment patterns.

New changes that may impact a school's projected enrolment and its historical retention trends are also addressed outside of the traditional cohort retention methodology. These types of changes might include revisions to Board programming or a particular school's program offering, policy changes at the Board or provincial level, the opening of a new coterminous Board school, etc. – in short, any new relevant information that might alter reliance on historical data or trends.

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During the annual enrolment projection process, on-going discussions take place with school Principals who may be able to provide local knowledge of a school or a community's particular circumstance.

As indicated above, anticipated growth from on-going residential development is captured in a school's historical retention rates. In an area experiencing new family-oriented residential development that is significantly higher than what has occurred in the past, a different methodology is applied. An estimate of the number of houses to be constructed is determined and a projected pupil yield per new residential unit is applied. This methodology is only used in cases where the development has yet to begin and is of a significant size.

A cohort retention methodology is generally more accurate in the short to medium term (one to five years). In projecting longer-term enrolment, staff also utilizes historical school-age population data from the Census. This data is important in order to account for larger demographic trends taking place. Planning staff receive development circulations from the City of Ottawa and are an active participant in community design plan processes. This information assists in the identification of larger factors, including significant new development or re-development areas, which may affect future enrolments.

At times a participation rate methodology may be utilized, in whole or in part to project enrolment. This method of forecasting enrolment focuses on the number of students that enrol at OCDSB schools within an attendance area in comparison to the school-age population resident. This type of methodology is best used for longer-term, broad-based forecasting. It is not as efficient in projecting detailed grade by grade enrolment. This is especially true for our jurisdiction, given the amount of choice available to parents and students, both within the OCDSB and between school boards.