

First Nations Schools of Choice (SoC) Policy

Background

Prior to the *School Act* changes relating to First Nations Schools of Choice, Boards of Education (Boards) set catchment areas for all schools in their district. While some Boards entered into agreements with First Nations relating to a choice of schools, this practice was not consistent across the province.

Policy Changes

The new First Nations Schools of Choice provisions in the *School Act* set out a process for First Nations to choose which school First Nation students who live on-reserve, self-governing First Nation lands or Treaty lands will attend. These provisions ensure that a First Nation can designate an elementary, middle school (where applicable), and secondary school for their students. First Nations will determine which schools the First Nation's students living on-reserve, self-governing First Nation lands or Treaty lands will attend through their own internal processes. If a First Nation parent/caregiver wishes to have their child enrolled at a different program or school (e.g. specialty programs) than the school(s) of choice, the existing enrolment provisions apply.

First Nation students who live on-reserve or on Treaty lands have priority to attend the public school designated by their First Nation.

The school must be designated by the earliest date of enrolment set by the Board, typically the pre-enrolment or kindergarten enrolment date. Identifying the chosen school on or before the earliest date enables Boards to prioritize the First Nations' choice. The designation of a school of choice will continue unless changed by the First Nation.

If a First Nation has students that are ordinarily resident on-reserve, Treaty lands, or self-governing lands and are boarded outside of that community to attend public school, the First Nation may designate a school within the district where those students are boarded.

This is an optional choice for First Nations. Other agreements between schools, First Nations, or parents/guardians of First Nations students respecting school choice are not affected by this amendment.

Considerations

- In some areas of the province, there may not be reasonable choices of different schools.
- If there is not a date of enrolment in a district, the First Nation and Board should agree upon a date by which the First Nation will designate the school of choice.



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