

Parental/Guardian Choice - Statement of Philosophy

The Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS) Board recognizes that public schools are responsible for providing the best possible education for all students. The Board also realizes that students learn in different ways. Further, the Board recognizes that some students and their parents/guardians are especially interested in a particular emphasis in their education, and that when students' interests and educational needs are met, their enthusiasm for learning increases.

In order to meet these special interests the GRPS has provided opportunities for choice. With these choice options, the GRPS affirms the importance of parental/ guardian involvement in the education of their children and also recognizes that a declared interest in a particular school often has a positive influence on the child's academic achievement.

Theme Schools

In an effort to meet students' varying needs and interests, the Board may establish and maintain theme schools within the District. These are schools that follow a distinctive curriculum based on a special theme or method of instruction, encourage voluntary selection by the student and parent/guardian, and may, when appropriate, provide access to students outside of the District. Theme schools should also promote and encourage a diverse student population.

While affirming opportunity for choice of a theme school, the GRPS Board also recognizes that there are limits to that choice. Along with maintaining the theme schools, the Board must give attention to safeguarding and/or enriching the programs at attendance area schools . The rules and regulations for this policy should reflect a balance between individual choice and community values.

To that end:

1. New theme schools will be considered when applications for an existing school substantially exceed available seats or when there is a significant interest in a new program.
2. The establishment of a theme school and the theme/focus/method of the school must be approved by the Board of Education.

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3. Theme schools must reflect a distinctive school focus of the curriculum or pedagogy that can be identified as a specialty and that is not in conflict with existing Board policies. The curriculum shall be evaluated by the Superintendent annually.
4. The Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS) Board of Education encourages the formation and continuation of theme schools that meet the following conditions.
 - a. There are GRPS administrators and/or teachers who are advocates for the theme school.
 - b. There is sufficient parent/guardian and/or community support for the establishment of the school.
 - c. The theme school's curriculum includes and is consistent with District benchmarks and the State of Michigan curriculum.

Approved: June 29, 2009

LEGAL REF: MCL 380.10, 380.11a,