

METRO & STATE



Tribune photo by Heather Stone

Shenika Burton, (left, rear) who transferred to Kellogg Elementary under No Child Left Behind, reads with Bryanna Vega.

Most allowed to transfer stay in struggling schools

By Ana Beatriz Cholo
Tribune staff reporter

Less than half of the Chicago Public Schools students who were given a chance to switch schools under the federal No Child Left Behind program actually did so during the second year of the act's implementation, officials said Friday.

The latest numbers show that 481 students opted to move out of their academically troubled schools into one of 1,097 spots available at 35 elementary schools and three high schools. The school district had received more than 19,246 applications for those spots.

Officials said that despite

the high demand, the spots not taken will remain vacant.

Schools chief Arne Duncan said he is unwilling to have a second lottery or create a waiting list. He says moving a student around after the school year has begun hurts the child and the receiving school.

At Blaine Elementary, 1420 W. Grace St., where parents in the neighborhood vie for spots at the school's tuition-based preschool program, only seven out of the 20 students granted transfers actually enrolled.

"I'm disappointed," said assistant principal James Byrne. "There was room for 20 kids and we expected 20 kids."

Considered to be the heart of the federal law, the choice provision has been troublesome

not only for Chicago but for many other school districts.

Even though the law gives parents the right to move their children out of poorly performing schools, officials say finding enough space at high-performing schools is next to impossible.

Some school principals were surprised that so many students did not transfer. They noted that some parents had complained that transportation hassles made it difficult to take advantage of the opportunity.

During two days of open houses at Disney Magnet School last month, principal Kathleen Hagstrom met hundreds of parents desperate to enroll their children—some

willing to drive as much as 17 miles to the school at 4140 N. Marine Drive.

Disney had the highest number of applications of any receiving school, 3,287. But as of Friday, only 22 out of the 42 students who were allowed to transfer were enrolled there.

At Kellogg Elementary School, 9241 S. Leavitt St., 699 parents applied but there was only room for 13 students. As of Friday, only eight had registered.

Sharon Herron said she is thrilled her 10-year-old son got into Kellogg—even though he will have a 45-minute trip south from 49th Street.

Her three other children, however, were denied the chance to transfer.