

Florida Department of Education 2024-2025

Wakulla County School District Controlled Open Enrollment Plan

Application Process:

Parents access schools of choice through an application process during the open enrollment period between January 6 and March 14. The application for controlled open enrollment can be obtained from the Wakulla County School District Website for printing. Parents without computer access may seek assistance from the District Office. Submitting an application does not guarantee that the student will be approved to transfer to the requested school. The application is completed and signed by the parent/guardian and submitted to Instructional Services via fax or email. All application received after the deadline will be processed in accordance with the procedures below.

Applications are required in any one of the following circumstances:

- The request is for initial entry of a student in a school of choice.
- A student is attending a school of choice that is impacted by boundary changes, and the parents want their child to remain at the school the student was previously approved to attend through the school choice process.
- There is a change of home address, which places the student in a different neighborhood school, and the parents want their child to remain at the school for the remainder of the current school year. In these cases, approval is limited to the remainder of the current school year.
- The parents want to transfer their child from one school of choice to another school of choice.
- A student in good standing withdraws from an approved school of choice, and the parents want their child to reenter the school of choice.
- A student withdraws from a course of study that was the reason for attending the school of choice, and the parents want their child to remain at the school of choice for the remainder of the current school year.
- A school is severely overcrowded, there are no alternatives for relief, and the Superintendent has deemed that the impact of school choice must be reconsidered.
- A parent who resides in another district is requesting attendance at a Wakulla County school. In such cases, parents must reapply annually.

Process for Declaring School Preference:

- School Choice Open Enrollment Applications are accepted for all district schools open to Choice. To be open to Choice, a school must be below 90% capacity.
- Applications are accepted outside the open enrollment period ONLY when a school choice request is based on a documented hardship or other eligible situation.
- School choices are publicized primarily through the district website, including the following information:
 - i. School program information
 - ii. School location/zoning maps
 - iii. Transportation information

Placement of Siblings and Mitigating Factors

Sibling Placement

The district prioritizes the placement of siblings in the same school whenever possible. Special consideration is given to:

- Siblings of exceptional education students (ESE) placed at the school through School Choice or Florida Empowerment Scholarship (formerly McKay Scholarship).
- Siblings of students already approved for school choice and in good standing.
- Siblings attending co-located schools (e.g. elementary and middle schools adjacent to each other).

Mitigating Factors

Instructional Services staff will assist in the assignment process and will make reasonable efforts to provide an assignment that is appropriate for the individual circumstances.

Preferential treatment is given to:

- Homeless students as defined in School Board Policy 5.141
- Children who move due to a court-ordered change in custody due to separation or divorce, or the serious illness or death of a custodial parent
- Students residing in the school district
- Students in foster care
- Dependent children of active-duty military personnel
- School assignment issues that arise due to custody issues, legal situations, and administrative circumstances

Lottery Procedure to Determine Student Assignment:

After the close of the application period and the determination of capacity at each school, the District shall conduct a lottery as described below and then process the application according to the random numbers assigned.

Applications shall be grouped accordingly:

A. Phase 1

Applicants in this phase shall reside in the District and also qualify for preferential treatment in at least one of the following ways:

1. Dependent children of active duty military personnel whose move resulted from military orders;
2. Children who have been relocated due to a foster care placement in a different school zone.

3. Children who move due to a court-ordered change in custody due to separation or divorce, or the serious illness or death of a custodial parent/legal guardian.
4. A student whose parent is transferred or is pending transfer to a military installation within the District while on active military duty pursuant to an official military order. The student and/or parent must submit the official military order to the District in order to qualify for preferential treatment.
5. School District employee that works full-time.

B. Phase 2

Applicants included in this phase reside in the District but are entitled to no other preferential treatment.

C. Phase 3

Applicants included in this phase do not reside in the District but are entitled to preferential treatment in at least one of the following ways:

1. Dependent children of active duty military personnel whose move resulted from military orders.
2. children who have been relocated due to a foster care placement in a different school zone;
3. children who move due to a court-ordered change in custody due to separation or divorce, or the serious illness or death of a custodial parent/legal guardian;
4. School District employee that work full-time.

D. Phase 4

Applicants included in this phase are not entitled to preferential treatment under State law.

Lottery

The lottery will be conducted by two (2) or more staff members designated by the Superintendent.

The lottery involves the assignment of a random number to each applicant (siblings shall be paired unless requested otherwise). Separate lotteries will be conducted for applicants in Phases 1 through 4. Random numbers will be selected, and the applications in each phase shall be placed in order of their selection.

Review of Applications

Once the application period ends and the lottery has been conducted, the District will review all fully completed applications received by the application deadline. Consideration of applications will be based on the current capacity of each public school in the District. (See definition of "capacity" above). Only those schools identified in the application will be considered by the District.

A. Phase 1: Applicants Residing in the District Entitled to Additional Preferential Treatment

The District will review the Phase 1 applications in the order assigned by means of the lottery and will attempt to honor the ranked choices of each applicant.

Approved applicants will be notified in writing (via email and Focus Parent Portal alerts) and shall have ten (10) school days to enroll at their chosen school. If the last day for enrollment falls on a day that the school office is not open for business, the deadline shall be extended to the next day that the school office is open for business.

If, after submitting an application to participate in the District's controlled open enrollment program and before a decision is made about the application, a student is suspended or expelled, placed on an IEP, assigned to a Department of Juvenile Justice program, or subject to any alternate assignment as a result of his/her behavior, within ten (10) days the parent shall notify the District by submitting documentation related to this change in the student's status. Failure to do so shall constitute grounds for revocation of approval to enroll, if given, under this policy.

Failure to enroll by the deadline identified in the written notification shall result in an automatic revocation of the District's approval of the application. Once the deadline passes for students to enroll at their chosen school, if any capacity remains, the District will begin contacting applicants on the initial lottery list and late applicants regarding enrollment opportunities. Applicants who have their approval revoked must submit a new application.

If capacity is reached before all applications can be reviewed and enrollment requests fulfilled, the remaining Phase 1 applications will remain on the lottery list until two (2) weeks before the first day of school.

B. Phase 2: Applicants Residing in the District

If capacity is available after Phase 1, the District will process applications from applicants residing in the District not entitled to additional preferential treatment.

The District will review the Phase 2 applications in the order assigned by means of the lottery and will attempt to honor the ranked choices of each applicant.

This process will continue until the choices listed on each fully completed application have been honored or until all available classroom slots have been filled.

The approved applicants will be notified in writing (via email and Focus Parent Portal alerts) and shall have ten (10) calendar days to enroll at the school where s/he have been offered the opportunity to enroll. If the last day for enrollment falls on a day that the school office is not open for business, the deadline shall be extended to the next day that the school office is open for business.

If, after submitting an application to participate in the District's controlled open enrollment program and before a decision is made about the application, a student is suspended or expelled, placed on an IEP, assigned to a Department of Juvenile Justice program, or subject to any alternate assignment as a result of his/her behavior, within ten (10) days the parent shall notify the District by submitting documentation related to this change in the

student's status. Failure to do so shall constitute grounds for revocation of approval to enroll, if given, under this policy.

Failure to enroll by the deadline identified in the written notification shall result in an automatic revocation of the District's approval of the application. Once the deadline passes for students to enroll at their chosen school, if any capacity remains, the District will begin contacting applicants on the initial lottery list and late applicants regarding enrollment opportunities. Applicants who have their approval revoked must submit a new application.

If capacity is reached before all applications can be reviewed and enrollment requests fulfilled, the remaining Phase 2 applications will remain on the lottery list until two (2) weeks before the first day of school.

C. Phase 3: Applicants Residing Outside the District Entitled to Preferential Treatment

If capacity is available after Phases 1 and 2, the District will process applications from applicants residing outside the District who are afforded preferential treatment as set forth above.

The District will review the Phase 3 applications in the order assigned by means of the lottery and will attempt to honor the ranked choices of each applicant.

This process will continue until the choices listed on each fully completed application have been honored or until all available classroom slots have been filled.

The approved applicants will be notified in writing (via email and Focus Parent Portal alerts) and shall have ten (10) calendar days to enroll at their chosen school. If the last day for enrollment falls on a day that the school office is not open for business, the deadline shall be extended to the next day that the school office is open for business.

If, after submitting an application to participate in the District's controlled open enrollment program and before a decision is made about the application, a student is suspended or expelled, placed on an IEP, assigned to a Department of Juvenile Justice program, or subject to any alternate assignment as a result of his/her behavior, within ten (10) days the parent shall notify the District by submitting documentation related to this change in the student's status. Failure to do so shall constitute grounds for revocation of approval to enroll, if given, under this policy.

Failure to enroll by the deadline identified in the written notification shall result in an automatic revocation of the District's approval of the application. Once the deadline passes for students to enroll at their chosen school, if any capacity remains, the District will begin contacting applicants on the initial lottery list and late applicants regarding enrollment opportunities.

Applicants who have their approval revoked must submit a new application.

If capacity is reached before all applications can be reviewed and enrollment requests fulfilled, the remaining Phase 3 applications will remain on the lottery list until two (2) weeks before the first day of school.

D. Phase 4: All Remaining Applicants Not Entitled to Preferential Treatment

If capacity is available after Phases 1 through 3, the District will process applications from applicants residing outside the District not entitled to preferential treatment.

The District will review the Phase 4 applications in the order assigned by means of the lottery and will attempt to honor the ranked choices of each applicant.

This process will continue until the choices listed on each fully completed application have been honored or until all available classroom slots have been filled.

The approved applicants will be notified in writing (via email and Focus Parent Portal alerts) and shall have ten (10) calendar days to enroll at their chosen school. If the last day for enrollment falls on a day that the school office is not open for business, the deadline shall be extended to the next day that the school office is open for business.

If, after submitting an application to participate in the District's controlled open enrollment program and before a decision is made about the application, a student is suspended or expelled, placed on an IEP, assigned to a Department of Juvenile Justice program, or subject to any alternate assignment as a result of his/her behavior, within ten (10) days the parent shall notify the District by submitting documentation related to this change in the student's status. Failure to do so shall constitute grounds for revocation of approval to enroll, if given, under this policy.

Failure to enroll by the deadline identified in the written notification shall result in an automatic revocation of the District's approval of the application. Once the deadline passes for students to enroll at their chosen school, if any capacity remains, the District will begin contacting applicants on the initial lottery list and late applicants regarding enrollment opportunities.

If capacity is reached before all applications can be reviewed and enrollment requests fulfilled, the remaining Phase 4 applications will remain on the lottery list until two (2) weeks before the first day of school.

Appeals Process for Hardship Cases:

Parents of students who applied during controlled open enrollment and were not approved for placement in a school of choice may request an appeal review based on a documented hardship situation within 3 days of receiving notice of denial. A written appeal describing the hardship must be submitted via email to the Instructional Services Office. The appeal committee will review all submitted documentation. The results of this appeal are considered final.

Hardships or statutory provisions may affect Choice transfers to schools in all status categories. These provisions include documented medical, emotional, psychological, and legal reasons:

- Availability of day care will not be considered as a basis for hardship beyond the elementary level.
- If a hardship appeal is submitted for medical reasons, including psychiatric, the parent or guardian must submit a Medical Hardship Documentation and Release of Records form, including a physician's statement describing the student's medical condition and specific medical reasons justifying the request.

- If a hardship appeal is submitted for legal reasons, the parent or guardian must submit documentation of the legal hardship.
- Hardship appeals based on course availability will not be considered unless the requested program was stated in the original application and is not available at the zoned school, and the requested school has space available in the core academic classes and the requested program.

Applications Filed After the Advertised Deadline

Applications received after the advertised deadline and prior to July 1st, will be reviewed and considered after processing all applications in Phases 1 through 4, as well as the deadline for appeals from the original lottery. Subsequent lotteries will be held for applicants on the initial lottery list and late applicants in March, May, and July for students to be placed in a school.

Students Residing in the District

Students residing in the District will not be displaced by a student from another school district seeking enrollment under the District's controlled open enrollment program.

Completion of Highest Grade Level

A student who enrolls in the District through the District's controlled open enrollment program may remain at his/her current school until completion of the highest grade at the school.

After completing the highest grade at the school, a student who resides in another school district and wants to transition to the next level of the academic program in this District must reapply for enrollment through the controlled open enrollment program.

After completing the highest grade at the school, a student who resides in the District and wants to transition to the next level of the academic program at a school other than the one to which s/he would be assigned in accordance with Policy 5.20 – *Student Assignment* must reapply for enrollment at his/her preferred school through the controlled open enrollment program.

Maintaining Appropriate Socioeconomic, Demographic, and Racial Balance

Given our diverse society and the importance of preparing students for education, work, and citizenship, the Board is committed to providing students with equal educational opportunities, promoting educational diversity in the District, and providing students with the educational benefits of a diverse student body. To that end, should a concern arise regarding socioeconomic, demographic, or racial balance in one or more of the District's schools, the Superintendent shall consult with legal counsel to determine the appropriate steps that should be taken, including, but not limited to, any necessary policy revisions and other actions necessary to comply with Florida and Federal law. The Superintendent shall then make the appropriate recommendations to the Board.

Availability of Transportation:

The parent/guardian is responsible for the transportation of a student approved to attend a school of choice through the controlled open enrollment process.

Socioeconomic, Demographic, and Racial Balance:

- School choice data is maintained and analyzed to ensure that school assignments do not disproportionately impact the district's socioeconomic, demographic, or racial balance.
- The Superintendent's staff regularly reviews these data, and adjustments to the open enrollment plan may be recommended if imbalances are identified.