



## **CONTROLLED OPEN ENROLLMENT PLAN**

Florida Statute 1002.31 states that beginning with the 2017-2018 school year, each district school board shall allow a parent from any school district in the state whose child is not subject to a current expulsion or suspension to enroll his or her child in and transport his or her child to any public school that has not reached capacity in the district, subject to the maximum class size.

### **Capacity**

Capacity is determined based on Florida Inventory of School Houses (FISH) Permanent Stations and school enrollment. Once a school meets or exceeds 90% of stated capacity, it is closed to controlled open enrollment to allow for students who move into the school's transportation zone.

### **Choice Exclusions**

This Controlled Open Enrollment Plan does not govern charter, magnet, or alternative schools. These schools do not designate attendance or transportation zones. Each of these schools has admissions criteria to determine enrollment along with program capacity.

Controlled Open Enrollment options are not available for Pre-K students or specific ESE programs designated by the district to serve students from multiple schools.

### **Process for Declaring School Preference**

Controlled open enrollment is a voluntary process, and parents are not required to participate. The application is relatively simple and requires basic address and profile information on the parent and child and the names of the zoned, attending, and requested school. The district will accept and consider applications where available capacity exists at the requested school. Submitting an application does not guarantee the student will be approved to transfer to the requested school.

The following are considerations for approving an application when enrollment is at or exceeding available capacity.

*Children of School District Employees* – Based on available capacity, school district and instructional personnel may place their children in the school where they are employed or nearest their employment.

*Sibling* – An application may be approved for a student if a sibling currently attends the requested school. Siblings of voluntary prekindergarten students may not be eligible to enroll if a school is at capacity. A sibling is defined as two or more students in the same family unit and in the same



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residence.

*Unique Condition (all grades)* – An application may be approved when a unique or unexpected event or condition has led to a situation where the student’s current zoned placement creates a severe hardship on the student and/or family. **Unique Conditions may include foster care placement, court ordered change in custody or hardship cases that affect the student’s health, safety and/or welfare.**

*Program/Curriculum* – An application may be approved for a student to participate in an academic program that is not available at the student’s zoned school. In the event the student ceases to be enrolled in the curriculum for which the approval is granted, the student may be required to return to the zoned school.

*Active Duty Military* – An application may be approved if a student is the dependent child of active duty military personnel whose move resulted from military orders. (This does not include retired, civilian, and reserves.)

### **Current Choice Students**

Students who were enrolled at a school other than their zoned school during the previous school year may remain at their choice school until the student completes the highest grade level at the school. Beginning with the 2017-2018 school year, all students wishing to attend a school other than their zoned school must complete a Student Performance Contract. Returning students not submitting their signed Controlled Open Enrollment Performance Contract at the beginning of the school year may be considered for revocation of Controlled Open Enrollment attendance approval.

Students enrolled in their final year at a Choice school may not be eligible to attend a receiving school that is at capacity. If the receiving school is at capacity, the student must return to his/her zoned school unless the student meets one of the above considerations for approval. If the student meets one of the considerations for approval, he/she must apply to the requested school to begin the application process.

### **Process That Encourages Placement of Siblings within Same School**

Parents can indicate on the application whether or not a sibling is attending the requested school. If conditions exist that allow for the sibling to be placed at the requested school, these requests are routinely approved. The district makes every effort to keep siblings at the same school site. Siblings of voluntary prekindergarten students may not be eligible to enroll if a school is at capacity.

### **Lottery Procedure to Determine Student Assignment**

Since all completed applications are individually reviewed, the Walton County School District does not



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currently employ a lottery procedure.

### 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.

### Application Process

The application process for the Walton County School District controlled open enrollment plan is available at all schools and the district's website. Parents/Guardians may obtain an application at any school, on the district's website or through the district office. The district requires applications for the subsequent school year to be submitted **January 3 – March 15** in order to facilitate timely decisions and notifications. Applications are accepted outside the open enrollment period ONLY when a school has not reached capacity or a school choice request is based on a documented hardship or other eligible situation.

The key factor in granting or denying a request is the capacity of the school in terms of physical plant, available classrooms, staffing, and/or program availability. Each school has a designated individual responsible for implementing the controlled open enrollment plan and that individual responds directly to the applicant in writing via US Mail within two weeks, unless requested otherwise.

The process is initiated by the parent discussing their options with the designees at the zoned school and requested school. This process enables both the school and parent to determine the specific needs of the child and whether those needs can be addressed better at the zoned school or requested school. During this time the family can discuss siblings' needs as well, which are another consideration given to the approval of an application.

Any parent wishing to apply should complete the following steps:

1. The parent/guardian will complete the Walton County School District's Application for Attendance to request permission to attend an alternate school to the student's zoned school. This form is available on the district's website, at the district office, or at any WCSD school. The form must be completed in its entirety and must have attached any additional justifications/documentation and proof of residency at the time of submission to the school. The parent/guardian shall provide evidence of Active Duty Military status, if applicable. (This does not include retired, civilian, and reserves.)
2. The parent/guardian will complete a Controlled Open Enrollment Student Performance Contract available on the district's website, at the district office, or at any WCSD school. This



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completed and signed Student Performance Contract must be submitted by the parent/guardian to the Principal of the requested school at the time of application.

Once the school receives **ALL** of the required items, the request will be reviewed. The parent/guardian will be notified in writing via US Mail within two weeks or as soon as a decision is made. Due to this process, students may not be allowed to enroll in the choice school at the time the Application for Attendance is submitted. Once notification of acceptance has been received, the parent/guardian may enroll the student in the approved school.

School choice approvals (Applications for Attendance) remain in effect throughout the highest grade level at the school of choice, unless circumstances warrant a new application or the district rescinds school choice approval.

If an application is denied and has been submitted by the March 16 deadline, the parent is afforded the opportunity to file an appeal.

### **Appeal Process**

In the event that an Application for Attendance has been denied, the parent/legal guardian may contact the Superintendent's Office and request a review of the conditions of the Application. The Superintendent's Office will then contact the parent/legal guardian with the final recommendation.

### **Returning a Student to His/Her Home Zoned School**

Patterns of nonattendance, tardies, civility violations, transportation difficulties, or violation of the Student Code of Conduct/Controlled Open Enrollment Student Performance Contract will result in the student being returned to his/her zoned school.