



THE SCHOOL BOARD OF SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA

OFFICE OF CHOICE & CHARTER SCHOOLS

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STUDENT ASSIGNMENT, OPEN ENROLLMENT CONTROLLED CHOICE, NCLB AYP CHOICE WITH TRANSPORTATION AND REASSIGNMENT PROCEDURES

Student assignment in the district occurs under the direction of School Board Policy 5.20. The Office of Choice & Charter Schools in the Research, Assessment and Evaluation Department is responsible for carrying out activities related to this policy. Any student residing in the district shall be assigned to a school for attendance by the Superintendent or designee. All students, unless otherwise provided by school board rule or authorized by the School Board, shall attend the school serving their residential attendance zone. No student whose legal residence is outside the boundaries of the County may be enrolled in any district school without the approval of the School Board, except under the provisions of Florida Statutes. A student's residence is defined as the residence of his/her parent(s), legal guardian, or other such person as defined by any order issued by a court of competent jurisdiction.

A. Establishment of Official Residence

Acceptable forms for providing proof of residency include a/an:

- current electric or water bill showing the address and name of the parent/guardian,
- current lease agreement with parent/guardian name
- official letter from a company providing housing with a parent/guardian name, or
- sworn notarized statement from an owner/lessee of the home in which a parent/guardian is living, stating the names of all people residing at the address and a current utility bill with the owner/lessee's name

B. Falsification of Information

Fair and equitable implementation of student assignments depends on complete and honest compliance with process guidelines. Providing false or misleading information on registration forms and/or choice applications with the intent to circumvent established procedures or to unfairly gain advantage over other applicants is considered a serious offense. Upon information or belief that a student has been assigned to or enrolled in a particular school based upon inaccurate, false or misleading information, the school shall initiate an investigation of the student's assignment, possibly including an on-site visit to the address of record, execution of an affidavit certifying the information on the application or other processes to determine the legitimacy of a residence.

If false or misleading information results in an improper assignment, or if a student is found to be inappropriately attending a school without an approved transfer or reassignment, the student shall be withdrawn from the assigned

school and transferred (without regard to parental preference) to their districted school. Such involuntary transfer shall not preclude any other remedy provided by law and School Board policy. Refusal to attend the assigned school shall constitute violation of the compulsory school attendance law.

The parent or guardian of the student, or the student if of legal age, shall be responsible for any consequences affecting the eligibility of the student for participation in extra curricular activities pursuant to rules of the Florida High School Activities Association (FHSAA). The rules of the FHSAA shall prevail in any event.

C. General Assignment Process

All schools will have a geographic definition establishing their attendance area. All students residing within a particular attendance area shall attend that school unless the student

- receives a reassignment due to hardship or special circumstances
- is placed elsewhere to meet the requirements of an Individual Education Plan (IEP).
- is placed administratively into an alternative program; or
- receives an assignment through one of the choice processes.

Each spring, many students are eligible for a variety of placements for the following school year, including their district school, a choice school, a magnet school/program, or charter school. Parents of these students must make a final decision regarding their children's placement for the following school year by a date set by the Superintendent. Changes after that date, even to a student's districted school, shall necessitate following the reassignment process. All student assignments are made for an entire school year;

All students currently enrolled in their districted school and all students granted an assignment or reassignment through this document may continue to the highest grade level offered in their assigned school until:

- the student is returned to the school serving his/her attendance area for failure to abide by an agreement concerning attendance expectations, behavior expectations, and parent involvement/ cooperation.
- the student is enrolled in a program which requires a change of schools.
- the parent or guardian requests a change of assignment.
- the student is expelled.
- the student leaves that public school to attend a private school, charter school, or home education program.
- the student moves out of the Sarasota County school district or moves to another residence which would affect assignment.
- the School Board district school boundaries are changed; or
- it is determined that inaccurate, false, or misleading information resulted in an improper assignment.

Prior to making student assignments for each school year, the Superintendent will evaluate the enrollment limit for each school and grade level. This decision is based

upon factors including, but not limited to, the physical capacity of the school, seats set aside for special programs (i.e., ESOL and ESE students, magnet programs) utilization of cafeteria, and seats set aside for projected growth.

D. Student Registration Procedures

Registration may take place at individual schools and, occasionally, at other sites as established by the Superintendent. Registration periods shall be established for specific grade levels as discussed below;

- Students new to Sarasota County Schools, and those entering grades K,6, and 9, must verify their residence within the district in accordance with the guidelines as set forth in the district procedures.
- At the time of application and again at enrollment, kindergarten students, and all students new to the district, must verify their birth date in compliance with the state requirements for admission.
- Registration with the district will generate or reactivate a student number for each student. After registration, in order to be enrolled at the assigned school, the student must physically appear at the assigned school. Students who are new to the district must complete a registration form, present a certificate of immunization, and present verification of a physical examination.
- The name of the student shall be spelled exactly as it appears on the birth certificate or on a court order designating a name change.

When a student has been assigned to a school, it becomes the responsibility of the assigned school to complete the registration process and to schedule the student for classes. It will be the responsibility of the assigned school to report those students who failed to enroll in an assigned school. Neither principal or other school site personnel, nor the Office of Student Assignment may assign a student to a school except through established procedures.

E. Students who Reside Out of County

Any Florida student who resides outside of Sarasota County who wishes to attend the School District of Sarasota County must have permission from both the school district of their residence and the Sarasota County School District. The Superintendent or designee is authorized to give the permission and make a school assignment. All funding generated by the student's enrollment shall be reported and retained by the School District of Sarasota County for the for the provision of instruction, transportation and other services.

Students must make application to attend annually. Any student who receives permission prior to the start of the school year will be granted permission for the upcoming school year only. Any student receiving permission to attend after the first day of school will be granted permission to complete the current school year only. The student must maintain acceptable attendance, discipline, and academic requirements.

F. School Attendance in a Neighboring County

Students residing in Sarasota County who wish to attend a school in a neighboring county must first apply with the School District of Sarasota County by completing an Out-of-County Assignment Request form.

Students must have permission from both the School District of Sarasota County and the school district of the county where they wish to attend.

All funding generated by the student's enrollment shall be reported and retained by the county in which the student attends.

G. School Choice Options

Parents in Sarasota County Schools have many options to participate in their child's placement in schools and programs in the district. Some placements are made at individual schools and some through district-wide processes. All schools are responsible for helping to inform parents of the various options available to them and for assisting them with processes associated with selecting options. The district's school choice options and procedures for accessing the options are as follows:

Charter Schools—Charter schools have application and enrollment procedures in accordance with their charters. Parents must apply and receive an acceptance of their child in a charter school directly from the school. The parent is responsible for completing a reassignment form requesting a voluntary placement into the Charter School and submitting that to the Office of Choice & Charter Schools.

Controlled Open Enrollment (Regular Choice)—The extent to which controlled open enrollment will be utilized is determined each year by the School Board through a recommendation of the Superintendent. The district will make diligent effort to inform all parents of the options available to them in this choice option. To assist parents and guardians the district will use newsletters, media announcements, newspaper and radio advertising, church bulletins and announcements, civic and business organizations, childcare centers and other governmental agencies. Controlled Open Enrollment will be conducted over a three week period early in the calendar year for placements in the following academic year. A lottery process will be used to ensure equitable access for all parents. Parents complete an application for Regular Choice that is available in multiple locations. If they are awarded a choice assignment through the lottery process, parents **MUST** return a card acknowledging acceptance of the choice seat. **Failure to return that card will invalidate the assignment and the student will remain at their districted school. Parents must provide transportation for their children attending a school selected through the controlled open enrollment process.**

Magnet Schools and Programs—The district currently has two magnet schools and several magnet programs available to parents. Bay Haven Elementary School and Suncoast Polytechnical High School are the district's magnet schools and parents apply directly to those schools for admission. A reassignment form requesting a voluntary placement is completed upon admission to Bay Haven Elementary School and is submitted to Office of Choice & Charter Schools. Several magnet programs in the district are available to students after meeting admission eligibility criteria. Application to a magnet program occurs at the school housing the program. Students who choose to leave or are dismissed from the magnet program shall be returned to their districted school at the beginning of an

appropriate grading period unless an agreement is reached between the Principals of the sending and receiving schools. Magnet programs currently in existence in the district are the International Baccalaureate Program at Riverview High School, and the Visual and Performing Arts (VPA) programs at Booker High and Booker Middle Schools. **Transportation is provided to eligible students attending Suncoast Polytechnical High School and the VPA programs.**

McKay Scholarship—The district participates in the McKay Scholarship program that is offered through the Florida Department of Education. This program allows eligible students with special needs an opportunity to select a placement in a private school or selected public schools including charter schools. Parents access that option through the Florida Department of Education website. Information about that option is given to parents at schools as they are involved with the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) of their child in addition to being clearly referenced on the Sarasota County School Board website. A parent choosing to return their child from a private school into to the public school setting should call the Office of Choice & Charter Schools to learn of the options available to them. Public schools selected by a parent on McKay Scholarship must have the resources to fulfill the students IEP. **Any McKay Scholarship application for a public school placement MUST be received in the district prior to July 1 for placement in the academic year Parents may need to provide transportation for their children attending a school selected through the McKay Scholarship program.**

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) School Choice (AYP Choice with Transportation)—Students districted to schools that have failed to meet NCLB Annual Yearly Progress standards for three consecutive years are eligible to request a placement in another district school. The district will annually determine the schools eligible to receive those students based upon capacity and other criteria. Parents are notified of their options early in the calendar year during the Controlled Open Enrollment process and may make a selection for an alternative placement at that time. These applications do not become part of the lottery process. The placement of the student occurs in the next academic year. Students entering the district during the academic year are able to make a selection of alternative school if they are districted to one of the schools failing to meet NCLB standards. **Transportation is provided to eligible students attending a placement related to this legislative requirement until such time the districted school meets AYP standards.**

Options at Individual Schools—District schools all have special programs that could be of interest to parents and those programs are accessed through the individual schools. These programs are ONLY open to students enrolled at the school. Programs may have eligibility criteria for acceptance and some placements may need to be made through school district departments such as the Exceptional Student Education Department. Examples of these options include International Baccalaureate programs at elementary and middle school, gifted education programs, Advanced Placement classes, Exceptional Student Education cluster sites, dual enrollment programs, small learning communities and others. Program placements within schools do not require reassignments forms.

Virtual School --Florida Virtual School (FLVS)—FLVS is a fully-accredited public virtual school that offers free online courses to middle and high school students in Florida. Students have expanded access to courses for credit retrieval, acceleration or other personal needs. Students must be enrolled in a district school or in home school in order to take advantage of the FLVS option. Parents seeking this option for their student should work through the guidance counselors at their individual schools or call the Office of Choice & Charter Schools for assistance. **Virtual School—Elementary Option**—Beginning in the 2009-2010 academic year, parents of elementary age students may select a full time, online educational option for their students. Students must have been enrolled in a district school for an entire year to be eligible for this option.

F. Controlled Open Enrollment Choice (Regular Choice) Application periods

Application periods and timelines will be specified for each school year. Typically the application period is in February for placements in the next academic year. Parents are asked to apply at any district school or at the Office of Choice & Charter Schools. Assignments are made at the end of each application period. Parents receive notification of their new assignments with sufficient time to accept their assignment in accordance with this process. **PARENTS MUST RETURN AN ACCEPTANCE OF ASSIGNMENT NO LATER THAN MAY 1 OR THEIR CHOICE WILL BE INVALIDATED.**

G. NCLB Choice with Transportation Application periods

Parents of students in Title I schools are notified in January of the potential or actual status of the schools toward meeting NCLB guidelines. At that time, if those Title I schools are considered in need of improvement for three years, parents are offered the opportunity to transfer their child to one of several schools in the district. Processing of the applications occurs during the time in which Regular Choice is occurring. Placements occur at the beginning of the next school year. Parents are again notified of the status of the schools in summer after all testing has occurred. Previously granted transfers are honored and parents in schools that fall for the first time into a category that qualifies their students for transfer are notified of their options.

H. Assurance of equal opportunity for Choice Assignments

For each application period, all applications submitted shall be placed in a batch for processing. No application within the batch shall receive any advantage based on the date of its filing. The following guidelines are used:

- The first processing is used to place students requesting a transfer to another school related to NCLB Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) criteria. Each year the district will identify specific schools that may receive students transferring from Title 1 Schools identified “In Need of Improvement”. The lack of available seats in those specific schools WILL NOT restrict AYP students’ access to their selected school of choice.
- If seats for Regular Choice remain at a particular school/program, applications with a verified sibling priority shall be separated from each group and placed in random order by lottery. Siblings must be residing at the same address in order to qualify for this sibling priority. For purposes of this process, siblings are

defined as a brother, sister, half brother, half sister, step brother, or step sister. The sibling priority applies to children whose sibling is already assigned to the school and who will be attending during the year for which the application is made. If seats still remain available, a lottery shall be used to fill the remaining seats.

- Assignments shall be made from the list within each priority/preference group until all students are assigned or until no seats remain at the school and grade level. Applications within each batch shall then be sorted by second choice school and grade level. A similar process continues for these students' third choice.
- Students and parents shall be notified by mail of the action on the application. Students granted an assignment based on the controlled choice process **MUST** return a card within a specified time to accept the assignment. **Failure of a parent to return the acceptance card at the correct time will result in a revocation of the choice assignment.** Return of the card will also indicate that the parent is aware that the student must begin attending classes at the assigned school by no later than the third day of school; otherwise the student's assignment will be revoked and the seat filled by the next student on the waiting list.
- In the event that a student cannot be accommodated at his or her first, second, or third choice school, the student shall be assigned to the districted school and the student's name automatically will be placed into an eligibility pool for possible transfer to the first choice school, if and when seats in the particular grade become available. Waiting lists shall be maintained in order, beginning with the original assignment waiting list. As students are placed on the waiting list, they shall be placed behind all students having the same priority/preference level as themselves, and ahead of all students with lower priority/preference levels.
- At the beginning of the school year, the Supervisor of Choice and Charter Schools will eliminate the list of assigned students who have not enrolled in their assigned schools. These vacancies will be filled by applicants in the eligibility pool in accordance with factors described in this document. Students in the eligibility pool who decline an available seat shall have their name removed from the pool and the seat shall be offered to another student. This process will continue until all students are assigned or until no seats remain at the school and grade level.
- All waiting lists shall be cleared by the fifth day of school. Students may then change schools only based on a change of residence, participation in an alternative/special program requiring a change, or a reassignment.
- After proper notification of the public, the Superintendent may establish additional application periods, with all applications received during the time period being considered part of that batch.
- Each student may receive only one choice transfer for a particular school year; if there are extenuating circumstances possibly requiring an additional change in schools, the student may request a reassignment but no assurance is given that the request can always be granted.

Transportation

Transportation to identified Choice Schools will be provided ONLY to students attending Title I schools identified as “in need of improvement” for not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in accordance with NCLB regulations.

Transportation will continue to be provided to students attending magnet schools, students assigned by the district to special programs and to others in accordance with transportation service standards, Florida Statutes, and district policies set by the School Board.

TRANSPORTATION WILL NOT BE PROVIDED TO STUDENTS RECEIVING REGULAR CHOICE ASSIGNMENTS.

Administration of Choice Programs

Oversight of all Controlled Choice implementation strategies and actions shall be carried out by the Superintendent's staff who will monitor: (1) student assignments and reassignments and their affects on instructional capacity, diversity, and school profiles at all schools within the district; (2) the range of curriculum, instruction, and program offerings at each level; and (3) instructional quality and improved student performance for all students.

The Superintendent or designee may make periodic reports to the Board on the implementation of choice programs. The Superintendent or designee shall report to the Board each year the number of assignments to/from each school and any other pertinent data concerning the Choice program.

The authority for the assignment of all students resides with the Supervisor of Choice & Charter Schools who will make and coordinate assignments in accordance with these procedures. Principals and other school system personnel may not assign students to schools, with the sole exception of magnet programs. The Supervisor of Choice & Charter Schools will inform principals of all assignments made to their schools at the earliest possible time.

G. Change of Residence During the School Year

All students changing residences during the school year must complete the appropriate form to ensure that the school assignment is acceptable and must supply proof of the new address. The rules regarding change of residence are:

- All schools shall ensure that families are notified of the rules in this section.
- A student who moves within the districted school's attendance zone must remain at that school.
- A student moving out of the districted school's attendance zone may:
 - Attend the new districted school based upon proof of the new legal residence, or

- Remain at the current school for the remainder of the year through the reassignment process. Students who receive a reassignment to remain at the current school may choose to remain there through the highest grade level in the school unless they receive a placement elsewhere, or the school is determined to be over capacity, in which case the parent will be notified of the assignment options.

Transportation to the current school under reassignment is not provided for any students changing residences during the school year.

H. Reassignments

The Reassignment process is available to those students who meet special circumstances for attending a non-districted school. Reassignments may be processed in batches during specific periods set by the Superintendent or individually at other times. "Special Needs" reassignments for the following school year shall be accepted only through the last school day of each year. No reassignments, except those associated with address changes, will be processed during the two weeks prior to the first day of school. **Reassigned students must provide their own transportation.**

The following procedures guidelines shall govern all requests for reassignment:

- The reassignment form for special needs/hardships will be obtained from the Office of Choice & Charter Schools by the parent or guardian; once completed, the form will be forwarded to that office. Parents must submit documentation to substantiate the request for a reassignment. Applications received without appropriate documentation will be returned to the parent.
- Whenever the number of reassignment requests exceeds the available seats at any grade the district will prioritize the valid requests in the following order:
 - Sibling already at the requested school,
 - Severe extenuating circumstances related to the student's educational / emotional well-being,
 - Before/after school care at elementary
 - Continuing out-of-county students
 - New out-of-county students, including siblings.
- Consideration of reassignment requests may include the Supervisor of Student Assignment, principals, directors or content area specialists in the district.
- All requests for reassignments of self-contained and low-incidence ESE, ESOL, and other special needs students shall be reviewed by the appropriate district administrator to assure that necessary services are available at the requested school.

- Neither the Office of Choice & Charter Schools nor any school shall inform a student or parent of the likelihood of a reassignment approval until all necessary parties have been involved.
- No student shall be allowed to enroll at the requested school until approval is granted through these procedures.
- The parent or guardian of a reassigned student will be required to enter into an agreement with the receiving school concerning attendance/punctuality and behavior expectations, which may include parent involvement/ cooperation. A student may be returned to the school serving her/his attendance area if, after proper warning and offer of assistance, s/he exhibits poor attendance/punctuality, demonstrates a pattern of behavior in violation of the "Code of Student Conduct," and/or if the parent/guardian fails to cooperate to correct the problem. Students will be returned to their districted school at a time that is considerate of grading periods.
- For reassignments of high school students, the Florida High School Activities Association Regulations shall govern eligibility for athletics of all reassigned students.
- Individual School Board members and the Superintendent shall not be involved in decisions concerning a student's reassignment unless and until an appeal is brought before the School Board as indicated in the section on Appeals.

Reassignments may be granted, based upon the enrollment limits of the school, grade and applicable program, for the following reasons and under the stated conditions:

Special Needs/Severe Extenuating Circumstances -- Reassignments of K-12 students for severe extenuating conditions may be granted based upon written statements from parents/guardian and upon verification by the impacted schools, when appropriate. Transportation must be provided by the parent/guardian.

1. Supervision – Reassignment of elementary school students may be granted when pre- and/or post-school supervision is determined to be necessary by the parent/ guardian. Transportation must be provided by the parent/guardian. The district may approve a request by a parent or guardian who is a full time School Board employee for a transfer for his or her child, at any grade K-12, to attend the school to which the parent is assigned, provided such school offers instruction at the proper grade level and space is available. Transportation must be provided by the parent.
2. Moving between Districts during the school year – Students who move at any time during the school year may complete a reassignment to remain at their current school, or may register at their new districted school. If the student remains at the current school transportation must be provided by the parent.
3. Moving Into Attendance Area – A parent/guardian of a student who submits valid proof, including substantiation of the expected date of occupancy, that the student will be moving into an attendance area within 60 school days shall, upon request, have the student assigned to the school serving that attendance area. These reassignments

may be processed at any time, regardless of blackout periods. Valid proof shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, at least one of the following:

- a. An original or certified copy of legal papers certifying that custody of the student will be changed within 60 school days to someone living in the new attendance area;
- b. An original or certified copy of an approved lease or rental agreement showing occupancy to take place within 60 school days;
- c. An original or certified copy of an executed contract to build or purchase with an estimated occupancy date within 60 school days; or,

Note: The substantiating documentation must be attached to the request for reassignment. Dollar figures for such items as monthly payments or loan amounts may be blacked out on the original or certified copy attached to the reassignment form. The Office of Research, Assessment, and Evaluation may investigate the credibility of any substantiating documentation. The school shall track each request to determine the extent to which the student does move into the attendance zone within 60 school days; students found out of compliance with this section may be withdrawn from school immediately.

4. Health Reasons – Reassignment of a student may be made for valid health reasons. Detailed and compelling reasons based on physical health for reassigning a student from one specific school to another specific school must be certified in writing by the student's physician. The written communication from the physician must specify the reason(s) that the reassignment is necessary or desirable. Reasons based upon physical health must be certified in writing by appropriate medical staff assigned by the director of the Sarasota County Health Department. Transportation must be provided by the parent/guardian.
5. Out of District Students – A student from another Florida school district may be permitted to attend Sarasota County Schools when permission is granted by the Superintendent of his/her home school district, and by the Sarasota County Schools Superintendent's designee. Such designee shall determine the appropriate school to which any such student may be assigned.
6. Return to Districted School – This process allows students who have received an assignment or reassignment to request a return to the districted school, during the school year, based on extenuating circumstances. Students may return at the beginning of a school year, without submitting a reassignment form, by coordinating their intention with the appropriate guidance counselors by May 1st.
7. Volunteer – The parent of a student admitted into a magnet school/program, a charter school, or other voluntary program shall submit a reassignment form as official notice that the student will attend such a program.
8. Grandfathering – Following a redistricting, those affected students who by Board action are allowed to remain at the current school may be granted reassignment to remain. **Transportation for such students will be determined by Board action and there is NO assurance of continued service.**

I. Appeals Process

For Sarasota County residents for whom a school preference under controlled choice or reassignment is denied for a reason other than enrollment limit, the parent, guardian, or student of legal age shall have the right of appeal to an Appeals Board.

- The Appeals Board may be composed of four or five voting members:
 - The county health officer or his/her representative;
 - One or two representatives of elementary and secondary schools;
 - One or two district-level administrators; and,
 - One or two lay citizens, selected for each hearing by the Superintendent's designee.

- The Appeals Board shall be chaired by the Superintendent's designee who shall have no vote.

- A challenge of a student assignment may be made on the grounds that the Controlled Choice process was not followed or to appeal the denial of a reassignment. The following procedure shall be followed:
 - Each request for appeal must be in writing. Appeals based on denial of assignment under the Controlled Choice Plan may be accepted at any time; appeals based on denial of a reassignment request must be received by the Superintendent's designee within three working days after notification of denial.

 - Appeals will be heard only at scheduled times.

 - Additional information presented at an appeal hearing by the Superintendent's designee may necessitate the hearing being temporarily recessed for referral back to the principal(s) involved for reconsideration, pending completion of the hearing process.

 - A quorum shall be present for recommendations on all appeals. Three voting members shall constitute a quorum. An affirmative decision to recommend the appeal (reverse the denial) of any transfer or reassignment shall require a simple majority of those voting. If a member determines that he or she cannot cast an objective vote for any reason, that member must abstain from voting. If the abstention causes the council to fall below a quorum, the appeal shall be rescheduled to the next Appeals Board meeting.

 - Any recommendation of the Appeals Board which is adverse to the student may be appealed to the School Board. However, no appeal will be heard or considered by the School Board until the final recommendation of the Appeals Board is rendered.

 - The Supervisor of Student Assignment will notify the parent/guardian or student of the recommendation of the Appeals Board. When the recommendation is a denial of the request for reassignment, the parent/guardian or student shall be notified of their right to appeal to the School Board. Each request for appeal to the School Board must be in writing and must be received by the appropriate department within three working days after notification of the denial.