SCHOOL BOARD OF SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT, CONTROLLED CHOICE, AND REASSIGNMENT PROCEDURES

A. Establishment of Official Residence

The official residence of a minor student shall be the domicile of his/her parent, legal guardian, or legal custodian. Domicile is defined to mean one's residence at a particular place accompanied by a positive proof of intent to remain there. The residence of a student who is married or who is competent, independent, and above the age of majority shall be his/her domicile.

Legal custody of a minor student shall be documented by a court of competent jurisdiction or by placement by the Department of Children and Families or other such authorized agency. Any change of custody authorized pursuant to a general power of attorney approved prior to January 9, 2002, will be recognized by the school board until it is revoked by the parent or legal guardian who granted the power of attorney or until it is revoked by the resident who accepted the power of attorney.

B. Falsification of Information

Fair and equitable implementation of student assignments depends on sincere and honest compliance with process guidelines. Including false or misleading information on registration forms and choice applications with the intent to circumvent established procedures or to unfairly gain advantage over other applicants is considered a serious offense (See s. 837.06, F. S.). Upon information or belief that a student has been assigned to or enrolled in, or reassigned to, a particular school based upon inaccurate, false or misleading information, the school shall cause an investigation of the student's assignment, possibly including an on-site visit to the address of record. Following any investigation, if s/he is unable to make determination as to the accuracy of the application, s/he shall notify the student or her/his parent(s)/legal guardian of the discrepancies and shall require the execution of an affidavit certifying the information on the application.

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is found to be inappropriately attending a school without an approved transfer or reassignment, the student shall be withdrawn from the assigned school and transferred (without regard to parental preference) to their districted school.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.

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 continue to have a geographic definition establishing their attendance area. All students residing within a particular attendance area shall attend that school unless (a) the student receives a reassignment; (b) the student is placed elsewhere by means of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or administratively into an alternative program; or (c) the student receives an assignment through the controlled choice process.

Each spring, many students are eligible for a variety of placements for the following school year, including the district school, a choice school, a magnet school/program, or others. 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. All student assignments are for an entire school year; changes after that date, even to a student’s districted school, shall necessitate the reassignment process.

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:

1. 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.
2. The student is enrolled in a program which requires a change of schools.
3. The parent or guardian requests a change of assignment.
4. The student is expelled.
5. The student leaves that public school to attend a private school, charter school, or home education program.
6. The student moves out of the Sarasota County school district or moves to another residence which would affect assignment.
7. The School Board redistricts and district school boundaries are changed; or
8. It is determined that inaccurate, false, or misleading information resulted in an improper assignment.

If a student wishes to re-enroll after any of events (1) – (8) above, or if the student is new to the district, the student has the right to attend the districted school, unless there are programmatic requirements for the student to attend another school. The student may request assignment to a magnet school; the student may be assigned through the Controlled Choice process, if available; or the student may receive a reassignment pursuant to section G, below.
Prior to making student assignments for each school year, the Superintendent will set 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.

Students or parents seeking an official appeal concerning student assignment shall follow the procedures as set forth in section I of this document.

D. Student Registration Procedures

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

(1) 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.

(2) 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.

(3) 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.

(4) 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. No principal or other school site personnel, nor the Office of Research, Assessment, and Evaluation, may assign a student to a school except through these procedures.
E. **Magnet Schools**

The district provides a number of regional or district-wide special programs of academic emphasis. Parents of students applying for assignment to a magnet school must comply with all existing application procedures, including any eligibility criteria.

Students accepted into a magnet school/program outside of their district school shall submit a Reassignment Form, requesting a "Volunteer" placement, by the Spring date determined by the Superintendent. At all other times, including during the school year, a current student may only receive a magnet assignment if the student meets the magnet eligibility requirements, and (a) the parent presents a documented "special needs/hardship", and (b) both principals agree/sign off. Exceptions will include:

- Bay Haven which may accept students at any time without the above criteria
- Pine View which does not accept students past the deadline set by the Superintendent
- Regional full-time gifted magnet programs
- Other situations as determined by the appropriate Director.

New students to the county may receive a magnet assignment at the time of initial entry by meeting only eligibility criteria; the only exception is Pine View which does not accept students past the deadline set by the Superintendent.

Students who either choose to leave the magnet or are dismissed from the magnet by the principal, shall return to the districted school at the beginning of the appropriate grading period unless

(a) The student is granted an assignment elsewhere, or

(b) The principals of the sending and receiving schools agree for the student to remain reassigned to the current school.

F. **Controlled Choice/ NCLB Choice Options**

Controlled Choice is a student assignment methodology which allows parents of all public school students the opportunity to express preferences from a range of schools offering educational program options for their children and which promotes stability of assignments for students. The extent to which school choice will be utilized shall be determined each year by the School Board, after a recommendation by the Superintendent of seat availability and identified Choice Options for students of Title 1 schools not meeting AYP. An assignment through Controlled Choice may be available, according to a schedule adopted by the Superintendent, to all students residing in Sarasota County; middle and high school students residing in Englewood shall have the option of (a) attending the appropriate Charlotte County school, according to the extant inter-district agreement, or (b) exercising choice options contained in this document.

(1) Informed Parental Choice
The district realizes parents do not always have information necessary to make informed choices. To assist parents and guardians the district will utilize newsletters, media announcements, newspaper and radio advertising, church bulletins and announcements, civic and business organizations, childcare centers, and other governmental agencies.

The district shall print instructions and forms in English, Spanish, and other languages, as appropriate, and will arrange for employees and/or volunteers who speak these languages to assist parents who do not speak English, as needed.

All schools shall maintain materials including, but not limited to, the following:

- Controlled Choice Description and Regulations
- Information Regarding Special Programs and Magnet Schools
- Transportation Information
- Information on Each Choice School
- No Child Left Behind, Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) Choice Options

(2) Controlled Choice Application Periods

Application periods and timeline will be specified for each school year. During these times, parents of students who wish to apply for a Controlled Choice or Choice for Title 1 schools not meeting AYP assignment will be required to apply at any district school or at the Office of Research, Assessment and Evaluation. Assignments will be made at the end of each application period. Parents will receive notification of their new assignments within six weeks of the end of the application period during which they apply.

If school choice is available, applications submitted for students entering the district after school starts each year will be processed immediately. These assignments will be made on a first come, first served basis so students can be assigned to schools as quickly as possible. It is the goal of the district to assign these students to schools the day after their initial application; the district is not obligated to transport new students to the county to their choice—school. Transportation WILL be provided to all students attending Title I schools identified as “in need of improvement” for not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for two consecutive years.

(3) Batch Assignments

For each application period, all applications submitted shall be placed in that batch for processing. No application within the batch shall receive any advantage based on the date of its filing. Assignments for each batch shall be made in the following order.

(a) Applications shall be sorted by first choice school and grade level.

(b) All students requesting assignment to their current school shall be assigned to that school unless an exceptional student education or
other programmatic decision requires their attendance elsewhere, or unless they have been placed at a magnet school/program. Students in special programs (i.e., ESE, Gifted) will be assigned according to the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process, the availability of programs, and school enrollment limit.

[Note: The highest choice priority, Priority One: will be for all students attending Title I schools identified as “In need of improvement” for not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for two consecutive years and Priority Two: for reassigned students and for students who, after moving out of their districted school's attendance zones, have remained at that school for the remainder of that school year. The lack of seats available WILL NOT restrict AYP students’ access to their identified school of choice.

(c) If seats 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.

(NOTE: At the elementary level, students who qualify for both a sibling priority and a proximity priority, will be assigned first, followed by students with only a sibling priority, and then followed by students with only a proximity priority.)

(d) If seats still remain available, applications with a verified proximity priority shall be separated from each group and placed in random order by lottery. A two-mile walk zone shall be established around each choice school. The two mile walk zone is determined using the most direct pedestrian route not classified "hazardous walking conditions" as defined in Chapter 234, F.S., or as defined by board Methods will be eligible for transportation. Students residing in the areas specifically deemed hazardous by either of these walk zones surrounding the school will be given a priority in the student assignment process.

(e) In compliance with s. 228.057, F.S., if seats still remain available, preference shall be afforded to students in multiple session schools (i.e. schools where some students attend all morning and the remaining students attend all afternoon).

(f) If seats still remain available, a lottery shall be used to fill the remaining seats. In order to promote diverse school enrollments that will benefit all students, some applicants will receive preference
based upon the extent to which their status may be underrepresented at the selected school. This preference will neither automatically permit nor deny assignment of any student, regardless of status, to any school. This preference does provide an eligible student with a greater chance of assignment to particular schools when the random lottery process is utilized.

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. Applicants shall be ranked according to steps 7-a through 7-f above for their second choice. 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 reject the 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. Students in the eligibility will be considered for transfer after those who did not receive an assignment to any of their first three choices. Absolute position on waiting lists shall not be reported to parents because, due to sibling priorities, proximity priorities, or diversity preferences, these positions may change as subsequent applications are processed. 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.

On the fourth day of school, the Supervisor of Student Assignment 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.

(4) Transportation

Transportation to identified Choice Schools WILL be provided to All students attending Title I schools identified as “in need of improvement” for not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for two consecutive years. Transportation will be provided to all other students granted a choice assignment to the extent economically efficient. After the processing of any batch, the Transportation Department will determine the cost of transporting all students indicating a need for transportation. The Superintendent maintains the right to implement a transportation plan which provides the highest level of transportation to those indicating a need, taking into consideration such factors as distance to the choice school, socio-economic status, diversity, under-selected schools, and economic efficiency. Students may accept the choice assignment despite lack of transportation. Students who do not desire the choice assignment without transportation shall be guaranteed assignment to their districted school.

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.

(5) Administration of Controlled Choice

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 shall make periodic reports to the Board on the implementation of controlled choice. The initial report shall be at such time as the assignment and transportation recommendations shall be made for the following school year. The Superintendent shall report to the Board each September the number of assignments to/from each school. The financial impact of each year’s controlled choice implementation shall be reported to the Board by September. The periodic reports of test scores; school demographics, school profiles, and other such information shall contain, to the extent possible,
discussion of the impact of controlled choice.

The authority for the assignment of all students resides with the Supervisor of Student Assignment 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 Student Assignment 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 as follows:

1. All schools shall ensure that families are notified of the rules in this section.
2. A student who moves within the districted school’s attendance zone must remain at that school.
3. A student moving out of the districted school’s attendance zone may:
   
   (a) Attend the new districted school based upon proof of the new legal domicile, or
   
   (b) Remain at the current school for the remainder of the year. Students who receive a reassignment to remain at the current school will remain there for the following year, and through the highest grade level in the school, unless (1) they receive a placement elsewhere, or (2) 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 (3)(b) is not guaranteed for any students changing residences during the school year. Parents faced with deciding between options (3)(a) and (3)(b) should be referred to the Transportation Department for immediate assistance.

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 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:

1. The reassignment form for special needs/hardships will be obtained from the Office of Research, Assessment, and Evaluation by the parent or guardian; once completed, the form will be forwarded to that office. The Superintendent’s designee shall compile all appropriate documentation verifying the request; reassignment forms will be returned to parents when the required documentation is missing. At the end of each batch-processing period determined by the Superintendent, reassignment requests will be
   (a) Discussed with each elementary school principal, as necessary, and
   (b) Copied and delivered to each sending secondary principal, and then to the receiving principal, for their sign-off.

Whenever the number of reassignment requests exceeds the available seats at any grade, the principal, with the assistance of the Superintendent’s designee, shall prioritize the valid requests in the following order:
   (1) Continuing out-of-county students,
   (2) Severe extenuating circumstances related to the student’s educational / emotional well-being,
   (3) Sibling already at the requested school,
   (4) Before/after school care [at elementary and middle], and
   (5) New out-of-county students, including siblings.

The principals involved must agree and/or sign-off per (a) and (b) above, prior to parent notification.

Reassignment requests received in the Office of Research, Assessment, and Evaluation outside of the batch processing periods will be handled individually and will be (a) discussed with each elementary school principal, as necessary, and (b) copied and delivered to each secondary principal for their sign-off.

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. However, the final decision is determined by the principals at the sending and receiving schools in consultation with the appropriate Director, as needed.

2. Neither the Office of Research, Assessment, and Evaluation nor any school shall inform a student or parent of the likelihood of a reassignment approval until all necessary parties have been involved.

3. No student shall be allowed to enroll at the requested school until approval is granted through these procedures.
4. 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. Such elementary and middle school students will return to their attendance area school at the end of the grading period; high school students will return at the end of the appropriate grading period.

5. For reassignments of high school students, the Florida High School Activities Association Regulations shall govern eligibility for athletics of all reassigned students.

6. 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 below.

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

(1) 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:

1. 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;

2. An original or certified copy of an approved lease or rental agreement showing occupancy to take place within 60 school days;

3. An original or certified copy of an executed contract to build with an estimated occupancy date within 60 school days; or,

4. An original or certified copy of an executed contract to purchase with an occupancy date within 60 school days.

Note: The substantiating documentation must be attached to the request for reassignment. Dollar figures for such items as monthly payments, loan
amount, etc. 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.

Transportation must be provided by the parent/guardian.

(2) 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.

(3) 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.

(4) Special Needs

(a) 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.

(b) Supervision -- Reassignment of elementary and middle 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.

(c) 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.

(d) **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.

(e) **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.

Acceptance of a student from another Florida school district shall be for reasons a, b, c, or d above, and be granted only on a space available basis, after Sarasota County residents are placed.

Transportation must be provided by the parent/guardian.

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.

(1) The Appeals Board may be composed of four or five voting members:

(a) The county health officer or his/her representative;

(b) One or two representatives of elementary and secondary schools;

(c) One or two district-level administrators; and,

(d) One or two lay citizens, selected for each hearing by the Superintendent's designee.

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

(3) 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:

(a) 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.

(b) Appeals will be heard only at scheduled times. Appeals will take place at the school which denied the reassignment. Staff from the appropriate schools shall be invited to the hearing.

(c) 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.

(d) 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.

(e) 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.

(01/08/02: ASSIGNPR.REV.3)