

Suwannee County School District  
2016-17 Controlled Open Enrollment Plan

The Suwannee County School District's Controlled Open Enrollment Plan is designed to give all parents the opportunity to select a school other than their child's zoned school for the upcoming school. It is also an important consideration as the District makes short-term programmatic plans and resource allocation.

I. The controlled open enrollment plan - includes the following:

A. Eligibility requirements;

School age children not subject to a current expulsion or suspension may submit an Open Enrollment School Choice application during the specified period.

B. Application process:

Approval to attend a school outside of a student's zone may be considered at any time by the District based on hardships and other mitigating factors. However, for planning purposes, the application window for parents to access schools of choice through an online application process is February 1, through March 1, as established annually by the District established annually by the Board. Parents without computer access may seek assistance from the nearest public school or public library.

Submitting an application does not guarantee that the student will be approved to transfer to the requested school. Applications are required when:

1. The request is for initial entry of a student in a school of choice.
2. 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.
3. 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. Once a child has been approved on school choice for a school other than the zoned school, they are approved to attend the choice school through the highest grade served, regardless of future address changes within the district.
4. A student in good standing withdraws from an approved school of choice, and the parents want their child to reenter the same school of choice.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. A parent of a Suwannee County student is requesting attendance in another county or a parent living in another county is requesting attendance at a Suwannee County school. In such cases, parents must reapply annually for release from their home county and entry into Suwannee County.

Additional Options include:

1. School approved enrollment in specific High School Program or Career Academy

2. Magnet Schools or programs
  3. McKay Scholarship
  4. Opportunity Scholarship Program
- C. Method of determining capacity of schools;  
Suwannee County Schools defines school capacity for school choice open enrollment as 100% for elementary schools, 90% for middle schools and combination schools, 95% for high school and 120% for technical college of permanent FISH capacity and considers the District's facilities work program (five-year plan), as well as class size, constitutionally required in the state of Florida.
1. Capacity determination for each District school;
    - a. As required in Statute (1002.31) Suwannee County schools posts capacity information on its website.
    - b. Schools projected to be at or above 90% of capacity in the next five years shall be deemed as frozen to School Choice Open Enrollment.
    - c. Schools projected to be below 90% of capacity in the next five years shall be deemed as open to School Choice Open Enrollment.
  2. Class size standards  
All School Choice Requests for Suwannee County schools are monitored for compliance as per [Florida's Constitutional Amendment for Class Size](#).
- Schools that are designated "frozen due to class size" have exceeded their teaching allocations (which are based on class size limits).
- D. Lottery procedure for determining student assignment if transfer requests exceed available space;
1. Once a school reaches or exceeds 90% of permanent FISH capacity the school is reclassified as frozen to School Choice Open Enrollment.
  2. Applications for schools which have exceeded available space will receive a randomly generated lottery assignment that prioritizes mitigating factors as detailed in subsection F.
- E. Provision for a parent to request placement of siblings within the same school;  
Placement of siblings within the same school is facilitated whenever feasible during the open enrollment period if appropriate educational services are available for each sibling at the requested school. The School Choice Open Enrollment Application includes a section for the parent to indicate if they have submitted new applications for other siblings to attend the same school or if a sibling in good standing is currently attending and will continue to attend the requested school. The application includes a section for parents to provide the full name and grade level of each sibling so that blended families with different surnames can be cross-referenced.  
Special consideration for approval of school choice is given to:
1. Siblings of exceptional education students placed at the requested school;
  2. Siblings of students who are enrolled, in good standing and attending the school of choice for the requested school year; and

3. Siblings of students who attend another educational level (elementary, middle or secondary) at schools co-located on the same grounds or physically adjacent to each other when a documented hardship situation warrants approval to attend the requested school.

F. Mitigating Factors

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

Priority is given to:

1. Dependent children of active duty military personnel whose move resulted from military orders;
2. Children who have been relocated due to 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;
4. Students residing in the District.
5. Students at multiple session schools.
6. Homeless students as defined in School Board Policy 5.021
7. A child of a full-time school system employee desiring to attend the school where the parent works or that feeder pattern except in cases where student enrollment exceeds capacity.
8. School assignment issues that arise due to legal situations and administrative circumstances
9. A twelfth grader wanting to graduate from the high school he or she has attended since ninth grade
10. Enrollment in course offerings not available at their zoned schools
11. Opportunity Scholarship Program eligible students

G. Athletics

The District's middle and high school interscholastic athletic program adheres to the rules and policies of the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA). The FHSAA's new state statute, with regards to student athletes, as of August 1, 2016, is as follows:

1. Upon school choice approval, high school students will be "immediately eligible to participate" when first enrolling in school or transferring schools, with certain limiting conditions, set forth below. Mid-season transfers may seek to immediately join an existing team roster, so long as:
  - a. The designated roster for the sport has not reached maximum size; and the coach determines that the student has the requisite skill and ability to participate.
  - b. The student hasn't already participated in the same sport at another school during that same school year, unless the student meets one of the following:
    - A dependent child of active-duty military personnel whose move resulted from military orders;
    - A child who has been relocated due to foster care placement in a different school zone;

- A child who moved due to a court-ordered change in custody due to separation or divorce, or the serious illness or death of a custodial parent; or
  - Otherwise authorized to participate for good cause, as determined by Board policy or charter school policy
2. “Eligible to participate” is defined as including the required medical forms and has expanded to include off-season conditioning, summer workouts, and preseason conditioning, regardless of whether the student has been placed on a team.
  3. Non-member, small private schools (125 students or fewer) may now participate at zoned public school in whatever sport(s) their private school does not offer.
  4. Individual Home Education, Charter School, Florida Virtual School (FLVSFT), or Suwannee Virtual full-time student, who otherwise meets the criteria, is eligible to participate at the public school to which the student would be assigned to attend by the district school board.

H. Appeals process for hardship cases;

Parents of students who applied during 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 facsimile, or electronically via email to the Educational Choice appeal committee. The committee shall consist of the receiving school principal and at least two of the following: Assistant Superintendent of Instruction, Assistant Superintendent of Administration, Director of Facilities Director of Human Resources, Director of IT, or Chief Financial Officer. This committee serves as the contact for appeal requests and coordinates the review of all hardship requests. 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 or psychological, or legal reasons:

1. Availability of day care will not be considered as a basis for hardship beyond the elementary level.
2. 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 medical condition of the student and specific medical reasons justifying the request.
3. If a hardship appeal is submitted for legal reasons, the parent or guardian must submit documentation of the legal hardship.
4. 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 selected school has space available in the core academic classes as well as in the requested program.

I. Availability of transportation;

The parent is responsible for the transportation of a student approved to attend a

school of choice through the open enrollment process.

- J. Method and timeline for notifying a parent of his/her child's placement for the next school year.

School Choice Open Enrollment Applications for the following school year will be accepted February 1 - March 1. Applications must be received electronically no later than March 1st. Applications for multiple children, multiple schools or incomplete applications will *not* be considered.

- If your application was received prior to March 1 deadline, you may expect to receive notification regarding the status of your Open Enrollment School Choice request prior to the end of the current school year.

Requests to attend a Suwannee County school from an out of district resident will be considered, only after decisions are finalized for Suwannee's students.

Requests to attend a Suwannee County school, if you live in another county, will require a release from your home county.

- II. The plan and process for implementing the plan must

- A. Adhere to federal desegregation requirements;

- B. Maintain socioeconomic, demographic, and racial balance;

1. A database of school choice requests is maintained and cross-referenced with the district electronic student information system. Updated lists of students approved to attend a school of choice are generated periodically for review by district and school based administration.
2. School choice data are collected and the Superintendent's staff is apprised of emerging patterns that may potentially impact the socioeconomic, demographic and racial balance of the district. If necessary, further analysis and possible revision to the district school choice open enrollment may be recommended.

- C. Maintain existing academic eligibility criteria for public school choice programs.

- D. Establish criteria for Rescinding School Choice approval

Approval of a School Choice application may be rescinded if:

1. False information was provided (F.S. 837.06 & F.S. 92.525 – providing false information is a criminal act);
2. It is determined by district and school personnel that enrollment at a requested school is having a negative impact on the student's educational progress
3. The student withdraws from a course of study that was the basis for enrollment at the requested school (i.e. Career Technical Programs, International Baccalaureate);
4. The principal has the right to rescind approval due to poor attendance, grades, behavior, and/or if the student is chronically tardy to school.
5. out of district students who commit offenses subject to expulsion recommendations will be returned to their zoned district for determination of alternative schooling or expulsion.

- III. Students residing in the District shall not be displaced by a student from another district who is seeking enrollment through the open enrollment provisions.
- IV. Preferential treatment shall be provided for
  - A. Dependent children of active duty military personnel whose move resulted from military orders;
  - B. Children who have moved due to foster care placement in a different school zone;
  - C. Children who have moved due to a court-ordered change in custody as a result of separation or divorce;
  - D. Children who have moved due to the serious illness or death of a custodial parent;
  - E. Students at multiple session schools; and
  - F. Students residing in the District.
- V. The Controlled Open Enrollment Plan shall be available on the District website.
  - Electronic School Choice Open Enrollment Applications are accepted for all district schools open to Choice. To be open to choice a school must be below 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.
- VI. The process for participating in controlled open enrollment is posted on the District website with a list of schools that have not reached capacity, the application for participation is electronic, and the deadline for submitting the request to participate in controlled open enrollment is March 1.
- VII. The District shall report the number of students participating in public school choice by type as required by the Department of Education.
- VIII. The Controlled Open Enrollment Plan and the process for implementing the plan shall be reviewed annually. The Superintendent shall present the plan and any recommended changes to the School Board for consideration.