

## **Controlled Open Enrollment 2025-2026**

### **Contact Information**

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**Enrollment Plan Link:**

<https://www.escambiaschools.org/Page/5413>



A controlled open enrollment plan allows school districts to make student school assignments using parents indicated preferential school choice as a significant factor. The legislation requires that beginning with the 2017-2018 school year, each district school board adopt a controlled open enrollment plan that allows a parent from any district in the state to enroll his or her child in and transport his or her child to any public school that has not reached capacity. Parents/guardians access schools of choice through an application process during a pre-determined Controlled Open Enrollment period established annually by the district. The application for Controlled Open Enrollment can be obtained from the Escambia County Public School's Enrollment Services website. Parents/guardians without computer access may seek assistance from the Enrollment Services office at the J E Hall Center, a public district school or the public library. Applying does not guarantee that the student will be approved to transfer to the requested school. The application is completed online.

### **Choice Exclusions**

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

Magnet Schools, Academic Programs and Career Academies within the Escambia County Public School system requiring an application for admission, shall be processed within the Controlled Open Enrollment process, and admission will be based upon program qualifications and space availability in the program.

The Escambia County School District offers parents and guardians an opportunity to choose an appropriate school for their children through several methods. These choice opportunities provide clear information so families can make the best decision to meet the educational needs of their children.

## **1. District Application Process:**

The Office of Enrollment Services manages School Choice and is responsible for maintaining information on schools and choices available to parents, selection of students to chosen schools, notification to parents as to the status of their child's application, and assisting schools with the controlled open enrollment process and selections. The Office of Enrollment Services is the central information site for parents to receive information regarding schools in the district and choices available. Applications for School Choice Programs can be submitted to the office at the J E Hall Center, 30 E. Texar Dr., Pensacola, FL 32503 or through the established online application available only during controlled open enrollment periods. Applications must be submitted annually for new choice selections. If a student is not selected for the current school year, the parent must resubmit an application for consideration for the next school year. The application period is open to all incoming Kindergarten through 11th grade students.

The Office of Enrollment Services will support marketing activities for all district recommended programs, in collaboration with the district's Communication Coordinator. Each magnet/academy program has an application deadline that is posted on the Enrollment Services Timeline which is located on the district's website. Once this deadline has passed, the magnet school lotteries will be run as determined by the timeline. Students will be notified and must commit to the school of choice by the deadline according to the Enrollment Services Timeline. The registration cards will serve as a commitment from students for attendance in the school and/or program. Students will be notified and must accept the school of their choice. If a parent does not complete the registration process, the student will not be considered. Students that do not commit to a choice school by the established deadline will be placed at their residentially zoned school, and will not be reconsidered until all waitlists have been exhausted. Students will only be allowed to enter academies/programs, magnet programs and magnet schools at the beginning of the school year, based on selections indicated during the open enrollment period.

When a parent/guardian accepts a School Choice placement, they agree to the following:

1. A student may receive only one choice assignment in a school year.
2. An applicant granted a choice assignment shall register the student at the school by the eighth day of the new school year. If the student fails to begin attending classes, the choice assignment shall be deemed forfeited.
3. A student who is subject to a current expulsion or suspension from any public or private school is ineligible to apply for a choice assignment.
4. A parent or legal guardian may discontinue a choice assignment within a school year at the end of a grading period or semester.
5. A parent or legal guardian cannot withdraw the student from their zoned school until an approved transfer has been processed and approved.
6. A separate application must be completed for each student.
7. The school district will notify each family of selections by email or phone call from the Enrollment Services Office.

8. Transportation to and from the choice school is the responsibility of the parent/guardian.

A choice assignment may be revoked by the school principal. In order to remain in a School Choice Placement, the student must:

- o Comply with the Student Code of Conduct.
- o Maintain satisfactory academic performance.
- o Maintain satisfactory school attendance.

Applications are accepted outside the open enrollment period ONLY when a school has not reached capacity, and a school choice request is based on a documented hardship. Parents who are interested in submitting a late Choice application may do so by contacting the Enrollment Services office. Applications can not be accepted for the non-residential magnet schools outside of the controlled open enrollment application timeline.

## **2. Process for Declaring School Preference**

During the Open Enrollment Application Periods, held during the months of November/December at the secondary level and January/February at the elementary level, parents may select up to three schools and rank them in order of preference. The application is available online or through the Office of Enrollment Services. Completing an application does not guarantee assignment to the choice school. Students not completing an application are assigned to their residentially zoned school as determined by the enrolling parent/guardian's primary address.

## **3. Process that Encourages Placement of Siblings within the Same School/District Employee Accommodations**

Every effort is made by the School District of Escambia County to accommodate the placement of a sibling related to any student already enrolled in a school if space is available and if the student meets admission criteria, if applicable.

The Choice plan provides guarantees for placement of siblings within the same school and placement of a district employee's child at the parent's work site. ***Although these students are guaranteed their choice, they must apply during the Open Enrollment Period.*** Siblings, provided they meet the eligibility criteria and there is space availability, will be automatically accepted if two or more siblings of the same family are enrolled at that school during the same school year.

For a district employee accommodation, District employees must be full time employees assigned to the school of their request. District employees may also request schools not at capacity, and such requests will be forwarded to the Enrollment Services Coordinator for consideration.

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

At the end of the controlled open enrollment window, if the number of applicants exceeds the number of available seats, a lottery shall be conducted.

Individuals seeking admission to magnet schools, and/or academy programs must meet individual school criteria before being permitted to participate in the lottery. Each student applying to a magnet school or choice academy program must meet and maintain the criteria as set by the school and approved by the Curriculum and Instruction Department. The criteria shall be on file at the school and in the Office of Enrollment Services. Students from out of county will only be accepted into magnet programs, magnet schools or academies/programs if the student was in a similar academy/program prior to coming to Escambia County, the program is not available within the residentially zoned school, and there are available seats. The district will first consider programs at residentially zoned schools for placement in these programs.

A lottery will be utilized to select students whenever the number of eligible applications exceeds the program/school's capacity. The lottery selections must maintain socioeconomic, demographic and racial balance, and consider the families residential zone for selection purposes. Applications may be randomly audited by a team consisting of the Office of Enrollment Services, designated directors and the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. The electronic database will be processed through the office of Evaluation Services, who will generate a selection list.

Student selection will be based on the following criteria:

1. Students of Active Duty Military that have transitioned to the area within the last 12 months, or will be transitioning to the school before the first day of school of the requested school year, and that applied by the deadline, met all the eligibility requirements, and submitted a copy of the official orders will be automatically selected. Upon arrival, the family must reside in Escambia County.
2. Siblings, provided they meet the eligibility criteria, will be automatically accepted if two or more siblings of the same family are enrolled at that school during the same school year. The older sibling must have attended the requested school in the current school year, and be enrolled for the upcoming school year.
3. Children of full-time district employees at that school, who apply by the deadline and meet the eligibility criteria, will automatically be accepted into the school/program.

The formula to determine how many students are selected from each school is as follows:

- (i) Capacity of the school/program/grade level and/or facility will have numbers which ensure that normal attrition will not affect the ability to offer academic programs during the course of the year or maintain class size reduction requirements.

- (ii) Number of incoming students assigned to each school, including home school and private school students, at the desired grade level.
- (iii) Percentage of students selected from each school to reach capacity.

## **5. Appeals Process for Hardship Cases**

An applicant may appeal the denial of a choice assignment if received prior to the deadline posted within the timeline. Appeals are based solely on the academic criteria. Appeals are not considered due to the capacity constraints of the school, or the lottery selection process.

For Escambia County residents for whom a school choice is denied for a reason other than overcapacity or lottery selection, 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 three or more voting members from the following:

- Superintendent
- Deputy Superintendent
- Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction
- Directors, Any Curriculum and Instruction Division
- Specialists, Workforce Education
- Specialists, Enrollment Services

The Appeals Board shall be chaired by the Coordinator of Enrollment Services, who will facilitate the process, but not vote on the final decision.

A challenge of a student assignment may be made on the grounds that the School Choice process was not followed, the extenuating circumstances of the eligibility criteria or to appeal the denial of a reassignment.

The following procedure shall be followed:

- ✓ Each request for appeal must be in writing on the established school district appeal form. Appeals based on denial of assignment under the Choice Plan may be accepted at any time; appeals based on denial of a reassignment request must be received by the Enrollment Services Coordinator 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 Coordinator of Enrollment Services may necessitate the hearing being temporarily recessed for referral back to the principal(s) involved for reconsideration, pending completion of the hearing process.
- ✓ Three members shall be present for recommendations on all appeals. 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 meeting.

- ✓ Any recommendation of the Appeals Board which is averse to the student may be appealed to the Superintendent. However, no appeal will be heard or considered by the Superintendent until the final recommendation of the Appeals Board is rendered.
- ✓ The Coordinator of Enrollment Services, or a designated staff member, will notify the parent/guardian and/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 Superintendent. Each request for appeal to the Superintendent must be in writing and must be received within three working days after notification of the denial.

## **6. Procedure to Maintain Socioeconomic, Demographic, and Racial Balance**

One of the goals of the School Choice program is to create a student population at every district school that reflects the diversity, based on these factors, of the county overall. This goal is based on research that has shown that students show greater educational success, as well as greater success in future careers, when they have been educated in an environment that reflects the diversity of the population with which they may later work.

## **7. Availability of Transportation**

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

Student transportation to a district choice option school outside the student's residential attendance zone is the responsibility of the parent/guardian, but parents/guardians may request school bus transportation for students who reside more than two (2) miles from certain Choice schools in accordance with procedures established for Choice transportation. Students may be authorized school bus transportation from an existing bus stop assigned by the District either at a bus stop located within the attendance boundary of the approved school of choice on a space available basis, or from a center-to-center bus stop as appropriate.

Students authorized to attend a school outside of his or her residential attendance zone shall arrange for his or her own transportation to and from school. Parents/guardians of students who reside outside of their school's attendance zone may request transportation from an existing bus stop located in his or her destination school's attendance zone by requesting a transportation accommodation each year from the Transportation Department. Requests will be approved on a space available basis. The Board will not provide additional or different transportation service for students accommodated under this rule, to include the establishment or relocation of bus stops, alteration of school bus ride times, or deployment of additional school buses for route service.

## **8. Process for Promoting Strong Parental Involvement, Including the Designation of a Parent Liaison**

Parents provide valuable information through their involvement with the School Advisory Committee, recommending changes and better ways of communication. Parents can also participate on redistricting committees representing each of the schools under review.

## **9. Strategy for Establishing an Information Clearinghouse**

A centrally-located Office of Enrollment Services, located at the J. E. Hall Center, 30 E. Texar Drive, provides the community with information on the educational options available for students living in Escambia County. This central office offers information on public, magnet, charter, and private schools, as well as information on home-education and on-line course options.

Employees work collaboratively with local media outlets while utilizing other effective communication avenues to inform parents of the opportunities available. The office also assists parents with registration, guardianships, student records, scholarship opportunities and other details necessary for enrollment in school.

The School District provides Choice Program information to parents via the district website, school messenger call outs, media releases through the communications coordinator, and each school's individual website. The Enrollment Services department also promotes choice programs through an annual School Choice Expo, held in the fall of each school year.