

5120.01 – CONTROLLED OPEN ENROLLMENT PLAN

F.S. 1002.31 requires district school boards to offer controlled open enrollment with the following FDOE Quality Indicators of Consideration.

1. Application Process

Pinellas County Schools offers multiple choice options. District Application Programs are themed curricular programs including magnet schools, high school career themed programs and fundamental schools. The Pinellas County Schools District Application Program procedures and the District Application Program Guide, listing all programs and the annual timeline, can be found at www.pcsb.org.

Application for District Application Programs are all made online and can be done from the family home or at any Pinellas school. The application period for district application programs occurs each January. Priorities for admission include feeder patterns from lower grades to upper grades in select programs, while priorities for siblings, professional courtesy and proximity apply to all programs. Students are invited and the family must log on to the application system in February to accept an invitation. The system then assigns the students. Remaining open seats are filled from the initial wait list. Late applications are also accepted and placed at the bottom of the wait list in the order received.

Parents may make a Special Assignment Request (SAR) to attend any other non-zoned school. The students are assigned a random number and requests are first prioritized by having a sibling already attending the school. The second priority is for students who had attended the requested school the prior year. The applications are made online in the spring of each school year. Students granted a Special Assignment Request (SAR) to a non-zoned school are responsible for transporting their child to and from school safely and on time.

If a parent, legal guardian, other person with primary or shared parental responsibility for the student, or an adult student has his/her primary legal residence in a county other than this county, s/he may apply to attend a Pinellas County Public School with a Special Attendance Permit (SAP).

Details regarding these Controlled Open Enrollment or School Choice programs are found in the School Board of Pinellas County Policy 5120 – ASSIGNMENT WITHIN DISTRICT and the District Application Program Procedures.

2. Process for Declaring School Preference

In addition to online information, a District Application Program Guide is printed and distributed to all schools and students entering 6th and 9th grade in the following year. There are several showcase events scheduled for parents with school personnel in attendance to showcase their programs. The online application process, policies regarding selection of schools, submitting preferences of up to 5 choices and all the applicant program options are described in the Program Guide available at the link above. The online District Application Program application process occurs each January for these themed curricular programs.

The Special Assignment Request process occurs each April and parents also apply online for available seats as a non-zoned school. Students residing in another county must apply by completing the Special Attendance Permit Application (PCS Form 4-302).

3. Process that Encourages Placement of Siblings within the Same School

As part of the District Application Program process parents may request a sibling priority preference. These students are prioritized above students without siblings in the random lottery process.

In addition to applying to an application program, parents may make a Special Assignment Request to attend any school. The students are assigned a random number prioritized by prior attendance at the school as well as a sibling priority preference. The applications are made online in the spring of each school year.

Siblings of full time Exceptional Student Education (ESE) students may also request a seat at the school where the ESE student receives services. Such requests are made by calling the Student Assignment Office or the ESE Placement Office. Requests are reviewed periodically and granted on a space available basis. Transportation is granted on a case-by-case basis based on available seats on the bus.

4. Lottery Procedure to Determine Student Assignment

Once all parents make an online application to a District Application Program (aka: magnet) the computer generates a random number that along with identified priority preferences determines initial placement based on program capacity. Families can rank 5 choices from first to fifth. A waitlist is maintained after the initial seats are filled and if students exit the program students are called from the wait list based on their random number.

Late applications may also be submitted and students are added to the bottom of the wait list in the order the late applications are made.

Special Assignment Requests (SAR) are also submitted online and the computer generates a random number that, along with identified priority preferences, determines the initial placement. Parents may only select one school through the SAR process. SARs are granted on a space available basis.

5. Appeals Process for Hardship Cases

An appeal process is provided following the initial acceptance period for District Application Programs by contacting the Student Assignment office in writing. The Director reviews each appeal and a committee may be formed if necessary with school and district staff to review the request. Appeals of Special Assignment Requests may also be requested by contacting the Student Assignment Office in writing.

Additionally, if the student's attendance in the assigned school creates substantial and undue hardship for the family, a request for a hardship exception will be considered. The hardship must be based upon unusual facts and circumstances applicable to the individual parent, legal guardian, other legal custodian, or adult student in question.

Hardship exceptions shall be granted based upon a case-by-case analysis by the Student Assignment Department of such facts and circumstances.

6. Procedure to Maintain Socioeconomic and Demographic Balance

Pinellas County Schools has been declared a Unitary district and the Student Assignment Policy is race neutral. A school is considered diverse when the demographics of the enrolled population more closely mirror the demographics of the students residing in the school's attendance zone. In schools where the zoned population's demographics are not diverse, increasing diversity will be defined as increasing the enrollment of students of races other than the majority race. To accomplish this end, the district establishes application areas or applicant pools that are significantly more diverse than the attendance zone and employs a variety of targeted marketing and recruitment efforts to increase the number of students making application from the application area/pool leading to increased socioeconomic, demographic, and racial diversity in District Application Program (aka; magnet schools) through the random lottery process.

7. Availability of Transportation

Students accepted into a District Application Program are provided arterial bus transportation along major roads. Students receiving a Special Assignment Request (SAR) or a Special Attendance Permit (SAP) must provide their own transportation.

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

Many of the District Application Programs have community advisory boards to guide program offerings and facilitate available industry certifications. Each school also maintains a School Advisory Council that provides additional input and support for the application program.

9. Strategy for Establishing an Information Clearinghouse

All information on available choices and student assignment issues is maintained on the district Student Assignment website at: www.pcsb.org/registration

Additionally, each year the district Office of Strategic Communications coordinates a variety of outreach showcases, magnet fairs and community events to promote choices. Translators are available at these events for non-English speaking families.

Each District Application Program school schedules a Discovery Night and schedules program tours during the day for interested families. High school programs also offer shadowing opportunities for students.

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