



Questions and Answers about Controlled Open Enrollment

1.

Q What is Controlled Open Enrollment (COE)?

A *The Florida Legislature recently passed a law requiring School Boards to adopt a policy that gives parents and students the ability to seek enrollment in a school other than their zoned school of attendance. While this has always been the case in Okaloosa County, this ability did not exist in all parts of the State. (§1002.31, Florida Statutes) www.flsenate.gov/Laws/Statutes/2016/1002.31*

2.

Q If my child currently attends an out-of-zone school under COE, do I have to submit a new application to attend the same school next year?

A *No. Students who currently have a COE seat to attend an out-of-zone school are allowed to stay at that school without re-applying through the highest grade level offered at that school.*

NOTE: If a student is completing the highest grade level within a school and wishes to remain within that feeder pattern, the parent/guardian is required to submit a new request for a seat in the next school in the progression if capacity exists (moving from elementary to middle or middle to high).

3.

Q How are COE seats assigned?

A *In cases where the number of available seats is greater than the number of valid requests, all COE requests will be approved. When there are a limited number of seats, the District will use a lottery process. Preference will be given to certain groups of students as required by Florida Statute. (see Question 10 below).*

The COE application will be completed and submitted online. The application window extends from January 16 through February 15. All students with applications submitted within the open enrollment window will be eligible for placement.

4.

Q Who is eligible to participate in Controlled Open Enrollment?

A *Under § 1002.31, Florida Statutes, a parent from any district in the state whose child is not subject to a current expulsion or suspension may enroll his or her child in and transport his or her child to any public school that has not reached capacity in the district, subject to the maximum class-size requirements.*

5.

Q Is transportation provided?

A *No. Transportation is the responsibility of the parent/legal guardian.*

6.

Q Where do I find the list of schools that have not reached capacity?

A Visit the District's website at www.okaloosaschools.com and click on Controlled Open Enrollment to find the School Capacity Report.

7.

Q How do I apply for my child to attend a school under Controlled Open Enrollment?

A Parents/legal guardians must submit an online request at www.okaloosaschools.com by clicking on the Controlled Open Enrollment link. The application window will be open through February 15. A parent/guardian who is unable to complete an application online may contact their zoned school or their requested school for assistance in completing an application.

8.

Q How many applications can I submit for my student?

A One application is allowed per student. However, the parent may request up to three schools on the application in order of preference. The student will be assigned to the first school that has available seats.

9.

Q Can I submit an application for my child to attend a school even if it is at capacity?

A No. Applications are only accepted for schools that have available seats.

10.

Q What happens if there are more requests to attend a school than there are available seats?

A Florida law requires districts to give priority to the following students:

1. Dependent children of active duty military personnel whose recent move resulted from military orders
2. Children who have been relocated due to a foster care placement in a different school zone
3. Children who move due to a court-ordered change in custody due to a separation or divorce or due to the serious illness or death of a custodial parent
4. Children who live in Okaloosa County will be given priority over out-of-county students

Students in 1-3 above who live in Okaloosa County will be given equal priority. A lottery will be used among these students if there are not enough available seats for the number of applicants. If there are enough seats, all students in 1-3 above will be assigned to the school, and if needed, a lottery will be held among remaining in-county applicants for any remaining seats. In the event that all students in 1-4 are assigned to the school and there are still remaining seats, those seats will be assigned to out-of-county applicants on a lottery basis.

11.

Q When/how will I be notified if my child has been assigned a seat?

A Parents/guardians will receive an email no later than February 21st indicating approval/denial of a seat assignment for next year. Additionally, all schools will have a list of approved applicants by February 21st.

12.

Q If my child is approved to attend a school under Controlled Open Enrollment, what steps must I take to confirm his or her enrollment?

A *A parent/guardian whose child is selected in a lottery must contact the school within ten (10) business days of receiving notification to accept the seat. If the parent indicated a preferential treatment category on the application, verification will be required before enrollment is completed, i.e., copy of military orders, documentation of foster care placement, court order resulting in change of address for student. The actual enrollment process may extend beyond the 10th day in order for the parent/guardian to provide necessary documentation. However, if a parent/guardian is unable to provide documentation to justify the preferential treatment within 30 days from the date of notification, their child's seat will be rescinded.*

13.

Q Will there be a waiting list if my child is not selected in a lottery?

A *Yes. The waiting list will be ordered based on the random lottery conducted when the enrollment window closes taking into account preferential treatment required under the law. The parent/guardian will be notified of student position on the waiting list. If a student who received a seat in a lottery does not claim that seat or if it is rescinded due to the failure of the parent/guardian to provide required documentation, the seat will be reassigned to the first student on the waiting list.*

14.

Q Does the waiting list carry over to the next school year?

A *No. Once the first ten (10) days of the school year have passed, the waiting list will be cleared. Parents will be able to apply for a seat when the enrollment window opens to accept applications for the following school year.*

15.

Q What happens if I move into the area after February 15 and miss the application window for next year?

A *Parents/legal guardians will still be able to apply to under-enrolled schools online after the COE window closes. An under-enrolled school is one that has COE seats available after Feb 15. COE applications will be approved to attend under-enrolled schools on a first-come, first-served basis until the school fills all of its COE seats or the 10th day of the school year, whichever comes first.*

16.

Q Are there any district-operated schools that are not part of the Controlled Open Enrollment Plan?

A *The following schools are either magnet programs or centers schools and have separate criteria for admissions. Please contact the school directly for enrollment information.*

1. *STEMM Academy*
2. *NWF Ballet Academie*
3. *Silver Sands – ESE Center School*
4. *Richbourg School – ESE Center School*
5. *Southside Primary – Crestview PreKD*
6. *Okaloosa Technical College*
7. *Best Chance – North (ECCI-North)*

Specific ESE programs located within a school that have been designated by the district to serve students from multiple schools are also not subject to the Controlled Open Enrollment Plan.

17.

Q Are charter schools subject to the district's Controlled Open Enrollment Plan?

A *No. Charter schools have their own enrollment plan. Contact the appropriate charter school directly for information on enrollment.*

18.

Q If one sibling already attends a school that is at capacity, will another sibling be automatically allowed to attend the same school?

A *No. A new sibling will not automatically be assigned to a school that is at or above capacity. In this case, the parent/guardian would have to apply through a hardship appeal. **Sibling attendance in itself does not ensure that a hardship request will be approved in schools that are at capacity.***

19.

Q How do I file for a hardship?

A *A parent/guardian may obtain MIS Form 5423 from the COE website or the school principal to appeal a denial based on hardship. The parent/guardian must complete the form and submit it to the principal of the school that they wish for their student to attend. The parent/guardian may be asked to provide documentation of any circumstances that led to the hardship request.*

20.

Q If my child attends a Pre-K program at a school, is he or she guaranteed a Kindergarten seat in the same school?

A *Only if the student resides in that school's attendance zone. Otherwise, the parent is required to submit a Controlled Open Enrollment application for Kindergarten.*

21.

Q If I accept a COE seat for next year and my child begins the school year, will he or she be able to return to our zoned school during the year?

A *Yes. A parent/guardian has the option to return his or her child to a zoned school at any time. However, a student who has returned to his or her zoned school may not return to the Controlled Open Enrollment school for the rest of the school year and must reapply for a seat in that school for the following year. It is recommended that returning to a zoned school occur at the end of a grading period, if at all possible.*

22.

Q If my child currently attends his or her zoned school but we move out of zone during the year or during the summer, will he or she be able to stay at that school?

A *Yes. Your child may stay at the school through the highest grade offered. However, transportation will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian. NOTE: This option is currently under review to determine the impact on schools following the first year of COE and may not be available for students who move out of zone after the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year.*

23.

Q What are the procedures for implementing a lottery if it becomes necessary?

Under the district's Controlled Open Enrollment Plan, seats will be assigned to each category below until there are not enough seats to fill all requests within that category. At that point, a random lottery will be used to assign seats to applicants within that category.

Category I: In-county applicants who fall into one or more preferential treatment categories identified in §1002.31, *Florida Statutes*.

Category II: Remaining in-county applicants

Category III: Out-of-county applicants

STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTING A LOTTERY

1. A random number generator will create a lottery number for each valid application. In order to be valid, an application must have been received during the enrollment window.
2. The lottery is held within a category (outlined above) once it has been determined that there are not enough available seats to approve all applications within that category. Seats will be awarded based on lottery number, from lowest to highest, until all available seats have been awarded.
3. If an application listed more than one school preference, and the first preference is not approved due to an unsuccessful lottery outcome, then the next school preference(s) will be considered. All first preference requests will be considered and seats will be assigned before any second preference requests are considered. Additionally, all second preference requests will be considered and seats will be assigned before any third requests are considered. If a student is put on a waiting list for the first preference but is accepted for the second or third preference, the student's place on the waiting list will be maintained in the event a COE seat opens. The student may temporarily accept a seat at a school of second or third preference while waiting to see if a COE seat opens up at the school of first preference.