

Putnam County School District Controlled Open Enrollment Plan

Declaring School Preference

Parents may apply for student attendance in any school outside of their attendance zone. Parents of students that are not currently subject to suspension or expulsion may seek any public educational school choice options that are applicable and available to students for Putnam County School District schools or any other applicable and available choice option throughout the state. Any such request is subject to school capacity limits. School capacity will be advertised on the individual school websites. Capacity limits will be determined by the specifications, plans, elements, and commitments contained in the school district educational facilities plan and long-term work programs required under F.S. 1013.35.

Components of the District's Controlled Open Enrollment Program

The District's controlled open enrollment program:

- A. adheres to Federal desegregation requirements;
- B. allows parents to declare school preferences, including placement of siblings within the same school;
- C. provides a lottery procedure to determine student assignment and establishes an appeals process for hardship cases;
- D. affords parents of students in multiple session schools preferred access to controlled open enrollment;
- E. maintains socioeconomic, demographic, and racial balance;
- F. addresses the availability of transportation;
- G. maintains existing academic eligibility criteria for public school choice programs pursuant to Florida law;
- H. identifies schools that have not reached capacity, as determined by the District; and
- I. ensures that preferential treatment is provided to individuals as set forth in Florida law.

Eligibility for Participation in the Controlled Open Enrollment Program

In addition to the public school choice programs available under Florida law and provided in the District pursuant to the policies listed above, a parent of a student under the age of eighteen (18) or an eligible student who lives in the District or in any other school district in the State of Florida who is not subject to a current expulsion or suspension may seek to enroll in a public school in the District that has not reached capacity, subject to the maximum class size pursuant to F.S. 1003.03 and Section 1, Art. IX of the Florida Constitution.

In determining the capacity of each District school, the Board shall incorporate the specifications, plans, elements, and commitments contained in the District's educational facilities plan and the long-term work programs required under Florida law.

A District school shall be at “capacity” once the number of enrolled students in a District school equals or exceeds the number of seats available for each of the grade levels and/or programs offered in that school.

"Capacity" as defined herein is subject to program-specific enrollment limitations. Programs with enrollment limitations may include, but are not limited to, self-contained Exceptional Student Education (ESE) programs, career-tech programs, magnet programs, international baccalaureate programs, advanced placement courses, and other academic programs that require student-teacher ratios less than the FISH capacity for that space. The capacity at each public school in the District shall be identified on each school’s website.

The District’s school interscholastic athletic program adheres to the rules and policies of the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA). A student who transfers to a school during the school year may seek to immediately join an existing team if the roster for the specific interscholastic or intrascholastic extra-curricular activity has not reached the identified maximum size for the particular activity and if the coach for the activity determines that the student has the requisite skill and ability to participate. The FHSAA and District may not declare such a student ineligible because the student did not have the opportunity to comply with qualifying requirements. However, a student may not participate in a sport if the student participated in that same sport at another school during that school year, unless the student meets one of the following criteria:

- Dependent children of active duty military personnel whose move resulted from military orders.
- Children who have been relocated due to a foster care placement in a different school zone.
- Children who move due to a court-ordered custody change (separation/divorce, serious illness/death of a custodial parent.)
- Authorized for good cause.

Authorized for good cause" means the student is able to satisfactorily demonstrate to the Principal that one of the following applies:

- The student moves to a new home address due to a move by the student and a person or person(s) with whom s/he has been previously living that makes it necessary for the student to attend a different school.
- The student moves to a new residence following marriage of the student.
- The student must immediately establish a new residence that makes it necessary to attend a different school.
- The student is reassigned to a new school pursuant to School Board policy.

- The student transfers from his/her current school within the first twenty school days to a new school (i.e., acceptance into a previously applied program, charter, or private school).
- Special assignment by the Superintendent or undue hardship.

Individual Home Education, Charter School, Florida Virtual School (FLVSFT), or Putnam Virtual School 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.

Application Process

Controlled Open Enrollment requests are made through the submission of a written application to the desired school's principal. The application forms can be obtained from one of the local schools or the district office. If you live in another county, requests to attend a Putnam County school will require submission of a written release from your home district with the application.

School Choice Open Enrollment Applications for the following school year will be accepted March 1 through July 1. Applications must be received at the requested school no later than July 1st. Decisions on these applications may not be available until after the tenth day of the school year. While the application is pending, the child must remain in attendance in their school origin. Parents/guardians will be notified of the request status via email or phone. The requested school must have available capacity. If approved, the student should be withdrawn from the current placement and enrolled at the requested school.

Students wishing to enroll in a non-traditional program at a school other than their zoned school must apply to the program prior to filing a school choice request. Please contact the school of choice and follow their requirements for acceptance into a program.

An applicant's failure to disclose information (e.g., being subject to suspension or expulsion, having a current IEP, being assigned to a Department of Juvenile Justice program, et cetera) that would be relevant to the District's determination that the applicant could be served in a program at his/her preferred or alternate schools and therefore would be accepted shall constitute grounds for revocation of approval to enroll under this policy.

Student Assignment

After the close of the application period and the determination of capacity at each school, the school shall establish waiting lists, based on order of application submission, for those students who are not accommodated based on capacity limits. Decisions on these applications may not be available until after the tenth day

of the school year. While the application is pending, the child must remain in attendance in their school origin. Preferential treatment in the controlled open enrollment process must be provided to all of the following:

1. Dependent children of active duty military personnel whose 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 separation or divorce, or the serious illness or death of a custodial parent.
4. Students in multiple session schools.
5. Students residing in the school district. (Students residing in District may not be displaced by any other applicant.)

In addition to the waiting lists, if there are more students requesting enrollment than there are spaces available, a lottery procedure that is fair to all students may be used as described below.

Lottery

The lottery will be conducted by two (2) or more staff members designated by the Principal. The lottery involves the assignment of a random number to each applicant (siblings shall be paired unless requested otherwise). Random numbers will be selected, and the applications shall be placed in order of their selection.

Late-Filed Application and Hardship Appeals

Applications received after the deadline will be reviewed and considered by the Principal after processing and placing all other student applications. Late-filed applications may be approved only if a hardship exists and there is capacity in the school(s) that the student has listed as his/her preference(s) on the application.

An appeal of a Principal's denial must be submitted in writing, must be based on hardship, and must include as much detail as possible regarding the hardship. Appeals of the Principal's decision will be considered by the Superintendent and the decision of the Superintendent is final.

A "hardship" is defined as a situation or circumstance that will have a compelling and adverse state of misfortune for the student or their family's daily life.

Maintaining Appropriate Socioeconomic, Demographic, and Racial Balance

Given our diverse society and the importance of preparing students for education, work, and citizenship, the Board is committed to providing students with equal educational opportunities, promoting educational diversity in the District, and providing students with the educational benefits of a diverse student body. To that end, should a concern arise regarding socioeconomic, demographic, or racial balance in one or more of the District's schools, the Superintendent shall consult with legal counsel to determine the appropriate steps that should be taken, including, but not limited to, any necessary policy revisions and other actions

necessary to comply with Florida and Federal law. The Superintendent shall then make the appropriate recommendations to the Board.

Availability of Transportation

Parents must provide transportation when an application for a school outside their attendance zone is approved, unless otherwise provided by Florida State Statutes, State Administrative Procedures, or Federal Codes.

Completion of Highest Grade Level

A student who enrolls through the District's controlled open enrollment program may remain at his/her current school until completion of the highest grade at the school. After completing the highest grade at the school, a student who wants to transition to the next level of the academic program at a school in which they are not zoned must reapply for enrollment through controlled open enrollment.

Parental Involvement

Parents at all schools are informed of how they may become involved in programs and committees at their child's school through school newsletters, PTO meetings, open house, and notes sent home with students, as well as newspaper articles and TV ads. Each school's school advisory council and the Title I parent advisory committee serve as parent liaisons and serve as a resource to parents. All parents are encouraged to become involved and are invited to join the parent advisory councils and other committees at their child's school.

Information Clearinghouse

Information on school choice is available at all schools and at the district office all year. The information is made available to the public annually through school newsletters, the school district's local television channel, and continually on the school district website. The district has employees who are available to all schools when a parent needs a translator.