



## Questions and Answers about Controlled Open Enrollment

1.

**Q What is Controlled Open Enrollment (COE)?**

**A** Florida Statute 1002.31 requires 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 if the school has available seats as defined by the School Board. [www.flsenate.gov/Laws/Statutes/2016/1002.31](http://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 for the following school 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 an out-of-zone 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 15 through February 15. All students with a valid application 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, the School Board shall allow a parent from any district in the state, whose child is not subject to a current expulsion or suspension, to 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 available seats?**

**A** Visit the District's website at [www.okaloosaschools.com](http://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](http://www.okaloosaschools.com) by clicking on the Controlled Open Enrollment link. The application window for Controlled Open Enrollment 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 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 21<sup>st</sup> indicating approval/denial of a seat assignment for the upcoming school year. Additionally, all schools will have a list of approved applicants by February 21<sup>st</sup>.

12.

**Q** If my child is selected in the lottery 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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 student'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. 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 current COE application window?

**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 10<sup>th</sup> 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 & Primary
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** *The District will make every effort to allow siblings to attend the same school when possible, subject to the maximum class-size requirements. A new sibling will not automatically be assigned to a school that is at or above capacity. In this case, the parent/guardian will have to apply through a hardship appeal.*

19.

**Q How do I file for a hardship?**

**A** *A parent/guardian may obtain MIS Form 5423 from 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. Athletic participation should not be the sole reason for a hardship appeal.*

20.

**Q Is my child guaranteed a Kindergarten seat in an out-of-zone school after completing a Pre-K program at the same school?**

**A** *No, the parent must submit a Controlled Open Enrollment application for Kindergarten to attend the out-of-zone school.*

21.

**Q If I accept a COE seat 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 his or her seat be forfeited?**

**A** *No. Your child may stay at the school through the highest grade offered. Transportation will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian.*

23.

**Q** Can my high school student participate in sports at any district school if they attend a private/charter/magnet/home school that does not have a sports program?

**A** No. According to Article 9 of the Florida High School Athletic Association handbook (<https://www.fhsaa.org/rules/fhsaa-handbook>), your student can participate in sports at either their zoned high school or a high school that has/had available Controlled Open Enrollment seats for the school year that your student wants to participate.

24.

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

**A** 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.