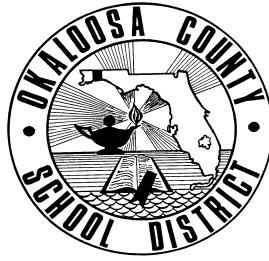


SCHOOL DISTRICT OF OKALOOSA COUNTY

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2009-10 CONTROLLED OPEN ENROLLMENT PLAN: OKALOOSA COUNTY

OVERVIEW

Okaloosa County School District's plan for Controlled School Choice Open Enrollment is to continue a system for parents' preferential school choice through a waiver application process. As defined in Florida Statute 1002.31(2), "controlled open enrollment" means that school districts may make student school assignments using preferential school choice as a significant factor.

The "Controlled Open Enrollment Plan" is in addition to the existing Okaloosa CHOICE Institutes, whereby students from all district high schools, as well as public, private, charter, and home-school students, are provided with open access to attend career institutes preparing students for aerospace, information technology, creative arts, and construction technology. CHOICE students attend their own "home" high school for most required core courses and enroll in CHOICE courses leading to national industry certifications, university credits, and qualification for high school diplomas. Approximately 2,500 high school students are enrolled in a course included in a CHOICE program progression that may lead to industry certifications upon completion of the CHOICE track.

Okaloosa also sponsors "Blended School," whereby more than 250 home-schooled students are provided with educational services, developed in coordination with home-schooling families, in non-traditional sites such as the Boys and Girls Club as well as the district's Southside Center. Students from three counties participate as a matter of choice in "Blended School" on a part-time basis.

As well, Okaloosa Schools has established The Académie, a joint venture with the Northwest Florida Ballet, in which students in grades 3-8 from any public, private, charter, parochial school or home-school setting may enroll in a European-style performing arts academy located in Fort Walton Beach, Florida. The Académie offers a full academic curriculum supplemented with rigorous dance instruction. Approximately 130 students attend on a full-time basis.

The district's ongoing "Controlled Open Enrollment Plan" provides for zoning waivers as an avenue for parents to request the relocation of their child to a school of their choice. However, exceptions are made when schools have a capped enrollment, or it is necessary to maintain a certain enrollment at designated schools. Annually, enrollment is carefully monitored to determine if a school is eligible to accept zoning waivers. In addition, maintaining a student balance in classrooms based on gender, ethnicity, academic performance and socioeconomic status is a provision of the OCS D teachers' contract.

Aside from the more than 2,000 students participating in the aforescribed CHOICE Institutes, Blended School, and Académie, the zoning waiver procedure described hereafter, has been selected by families of 2,155 students throughout the county.

Okaloosa County School District, comprised of 936 sq. miles, is located in the northwestern section of the Florida panhandle and serves approximately 28,000 students from Laurel Hill in the north end of the county to Destin in the south. The school district operates 33 neighborhood public schools, CHOICE institutes for high school students, an adult vocational-technical center, a school for severely disabled students, a performing arts academy in cooperation with the Northwest Florida Ballet, schools in cooperation with the Department of Juvenile Justice, an alternative education system, and a "blended" school approach with home-schooled students.

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NEEDS STATEMENT

In order to comply with Florida Statutes, each school district in Florida is required to develop a plan for open enrollment and provide this plan to the Florida Department of Education. Okaloosa County's zoning waiver procedures supports our district mission of *better customer service*.

The needs of parents and children can be better served through a controlled open enrollment program that allows and empowers parents to decide the best educational school program for their children. The district's school open enrollment choice plan will:

1. Define the procedure to apply for a zoning waiver to a school outside the designated attendance area.
2. Define the process for declaring school preference.
3. Define the manner in which every effort is made to ensure siblings attend the same school.
4. Define the procedure to maintain socioeconomic, gender, academic, and ethnic balance within schools.

STATEMENT OF PLAN

Students may attend a school outside of their residential zone with the approval of the Okaloosa County District School Board. Requests for a zoning waiver are initiated by the custodial parent at the preferred school of choice; the parent should obtain a waiver request (MIS form 4257) from that school and complete the required information. On the form, the parents may provide the reason(s) for the requested enrollment and identify the conditions of acceptance, to include the requirement of transportation by the parent. A meeting may be scheduled with the receiving principal to formally request approval of the waiver. Upon acceptance of the zoning waiver by the receiving school, and appropriate signatures obtained from both the parent and receiving principal, the parent will then meet with the principal of the school serving the student's residential address. The zoning waiver is completed once the accepting principal signs the form. The completed zoning waiver request will then be forwarded to the Deputy Superintendent for presentation before the Okaloosa County School Board. The parent shall be officially notified of the School Board's decision. Below is an outline of the procedures for requesting a zoning waiver.

- A. Requests for zoning waivers are initiated at the preferred school of choice by the parent or legal guardian.
- B. An approved zoning waiver shall be for the duration of the school year in which it is initiated.
- C. Additional requests for zoning waivers must be made annually.
- D. It is appropriate for a receiving principal to obtain a disciplinary and attendance history of a student in considering the acceptance of a waiver.
- E. A student attending a school on a zoning waiver must adhere to the policies, rules and regulations of the school of choice. The zoning waiver may be administratively revoked if the requirements are not honored, and the student will then be required to return to the zoned school.
- F. A school that has been deemed as closed to zoning waivers due to capacity will entertain requests based upon the following reason(s), unless a waiver restriction policy is in place:
 1. Employees of the Okaloosa County School District who work at the school of request, or at a school within that feeder pattern pending availability of space.
 2. Court ordered action on a student.
 3. A student who is currently attending a school and moves into another school zone may continue to attend the school until the end of the current school year. Parents are responsible for providing transportation to and from school.
 4. Seniors who move out of a school zone for Okaloosa County.

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- G. A school that has not reached capacity will consider zoning waivers based upon the following reasons(s):
1. Acceptance by the receiving principal based on capacity, balanced enrollment and other considerations.
 2. Employees of the Okaloosa County School District who work at the school of request, or at a school within the feeder pattern pending space availability.
 3. A student who is currently attending a school and moves into another school zone. Parents are responsible for providing transportation to and from school.
 4. A student may be considered for a waiver to complete their exit year at a school in which rezoning changed the school of attendance. Parents are responsible for providing transportation to and from school.
 5. Needs of the district, such as serving as a school of choice for NCLB.
- H. Okaloosa County makes every reasonable effort to ensure that siblings are able to attend the same school in order to prevent any undue hardship on families. Siblings of students who request a zoning waiver will also be given the same consideration, if requested by the parent, to attend the requested school.
- I. To a reasonable and practical extent, the principal ensures socioeconomic, gender, ethnic, and academic balance in classrooms, per the OCSD teachers' contract.
- J. Parent handbooks and other types of school communication inform parents of procedures pertaining to the selection of a preferred school of choice within the Okaloosa County School system. Schools keep a supply of zoning waivers in the event that parents make such a request.
- K. Each of the parental choice programs described herein is posted on the district's website – www.okaloosaschools.com. CHOICE Institutes are more fully detailed on www.choiceinstitutes.com

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