



Suwannee County School District Controlled Open Enrollment (COE) Public School Parental Choice Plan

September 2022

Beginning with the 2017-2018 school year, each District school board must adopt a Controlled Open Enrollment plan that allows a parent from any school District in the state to enroll his or her child in and transport his or her child to any public school that has not reached capacity. For more information, please see the SCSD website (<https://www.suwannee.k12.fl.us/>).

Message from the Florida Legislature



The Florida Legislature recognizes the value of an educational system and provides numerous and meaningful options for students and their parents. In order to promote and encourage parental involvement and ensure students have access to a school that meets their needs, the Florida Legislature enacted Section 1002.31, Florida Statutes, which directs each school District to develop a Controlled Open Enrollment plan.

www.fldoe.org



In an effort to meet the needs of the students who reside in Suwannee County, Florida, as well as to provide an opportunity for those who reside outside of the county to seek enrollment in the Suwannee County School District, the following Controlled Open Enrollment Public School Parental Plan options are provided:

In-County School Selection for Suwannee County Residents (SCSD Policy 5.031)

- According to SCSD Policy 5.03: *The School Board shall establish residential attendance zones for each school based upon the Superintendent's recommendation. All students, unless otherwise provided by School Board rule or authorized by the School Board's order, shall attend the school serving the student's residential attendance zone. Each residential attendance zone shall be established to achieve maximum utilization of all School Board facilities and to consider the time and distance of travel for students. The instructional capacity for each school will be set yearly by the School Board after the recommendation by the Superintendent or his/her designee ("Instructional Capacity"). For the purposes of this plan, Enrollment Capacity is defined as ten percent less than the Instructional Capacity. A student's residence is defined as the residence of his/her parent(s), legal guardian, legal custodian, or other such person as defined by any order issued by a court of competent jurisdiction of the State of Florida. Any student residing in the School District shall be assigned to a school for attendance by the Superintendent or designee based upon the Controlled Open Enrollment (COE) Public School Parental Choice Plan.*
- Parents may request reassignment to attend an out-of-zone school using the online Controlled Open Enrollment application.
- Parents participating in this school choice option are required to provide their own transportation to the nearest public bus stop in the school zone that delivers students to the approved school.
- SCSD has two school transportation zones, Branford and Live Oak. These zones define the students' assigned school(s). For students who reside in the Branford zone, Branford Elementary and Branford High Schools are the assigned schools. For students zoned for Live Oak, there are three elementary schools: Suwannee Pineview, Suwannee Riverside, and Suwannee Springcrest, in addition to Suwannee Middle School and Suwannee High School. Parents/legal guardians of elementary-age students zoned for Live Oak may select from the three schools in order to meet the educational needs for their child. Parents/legal guardians are expected to support the theme-based school activities and/or afterschool activities that reinforce the school theme.

Out of County Student Requesting to attend a Suwannee County School (Florida Statute § 1002.31)

- According to s. 1002.31, F.S., Controlled Open Enrollment is defined as a public education delivery system that allows school districts to make student school assignments using parents' indicated preferential educational choice as a significant factor.
- Parents may request Out of County attendance using the Controlled Open Enrollment application found on the website under Controlled Open Enrollment.
- Eligibility Requirements
 - A parent from any school district in the state whose child is not subject to a current expulsion or suspension may apply 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. Florida residence must be established and approved prior to enrollment.
 - The Suwannee County School District is charged by s. 1002.31, F.S. to maintain socioeconomic, demographic, and racial balance in all schools when implementing Controlled

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Open Enrollment. Our goal is to ensure that this process selects families for enrollment in a non-biased manner. The random-selection lottery procedure will help to ensure that this goal is achieved. Periodically, data will be reviewed to ensure the targets for each school will be proportionate to the community as a whole.

- The requested school must be on the Controlled Open Enrollment (COE) available school list and not currently be at or over capacity.
- Pre-K programs are not mandatory. Therefore, COE options are not available for Pre-K students. Pre-K out-of-county requests should be made directly with the Director of Curriculum and Instruction.
- Factors Considered
 - A determination is made on the current capacity of each school as determined by class size pursuant to s. 1003.03, F.S., and s. 1, Art. IX of the State Constitution, in conjunction with projected class size numbers for each school in order to ensure each school has the capacity to sustain the additional out-of-county students over time (until the highest grade level at the school).
 - The calculation for compliance with maximum class size pursuant to s. 1003.03(4) is the average number of students at the school level.
 - Calculations to determine COE eligible schools will be made and updated annually.
 - Students residing in the District may not be displaced by a student from another District seeking enrollment under the Controlled Open Enrollment process.
 - Once this determination has been made, the names of the schools that have capacity for public school choice will be posted on the Suwannee County School District's website (<https://www.suwannee.k12.fl.us/>) with the Controlled Open Enrollment application so parents may apply accordingly.
 - A school is considered open for COE when the school's projected enrollment is less than 80% of the determined capacity of the school.
- Availability of Transportation
 - 1002.31, F.S. states that a school district may provide transportation to students associated with public school parental choice.
 - SCSD will provide transportation when there are seats available on the appropriate route for the out-of-county student as decided by the Transportation Department.
 - Out-of-county students may ride Suwannee County School buses provided the student boards at the nearest, in-county, public bus stop (voting precinct, etc.) and the bus is not overcrowded (SCSD School Board Policy 8.13).
 - School routes are designed to deliver students to a zoned school. When seats are available on a route, the first stop for an out-of-county, school choice student would be at the first available existing stop within the District and then to the appropriate zoned school.
 - Special connecting routes or extension of existing routes will not be created to transport an out-of-county, school choice student.
 - Routes will be reconfigured annually and the availability of transportation for COE is not guaranteed from year to year. It will be determined on whether or not the route has open capacity for COE students.
- Preferential Treatment will be provided to all of the following through the Controlled Open Enrollment Process:
 - 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;

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- 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; and
- Students residing in the District.
- Controlled Open Enrollment and Athletics (additional information fhsaa.com)
 - A school district may not delay eligibility or otherwise prevent a student participating in Controlled Open Enrollment or a choice program from being immediately eligible to participate in interscholastic and intrascholastic extracurricular activities.
 - 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 change in custody due to separation, divorce, or the serious illness or death of a custodial parent; or
 - Authorized for good cause in District per District policy/procedures (e.g., involvement in an incident that is considered catastrophic, tragic, or devastating in nature).
- Application Process
 - Parents may obtain applications on the District's website.
(<https://www.suwannee.k12.fl.us/>).
 - Applications will be reviewed for approval/denial within ten school days.
 - One application should be submitted for each child applying for enrollment.
 - Students previously approved to attend as an out-of-county student will not need to reapply for Controlled Open Enrollment unless they are making the following grade level transitions:
 - Ending 5th grade and entering 6th grade;
 - Ending 8th grade and entering 9th grade (Live Oak only); or
 - After withdrawing from the School District.
 - Parents of students with siblings may declare school preferences and request placement of siblings within the same school on each application based on the following:
 - Sibling is defined as brother, sister, half-brother, half-sister, step-brother, or step-sister that lives in the same household.
 - Verification will be made by the District and additional documentation may be required.
 - If necessary due to capacity restrictions, applications indicating a request for siblings to attend the same school will be placed in the lottery as one unit, and, if selected, all will be accepted.
- Application Review
 - All applicants will be accepted for review if the requested school has capacity.
 - If the number of Controlled Open Enrollment student applications is greater than the number of seats available for a particular school, then students who qualify for preferential treatment will be admitted first, and a lottery procedure will be utilized to fill the remaining seats.
 - If the lottery is utilized, all applications will be numbered (with siblings grouped) after being chosen randomly.
 - If there are students who do not enroll within ten days of being approved, final determinations for additional approvals will be made by the first day of school if there are

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still seats available at the school.

- Notification of Acceptance/Denial
 - All applicants will be notified via U.S. mail by the deadlines posted on the website (see Controlled Open Enrollment) of acceptance/denial.
 - A parent must accept the opportunity by initiating the enrollment process on the District's online registration portal within ten school days of being notified.
 - If a student is not approved for attendance, it is the parent's responsibility to enroll the student in the appropriate school in the District that corresponds with their residence or to seek enrollment in another school District.
 - Upon obtaining approval for enrollment, the approved student will be allowed to remain at that school until he/she completes the highest grade level at that school. The application process must be repeated when a student is due to transfer to a new school.
 - If accepted, enrollment may be revoked at any time during the school year due to poor attendance, lack of academic progress, disciplinary issues, and/or failure of student/parent to comply with District policies.
- Appeals Process
 - The appeals process will be automatically initiated after the lottery process is complete for hardship cases. All denied applications indicating a hardship (see below) will be reviewed by the School Choice Committee, convened by the Superintendent.
 - Appeals will only be processed within ten school days of the denial.
 - Decisions made by the Superintendent pursuant to review and recommendation by the School Choice Committee on the appeal are final.
 - Hardships – A parent/guardian may identify on the Controlled Open Enrollment application any hardship to be considered; the hardship will only be considered through an appeals process if the student is NOT chosen through the procedures outlined in this document. A hardship is defined as one of the following:
 - The student is an immediate family member (living in the same household) of a SCSD employee.
 - Students with siblings already attending the requested school.
 - Students currently enrolled as a Suwannee County resident who move out of county and wish to remain at their school.
 - Students experiencing other extraordinary or extenuating circumstances.
 - If the original application did not indicate a hardship and circumstances have changed, parents may file a written appeal at the Superintendent's office and the appeals process will be followed.
 - If approved, students may be revoked at any time during the school year due to poor attendance, lack of academic progress, disciplinary issues, and/or failure of student/parent to comply with District policies.
- Determining Capacity
 - The number of students who can be served by a school is identified and validated yearly on the Florida Inventory of School Houses (FISH) Report. A school has reached capacity when it has filled at least 80% of its student stations/seats. Additionally, available personnel (number of classroom teachers) must be considered when considering capacity at each individual school.
 - If a school has enrollment at or exceeding 80% of its student stations/seats, then the school will not be open for Controlled Open Enrollment.
 - If a school's enrollment is less than 80% of its student stations/seats, then the school will be open for Controlled Open Enrollment.

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- If a school is open and a particular grade level has enrollment exceeding the state class size requirements, that grade level will be closed.
- See the chart below to determine which schools are open for Controlled Open Enrollment.