

# Pinellas County Schools

## Student Assignment Procedures

The assignment of students will be pursuant to the following procedures.

### **(1) Guiding Principles of the Student Assignment Procedures**

The principles of the Student Assignment Procedures are aligned to federal and state law, Board policies, and the District Strategic Plan. The guiding principles of the student assignment plan are the following:

- A. predictable feeder patterns;
- B. multiple school options and choices to address individual family circumstances;
- C. zoned schools that are reasonably close to each student's residence;
- D. public school choice programs/schools to increase student access to peers from multiple cultures and diverse backgrounds that possess a broad variety of diverse skills, talents, and abilities, to promote and maintain the educational benefits of a diverse student body;
- E. that transportation issues for parents and families are reduced, along with transportation costs for the District;
- F. a simple enrollment process;
- G. consistency in the application of the Plan;
- H. equitable allocation of funds and resources to schools and programs, meaning that certain schools and programs will receive proportionately higher funding and resources than other schools or programs based upon needs demonstrated through verifiable data. The degree of funding will be determined during the annual budget process; and
- I. school zones are contiguous.

### **(2) Defining School Capacity**

A Functional Program Capacity will be determined annually for all schools. Functional Program Capacity determinations for district schools will be posted annually on the district's website.

The following will be taken into consideration when determining Functional Program Capacity:

- A. density of population, demographic patterns and planned residential property development;
- B. permanent program capacity of school facilities, the Florida Inventory of School Houses (FISH), specifications, plans, elements, and commitments contained in the school district educational facilities plan and the long-term work programs and capital outlay plan;
- C. programs located at the school including, but not limited to, Exceptional Education Students (ESE), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Pre-Kindergarten, Gifted, Science Labs, Technology/Computer Labs, Speech/Language, Occupational/Physical Therapy, Art/Music;

- D. transportation patterns;
- E. educational offerings;
- F. placement of District application programs and schools;
- G. the school's staffing model, and
- H. the guiding principles of the Plan as set forth above.

Functional Program Capacity will be controlled through a five (5) year plan just as are construction and capital improvements. Any additional changes to program capacity shall be made between school years unless program needs require an immediate adjustment to be made.

Functional Program Capacity will be used to determine schools with available seats for school choice as required by F.S. 1002.31. Schools with a Functional Program Capacity over 95% will be classified as Overcrowded. Schools with a Functional Program Capacity less than 95% will be classified as Having Available Seats at Some Grades.

Parents may request seats at any school, but essentially no or very few (likely siblings) choice seats will be awarded at schools designated as Overcrowded. Twenty percent of available seats will be awarded through choice at the grades that have 5 or more open seats during the Special Assignment Request (SAR) process. Likewise, seats will be awarded to out-of-county residents through the Special Attendance Permit (SAP) process at schools and grades that have available seats year round.

The Board seeks to minimize the rezoning of residential grids to the extent reasonably possible. The aspirational goal is that, unless necessitated by school closings, a student will not be rezoned more than once at each of the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

### **(3) Process for Determining a Student's Zoned School**

The district is divided into grids, which are used to create school zones. The grids are contained in the Grid Atlas that divides the county into 1,123 unique grids. The Grid Atlas, dated March, 15, 2011 and amended December 6, 2011, which is maintained in the Student Assignment Office, is incorporated herein by reference. From the grids are established 15 high school, 16 middle school, and 63 elementary school zones. Periodically school zone boundaries are redefined, for the purposes set forth above, by the addition or deletion of grids. Upon enrollment and change of residence, a student's address of record is matched to a grid, and the four (4) digit grid number becomes part of the student's record.

A student's school zone is determined by associating the student's residential address with a grid, which in turn is associated with a school zone. Parents can identify their child's zoned school by using the Zone School Locator at <https://sap.pinellas.k12.fl.us/PubInfo/> or by contacting the Student Assignment Office at:

301 4<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Largo, FL 33770  
727-588-6210

### **Falsification of Residential Address and Address Verification**

District forms pertaining to residence and household membership shall be verified under penalties of perjury.

Where there is a reasonable suspicion that a student is not residing at the claimed address, the District may conduct an investigation and require updated information from the parent. If it is determined that the

parent submitted fraudulent documents the student shall be withdrawn from the enrolled school and reassigned to the appropriate school. The fraudulent documents may be submitted to the State Attorney's office for prosecution.

State law provides that whoever knowingly makes a false statement in writing with the intent to mislead a public servant in the performance of his/her official duty commits a misdemeanor of the second degree. Additionally, a person who knowingly makes a false declaration under penalties of perjury commits a felony of the third degree. (F.S. 92.525 and 837.06)

### **Notice of Change of Address**

Parents are responsible for notifying the school principal via the Student Reservation System if there is a change in residence or custody of the student, even if the parent thinks the student is still in the school's zone. The parent must tell the principal within five (5) days of the change. Failure to give timely notice may result in a reassignment to the student's zoned school and/or loss of eligibility for athletics and other activities.

### **(4) School Closings and Conversions**

Schools will be closed only after careful consideration of such factors as overall student enrollment, class size requirements, demographic trends, and cost of facility maintenance.

The principal, the area superintendent, and the Director of Student Assignment shall meet with parents and the school community to explain the proposal and to gather input and concerns.

The Superintendent shall consider all available input before preparing a written recommendation for approval by the Board. Copies of this recommendation shall simultaneously be sent to the school principal(s) and the School Advisory Council(s).

### **(5) Relocatable Classrooms**

The District may place relocatable classrooms at a school only as required to meet student station or program capacity requirements and only if the school is able to support them. A school's ability to support relocatables is determined by the size of the dining area, the size of the site, and the number of restrooms at each school.

The program capacity of the permanent facilities, plus the program capacity of the relocatables placed according to the above principles will be the total program capacity for each school. Student assignments will be made to schools according to the capacity available.

### **(6) Student Assignment Process**

#### **General**

Students are assigned to schools based upon their acceptance to a District application program, placement in their zoned school, special program, or other school choice options. The timeline for assignments will be announced each year.

- A. Students in Kindergarten, Grade 6, and Grade 9 shall be assigned to their zoned school based on space availability. Students in other grades who are new to the District, as well as those students who have a change in residence will be assigned to their zoned school based on space availability. If space is not available at the zoned school, the student will be assigned to another school in the transportation cluster on a space available basis.

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B. Students at any grade level who move out of one zone into another zone during the school year may remain at their current school for the remainder of the school year, but will not be afforded transportation. Students will be assigned to their zoned school the following school year. However, students who move during their eleventh grade school year may remain at their current school through graduation, but shall also not be afforded transportation.

C. Change of Residence

If the primary legal residence of the parent, legal guardian, other person with whom the student primarily resides, or the adult student changes during the school year, parents may choose to have their child remain in the school for the remainder of the school year, but will not be afforded transportation. Parents are responsible to ensure timely student arrival and pickup. In the event of excessive tardies, excessive late pickups, or excessive absences, or in the event of behavioral issues attributable to the school assignment, the student may be reassigned to the zoned school. Students will be assigned to their zoned or space available school for the following school year.

D. Professional Courtesy for Parents Employed by Board

Children of full-time Board employees may be assigned to the school site at which their parents are employed full-time. Children of full-time Board employees may also be granted zoning exceptions on a space-available basis. These transfers are granted with the understanding that the arrangement will not interfere with the work hours or the responsibilities of the employee and that s/he must arrange before and/or after-school care for the child. Students assigned under professional courtesy may remain at the school as long as the parent/guardian is employed at the site.

E. Exceptional Student Education (ESE)

Students who qualify for Exceptional Student Education programs will exercise their options from among the schools that offer the needed services. These students will not be disadvantaged in the assignment process.

F. Changing Schools During the Year

Changing schools during the school year may occur when there is a change of address, acceptance into a district application program, substantiated hardship, or administrative reason.

G. Leaving a District Application Program

Students who leave an application program to participate in early admission to college, including the Early College Program, will not receive a certificate of magnet program completion. These students will remain assigned to the regular education program at the most recently attended high school through graduation or until they exit the college program. Students who leave the college program by choice or for failure to meet the requirements will be assigned to their zoned high school, or another nearby high school if a zoned seat is not available, to complete their high school requirements.

## **(7) Public School of Choice Options**

Pinellas County Schools has been declared a Unitary district and the Student Assignment Policy and Public School of Choice Options are race neutral.

A. District Application Programs

District application programs are ones to which students must apply for admission. These programs include fundamental programs, magnets, and career and technical programs. District

Application Programs are often strategically located in schools in need of a more diverse population accomplished through targeted recruitment of under-represented populations of students.

The purpose of these programs is to provide choice opportunities and promote diversity for the students of Pinellas County while voluntarily desegregating schools. A school is considered diverse when the demographics of the enrolled population more closely mirror the demographics of the students residing in the school's attendance zone. In schools where the zoned population's demographics are not diverse, increasing diversity will be defined as increasing the enrollment of students of races other than the majority race. To accomplish these ends, the district establishes application areas or applicant pools that are significantly more diverse than the attendance zone and employs a variety of targeted marketing and recruitment efforts to increase the number of students making application from the application area/pool.

All students enter District Application Programs through the application process. A computer random selection process is used if the number of applications exceeds the number of seats available for students. The number of seats available is based on the staffing model and the Functional School Capacity. The number of openings determines the number of invitations. The computer assigns all applicants a random number. The completed process yields one randomly numbered list of applicants. No applicant's random number will be released prior to the designated notification date on the Magnet, Fundamental and Career Programs timeline.

**B. Special Assignment Request (SAR)**

Parents may make a special assignment request for their children to attend a non-zoned school. Parents must make such a request in accordance with a timeline and procedures that are published annually on the District's website. Parents will be notified of the decision to attend a non-zoned school for the coming school year prior to the end of the current school year, or during the summer. Requests will not be granted unless there is space available. Students granted a Special Assignment Request may remain at the assigned school through the highest grade. Students granted a Special Assignment Request to a non-zoned school are responsible for transporting their child to and from school safely and on time.

Special assignment requests shall be received during the published time period. After the end of the request period, all requests shall be assigned a computer-generated random number. Sibling requests shall be assigned first, starting with the lowest random numbered request. Students who had been in attendance at the requested school the prior year are assigned next, starting with the lowest random number request. After sibling and previously attending student requests are addressed, remaining requests will be assigned starting with the lowest numbered request.

Additionally, the following will be provided preferential treatment through the Special Assignment Request process;

- 1) dependent children of active-duty military personnel whose move resulted from military orders;
- 2) students who have been relocated due to a foster care placement into another school zone;
- 3) students who move to another school zone due to a court-ordered change in custody due to separation or divorce, or the serious illness or death of a custodial parent.

Late SARs will be accepted after the initial application period each year for the following school year. Special Assignment Requests will not be accepted during the current school year. Students will not lose their current seat assignment until parents accept the special assignment.

## **(8) Zoning Exceptions**

Whenever possible, zoning exceptions shall be requested by June 30th prior to the start of the academic year. In addition to the Public School Choice Options above, parents may request individual assignment exceptions for the following reasons:

### **A. Medical Condition**

A request may be made if the student has a medical condition that requires attendance at a different school from the one assigned. A written order from a licensed physician documenting one of the following medical conditions is required for a transfer based on medical condition.

1. Tube feeding
2. Catheterization
3. Colostomy care
4. Tracheostomy care
5. Required insulin injections when the student cannot self inject

The order must include:

1. a description of the student's condition;
2. the reason this condition requires the removal of the student from his/her zoned school;
3. the reason this condition requires the enrollment of the student in the requested school;
4. the duration of time for which the zoning exception is needed.

### **B. Homeless Students**

The District is sensitive to the fact that there are homeless students who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement. The students have special rights and protections under Federal and State law and Board policy. See paragraph (10)B.1. and School Board Policy 5111.01 — Homeless Students.

### **C. Students Residing in Another County – Special Attendance Permit (SAP)**

If a parent, legal guardian, other person with primary legal custody, or an adult student has his/her primary legal residence in a county other than this county, s/he may apply for an exception known as a Special Attendance Permit (SAP). The student must obtain release from the district of residence and complete a Special Attendance Permit Application (PCS Form 4-302). Special Attendance Permit requests will be accepted for both the current school year and the next school year.

If approved for school attendance in the District, the student will be assigned to the requested school, provided the school has available space and it is the best interest of the educational

program at the school. Students granted a Special Attendance Permit may remain at the assigned school through the highest grade.

A student on suspension or who has been expelled cannot be approved for transfer to the District.

Additionally, the following will be provided preferential treatment through the Special Attendance Permit process;

- 1) dependent children of active-duty military personnel whose move resulted from military orders;
- 2) students who have been relocated due to a foster care placement into another school zone;
- 3) students who move to another school zone due to a court-ordered change in custody due to separation or divorce, or the serious illness or death of a custodial parent.

No student residing in the district may be displaced by a student from another district.

D. Temporary Supervision within the County

A student who lives within the District but whose parent, legal guardian, or other person with primary legal custody lives outside the county may be enrolled if, in accordance with applicable law, a relative or other responsible adult accepts in writing the temporary supervision.

E. Siblings of ESE Students

If an ESE student is assigned to a non-zoned school for ESE services, his/her siblings may be considered for assignment to the same school on a space available basis. The student may remain in the school until the ESE sibling has completed the highest grade.

F. Hardship

If the student's attendance in the assigned school creates substantial and undue hardship for the family, a request for a hardship exception will be considered. The hardship must be based upon unusual facts and circumstances applicable to the individual parent, legal guardian, other legal custodian, or adult student in question. Hardship exceptions shall be granted based upon a case-by-case analysis by the Student Assignment Department of such facts and circumstances.

G. Administrative Placement

Unanticipated attendance issues that arise due to custody issues, legal situations, and administrative circumstances.

**(9) Zoning Exception Rules**

The following provisions apply to all zoning exceptions:

- A. The student's behavior and school attendance may be considered when reviewing requests for assignment exceptions.

- B. A student's zoning exception may be revoked by the Area Superintendent if the student has multiple unexcused absences, excessive disciplinary referrals, or is not making sufficient academic progress.
- C. The Board provides transportation to students with zoning exceptions on an individual basis.
- D. In reviewing requests for hardship zoning exceptions, consideration shall be given to whether the requested school has sufficient space available for the student and is projected to have sufficient space for the student in the future.

#### **(10) Special Circumstances**

A. The Student Assignment Department staff will assist in the assignment process of:

1. homeless students as defined in Board Policy 5111.01;
2. students in foster care;
3. full-time school based employees who request for their children to attend the school where the employee works full-time;

Staff will make reasonable efforts to provide an assignment that is appropriate for the individual circumstances.

Parents will visit a school or contact the Student Assignment Office to initiate the registration and assignment process. All assignments are based upon available space at schools, except for Kindergarten, Grade 6, and Grade 9.

#### **(11) Eligibility for Extra-Curricular Activities for Home Education, Charter School, Virtual, and Private School Students**

Home education, charter school, and private school students are eligible to participate in extracurricular activities at their zoned school in accordance with State law, Federal law, and District policies, as well as rules and regulations of any governing body recognized by the Board.

#### **(12) Private School, Virtual, and Home Education Students**

Services shall be provided to private school and home education students with disabilities or who are gifted at their zoned school or at such other location as required by applicable law and Board policy.

Home education students who desire to enroll in public school courses shall be assigned on a space available basis to their zoned school or to the school where the course or courses are offered

#### **(13) Appeals**

Parents who believe the established procedures regarding the assignment process have not been followed as written may appeal to the Director of Student Assignment, who will determine whether the assignment process has been followed and whether reconsideration of assignment is appropriate. Parents who wish to appeal the decision of the Director of Student Assignment must do so within five (5) working days of the date of receipt of the Director's decision. The appeal shall be in writing and directed to the Associate Superintendent, Operational Services, who shall render a decision within five (5) working days. The Associate Superintendent, Operational Services' decision shall be final. The student shall remain in the assigned school during the appeal process.



## **(14) Obtaining Information about the Student Assignment Plan**

### **Introduction**

The student assignment plan needs to be effectively communicated throughout the community. Parents needing information should go to any school, the Student Assignment Office, or visit the District's website ([www.pcsb.org](http://www.pcsb.org)). Resources shall include but not be limited to:

- A. school choice options
- B. specific information about available schools
- C. directions for selecting a school
- D. transportation information
- E. Exceptional Student Education information
- F. assistance for parents who do not speak English or with limited literacy skills
- G. Public School Choice options and charter school opportunities.

### **Parent Outreach**

District staff members will employ various outreach strategies, including, but not limited to, visiting libraries, day care centers and community centers, and speaking to parent groups about the registration process, the academic programs and opportunities for parental involvement in their public school. There will be an aggressive marketing plan directed to the economically and educationally disadvantaged populations to inform and educate them about special programs in the District on an annual basis.

## **(15) Superintendent's Authority**

The Superintendent may assign or reassign a student to any school or program in the District if in the judgment of the Superintendent, such assignment or reassignment is in the best interest of the student, another student, staff, or the District in general.

## **(16) Annual Review**

The Superintendent shall conduct an annual review of the Student Assignment Plan to determine if any improvements are necessary or appropriate. The Superintendent shall be authorized to retain the services of an outside evaluation contractor to examine the effectiveness of the Plan in attaining the stated guiding principles. The contract amount shall be subject to Board approval if beyond the Superintendent's delegated authority. The annual review will include, but not be limited to, consideration of the Plan's effectiveness in creating schools zones, creating predictable feeder patterns, providing multiple school options, and to the extent possible creating opportunities for students to attend diverse school assignments. The Superintendent or designee shall include the results of the review and any recommended changes to the Plan in the Superintendent's annual report to the District Monitoring and Advisory Committee (DMAC) made pursuant to Board Policy 2130.

Thereafter, the Superintendent shall present such results and recommendations, together with any recommendations DMAC deems appropriate, to the Board for consideration and appropriate action.

## **(17) Glossary of Terms**

**Appeals Process.** The process that outlines the steps a parent may take when s/he feels the rules or procedures of the Student Assignment Plan were not followed.

**Assignment Process.** The process used to fill the student spaces at a school using the provisions of the student assignment plan.

**Zoned School.** The designated school for each student in the District determined by consideration and weighing of factors including, without limitation, proximity, keeping neighborhood students together to the extent practicable, program capacity, and feeder patterns from one (1) school level to the next.

**Equitable Funding.** Allocation of funds and resources meaning that certain schools and programs will receive proportionately higher funding and resources than other schools or programs based upon needs demonstrated through verifiable data

**Functional Program Capacity.** The number of spaces available at a given school based upon State and District guidelines for room usage, staffing model, and class size amendment rules and provisions listed herein.

**Proximity.** The distance a student lives from the school. All proximity distances will be computed to the nearest hundredth of a mile.

**Hardship.** The student's attendance in the assigned school creates substantial and undue hardship for the family. The hardship must be based upon unusual facts and circumstances applicable to the individual parent, legal guardian, other legal custodian, or adult student in question. Hardship exceptions shall be granted based upon a case-by-case analysis of such facts and circumstances.

**Public School of Choice.** A school or programs that provides students options to choose a school other than their zoned school.

**School Diversity.** A school is considered diverse when the demographics of the enrolled population more closely mirrors the demographics of the students residing in the school's attendance zone. In schools where the zoned population's demographics are not diverse, increasing diversity will be defined as increasing the enrollment of students of races other than the majority race.

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