

Gadsden County Controlled Open Enrollment Plan 2024-2025

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Open Enrollment Policies

“Controlled open enrollment” means a public education delivery system that allows school districts to make student school assignments using parents’ indicated preferential educational choice as a significant factor.

Introduction:

Florida Statute 1002.31 states that “...beginning with the 2017-2018 school year, each district school board shall allow a parent from any school 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”.

1. Application Process

The School Board shall establish residential attendance zones for each school. All students, unless otherwise provided by School Board rule or authorized by the School Board’s order, should attend the school serving the student’s residential attendance zone. A student’s residence is the residence of his/her parents(s), as defined by Florida Statutes. Any student residing in the School District shall be assigned to a school for attendance by the Superintendent or his designee.

The Gadsden County School District (GCSD) gladly honors school choice from any parent/guardian. Open enrollment options are available for parents to choose a school outside their residential attendance zone school. Gadsden County School District allows parents from any school 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 in the district, including charter schools, that have not reached capacity subject to the maximum class size pursuant to Florida Statutes and the Controlled Open Enrollment Plan adopted by the School Board. No student shall be permitted to transfer, enroll, or be admitted to a school when he/she has been expelled or suspended from another school district. This prohibition shall be effective for the period in which the student was expelled or suspended from another district. Such students shall be accorded the same appeals procedure which is available for district students.

Any parent wishing to apply for school choice options should complete the following steps:

1. The parent/guardian will complete the GCSD’s Application for Attendance to request

permission to attend a school different from the student's zoned school. This form is available on the district's website, at the Parent Resource Center, or at any GCSD school. The form must be completed in its entirety and must have attached any additional justifications/documentation and proof of residency at the time of submission to the school.

2. The parent/guardian will complete a Controlled Open Enrollment Student Performance Contract which is available on the district's website, at the district office, or at any GCPS school.

Once the school receives **ALL** the required items, the request will be reviewed. The parent/guardian will be notified in writing via U.S. Mail within two weeks or as soon as a decision is made. Due to this process, students may not be allowed to enroll in the choice school at the time the Application for Attendance is submitted. Once notification of acceptance has been received, the parent/guardian may enroll the student in the approved school.

Charter school open enrollment processes may provide enrollment preferences consistent with the enrollment preferences permitted under the charter school statute (s. 1002.33(10), F.S.), if such preferences are included in the charter school contract. The charter school shall annually post on its website the application process required to participate in controlled open enrollment. Determination of capacity must be listed on the charter school website and must be consistent with its charter school contract.

GCSD does not operate a home education program. However, the parent/guardian only registers with the school superintendent for the purpose of complying with the state's attendance requirements under s. 1003.21(1). Additionally, the district will help parents to facilitate the registration processes available under approved Virtual Instruction Provider (VIP) contracts as it is required to do under the state's attendance requirements (s. 1003.21(1) F.S.). If a parent or guardian chooses to homeschool their child(ren), the Superintendent shall accept a notice of intent to set up a home school program and shall immediately register the home education program upon receipt of the notice. The notice of intent must come from the parent/guardian and include the full legal name, address and date of birth of all children who shall be enrolled as students in the home education program. If the student chooses to participate in a school district program, additional information or verification from the parent will be required.

The assigned school for an out-of-district student shall be designated based on space available. Such transfers shall be made on a nondiscriminatory basis and shall not result in reducing desegregation in either the school district or in reinforcing the dual school system. The student will be accepted pursuant to the district's controlled open enrollment process described below, and the district will report the student for purposes of the district's funding pursuant to the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP). Students residing in the district shall not be displaced by a student from another district who is seeking enrollment through the open enrollment provisions.

The Controlled Open Enrollment Process is approved by the School Board and is consistent with the School Board Policy 5.23*+. The process includes, but is not limited to the following:

- A. Eligibility requirements
- B. Application process for parents to notify the school district of their desire to be part of Controlled Open Enrollment,
- C. Forty-five (45) daytime period for accepting applications,
- D. Method of determining the capacity of schools,
- E. Capacity determination for each district school,
- F. Identification of schools that have not reached capacity,
- G. Class size standards (pursuant to s. 1003.03(4), F.S.),
- H. Lottery procedure for determining student assignment, if transfer requests exceed available space,
- I. Provision for a parent to request placement of siblings within the same school,
- J. Appeals process for hardship cases,
- K. Availability of transportation; and
- L. Method and timeline for notifying a parent of his/her child's placement for the next school year.

The process for implementation must:

- A. Adhere to federal desegregation requirements,
- B. Maintain socioeconomic, demographic, and racial balance,
- C. Allow a student to remain at the chosen school until he/she completes the highest grade level at the school, and
- D. Maintain existing academic eligibility criteria for public school choice programs.

Information about school choice and special programs is provided annually to the community through parent communication links, listservs, school mail-outs, backpack disseminations, individual program promotional materials, open houses at school sites, parent orientation meetings, school visits, and through the district's Family and Community Engagement (FACE) office.

Open enrollment options include school choice for grandfathering, sibling support, over/under capacity schools, school safety, and other parent hardships. Preferential treatment will be given to dependent children of active duty military personnel who has or will be transferred by military orders to an installation within the school district; 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 from separation or divorce; children who have moved due to the serious illness or death of a custodial parent; students at multiple session schools; and students residing in the district.

In all cases, applications for school choice are available at all public schools, the FACE Office, on the district website, or by mail or fax, as requested. The form provides instructions, information, and contact information for questions and support. Applications are processed by the FACE Office. Applications for magnet and special programs are processed at the individual school level in accordance with each program's admission criteria. Determinations about student eligibility for acceptance into the special program are made based on eligibility of the program.

Applications for other choice options are reviewed by the FACE Office and the Superintendent, or his designee, taking into consideration any hardships that may need to be accommodated. The FACE Office then updates the student information system. A notification letter responding to a school choice application is sent to parents as soon as possible, including an appeal process in the case of a denial for reassignment based on hardship at a school that is over capacity. Parents with an approved school choice request are directed to the new school to proceed with student enrollment.

2. Process for Declaring School Preference

Gadsden County School Choice options are available on our website www.gadsdenschools.org. Applications can be downloaded from the web or picked up at any Gadsden County Public School, at the district office, or at the Parent Resource Center. Additional applications may be required by special programs.

Gadsden County School Choice programs include:

- (22) Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses, with over (106) CTE sections offered in GCSD's secondary schools
- District-owned technical college designed to meet secondary and postsecondary students at their diverse skills level (Gadsden Technical College)
- Advanced Placement (AP) course opportunities in mathematics, language arts, science, social studies, music, and art (Gadsden County High School and Crossroad Academy)
- AVID education (Gadsden County High School, James A. Shanks Middle School, and West Gadsden Middle School)
- Journalism (Gadsden County High School)
- Gifted Programs (Gadsden Elementary School and District-wide via Exceptional Student Education Department)
- Art and Music Education
- Virtual School opportunities via K12/FUEL Virtual; Florida Virtual School (FLVS); PAEC FLVS Virtual Franchise; and through Home Education.
- Dual Enrollment Agreements with all local colleges and universities
- Athletic competition programs

Per District School Policy 5.20+, (Assignment Within District), a student may be permitted to attend a school other than the school serving the parents' residential area by completing a Request for Out-of-Zone Assignment Form and submitting the form for the approval or disapproval of the Superintendent or Designee. Parents who choose to send their child to a school outside their home residential zone will be responsible for providing transportation.

A student who has been attending, in the year prior to the designation, a public school that has been classified as performance grade category "F" or has earned three (3) consecutive grades of "D" or a student who is assigned to a public school that has been designated as

performance grade category “F” or has earned three (3) consecutive grades of “D” may attend a higher performing public school in the district, virtual or home school, or a school in another district as allowed by law. The district will provide transportation to a student impacted by Florida Statutes for Opportunity Scholarship. Designation of schools within the district included in Opportunity Scholarship Options are determined by Florida Department of Education (FDOE).

Family Empowerment Scholarship (FES) Program: Gadsden shall honor a school choice opportunity for low-income and working-class families that is designed to extend support to middle-income families. Following the 2019 Legislative Session, Governor Ron DeSantis signed SB 7070, which creates the FES Program and provides 18,000 students life-changing education opportunities for academic and career success. A student is eligible for a scholarship if the student meets the following criteria:

- The student’s household income level does not exceed 300% of the federal poverty level (\$77,250 for a family of four) or the student is on the direct certification list (list of children who qualify for the food assistance program, the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program, or the Food Distribution on Indian Reservations program), or
- The student is currently placed, or during the previous state fiscal year was placed, in foster care or in out-of-home care as defined in s. 39.01, **and**
- The student is eligible to enroll in kindergarten or has spent the prior school year (2018-19) in attendance at a Florida public school. Prior attendance means the student was enrolled in and in attendance at a Florida public school during both October and February student counts.

Prior to scholarship funds being awarded, the student must be accepted and enrolled in a participating private school. A private school that is currently eligible to participate in any of the scholarship programs is eligible to participate in the FES. However, parents should contact the schools to inquire as to whether the private school will participate in the program. The student will remain eligible until he/she graduates from high school or turns 21 years of age, whichever first. It is parental responsibility to request the scholarship from the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) at least 60 days prior to the first payment due date at the school of their choice.

The Hope Scholarship: Beginning with the 2018-2019 school year, a student enrolled in a Florida public school in kindergarten through grade 12 are provided the opportunity to transfer to another public school with the capacity or enroll in an approved private school under the Hope Scholarship, if they have been subjected to any of the following:

- a. battery, to include sexual battery
- b. harassment, to include sexual harassment
- c. hazing
- d. bullying
- e. kidnapping
- f. simple battery

- g. robbery
- h. sexual offenses
- i. assault
- j. threat or intimidation
- k. fighting at school

Incidents reported may be investigated at the district level; however, there does not have to be substantiation on the part of the district to offer a transfer to another public school with the capacity or ability for the student to move to an eligible private school on scholarship.

Section 1002.40, Florida Statutes (F.S.), was established and provides the parent of a public-school who was subjected to an incident of bullying or violence (a complete list of incidents is found in section 1002.40(3), F.S., an opportunity to transfer to another public school, or request a scholarship for the student to enroll in and attend a participating private school. The law states in part, "Upon receipt of a report of an incident, the school principal, or his/her designee, shall provide a copy of the report to the parent and investigate the incident to determine if the incident must be reported as required by s.1006.09. Within 24 hours after receipt of the report, the principal or his/her designee shall provide a copy of the report to the parent of the alleged offender and to the superintendent. Upon conclusion of the investigation or within 15 days after the incident was reported, whichever occurs first, the school district shall notify the parents of the program and offer the parent an opportunity to enroll his/her student in another public school that has the capacity or to request and receive a scholarship to attend an eligible private school, subject to available funding.

Pursuant to State Board of Education Rule 6A-6.0951, Florida Administrative Code, the district shall notify the parent by providing the parent with a completed Hope Scholarship Notification Form. The Hope Notification Form was adopted by the State Board of Education in July 2018, and therefore shall not be substantively altered.

Students attending a "persistently dangerous" school, as defined by State law, have the right to transfer to another "safe" school in the district. Students who are victims of a 'violent crime' on school property also have the right to transfer to another school. If there is not another "safe" school in the district providing instruction at the student's grade level(s), the Superintendent or his designee shall contact neighboring counties and request that they permit students to transfer to a school in one (1) of those counties.

3. Process that Encourages Placement of Siblings within the Same School

Students who have siblings enrolled at a school other than their home zone school may apply for reassignment to that same school based on sibling support. GCSD understands the importance of keeping brothers and sisters together and encourages parental involvement. Parents of siblings who are assigned to the same grade level and school may request that the school place the siblings in the same classroom or in separate classrooms. The sibling must be attending the school the same year as the requested reassignment. Students assigned for sibling support may remain at the assigned school until they reach the highest grade

level available at that school. On the school choice form, parents identify "sibling support" and provide the name of the sibling who is at the school that the parent wants the student to be reassigned to. Parents choosing this option will be responsible for their own student transportation.

The Superintendent or his designee will develop and revise this plan as necessary, including the administrative procedures necessary to implement these policies. Except for homeless students, foster students and other student safety measures required by Florida Statute, parents who choose these options are required to provide their own student transportation.

4. Open Borders

In 2016, State Lawmakers removed school-district boundaries by allowing parents to enroll children in any public school beginning in 2017-18. School districts must accept most students if the school they want to attend has not reached capacity, according to Florida Statutes. If a school has more applications than openings, the law calls for schools to use a lottery to fill the spots.

5. Lottery Procedure to Determine Student Assignment

GCSD uses a lottery procedure, as necessary, to determine student assignment. Applications for choice schools and special programs are reviewed at the individual school level in accordance with each program's admissions criteria. Students are admitted to the program according to the available capacity in each program. In the case of too many requests for available slots in a special program or choice school, the district reserves the right to hold a lottery to determine admissions. The lottery process is designed to prevent the loss of more than five percent (5%) enrollment at any one school.

For purposes of continuity of educational choice, a student who enrolls or transfers under Controlled Open Enrollment may remain at the Controlled Open Enrollment School until the student completes the highest grade level at the school. After completion of the terminal grade of that school, the student must return to their zoned school or apply for and be granted another lottery selection through Controlled Open Enrollment. Students residing in another county must return to their school district in the absence of another lottery selection entitling them to enroll in another district school.

6. Appeals Process for Hardship Cases

Students may be allowed to attend a school other than their residentially zoned home school based on documented economic or medical hardship, or other documented reasons. A reassignment form must be completed, signed by both school administrators, and be submitted to the Parent Resource Center for review.

A hardship is defined as documented economic or medical factors that are beyond the student's and parent's/guardian's control that have a negative impact on the student's educational process, safety, mental health, or physical well-being. Upon receipt of a

hardship reassignment request, the Superintendent or his/her designee will afford the parent/guardian of the student an opportunity to present such evidence as may be appropriate. Thereafter, the Superintendent will make his/her recommendations to the Board. The Superintendent or his designee will furnish the parent/guardian of the student with a copy of his/her recommendation to the Board.

If the parent/guardian of the student wishes to appeal the recommendation of the Superintendent, they must submit a detailed statement specifying the basis for the disagreement to the Superintendent within ten (10) working days of receipt of the recommendation. If the Superintendent denies the reassignment appeal, the parent/guardian may appeal the decision to the Board at the next Board meeting. The parent/guardian must file for an appeal through the Board secretary prior to the meeting. The Superintendent will permit the student to remain at the current school until a decision is made by the Board. Parents choosing this option will be responsible for providing their own student transportation.

7. Procedures to Maintain Socioeconomic, Demographic, and Racial Balance

Gadsden County School District provides equal opportunity for school choice to all students in the district regardless of race, ethnicity or socio-economic status. To better ensure that participation in school choice supports socioeconomic, demographic and racial balance, Gadsden County Public Schools annually evaluate participation by race and free and reduced lunch eligibility and make changes accordingly.

8. Homeless Students

Pursuant to District School Board Policy 5111.01, (Homeless Students), any child in Gadsden County whose primary nighttime residence is in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter for temporary accommodations, or in a public or private place not designated for, or ordinarily used for, continuing human habitation or is currently in foster care shall be entitled to enrollment in the Gadsden County School District at their school of origin, unless it is determined that it is not in the best interest of the child. The District's Homeless Liaison shall work in collaboration with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to determine the school of origin for foster students. Student transportation to their school of origin will be provided within the school district. If the verified homeless situation is such that the student is crossing district lines, the Gadsden County Transportation Department will coordinate transportation between the district and neighboring districts.

9. Availability of Transportation

Except for homeless students or foster care students, it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to provide transportation for students who chose to participate in a choice option and are approved to attend a school other than their residentially zone school. Transportation can be arranged by contacting Gadsden County's Transportation Department. Transportation provisions follow s. 1002.31(2) F.S.

10. Parental and Family Engagement

Encouraging and promoting strong parental and family engagement is a priority for every school and department throughout Gadsden County. Throughout the district, there are parent liaisons, community liaisons, instructional specialists, guidance counselors and other staff in positions to strengthen parental engagement. The district does not have specific parental engagement requirements for its public schools, however, individual programs at the schools may require parent participation.

11. Strategy for Establishing an Information Clearinghouse

Gadsden County has a full-time, year-round Family and Community Engagement Office (FACE) that serves as a clearinghouse for information on school choice opportunities for students. In addition, each school disseminates information and promotes their choice options. Information is provided to parents and to the community through parent communication links (Skylert), listservs, school mail-outs, individual program promotional materials, open houses at school sites, school visits, and through the district FACE Office.

12. Athletic Eligibility

A student participating in Controlled Open Enrollment choice program will be immediately eligible to participate in interscholastic and intra-scholastic extracurricular activities. However, a student may not participate in a sport if the student participated in that same sport at another school during that same school year, unless the student meets one of the following criteria:

1. Dependent child of active-duty military personnel whose move resulted from military orders
2. Child who has been relocated due to a foster care placement in a different school zone
3. Child who moves due to a court-ordered change in custody due to separation or divorce, or the serious illness or death of a custodial parent.
4. Authorized for good cause in district or charter school policy.



FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY: Date Received: _____ Time Received: _____ Received By: _____

Gadsden County School District
2024-2025 Controlled Open Enrollment
Student Performance Contract

You have elected to attend a school in Gadsden County School District that is not your zoned school. Gadsden County School District is proud of its tradition of excellence and the academic accomplishments of our students. As such, you will be expected to adhere to certain standards and expectations.

For the 2024-2025 school year, I, _____, will be enrolling at
(Student Name)
_____ in the _____ grade rather than
(School Name) (Grade)

(Zoned School)

By signing this performance contract, we (student and parent), agree to abide by the following:

- 1) **Grades:** I understand that I must have a passing score in all core academic areas, a minimum of 2.0 cumulative GOA and a score indicating proficiency in each area on state mandate assessments.
- 2) **Attendance:** I understand that I must not have more than 3 unexcused absences within a 90-day period.
- 3) **Discipline:** I understand that I must not have any repeated discipline referrals or acts of violation of the Student Code of Conduct nor any suspensions or expulsion within the past calendar year.
- 4) **Behavior:** I understand that if I violate the Student Code of Conduct or school’s policies, my child will be returned to his/her zoned school.
- 5) **Transportation:** I understand that I am responsible for providing transportation for my student. Transportation difficulties cannot interfere with my child’s attendance and/or timely pick-up after school. If transportation issues become a barrier for my child’s regular attendance or prompt pick-up, my child may be returned to his/her zoned school.

I understand that if I fail to comply with any one of these above statements, my Controlled Open Enrollment approval may be revoked, and I must return immediately to my home zoned school. I also understand that this performance contract is only valid for the current school year.

_____	_____
Student Signature	Date
_____	_____
Parent/Guardian Signature	Date

The student performance contract must be submitted with the Controlled Open Enrollment Application.