



***Office of School Choice and Charter Schools***

**STUDENT SCHOOL ASSIGNMENT, SCHOOL CHOICE AND REASSIGNMENT  
PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES**

Student assignment in the district occurs under the direction of School Board Policy 5.20. The Office of School Choice and Charter Schools in the Office of Accountability and Choice is responsible for carrying out activities related to this policy. Any student residing in the district shall be assigned to a school for attendance by the Superintendent or designee. All students, unless otherwise provided by school board rule or authorized by the School Board, shall attend the school serving their residential attendance zone. No student whose legal residence is outside the boundaries of the County may be enrolled in any district school without the approval of the School Board, except under the provisions of Florida Statutes. A student's residence is defined as the residence/domicile of his/her parent(s), legal guardian, or other such person as defined by any order issued by a court of competent jurisdiction. The residence is defined as the place in which a student physically lives, sleeps and functions full-time during the school year. If divorced parents have joint custody of a child, they must use one address as the legal residence for enrollment purposes.

**A. Establishment of Official Residence**

Acceptable forms for providing proof of residency include a/an:

- Electric or water bill showing (1) the residence as the service address; (2) name of the parent/guardian; and (3) current date
- Current signed lease agreement with parent/guardian name
- Official letter from a company providing housing with a parent/guardian name
- Sworn notarized statement from an owner/lessee of the home in which a parent/guardian is living, stating the names of all people residing at the address and a current utility bill with the owner/lessee's name

**B. Falsification of Information**

Fair and equitable implementation of student assignments depends on complete and honest compliance with process guidelines. Providing false or misleading information on registration forms, student reassignment applications and/or School Choice applications with the intent to circumvent established procedures or to unfairly gain advantage over other applicants is considered a serious offense. Upon information or belief that a student has been assigned to or enrolled in a particular school based upon inaccurate, false or misleading information, the school shall initiate an investigation of the student's assignment. The investigation may include on-site visits to the address of record, testimony from knowledgeable individuals, evidence of returned mail, or other processes to determine the legitimacy of a residence. The results of the investigation will be used to determine the school's action related to the residency question.

If false or misleading information has resulted in an improper assignment, or if a student is found to be inappropriately attending a school without an approved transfer or reassignment, the student shall be withdrawn from the assigned school and transferred (without regard to parental preference) to their districted school. Such involuntary transfer shall not preclude any other remedy provided by law and School Board policy. Refusal to attend the assigned school shall constitute violation of the compulsory school attendance law.

The parent or guardian of the student, or the student if of legal age, shall be responsible for any consequences affecting the eligibility of the student for participation in extracurricular activities pursuant to rules of the Florida High School Athletics Association (FHSAA). The rules of the FHSAA shall prevail in any event.

### **C. General Assignment Process**

All schools will have a geographic definition establishing their attendance area. All students residing within a particular attendance area shall attend that school (referred to as the assigned or districted school) unless the student:

- Applies for and is granted a reassignment due to a severe and extenuating circumstance or a change in the location of his or her residence
- Is placed elsewhere to meet the requirements of an Individual Education Plan (IEP)
- Is placed administratively into an alternative program
- Receives an assignment through one of the School Choice processes

Each spring, many students are eligible for a variety of placements for the following school year, including their districted school, a Choice school, a magnet school/program or the full-time virtual school. Parents of these students must make a final decision regarding their child's placement for the following school year by a date set by the Superintendent. When a student withdraws from a school choice option such as the district's full-time virtual school, home school, a magnet school/program, a Choice school, charter school or a school/program outside the district, he or she is required to attend the districted school assigned to his or her residence. Students withdrawing from any of the school choice options listed above are not required to go through the reassignment process to return their assigned district school. However, prior to a student withdrawing from a Sarasota County School Board sponsored charter school and enrolling in his or her assigned district school before a semester ends, approval must be obtained from the Supervisor of the Office of School Choice.

All students currently enrolled in their districted school and all students granted an assignment or reassignment through this document may continue to the highest-grade level offered in their assigned school until the student:

- Is returned to the school serving his/her attendance area for failure to abide by an agreement concerning attendance expectations, behavior expectations, and parent involvement/ cooperation
- Is enrolled in a program which requires a change of schools
- Is expelled
- Leaves that public school to attend a private school, charter school, or home education program.
- Moves out of the Sarasota County school district or moves to another residence which would affect assignment

Students who are enrolled in their districted school or granted an assignment or reassignment through this document may not be able to complete the highest-grade level offered at an assigned school if:

- A parent or guardian request a change of assignment as permitted through this document
- The School Board's district school boundaries are changed
- It is determined that inaccurate, false, or misleading information resulted in an improper assignment or reassignment

Prior to making student assignments for each school year, the Superintendent will evaluate the enrollment limit for each school and grade level. This decision is based upon factors including, but not limited to, the physical capacity of the school, seats set aside for special programs (e.g., ESOL and ESE students, magnet programs) utilization of cafeteria, and seats set aside for projected growth.

### **D. Student Registration Procedures**

Registration may take place at individual schools and, occasionally, at other sites as established by the Superintendent. Registration periods shall be established for specific grade levels as discussed below:

- Students new to Sarasota County Schools, and those entering kindergarten must verify their residence within the district in accordance with the guidelines as set forth in the district procedures.
- At the time of application and again at enrollment, kindergarten students and all students new to the district, must verify their birth date in compliance with the state requirements for admission.
- Registration with the district will generate or reactivate a student number for each student. After registration,

in order to be enrolled at the assigned school, the student must physically appear at the assigned school. Students who are new to the district must complete a registration form, present a certificate of immunization, and verification of a physical examination.

- The name of the student shall be spelled exactly as it appears on the birth certificate or on a court order designating a name change.

When a student has been assigned to a school, it becomes the responsibility of the assigned school to complete the registration process and to schedule the student for classes. It will be the responsibility of the assigned school to report those students who failed to enroll in an assigned school. The Office of School Choice and Charter Schools, other district personnel or members of school-based administration may not assign a student to a school without following the established procedures.

#### **E. Change of Residence During the School Year**

All students changing residences during the school year should notify their current school and supply proof of the new address. The rules regarding change of residence are:

- A student who moves within the districted school's attendance zone must remain at that school
- A student moving out of the districted school's attendance zone may:
  - Attend the new districted school based upon proof of the new legal residence
  - Remain at the current school for the remainder of the year through the reassignment process described in this document; students who receive a reassignment to remain at the current school may choose to remain there through the highest grade level in the school unless they receive a placement elsewhere or the school is determined to be over capacity, in which case the parent will be notified of the assignment options
- If a parent/guardian change residences during the school year and move out of the assigned attendance zone where their students are enrolled, they may request that their students be permitted to remain enrolled in the school through the reassignment process. The parent/guardian will be responsible for providing transportation to and from school. Transportation will not be provided by the district.
- All schools shall ensure that families are notified of the rules in this section.

#### **F. Students who Reside Out of County**

Any Florida student who resides outside of Sarasota County who wishes to attend a public Sarasota County school must have permission from Sarasota County Schools. Students residing in Sarasota County School District will not be displaced by a student from another district seeking enrollment. The Superintendent or designee is authorized to give the permission and make a school assignment. All funding generated by the student's enrollment shall be reported and retained by Sarasota County Schools for the provision of instruction and other services. Any student who receives permission will be allowed to complete the highest available grade level at the requested district school until one of the conditions identified in the "General Assignment Process" section (see above) occurs. Failure to abide by an agreement concerning attendance expectations, behavior expectations and/or parent involvement/cooperation will result in the student being returned to the school serving his/her attendance area. The Office of School Choice and Charter Schools, other district personnel or members of school-based administration may not assign a student to a school without following the established procedures.

#### **G. School Attendance in a Neighboring County**

Students residing in Sarasota County who wish to attend a school in a neighboring county must have permission from the school district they wish to attend. All funding generated by the student's enrollment shall be reported and retained by the county in which the student attends.

#### **H. School Choice Options**

Parents in Sarasota County Schools have many options to participate in their child's placement in schools and programs. Some placements are made at individual schools and some through district-wide processes. All

schools are responsible for helping to inform parents of the various options available to them and for assisting them with processes associated with selecting options. Parents/Guardians may take a free survey to receive a personalized report with information on scholarships that the Florida Department of Education (FL DOE) makes available to students by visiting <https://mychoicesinedfl.org/>.

Sarasota County Schools' available School Choice options, procedures and guidelines are explained below:

**1) Controlled Open Enrollment (Regular School Choice)**

Controlled Open Enrollment (COE) is an educational Choice that allows the district to make student school assignments using parents and legal guardians' preferential school choice selections as a significant factor. The extent to which COE (often called Regular School Choice) will be utilized is determined each year by the School Board through a recommendation of the Superintendent. The district will make diligent effort to inform all parents of the options available via newsletters, media announcements, newspaper and radio advertising, civic and business organizations, and governmental agencies.

The following guidelines are used to conduct COE (Regular School Choice):

- a) The Superintendent may establish one or more School Choice application period(s).
- b) The specified School Choice application period and timeline will be announced each school year by the Supervisor of the Office of School Choice and Charter Schools. School Choice assignments are awarded after the close of each application period. School Choice assignments shall occur in the next academic year.
- c) Regular School Choice will be offered to parents and students residing in Florida. Active military personnel pending transfer to a military installation within the state are eligible to participate in the Regular School Choice process. In accordance with F.S.1002.31, a student who has been expelled or suspended from public school is not eligible to participate in COE (Regular School Choice).
- d) The School Choice application/process can't be used for admission or placement into magnet, virtual, charter, or special schools (e.g., Oak Park School).
- e) The School Choice application/process can't be used to retain or accelerate students' grade levels.
- f) Pursuant to Federal and State statute, School Choice assignments for students with disabilities (Exceptional Student Education [ESE] and Section 504 students) are contingent upon the school of choice having the program and services specified on the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) and Section 504 Accommodation Plan. If a student with an IEP or Section 504 Accommodation Plan is assigned to a school through the School Choice process, school administration may convene a team to ensure the IEP or 504 Accommodation Plan can be implemented.
- g) Schools that are open for Choice will be identified along with schools that have limited or no available space. The number of available seats may vary by school.
- h) Parents/Guardians will be able to complete and submit an online application for Regular School Choice on the district web site, [www.sarasotacountyschools.net](http://www.sarasotacountyschools.net). Parents/Guardians may select up to three (3) Choice schools in their preference order. All online School Choice applications must be submitted by the specified deadline. Incomplete applications shall not be processed.
- i) All completed School Choice applications shall be processed and eligible for the random lottery and school assignment. School Choice assignments will be awarded based upon seat availability.
- j) To ensure equitable access for all parents participating in the School Choice process, no application shall receive any advantage based on the date of its filing within the application window. Applications will not be accepted after the specified deadline.
- k) For purposes of the School Choice process, siblings are defined as a brother, sister, half-brother, half-sister, step brother, or step sister. The sibling preference will be given to children whose sibling is already assigned to the school and who will be attending during the year for which the application is made.

Siblings must be residing at the same address to qualify for this sibling preference. Siblings who receive preference in the random lottery are not guaranteed a School Choice assignment at a school determined to be over-capacity.

- l) Seats that are available for Regular School Choice at a particular school are first awarded in random order by lottery to applications with a verified sibling preference and/or with one or more of the preferences identified in School Board Policy 5.23. Students residing in Sarasota County affected by the Student Exchange and Transportation Agreement between the School Board of Sarasota County and Charlotte County School Board will be given a proximity preference. If seats remain, School Choice assignments shall be made in random order by lottery until all students are assigned or until no seats remain at the school and available grade levels.
- m) Applications shall then be sorted by second Choice school and grade level. Seats that are available for Regular School Choice shall be awarded in random order by lottery until all students are assigned or until no seats remain at the school and available grade levels. A similar random lottery process will continue to select students' third Choice school.
- n) In the event that a student cannot be accommodated at his or her first, second, or third Choice school, the student shall be assigned to the districted school and the student's name automatically will be placed into an eligibility pool (waiting list) for possible transfer to the first Choice school.
- o) If and when seats in the particular grade become available at the first (1<sup>st</sup>) Choice school, the parent of the student at the top of the waiting list will be contacted and offered the Choice seat. Waiting lists shall be maintained in order, beginning with the original Choice assignment waiting list. All waiting lists shall be cleared after June 30. Parents/Guardians and students will be notified via personal email of the action on the application. If a School Choice assignment is awarded through the lottery process, parents will be given sufficient time to accept their assignment in accordance with this process.
- p) Parents/Guardians are required to acknowledge their acceptance of the School Choice assignment no later than the date specified in the School Choice Acceptance Letter. The School Choice Acceptance Letter will be sent to the email address provided on the School Choice Application. Parents/Guardians must follow the instructions given in the School Choice Acceptance Letter to acknowledge the acceptance of the School Choice assignment and that they are aware the student must begin attending classes at the assigned school by no later than the third day of school.
- q) Failure to acknowledge acceptance of the School Choice assignment following the instructions provided in the School Choice Acceptance Letter by the specified deadline will forfeit the assignment, and the student will remain at his/her districted school. All forfeited School Choice seats will be filled by the next student on the waiting list (see "o" above).
- r) If a student is awarded a School Choice assignment and accepts an offer for admissions to another educational School Choice option such as a magnet program or a charter school, parents/guardians are required to (1) notify the Office of School Choice by the deadline specified in the School Choice Acceptance Letter and (2) forfeit the Choice seat to the next student on the School Choice wait list.
- s) At the beginning of the school year, schools will remove from their rosters any Choice students who have not enrolled by the third day of school and provide the Office of School Choice and Charter Schools with a list of the students removed.
- t) Each student may receive only one Choice transfer for a particular school year during the specified School Choice application period. Students may change schools only based on a change of residence or participation in an alternative/special program requiring a change.
- u) Transportation will not be provided to students receiving Regular School Choice assignments through Controlled Open Enrollment.

## 2) Controlled Open Enrollment (High School Athletic Choice)

Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) recognizes Pine View School and Suncoast Polytechnical High School (SPHS) as special schools because they do not sponsor any high school level interscholastic athletic programs. Other non-traditional schools include charter schools, FHSAA designated small private schools, full-time FLVS students, and home education students. FHSAA guidelines permits eligible students who are in grades 9 through 12 to participate in interscholastic athletic programs at a (public) district school following all Controlled Open Enrollment (High School Athletic Choice) guidelines and procedures established by Sarasota County School Board.

All FHSAA eligibility requirements and guidelines must be adhered to by any student participating in district-sponsored athletic programs. Students attending a special school and approved for an Athletic Choice are in no way guaranteed placement on any sport/athletic roster at the school of choice. Students who seek to participate in a particular athletic program must follow all eligibility guidelines to become an official member of the athletic team. If the student does not make the team, he/she may not return to the districted school to participate in any athletic program in that school year.

The following guidelines are used to conduct Controlled Open Enrollment (High School Athletic Choice) for eligible students:

- a) Controlled Open Enrollment (High School Athletic Choice) will only be offered to eligible students who are in grades 9 through 12.
- b) The application period for Controlled Open Enrollment (High School Athletic Choice) will last 4-weeks in the Spring of each school year unless specified otherwise.
- c) Parents/Guardians who miss a Controlled Open Enrollment (High School Athletic Choice) application period for any given reason will be required to wait until the next open enrollment period.
- d) Parents/Guardians will be able to obtain an Athletic Choice application at Pine View School, SPHS, the district Athletic Office, or on the district web site. All completed applications must be submitted to the district Athletic Office by the specified due date. Incomplete applications shall not be processed.
- e) Parents/Guardians participating in the Controlled Open Enrollment (High School Athletic Choice) application period may annually designate one (1) district school (the Designated school) at which their student(s) will register his or her intent to represent the school in interscholastic athletics for the subsequent school year. This choice will continue unless during a subsequent open enrollment period the parent/guardian notifies intent to change this designation.
- f) Parent/Guardians and students will be notified within 15 business days of the action taken on the Controlled Open Enrollment (High School Athletic Choice) application. If the school designation is approved, parents will be given sufficient time to accept their school designation in accordance with this process.
- g) Students shall not participate in extracurricular activities nor register their intent to participate in interscholastic athletics as a representative at the Designated school prior to receiving written notification from the district Athletic Office. At no time shall a student participate in an interscholastic athletic program at a Choice designated school without these measures being in place.
- h) The Designated school's principal and athletic director will be given a roster of the students who are approved to try out for athletic programs at their school. A student's athletic eligibility shall be determined by FHSAA Operational Bylaws along with district and school policies and athletic guidelines/requirements.
- i) A student who initiates athletic activity at the Designated Choice school may participate in interscholastic athletic programs only at that Designated Choice school for the remainder of the school year, and only if he or she remains eligible based on policies and guidelines set by the Designated school, district and FHSAA.
- j) A student who violates athletic program participation requirements or regulations set by the Designated school and/or FHSAA shall have their Interscholastic Athletics Participation Designation revoked. The

student shall return to his or her district school where athletic eligibility shall be determined by the principal.

- k) Interscholastic Athletics Participation Designation shall annually be renewed unless:
- i. A parent/guardian designates a new school through Controlled Open Enrollment (Non-Traditional School High School Athletic Choice).
  - ii. A student withdraws from the special school. If this occurs, the student's Designated Choice school assignment is revoked, and he/she shall only be eligible to participate in athletic programs at his/her districted school according to district and FHSAA guidelines.
  - iii. The parent notifies the district Athletic Office to withdraw their intent to continue with automatic renewal of the Interscholastic Athletic Choice.
  - iv. The student has his or her Interscholastic Athletic Choice revoked.

### 3) **Charter Schools**

Charter schools are publicly funded schools that operate under a performance contract, or "charter." The charter contract between the charter school governing board and Sarasota County Schools, the sponsor, details the school's mission, program, goals, students served, methods of assessment and ways to measure success. The length of time for which a charter contract is granted varies. Each sponsored charter school has application and enrollment procedures in accordance with the charter contract. Additionally, all sponsored charter schools may give enrollment preference to the student populations identified in F.S. 1002.33(10)(d).

Parents electing to enroll their students in a district-sponsored charter school do so as a voluntary Choice placement. Prior to a parent/guardian withdrawing a student from a Sarasota County School Board sponsored charter school and enrolling him or her in the assigned district school before a semester ends, approval must be obtained from the Supervisor of the Office of School Choice. When parents choose to withdraw their students from a charter school to enroll in their assigned attendance zoned school, the district's withdrawal and registration procedures must be followed. Students who attend a charter school are eligible to participate in interscholastic extracurricular activities at their assigned district school pursuant to F.S. 1006.15(3)(d).

Parents/Guardians interested in information about a district sponsored charter school may contact the school or visit the school's web site. Parents must apply and receive acceptance directly from the charter school.

### 4) **Family Empowerment Scholarship**

The Family Empowerment Scholarship (FES) Program was initially established to provide financial assistance to Florida's children with limited family income, so they could access private school as an option to achieve success in their education. (F.S. 1002.39). Florida House Bill 7045 made several changes to the FES Program. Effective July 1, 2021, the FES program is expanded to include:

- K-12 students with limited family income.
- Students that are age 3 or 4 on or before September 1 of the year in which they apply for the scholarship program and have an eligible disability and Individual Education Plan.
- K-12 students that have an eligible disability and Individual Education Plan and are eligible to enroll in a Florida public school.
- Dependents of a member of the United States Armed Forces.
- Siblings residing in the same household with a student(s) participating in the FES Program.
- Students that are placed in foster care or out-of-home care during the current year or the state's previous fiscal year.

FL DOE will work with the district and the Scholarship Funding Organization (SFO) to verify that all eligibility requirements have been met before scholarship funding is paid to a private school. To learn more about the changes to the FES Program, interested parents/guardians should visit the Florida Department of Education's web site, [www.fldoe.org](http://www.fldoe.org) or call Sarasota County Schools Office of School Choice, (941) 927-9000, ext.

32258. Parents/Guardians who are interested in applying for the FES should contact the state approved SFO to complete the income verification process. State approved SFOs are listed on Florida Department of Education's web site at <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/>.

#### 5) **Gardiner Scholarship Program**

HB 7045 repealed the Gardiner Scholarship Program as of July 1, 2021. These students are now eligible under the recently expanded Family Empowerment Scholarship Program.

#### 6) **Home Education**

Home education satisfies the requirement for compulsory education (F.S. 1002.20) and is defined as the sequentially progressive instruction of a student (F.S. 1002.41). Students who have a pattern of nonattendance (truancy) may enroll in home school and will also be required to comply with and F.S. 1002.26.

This educational choice option is 100% parent driven. By enrolling in home education, parents/guardians assume all educational responsibilities of how they will educate their students. This includes determining whether their students will use correspondence curriculum and books and/or on-line curriculum through Sarasota Virtual School or Florida Virtual School's Flex Program). The Office of School Choice and Charter Schools does not have access to any of the above third-party educational records.

Parents/Guardians who fulfills the reporting, record keeping, and student evaluation requirements specified in the law may conduct a home education program without being required to be a certified teacher. The Supervisor of the Office of School Choice and Charter Schools acts as the Superintendent's designee for Sarasota County Schools' home education program. As parents/guardians establish their home education programs, they should submit their Letters of Intent, annual evaluation and/or Letter to Terminate Home Education Program to the Superintendent's designee. The Superintendent's designee will help parents/guardians comply with the state statutes (see below) that govern this school choice option in Florida.

Students who complete a home education program are not eligible to receive a high school diploma from Sarasota County Schools. If a home school student is interested in earning a high school diploma from Sarasota County Schools, parents/guardians should contact a school counselor at their assigned district school.

Parents/Guardians who are considering home education as a School Choice Option should know they are governed by F.S.1002.41 as it applies to school attendance and educational choice. Under F.S. 1003.21, parents/guardians who choose to establish a home education program have the following responsibilities:

- Parents/Guardians must notify the Superintendent of Schools in writing within 30 days of the establishment of the Home Education Program.
- Parents/Guardians are required to maintain a portfolio of records and materials. This portfolio is to be preserved for two years and be made available, upon 15 days' notice, for inspection.
- Parents/Guardians are required to provide the Office of School Choice and Charter Schools with an annual educational evaluation of students in the home education program:
  - a. A Florida teacher, (currently certified to teach academic subjects at the elementary or secondary level) may assess the child.
  - b. The child can take any nationally-normed student achievement test, administered by a certified teacher chosen by the parent.
  - c. The child can take a state student assessment test (if available through the school district)
  - d. The child can be evaluated by an individual holding a valid, active license pursuant to the provisions of F.S. 490.003 (7) or (8).
  - e. The child can be evaluated with any other valid measurement tool not covered in 1-4 if mutually agreed upon by the Superintendent (designee) of the district in which the child resides. Examples

would be SAT or ACT scores, grades earned through dual enrollment, or classes taken at public schools, private schools or online.

- f. The annual evaluation is due in the Office of School Choice and Charter Schools no later than 12 months after your child is registered (and within each 12 month period following that date should your child continue in home education).

When parents/guardians seek to terminate a home education program, they must submit a letter of intent to terminate their established program along with a final evaluation of the student's progress to the Supervisor of the Office of School Choice and Charter Schools.

Students who withdraw from a Choice school or program to enroll in home education and desire to return to the non-District school/program of last enrollment shall follow the reassignment process. A reassignment is not guaranteed but may be granted based upon the available programmatic and physical space capacity at the requested school, grade and applicable program. Parents/Guardians must follow district procedures, guidelines and deadlines when applying for a school reassignment.

## 7) **Hope Scholarship Program**

In accordance with F.S. 1002.40, the Hope Scholarship Program provides parents/guardians with the opportunity to transfer eligible K-12 students from their assigned district schools to public schools with available (programmatic and physical) space capacity. Magnet programs and magnet schools such as Pine View, Bay Haven School of Basic Plus, Suncoast Polytechnical High School, and the district's special school, Oak Park, have specific admissions requirements and deadlines and are not available through the Hope Scholarship Program. Parents/Guardians may also enroll their students in approved private schools under the Hope Scholarship Program.

Parents/Guardians choosing to enroll an eligible student in a public school outside of Sarasota County School District are required to contact the school district of interest to obtain information about the enrollment process using a Hope Scholarship.

Funding from the Hope Scholarship Program can be used towards paying for the cost of private school tuition or transportation to a public school outside of Sarasota County. Hope Scholarships are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. To apply for scholarship funding, parents/ guardians must contact an eligible nonprofit Scholarship Funding Organization (SFO) by going to the FL DOE web site: <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/hope/>. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to follow all deadlines, guidelines and procedures set by the SFO when applying for scholarship funding. It is the responsibility of the SFO to determine if a student is eligible to receive scholarship funding. If parents/guardians have any questions, they may contact the Office of School Choice and Charter Schools at 941-927-9000, ext 32255.

## 8) **Magnet Schools and Programs**

The district currently has three magnet schools (Bay Haven Elementary School, Pine View School and Suncoast Polytechnical High School) and a variety of magnet programs (listed below). Parents and guardians may apply directly to those schools and programs for admission. A student who is accepted into a district magnet program at a school other than his or her assigned attendance zoned school must follow Sarasota County Schools' guidelines and procedures to submit an online Student Reassignment Application to request a voluntary assignment. An online Student Reassignment Application can be completed and submitted on the district web site at [www.sarasotacountyschools.net](http://www.sarasotacountyschools.net). Failure to submit an online Student Reassignment Application to request a voluntary assignment by the district's August 1 deadline may result in invalidating a student's admission status to a magnet program.

District magnet schools' admissions deadlines may vary, however the deadline to apply for admissions to any of the magnet programs is May 1. Students who are dismissed or choose to leave a magnet school or magnet

program before completing the highest-grade level offered at the school/program shall be returned to their assigned districted school.

- a) Sarasota County Schools have three full-time magnet schools:
- Bay Haven School of Basics Plus - serves students in grade kindergarten through grade five.
  - Pine View School – serves students in grade two through grade twelve.
  - Suncoast Polytechnical High School – serves students in grade nine through grade twelve.
- b) The district offers the magnet programs listed below. Parents must check with the specific school of interest to determine if transportation will be provided.
- **Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) Program-**
    - Booker High School
    - Heron Creek Middle School
    - North Port High School
    - Sarasota High School
  - **Circus Arts Magnet Program**
    - Sarasota High School
  - **International Baccalaureate (IB) Program –**
    - Riverview High School
    - Venice High School
    - Brookside Middle School (*Designated as an IB Middle Years Program*)
  - **Law Academy**
    - Booker High School
  - **Marine Science Academy**
    - Brookside Middle School
  - **MaST (Math and Science & Technology) Program –**
    - Sarasota High School
  - **STEM A+2 (Science, Technology, Engineering Mathematics, Arts & Agriscience)**
    - McIntosh Middle School
  - **Visual and Performing Arts (VPA) Program–**
    - Booker High School
    - Booker Middle School
    - North Port High School
  - **Young Marines**
    - Venice Middle School
- c) The district offers geographically located gifted magnet cluster sites. Students who are eligible for full-time gifted services have the option of a placement in a gifted magnet cluster sites following the guidelines and procedures set by the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Department. ESE Placements to a gifted magnet cluster site depends upon the availability of space capacity.

**North County Gifted Magnet Program**

- Fruitville Elementary School – Grades 1-5
- Booker Middle School – Grades 6-8
- Sarasota Middle School – Grades 6-8
- **Mid-County Gifted Magnet Program**
  - Venice Elementary School – Grades 1-5
  - Laurel Nokomis School – Grade 1-8
- **South County Gifted Magnet Program**
  - Toledo Blade Elementary
  - Woodland Middle School

## 9) **McKay Scholarship Program**

The district participates in the McKay Scholarship program offered through the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE). Parents of eligible students with special needs may select a placement in a private school or selected public school, including charter schools. The McKay Scholarship public school option is subject to the availability of required services for the individual student at the requested school.

Parents/Guardians who are interested in using the McKay Scholarship public school option shall use the Student Reassignment process (page 15) to apply for an assignment. With the district's assistance, FLDOE determines deadlines, eligibility, award amounts and payment distributions based on Florida Statute 1002.39 and State Rule 6A-6.0970. Parents can learn more about this option on FLDOE's website ([www.floridaschoolchoice.org](http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org)) or by visiting the Sarasota County Schools' website, ([www.sarasotacountyschools.net](http://www.sarasotacountyschools.net)). Information about this option is also provided to parents by the district annually. Parents wishing to gain access to the John McKay Scholarship may complete an Intent Application on the Florida Department of Education website.

Parents choosing to return their child from a private school to the public school setting should call the Office of School Choice and Charter Schools to learn of the options available. Public schools selected by a parent using a McKay Scholarship not only must have available space, but they must also have the programs and resources necessary to fulfill the student's IEP and Section 504 Accommodation Plan.

Parents may need to provide transportation for their children attending a school selected through the McKay Scholarship program.

## 10) **Virtual Instruction Options**

Florida Statutes, Section 1002.321, requires districts to provide multiple opportunities for students to participate in virtual instruction. Sarasota fulfills this requirement using part-time and full-time virtual options offered through the Florida Virtual School (FLVS) and Sarasota virtual programs.

### a) **Sarasota Virtual School Full-Time (SVS FT)**

Sarasota County Schools offers K-12 students access to online instruction through SVS FT which is a free public school. In accordance with Florida Statute 1002.45, SVS FT is an interactive learning environment in which the student and teacher are separated by time, space or both. Eligible students may be provided with a computer and/or Internet connection if they qualify for the Free/Reduced Price Lunch program. SVS FT students access lessons, assignments and assessments through the Internet, and teachers communicate with students and parents in many different ways using technology. SVS FT meets all Florida public school standards and requirements and receives a school grade along with all Florida schools. Students completing graduation requirements earn a standard high school diploma. Students are eligible for SVS FT if they meet the criteria in F.S. 1002.455.

Sarasota County Schools currently contracts with a variety of FL DOE approved virtual instruction providers (VIP). The VIP provide SVS FT students with instructional materials that include textbooks, resources and depending on the VIP, a variety of printed materials. Textbooks and traditional instructional materials are used, but much of the content is delivered via the providers' websites.

An annual open enrollment period (a minimum of 90 days) which ends 30 days before the first day of each school year, will be available to students seeking to enroll in SVS FT. The open enrollment period will be announced using correspondence, media releases, the district website and any other way deemed appropriate to ensure parents receive timely notification. Parents/Guardians interested in this option must apply for enrollment directly through SVS FT prior to registering on the selected contracted VIP's website. Parents/Guardians and students are required to have a face-to-face interview with the school's academic advisor prior to enrolling. To schedule an interview, parents/guardians should contact the SVS FT's academic advisor at (941) 924-1365, ext. 62338 or via email at

[SVS@sarasotacountyschools.net](mailto:SVS@sarasotacountyschools.net).

SVS FT administration or a parent/guardian can withdraw a student at the end of a semester when deemed in the best interest of the student's academic, social, and/or emotional growth and development. The withdrawn student will be returned to his or her assigned district school.

SVS FT follows the School-Board-approved Assessment Calendar. Students are required to participate in statewide assessments at designated grade levels, as required by F.S. 1008.22, 1008.34 and 1001.11. SVS FT students must also take grade-specific assessments required by the district. SVS FT follows Sarasota County Schools' Student Progression Plan based on a student's current grade level.

SVS FT students are eligible to participate in an interscholastic extracurricular activity at the districted school to which the student would be otherwise assigned based on state statute.

b) **Sarasota Virtual Academy Part-Time (SVA PT)**

SVA PT is a high quality free online program that serves students in Sarasota County by offering part-time virtual high school courses that are designed to match each student's individual educational needs. SVA PT allows grade 9-12 students to take at least one online course within the credits required for graduation in accordance with F.S. 1003.428.

SVA PT is designed to serve students who are enrolled full-time in a Sarasota County secondary school, which includes traditional and charter schools. Since SVA PT is a franchise of Florida Virtual School (FLVS), they provide all content and curricula. Sarasota County School Board-appointed, highly qualified and certified teachers deliver the instruction via the Internet. Online instructors are available Monday through Friday with office hours that vary from course to course.

SVA PT follows district timelines and guidelines for registration and withdrawal policies as outlined in the Student Progression Plan. SVA PT is a year-round program, and offers continuous, rolling enrollment throughout the school year and into the summer. SVA PT does not grant a high school diploma.

c) **Florida Virtual School Full-Time (FLVS FT) Public School**

FLVS FT is a fully-accredited public school in the state of Florida. Students in grades K-12 may enroll in one of two schools (a K-8 school and a 9-12 school). FLVS becomes the student's district and FLVS FT is the school of enrollment and instruction for the student. FLVS FT operates independently of Sarasota County Schools and all enrolled students must follow FLVS FT school policies, guidelines and procedures. FLVS FT follows a traditional 180-day calendar with all students observing the same start and end dates for school and a more traditional pace of instruction. FLVS FT does award high school diplomas to eligible candidates meeting the necessary graduation requirements. To learn more about educational programs at FLVS FT and eligibility criteria, parents are encouraged to visit the FLVS FT school website at [www.connectionsacademy.com](http://www.connectionsacademy.com).

d) **Florida Virtual School K-12 Part-Time Program (FLVS PT)**

Students in grades K-12 and home education may take advantage of online courses through FLVS PT. FLVS PT is fully accredited and offers free online courses to students living in Florida in grades kindergarten through 12. Students must be enrolled in a district school or an established parent/guardian home education program in order to take advantage of the FLVS PT option. A student seeking to take a virtual course through the FLVS PT option during the school day is required to take the course(s) at the school he/she is currently attending. Students enrolled in a traditional or charter school have expanded access to courses for credit retrieval, acceleration or other personal needs. Students enrolled in a home education program established by their parents/guardians have access to courses that are taught by Florida certified teachers. Parents/Guardians seeking this option for their students should work through their children's school counselors at their individual schools or visit the

website at [www.flvs.net](http://www.flvs.net). Courses completed in FLVS PT for recovery or for high school credit are fully transferable to a district middle or high school.

#### 11) Options at Individual Schools

Several district schools have special programs which are **only** open to students enrolled at the school. Programs may have eligibility criteria for acceptance and some placements may need to be made through school district departments such as the Exceptional Student Education Department. Examples of these options include gifted education programs, Advanced Placement classes, Exceptional Student Education cluster sites, dual enrollment programs, and others. Program placements within schools do not require reassignments forms.

#### I. Administration of Choice Programs

Oversight of all School Choice options and implementation strategies and actions shall be carried out by the Superintendent's staff who will monitor: (1) student assignments and reassignments and their effects on instructional capacity, diversity, and school profiles at all schools within the district; (2) the range of curriculum, instruction, and program offerings at each level; and (3) instructional quality and improved student performance for all students.

The Superintendent or designee may make periodic reports to the Board on the implementation of Choice programs. The Superintendent or designee shall report to the Board each year the number of assignments to/from each school and any other pertinent data concerning the Choice program.

The authority for the assignment of all students resides with the Supervisor of The Office of School Choice and Charter Schools who will make and coordinate assignments in accordance with these procedures. **Principals and other school system personnel may not assign students to schools, with the sole exception of magnet programs.** The Supervisor of The Office of School Choice and Charter Schools will inform principals of all assignments made to their schools at the earliest possible time.

#### J. Transportation

Transportation will continue to be provided to students assigned by the district to special programs and to others in accordance with transportation service standards, Florida Statutes, and district policies set by the School Board. Parents/Guardians may be required to provide transportation to their students if they are admitted into a magnet program/school. Parents/Guardians must check with the magnet program/school to get details regarding transportation expectations/requirements. Transportation will not be provided to students receiving school assignments through the Controlled Open Enrollment process or through the Reassignment process. Parents are responsible for providing transportation when students are attending a school outside the boundaries of their assigned school under the Controlled Open Enrollment process or the Reassignment process.

#### K. Reassignments

The Reassignment process is available to those students who meet special circumstances for attending a non-districted school. The reassignment process cannot be used to (1) request an assignment to Oak Park, the district's special school or (2) request admissions to a district sponsored charter school. Reassignment requests are granted/not granted by a committee which may consist of the Supervisor of School Choice and Charter Schools, school-level Executive Directors and content/program area administrators. Individual School Board members and the Superintendent shall not be involved in decisions concerning a student's reassignment. Until the reassignment process is complete, staff in the Office of School Choice and Charter Schools or staff at any school may not inform a student or parent of the likelihood of a reassignment approval. If a reassignment request is approved, the parent/guardian must provide the student with transportation to and from school.

## 1) Reasons for a Reassignment

Reassignments may be granted based upon the enrollment limits of the school grade and applicable program. Reassignments of K-12 students may be granted based upon specific qualifying reasons (preferences) and under the following stated conditions:

### a) Qualifying Reasons

- i. Active Duty Military Personnel Dependents  
Students that are dependents of active duty military personnel and have been relocated due to active military orders; parents/guardians that select this reason/preference for their students shall submit the official current orders and proof of dependency, such as the student's Military ID card.
- ii. Foster Care Placement  
Students that are relocated to a different school zone due to foster care placement; parents and/or legal guardians selecting this reason/preference shall submit a Court Order or other legal evidence to document a foster care placement.
- iii. Custody Changes  
Students that are required to move due to a court-ordered change in custody as a result of separation or divorce; the legal parent/guardian shall submit a fully executed Court Order to document the change.
- iv. Serious Illness or Death of a Custodial Parent/Guardian  
Students that are required to move due to the serious illness or death of a custodial parent; if a student is required to move due to the serious illness or death of a custodial parent, the legal parent/guardian shall submit evidence of the serious illness or death of a custodial parent/guardian.
- v. Sibling  
Students who have a sibling (brother, sister, half-brother, half-sister, step brother, or step sister) already assigned to the requested Choice School and will continue attending the Choice School during the year for which the application is made may request sibling preference. Siblings must be residing at the same address to qualify for sibling preference.
- vi. Employee  
Sarasota County School Board appointed employees who have grades K-12 children residing with them may request this preference. Non School Board appointed employees, which includes substitute teachers/paraprofessionals, individuals who have been approved to coach an athletic sport and/or are providing contracted services are not eligible for this preference.
- vi. McKay Scholarship  
The district participates in the McKay Scholarship Program's public school option. K-12 public schools requested by parents/guardians using a McKay Scholarship must not only have available space capacity, but they must also have the programs and resources necessary to fulfill the student's IEP and/or Section 504 Accommodation Plan. Parents/Guardians who are interested in using the McKay Scholarship public school option shall use the Student Reassignment process (page 15) to apply for an assignment within the specified open application windows and deadlines.

### b) Change of Residence

- i. Moving Between School Attendance Zones During the School Year  
Students who move at any time during the school year may complete a reassignment to remain at their current school or may register at their new districted school. If the student remains at the current school transportation must be provided by the parent.

- ii. Moving Into a Different Attendance Area  
A parent/guardian of a student who submits valid proof, including substantiation of the expected date of occupancy, that the student will be moving into an attendance area within 60 school days shall, upon request, have the student assigned to the school serving that attendance area.  
  
School Reassignment Applications may be processed at any time.
  
- c) Admission to Magnet Program  
The parent of a student admitted into a magnet program shall complete and submit an online student reassignment application on the district web site at [www.sarasotacountyschools.net](http://www.sarasotacountyschools.net), as official notice by August 1. Students who are dismissed or choose to leave a magnet program before completing the highest grade level offered at the school where the program is available shall be returned to their assigned districted school. This is not a requirement for enrollment in the district's full-time virtual school or a district sponsored charter school.
  
- d) Other Acceptable Reasons
  - i. Health Reasons  
Reassignment of a student may be made for valid health reasons. Parents/Guardians shall be required to submit a current/updated medical diagnosis. The medical diagnosis must be from a licensed medical physician or health care provider.
  
  - ii. Senior Athletic/Extracurricular Exemption  
A 12<sup>th</sup> grade student who has participated in an athletic program or extracurricular activity for the previous two school years and moves out of a school's zone may remain at the school of enrollment and continue to participate in that athletic program/extracurricular activity provided the student is in good standing and continues to meet all eligibility criteria. This provision does not apply to students enrolled in special schools (Pine View School or Suncoast Polytechnical High School).
  
  - iii. Return to Districted School  
This process allows students to return to their districted school during the school year based on extenuating circumstances. When parents/guardians seek to withdraw their students from a Choice school or program (Bay Haven School of Basics Plus, Pine View, Suncoast Polytechnical High School, charter school, IB, AICE, etc.), the student will be required to attend the districted school assigned to his or her residence. The parent/guardian shall follow the reassignment process **prior** to the withdrawal of a student. A reassignment is not guaranteed if the online student reassignment application is not submitted by the deadline specified in Sarasota County School Board Policy 5.20.
  
  - iv. Englewood Elementary School  
K-5 students who are not impacted by the Student Transportation Agreement between Sarasota County and Charlotte County School Boards may seek an assignment to Englewood Elementary School through the reassignment process.
  
  - v. John McKay Scholarship  
K-12 students who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 Accommodation Plan may select a placement in a Sarasota County public school. The McKay Scholarship public school option is subject to requested schools: (1) having available space capacity (programmatic and physical) and (2) being able to provide eligible students with all required accommodations and/or ESE services specified in their 504 Accommodation Plans and/or IEPs. Students applying for this educational option will be required to follow reassignment deadlines, guidelines and procedures specified in the "Reassignment Process" section.

## 2) Reassignment Process

The following procedures shall govern all requests for reassignment within Sarasota County:

- a) Parents/Guardians shall complete and submit an online reassignment application on the district web site at. Parents/Guardians must submit the required documentation to substantiate the reason for the reassignment request. Online applications submitted without the appropriate documentation will not be processed. Reassignment applications may take up to 45 business days from the date of submission to be processed and reviewed. The Office of School Choice and Charter Schools will notify parents/guardians of the action taken by the Review Committee on their reassignment requests.
- b) For requests based on a change of address to the attendance area, valid proof shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, at least one of the following:
  - An original or certified copy of legal papers certifying that custody of the student will be changed within 60 school days to someone living in the new attendance area;
  - An original or certified copy of an approved lease or rental agreement showing occupancy to take place within 60 school days;
  - An original or certified copy of an executed contract to build or purchase with an estimated occupancy date within 60 school days; or,
  - The substantiating documentation must be uploaded during the process of completing the online student reassignment application. Dollar figures for such items as monthly payments or loan amounts may be blacked out on the original or certified copy of the uploaded document. The district may investigate the credibility of any substantiating documentation. The school shall track each request to determine the extent to which the student does move into the attendance zone within 60 school days; students found out of compliance with this section may be withdrawn from school immediately.
- c) A parent/guardian who is a Sarasota County resident and interested in obtaining a reassignment to have his or her student attend an out of county school is responsible for working directly with the chosen district to enroll the student.
- d) A parent/guardian living outside of Sarasota County must follow district procedures (listed above) to submit an online Student Reassignment Application. The reassignment process can not be used to request an assignment to Oak Park, the district's special school or admission to a charter school. Reassignment applications may take up to 45 business days from the date of submission to be processed and reviewed. The Office of School Choice and Charter Schools will notify parents/guardians of the action taken by the Review Committee on their reassignment requests.
- e) Parents/Guardians of reassigned students shall enter into an agreement with the receiving school. If students exhibit poor attendance/punctuality or demonstrates a pattern of behavior in violation of the "Code of Student Conduct, the receiving school is required to give parents/guardians proper warning and offer assistance to correct the area(s) of concern. If in the judgement of the school principal, the parent/guardian fails to cooperate or correct the area(s) of concern, the student's reassignment will be revoked. Once a student's reassignment is revoked, he or she will be returned to the assigned district school serving his or her attendance area. Students will be returned to their assigned district school at a time that is considerate of grading periods.
- f) Student Reassignment Applications, except those associated with address changes, will not be processed throughout the school year. For a first semester assignment, online Student Reassignment Applications will be accepted from March 1 until the last day of school in the prior academic year. For a second semester assignment, online Student Reassignment Applications will be accepted from October 1 through October 31. Student Reassignment Applications may take up to 45 business days from the date of submission to be processed and reviewed. The Office of School Choice and Charter Schools

will notify parents of the action taken by the Review Committee on their reassignment requests.

- g) Whenever the number of reassignment requests exceeds the available seats at any grade the district may give preference in the following situations:
- Sibling already enrolled at the requested school,
  - Employee preference
  - Students with a proximity preference
  - Continuing out-of-county students

The district may approve a transfer to the school at which a parent/guardian works if they are a full-time School Board-appointed employee, the school has available space, and it offers instruction at the proper grade level.

- h) All requests for reassignments of self-contained and low-incidence ESE, ESOL, and other special needs students shall be reviewed by the appropriate district administrator to assure that necessary services are available at the requested school.
- i) No student shall be allowed to enroll at the requested school until approval is granted through these procedures.
- j) Transportation must be provided by the parent/guardian.

### **3) Other Policies Regarding Reassignments**

a) Return to Districted School

This process allows students who received a reassignment to return to their districted school at the beginning of a school year or at the beginning of second semester. Parents/Guardians are required to complete and submit an online Student Reassignment Application during the time period specified under the "Reassignment Process" section (2-f). Once a reassignment is approved for a student to return to his or her districted school, the student's parent/guardian shall contact the registrar at the assigned district school to obtain instructions on enrolling the student.

When a student withdraws from home school, a magnet school/program, a Choice school, charter school or a school/program outside the district, he or she is required to attend the districted school assigned to his or her residence.

b) Redistricting

Following a redistricting, those affected students who by Board action are allowed to remain at the current school may be granted reassignment to remain. Transportation for such students will be determined by Board action and there is no assurance of continued service.

c) High School Athletics

For reassignments of high school students, the Florida High School Athletics Association Regulations shall govern eligibility for athletics of all reassigned students.

### **4) Transportation for Reassignments**

Parent/guardian of students granted a reassignment must provide their own transportation to/from the school.

### **L. Appeals Process**

For Sarasota County residents for whom a school preference under controlled choice or reassignment is denied for a reason other than enrollment limit, the parent, guardian, or student of legal age shall have the right of appeal to an Appeals Board.

- 1) The Appeals Board may be composed of four or five voting members:
- The county health officer or his/her representative

- One or two representatives of elementary and secondary schools
  - One or two district-level administrators
  - One or two lay citizens, selected for each hearing by the Superintendent's designee
- 2) The Appeals Board shall be chaired by the Superintendent's designee who shall have no vote.
- 3) A challenge of a student assignment may be made on the grounds that the School Choice process was not followed or to appeal the denial of a reassignment. The following procedure shall be followed:
- Each request for appeal must be in writing. Appeals based on denial of assignment under the Controlled Open Enrollment Plan may be accepted at any time; appeals based on denial of a reassignment request must be received by the Superintendent's designee within three working days after notification of denial
  - Appeals will be heard only at scheduled times
  - Additional information presented at an appeal hearing by the Superintendent's designee may necessitate the hearing being temporarily recessed for referral back to the principal(s) involved for reconsideration, pending completion of the hearing process
  - A quorum shall be present for recommendations on all appeals. Three voting members shall constitute a quorum. An affirmative decision to recommend the appeal (reverse the denial) of any transfer or reassignment shall require a simple majority of those voting. If a member determines that he or she cannot cast an objective vote for any reason, that member must abstain from voting. If the abstention causes the council to fall below a quorum, the appeal shall be rescheduled to the next Appeals Board meeting. The Appeals Board's decision will be final
  - The Supervisor of School Choice and Charter Schools will notify the parent/guardian in writing of the recommendation of the Appeals Board. Within ten (10) business days