



School Choice Plan 2014-2015



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Santa Rosa County School Choice Programs

A. Background

The Santa Rosa County School District serves approximately 26,000 pre-kindergarten through grade twelve students in 33 school centers. These centers include 1 Pre-K center, 17 elementary level schools, 7 middle schools, 6 high schools, 1 K-12 combination school, 1 technical center and 1 adult school. The district strives to ensure both equal educational opportunities and facilities at all school centers. All school centers in accordance with the comprehensive technology plan have access to the Internet through the district wide area network. Local area networks in all schools support classroom computers and/or computer labs. The Instructional Television Fixed System, located at the Professional Development Center (PDC), provides distance learning opportunities, live broadcasts, educational cable programming, and an informational bulletin board to all schools. All schools have instructional television accessible to all classrooms. The PDC also provides in-service to teachers on state-of-the-art technology in two locations (one in the north end of the district and one in the south end of the district).

While the district has no magnet schools, the district has the best of both worlds. This district uses the state adopted standards in the state approved curriculum areas and has high expectations for all students. However, site-based decision making with input from all stakeholders, strongly encourages innovative programs to achieve these expectations. Schools, through the Continuous Improvement Model, plan and implement programs to meet the specific needs of their students and community. A strong network of administrators and teachers ensure that innovations that work are rapidly replicated, frequently with appropriate modifications at other schools. The district staff organization, with directors for elementary, middle, and high schools, workforce education, Alternative Education, Title 1 and Federal Programs, facilitates networking among school administrators. These directors meet on a monthly basis with site administrators of that level. A major portion of each meeting is devoted to sharing ideas and discussing common concerns. As a result, a strong basic similarity exists in the curriculum and instruction programs/material within schools with similar grade configurations.

The Santa Rosa County School District is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. District scores with regard to state testing are excellent. Santa Rosa County Schools rank within the top 3-5 of all districts in the state on a consistent basis with regard to state-wide testing scores in the areas of reading, math, and science.

The district has maintained a very liberal student transfer policy which allows parents to request a transfer for a variety of reasons.

B. Purpose

The School Board of Santa Rosa County is committed to providing quality educational opportunities for all students regardless of background characteristics. The School Board strives to provide an educational environment that enhances the student's educational success. The School Board continues to use a School Choice Program as a strategy in conjunction with the parent in providing appropriate quality educational opportunities when possible.

C. School Choice Programs

At the elementary, middle, and high school levels, the Santa Rosa County School District (SRCSD) currently utilizes the following programs:

(1.) No Child Left Behind School Choice

In 1965, Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), providing, for the first time, significant federal funding for K-12 education. The original law has been reviewed eight (8) times, most recently by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. On February 9, 2012, the Florida Department of Education's (FDOE) ESEA Flexibility Waiver request was approved by the United States Department of Education. The waiver removed the requirements in ESEA section 1116(b) of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act for an LEA to identify for improvement, corrective action,

or restructuring, as appropriate, a Title I school that fails, for two (2) consecutive years or more, to make AYP, and for a school so identified and its LEA to take certain improvement actions.

Previously under the NCLB Act, school districts were required to offer Public School Choice (PSC), the option to transfer to another public school, to students enrolled in Title I schools that were identified in need of improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. The ESEA Flexibility Waiver removed the requirement that school districts offer PSC to newly identified students. However, the ESEA Flexibility Waiver requires school districts to allow students participating in PSC for the 2014-2015 school year to remain in the choice school to the highest grade level. Parents who opt to continue placement of the Choice School must provide transportation.

(2.) Stewart B. McKinney-Bruce Vento Act School Choice

Appropriate exceptions and accommodations will be made to minimize the barriers related to student assignment for students identified as eligible for services through the Florida Department of Children and Family Services or Section 722 (d)(2) of the Stewart B. McKinney-Bruce Vento Act.

- (a.) To the extent feasible, keep a homeless child or youth in the school of origin, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the child's or youth's parent or guardian;
- (b.) Provide written explanation, including a statement regarding the right to appeal to the homeless child's or youth's parent or guardian, if the local educational agency sends such a child or youth to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent or guardian.

(3.) John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program

The John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program is established to provide the option to attend a public school other than the one to which assigned, or to provide a scholarship to a private school of choice, for students with disabilities for whom:

- (a) An Individual Educational Plan (IEP) has been written in accordance with rules of the state Board of Education; or
- (b) A 504 accommodation plan has been issued under s. 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

NOTE: Students with disabilities include K-12 students who are documented as having an intellectual disability; a speech impairment; a language impairment; a hearing impairment, including deafness; a visual impairment, including blindness; a dual sensory impairment; an orthopedic impairment; another health impairment; an emotional or behavioral disability; a specific learning disability, including, but not limited to, dyslexia, dyscalculia, or developmental aphasia; a traumatic brain injury; a developmental delay; or autism spectrum disorder.

1. Scholarship Application Procedure:

To receive a McKay Scholarship the parent of a public school student must first request by filing a notice of intent with the Department of Education by fully completing an online application for a McKay Scholarship using the Department's website: www.floridaschoolchoice.org.

A school district, a private school, or the department may assist a parent in filing the notice of intent. A notice of intent must be filed before a student withdraws from public school and must include the student's: name, date of birth, current public school district, last attended public school, parent's name, telephone number, mailing address, and email address (if applicable).

Upon filing a notice of intent the parent shall receive immediate online filing confirmation including: a confirmation number, a notice of potential eligibility or ineligibility, and, if ineligible, reasons for the ineligibility and instructions on contacting the public school district to correct any errors in information that may have caused the ineligibility. Intent may be filed throughout the school year.

NOTE: Intents filed after February 1 will be for the following school year.

2. **Determination of Eligibility:**

After receipt of a notice of intent, the Department shall, in cooperation with the school district, determine the student's eligibility for a scholarship by verifying that the student:

- Meets the prior school year in attendance definition in Section 1002.39(2)(a), F.S.
 - Filed a valid notice of intent; and
 - Meets one (1) of the following requirements:
 - a. Is a current public school student with a disability and has an individual education plan or a 504 accommodation plan, unless the accommodation plan has a duration of six (6) months or less;
- OR**
- b. Is not a current public school student but filed a notice of intent while a public school student, and was a student with a disability and Individual Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 accommodation plan, unless the accommodation plan has a duration of six (6) months or less, at the time he or she left the public school.

3. **Public school McKay Scholarship option:**

Pursuant to Section 1002.39(5), F.S., a student meeting the McKay eligibility requirements may choose to attend another public school in the student's school district or in an adjacent school district. In this case, the district McKay Scholarship Representative (name and contact information found on the School Choice website) must be contacted to discuss available public school options. Public school availability is determined by the school district and is based upon the following:

- Capacity* of the school center that the parents are requesting.
- Program availability (determined by the student's IEP) at the requested school center.
- Program capacity at the requested school center.
- Ability of parent to provide transportation for their child to and from the school of choice if the scholarship is awarded. **(Transportation is the responsibility of the parent.)**

**Capacity is defined by the SRCSD as 95% of the available student stations based upon the Florida Inventory of School Houses (FISH) report or at 90% of the allowable core class size for class average based upon class size calculation per class size amendment guidelines (1003.03, F.S.).*

NOTE: Parents may file a Notice of Intent at any time during the school year. For those intents filed after February 1, for the following school year, determination will be made and parent contacted by June 15th.

(4.) Parent Request for Student Transfer - In County

- (a) Students may be reassigned to a school outside of their residence zone with the approval of the Santa Rosa County District School Board. The **Request for Student Transfer** form must be completed by a custodial parent or a court-awarded guardian. A separate form must be completed for each child requesting a transfer.
 - 1. The request for a transfer is initiated at the school in the residence zone where the parent/guardian resides. The school will have the **Request for Student Transfer** form available. This form is also available on the district's web page, <https://www.santarosa.k12.fl.us> in the Operational Documents section.
 - 2. The losing school will route the form to the receiving school for the principal's signature and then forward the form to the grade level director for review. The parent may opt to obtain the signature of each principal and deliver the request to the grade level director.
 - 3. The Request for Student Transfer period each year is **from May 15th to June 15th**. Requests submitted after the transfer period may be held by the principal of the receiving school until enrollment numbers can be evaluated for the upcoming school year. In this case, the principal will forward the form to the district grade level director after indicating on the form whether he/she agrees with the request or does not agree with the request. Otherwise, the parent/guardian is responsible for submitting the form to the district grade level

director at the School Board Office located at 5086 Canal Street, Milton, Florida, after obtaining the signatures of each principal. The request will be presented to the Santa Rosa County School Board for action. The parent/guardian will be notified of the School Board's decision.

- (b) Transfers are considered individually and approved granted on space availability and in accordance with the Student Progression Plan sections 4.110, 5.109 or 6.112. A transfer is not a matter of right, and is granted at the discretion of the School Board. If the recommendation to the School Board is to deny the request for the transfer, the parent may address the School Board.
- (c) The Santa Rosa County School District is NOT responsible for the transportation of students if the request for transfer is approved.
- (d) An approved transfer request shall be for the duration of that child's completion of the highest grade at the school to which the child has been reassigned.
- (e) A new request must be submitted when the student progresses from elementary school to middle school or from middle school to high school. Transfers do not follow the student from elementary school to middle school or from middle school to high school.
- (f) The eligibility of high school students to participate in interscholastic athletics may be affected under the regulations of the Florida High School Activities Association. Procedures for athletic eligibility will be initiated by the school to which the student is assigned, if applicable.
- (g) A parent/guardian who wants a transferred student to return to the school of his/her attendance zone, must complete the **Request for Student Transfer** form for approval by the School Board prior to the student re-enrolling in the school to which the student is assigned, if applicable.
- (h) Any parent/guardian requesting a second transfer within the same school year in which the initial transfer was processed will be required to prove that the denial of the request would cause great personal hardship.
- (i) No request for transfer will be processed for a student for whom disciplinary action is pending.
- (j) As determined by the principals of the reassigned school, a transfer student who does not conform to the policies, rules, and regulations of the school to which the transfer was made, or if the lack of student/parental support develops or becomes a problem, the school may choose to have the student administratively withdrawn and reassigned to their residence-zoned school. If the revocation is due to lack of parent support/cooperation, the school will document three (3) good faith efforts to attain such cooperation/support prior to the revocation of the student transfer.
- (k) If a transfer is approved where an extracurricular program* exists in a school that is not available in the school where the student resides, the student must continue participating in the extracurricular program or return to the home school. *(A program is a continuum of courses over multiple years.)
- (l) As determined by the grade level director only, a student may seek a transfer based upon a Power of Attorney if, in the opinion of the director, ample evidence has been presented that the educational welfare of the student will be severely jeopardized. The director will petition the School Board for special temporary permission for the student to attend a school outside their attendance zone in accordance with residency established by the assigned Power of Attorney. This permission would expire at the end of the current school year.
- (m) A parent of a student with a disability who is requesting a transfer that is not required by the student's IEP is subject to school and ESE program capacity as stated in "McKay Scholarships".
- (n) Student transfers will be considered if one of the following criteria is met in concordance with school capacity:
 - 1. A school that has been deemed as closed to transfers due to capacity*:
**Capacity is defined by the SRCSD as 95% of the available student stations based upon the Florida Inventory of School Houses (FISH) report or at 90% of the allowable core class size for class average based upon class size calculation per class size amendment guidelines (1003.03, F.S.)*

- a. Employees who reside in Santa Rosa County and work at the school of request or at a school within that feeder pattern, pending availability of space (student stations and/or program space).
 - b. Court-ordered action on a student.
 - c. Needs of the district that would benefit the functioning of the school(s), this would include insurance of racial/ethnic balances and maintaining equity among all schools.
 - d. A student who is currently attending a school and moves into another attendance zone may continue to attend the currently enrolled school until the end of the current school year. Parents are responsible for providing transportation to and from school.
 - e. A student who is currently attending a school and that school's attendance zone has been rezoned, may continue to attend the school until the last grade of that school. Parents are responsible for providing transportation to and from school.
 - f. Parent requests due to military preference, pending availability of space.
 - g. NCLB School Choice participants.
2. A school that has not reached capacity:
- a. Employees who reside in Santa Rosa County and work at the school of request or at the school within the feeder pattern, pending space availability (student stations and/or program space).
 - b. Needs of the district that would benefit the functioning of the school(s), this would include insurance of racial/ethnic balances and maintaining equity among all schools.
 - c. A student who is currently attending a school and moves into another school zone may continue to attend the school until the last grade level of that school. Parents are responsible for providing transportation to and from school.
 - d. A student who is currently attending a school and that school's attendance zone has been rezoned, may continue to attend the school until the last grade of that school. Parents are responsible for providing transportation to and from school.
 - e. If an academic/extracurricular program* exists in a school and is not available in the school in which the student resides. If the transfer is granted the student must continue in the academic/extracurricular program or return to the home school. (*A program is a continuum of courses over multiple years.)
 - f. Parent requests due to military preference.
 - g. NCLB requests.
 - h. Court-ordered action on a student.
 - i. Parents of students that have requested to participate in School Choice and in which the school has reached capacity will be given the option to reapply for a student transfer mid-October and/or mid-February once the FTE counts have been completed. Enrollment will be reviewed at each school site at the end of the October FTE count and the February FTE count to determine if student stations or program space is available (this is also reviewed with respect to racial/ethnic balance, socioeconomic/demographic factors) and maintained equity among the schools: It is the district's intent to maintain a racial/ethnic balance that reflects the community in which the school resides.

D. Controlled School Choice Plan (Not Implemented)

The SRCSD's Controlled School Choice Plan is in response to the legislative mandate established by Section 1002.31, Florida Statutes.

(1) Choice Zones

The district plan would establish four (4) choice zones:

(a) Choice Zone 1:

1. Chumuckla Elementary
2. Jay Elementary
3. Central School
4. Jay High

(b) Choice Zone 2:

1. East Milton Elementary
2. Berryhill Elementary
3. Rhodes Elementary
4. Bagdad Elementary
5. King Middle School
6. Hobbs Middle School
7. Milton High School
8. Pace High

(c) Choice Zone 3:

1. B.C. Russell Elementary
2. Dixon Primary
3. Dixon Intermediate
4. Pea Ridge Elementary
5. Avalon Middle
6. Sims Middle
7. Milton High School
8. Pace High

(d) Choice Zone 4:

1. Gulf Breeze Elementary
2. Oriole Beach Elementary
3. Gulf Breeze Middle
4. Gulf Breeze High
5. Navarre High
6. Holley Navarre Middle
7. Woodlawn Beach Middle
8. Holley Navarre Primary
9. Holley Navarre Intermediate
10. West Navarre Primary
11. West Navarre Intermediate

(2) Attendance Zones

In addition, the SRCSD would:

- (a) Maintain attendance zones for each school.
- (b) Implement the plan when it is determined by the SRCSB that the School Choice options of: the NCLB School Choice Plan, the Stewart B. McKinney- Bruce Vento Act, McKay Scholarship Program, and Parent Request for Transfer School Choice plans are not meeting the educational needs of the students of Santa Rosa County. The plan will be implemented in phases depending upon which zone is deemed in need.
- (c) Grandfather in all students enrolled at a school prior to the extension of Controlled School Choice to a zone.
- (d) Offer Choice to students entering kindergarten, middle school, high school or any district school for the first time.
- (e) Once assigned, guarantee placement in the school of choice through the highest level at that school.
- (f) Grant priority to students living in the attendance zone of a school.
- (g) Grant priority to students with parents claiming military preference.
- (h) Establish the student capacity for each school at 95% of student station availability based on the Florida Inventory of School Houses (FISH) report or 90% capacity of core-class calculation per class size amendment guidelines.
- (i) Allow students to transfer to other schools in their choice zone through the request for transfer.
- (j) Allow students to transfer to out-of-choice-zone schools through the request for transfer process.

E. Transportation

- (1) Florida Statutes and Administrative Rules require that transportation be provided for students living more than two (2) miles from their school of assignment.
- (2) Transportation will be provided for students assigned by the district to special programs such as Exceptional Student Education (ESE) and English Language Learners (ELL).
- (3) Transportation will be provided to the assigned school in the Controlled School Choice Zone with the exception of students who receive their school assignment through request for transfer or McKay Scholarships Program.
- (4) Transportation to a school outside the students assigned school zone is the responsibility of the parent.

F. Application Process

- (1) No Child Left Behind School (NCLB) Choice
If a school is offering school choice due to NCLB requirements, parents of current students are notified via letter of their options regarding school choice with transportation. New students enrolling in a school which qualifies for NCLB School Choice are made aware of their option at the time of enrollment via information in the enrollment package. Applications are made available at the school site, the district office, and electronic copy.
- (2) Stewart B. McKinney-Bruce Vento Act School Choice Option
If a parent informs the school or district (through the enrollment process) that they are claiming homeless status, or it is determined by the district from information provided by the parent (by the resident information survey completed annually) that the student could possibly be eligible for services relating to the *Stewart B. McKinney-Bruce Vento Act*, the student is referred to the Santa Rosa County District School's Coordinator for Federal Programs program to coordinate services.

(3) McKay Scholarships Program

Every parent of a special needs child with an IEP that is being served in the SRCSD receives a letter each year from the SRCSB informing them of the McKay Scholarship Program. Parents also receive notification of the McKay Scholarship Program at every IEP meeting they attend. The parent initiates the application process by going on-line to the Florida Department of Education web-site and files a "Notice of Intent" to participate in the program at which point, the parent is contacted within 30 days of filing the intent by the district Contact person to review qualifications and assist in the application process.

(4) Parent Request for Transfer and Controlled School Choice Plans

Applications for Request for Transfer are available at every school site, district offices, and electronic copy. Deadlines if applicable are noted on the application form. Information regarding the School Choice through request for transfer is detailed in the "Student Progression Plan" or this document which can be located at each school site, district offices, or via the district web site. Parents are notified of approval or non-approval by the grade level directors within 30 days of submitting the completed required information.

(5) Virtual Instruction Program

Pursuant to 1002.45, F.S., Santa Rosa County public school students in grades KG-12 may participate in part-time or full-time virtual instruction programs. Open enrollment for both part-time and full-time virtual instruction programs will take place from April 15, 2013, through July 31, 2013, with late registration continuing through the first two (2) weeks of the school year if space is available. Parents of students interested in participating in a full-time virtual instruction program must contact Patti Peacher, Coordinator of Virtual Education Programs, at 850-981-7860, no later than the conclusion of the open enrollment period. Parents of students interested in participating in a part-time virtual instruction program, resulting in a hybrid schedule of virtual and brick and mortar classes, must contact their student's guidance counselor no later than the conclusion of the open enrollment period. Should the resulting hybrid schedule result in a student remaining at home for a period of the school day, parents shall be responsible for providing transportation to or from school, depending on the time of day the student will need to enter or exit his/her brick and mortar classes.

G. Application Timelines

Parents may choose at any time during the year to apply for the School Choice Programs available with the exception of Parent Request for Student Transfer. Parents may submit an application for a school transfer request beginning May 15th and ending June 15th each calendar year for the beginning of the subsequent school year. No applications will be accepted after June 15th for requests to start the school year unless the parent/student has established residence in Santa Rosa County after June 15th of the current year. Transfer determinations may not be made prior to July 15th. Once transfer determinations have been made, no further transfer requests will be considered or taken until after the FTE period in October.

H. Appeals

A parent may appeal the decision of the school district by making it known in writing to the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction within one (1) week of receiving notice that they have been denied School Choice. The Assistant Superintendent will review the School Choice Application and present his findings to the parent within two (2) weeks of receiving the appeal notice and make a recommendation to the SRCSB for final determination at the next available School Board meeting.

I. Parental Involvement

Each school site establishes a School Advisory Council (SAC) which reviews school policies/ procedures and advises the schools in total school operation. The SRCSB encourages each SAC to review the district's policy regarding School Choice Plan options and make recommendations regarding the Plan. The members of the SRCSB are elected by popular vote from the designated five districts within Santa Rosa County. As representatives of their respective districts, the Board members review the School Choice Plan and make recommendations regarding the guidelines and implementation. The SRCSB has the ultimate decision approving the School Choice Plan.