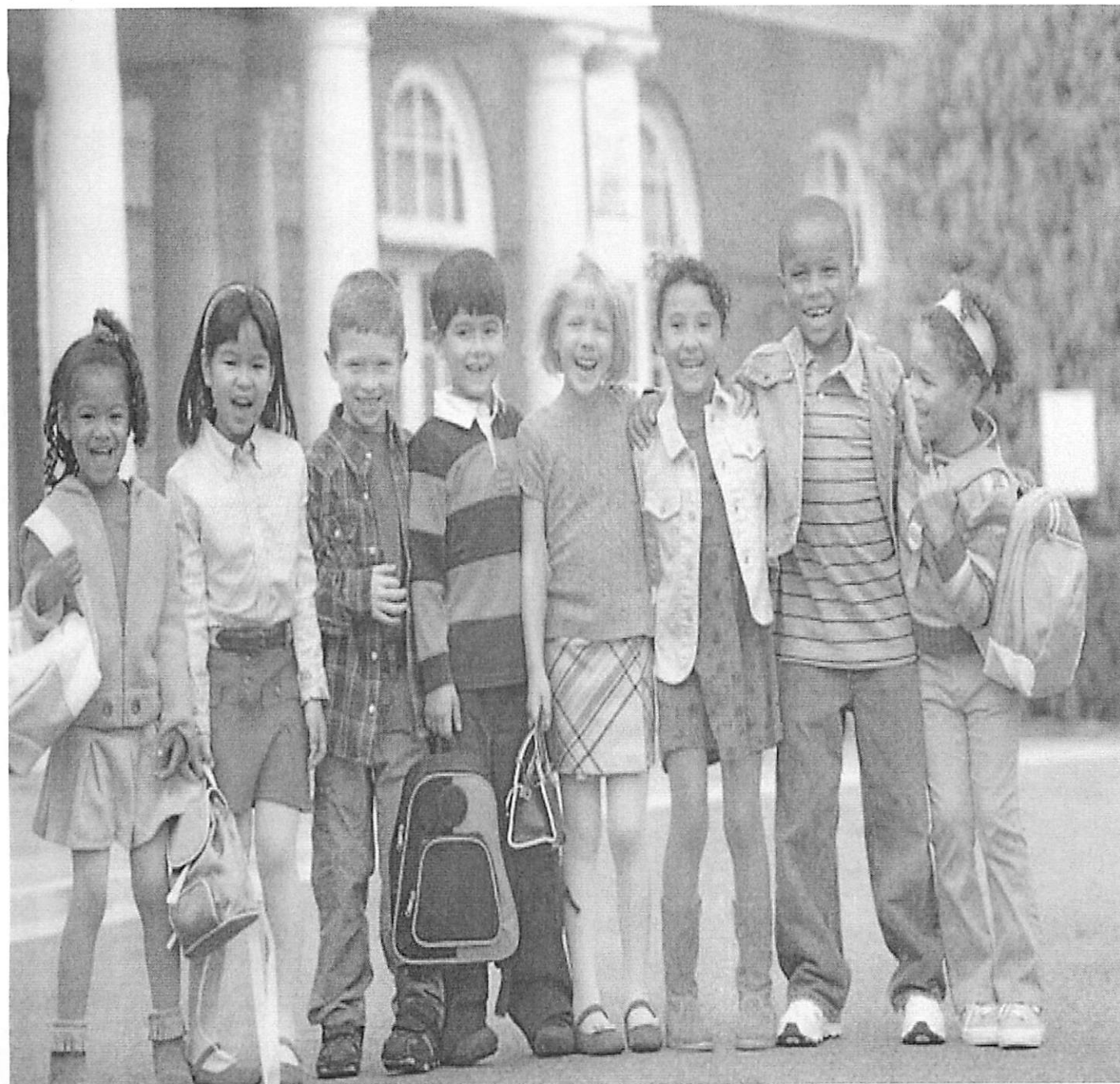


# School Choice Plan



2012-2013



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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 thirty-three school centers. These centers include 1 Pre-K center, 17 elementary level schools, 7 middle schools, 6 high schools, 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's curriculum, which implements the Sunshine State Standards, is currently being revised to implement the Next Generation Standards in state approved curriculum areas and established expectations for all students. 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, Title 1 and Federal Programs, and Alternative Education, 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 reassignment policy which allows parents to request a reassignment 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:

### *a. No Child Left Behind School Choice:*

When schools do not meet State targets for improving the achievement of all students, parents are given the option to send their child to another school. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) gives parents of all children enrolled in Title I schools that are identified as a school in need of improvement year two or more, the opportunity to transfer their child/children to a school that has not been so identified. In these instances, the SRCSD will provide transportation for the student to attend the school of choice within available funds. If adequate funds are not available, SRCSD may prioritize students based on academic need.

~~The SRCSD has designated the following schools as the NCLB Schools of Choice for 2012-2013\*:~~

- ~~1. Oriole Beach Elementary (grades K-5)~~
- ~~2. Chumuckla Elementary (grades K-6)~~

The SRCSD will determine each year based upon school assessment data which schools will be designated as the NCLB Schools of Choice. This designation will be made known to those students eligible for NCLB School Choice as soon as the district receives data to make a determination of those schools.

Once a student has exercised the option to transfer to another school, the district must permit the student to remain in that school until these student has completed the highest grade offered by that school (when it was designated as a CHOICE school). Students are not required to remain at the new school, but it is their option to stay. However, the district obligation to provide transportation to the new school expires at the end of the school year in which the original school is no longer identified for school improvement or subject to corrective action or restructuring.

If a receiving school becomes identified as a school in need of improvement then this school is no longer eligible as a School Choice transfer option, and would be required to offer to all students enrolled in the school the option to transfer to an eligible school. Students who

~~transferred~~ reassigned to such a school through choice with transportation must be given the same opportunity to ~~transfer~~ be reassigned again to a higher performing school as all other students enrolled in the school. Parents may choose to have their child remain at this original receiver school; however, the district is no longer obligated to provide transportation.

The SCRSD annually offers NCLB School Choice options after the announcement of grades and AYP status at all eligible schools. Parents/Guardians have 14 days from the date of the announcement to make selections before the enrollment window closes. Parents of students entering the school for the first time have 14 days to respond to the NCLB choice option.

\*These schools are subject to change depending upon annual review of school achievement.

*b. 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.

- i. 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;
- ii. Provide written explanation, including a statement regarding the right to appeal under subparagraph (E), 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.

*c. McKay Scholarships Program*

The McKay Scholarships Program offers parents public school choice. A parent of a disabled student may choose to ~~transfer~~ reassign the student to another public school. If the parent chooses to apply for a scholarship for their child, the parent must submit a Notice of Intent via the FLDOE School Choice web-site. The McKay Scholarship district contact will review each intent filed to ensure the following requirements have been met:

- i. The student has a current Individual Education Plan (IEP) which documents a disability,
- ii. The student is at least 5 years old and younger than 22 by September 1 of the Scholarship year,
- iii. The student is a **current** Florida Public School student, **and**
- ii. The student has attended public school in Florida during the prior school year (determined by verification of reporting in both October and February FTE counts).

Once the intent has been verified, the district contact will review with the parent the eligibility of the student for the McKay Scholarship ~~transfer~~ reassignment based upon the following:

- i. Capacity\* of the school center that the parents are requesting.
- ii. Program availability (determined by the student's IEP) at the requested school center.
- iii. Program capacity at the requested school center.
- iv. 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).*

Parents may file a Notice of Intent at any time during the school year. For those intents filed at the end of the year, to begin the following school year, determination will be made by June 15<sup>th</sup>.

*d. Parent Request for Reassignment/ Transfer*

Students may be reassigned to a school outside of their residential zone with the approval of the Santa Rosa District School Board. Reassignment is not an automatic right but is a carefully considered process by the District with obligations on the part of the parents and students to whom it is granted. A parent must meet with the principal of the school serving the student's residential address and request a reassignment, using Form 61-02-04. After this meeting, the parent must meet with the Principal of the school where they would like their child to attend to request the reassignment. Both Principals must sign the reassignment request which will be forwarded to the appropriate Grade Level Director for presentation to the Santa Rosa District School Board. The parent will be notified of the School Board's decision and will be required to provide their child's transportation to and from school. The following guidelines and considerations are utilized in determining the approval of a reassignment/ transfer:

- i. Parents may submit an application for a school reassignment/transfer request beginning May 15<sup>th</sup> and ending June 15<sup>th</sup> each calendar year for the beginning of the subsequent school year. No applications will be accepted after June 15<sup>th</sup> for requests to start the school year unless the parent/student has established residence in Santa Rosa County after June 15<sup>th</sup> of the current year. Reassignment determinations may not be made prior to July 15<sup>th</sup>. Once reassignment determinations have been made, no further reassignment requests will be considered or taken until after the FTE period in October. Exceptions to this would be for students who establish or change their residence in Santa Rosa County after June 15<sup>th</sup> and meet the criteria for "schools closed to capacity" (see C,d, xiii).
- ii. Requests for reassignments are initiated at the school in the attendance zone where the parent/court-awarded guardian resides. A letter stating the reason for the request for reassignment should be attached to the form at the initiating school.
- iii. The Reassignment Form, which contains the statement "to the best of my knowledge all of the above information is true and correct" must be notarized.
- iv. An approved reassignment request shall be for the duration of that child's tenure at the school he or she is reassigned.
- v. ~~Transfers~~ Reassignments for students with disabilities with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) indicating continued services in a reassigned school are not required to request reassignment with the change in grade level.
- vi. An additional request for a reassignment must be made when a student leaves elementary school and desires to go to a middle school outside of their attendance zone. An additional request for reassignment must also be made when a student leaves middle school and desires to go to a high school outside of their attendance zone.

- vii. A parent or guardian who wants a reassigned pupil to return to a school in their attendance zone shall complete a "Reassignment Form", which must be approved by the School Board prior to the pupil re-enrolling in the school of their attendance zone.
- viii. Any parent or guardian requesting a second reassignment within the same school year in which the initial reassignment was processed will be required to prove to the School Board that denial of the request would cause great personal hardship.
- ix. A request for reassignment will not be processed for any student with disciplinary action pending.
- x. As determined by the Principal of the school to which a ~~pupil~~ student is reassigned, a reassigned student who does not conform to the policies, rules and regulations of the school to which a reassignment was processed may be administratively withdrawn from the reassigned school and returned to the school from which the student was reassigned.
- xi. As determined by the Principal and approved by the grade level director, a reassignment to a school may be administratively withdrawn if a parent or parents of a student are causing or seeking to cause an uncooperative or hostile environment among the teacher, the student, the parent(s) and the school. The school must document at least three good faith attempts to obtain the cooperation/support of the parent(s) before considering this option.
- xii. As determined by the grade level director only, a student may seek a reassignment 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.
- xiii. A parent of a student with a disability who is requesting a reassignment that is not required by the students IEP is subject to school and ESE program capacity as stated in "McKay Scholarships".
- xiv. Student reassignments /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 reassignments /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).
    - 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).
    - Court ordered action on a student.
    - Needs of the district that would benefit the functioning of the school(s), this would include ensurance of racial/ethnic balances and maintaining equity among all schools).
    - A student who is currently attending a school and moves into another school zone may continue to attend the school until the end of the current school year. Parents are responsible for providing transportation to and from school.
    - 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.

- Parent requests due to military preference, pending availability of space.
- NCLB School Choice participants.

2. A school that has not reached capacity :

- Employees who reside in Santa Rosa County and work at the school of request or at a school within the feeder pattern, pending space availability (student stations and/or program space).
- Needs of the district that would benefit the functioning of the school(s), this would include assurance of racial/ethnic balances and maintaining equity among all schools).
- 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.
- 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.
- If an academic/extra curricular 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/extra curricular program or return to the home school.
- Parent requests due to military preference.
- NCLB Requests
- Court ordered action on a student.

xv. A request for reassignment will not be processed for any student with disciplinary action pending.

xvi. Parents of students that have requested to participate in School Choice and in which the school has reached capacity will be placed on a waiting list. 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). At this time, the parents of students on the "wait list" may contact the district and if it is determined that student stations are available, students may be granted reassignments based upon the order in which they were placed on the "wait list". The "wait list" order is determined by the number of criteria met, consideration equity balance with regard to racial/ethnic balance and the order in which the completed request was submitted.

**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.



The district plan would establish four choice zones

- i. Choice Zone 1 containing :
  - a. Chumuckla Elementary
  - b. Jay Elementary
  - c. Central School
  - d. Jay High
  
- ii. Choice Zone 2 containing :
  - a. East Milton Elementary
  - b. Berryhill Elementary
  - c. Rhodes Elementary
  - d. Bagdad Elementary
  - e. King Middle School
  - f. Hobbs Middle School
  - g. Milton High School
  - h. Pace High
  
- iii. Choice Zone 3 containing:
  - a. B.C. Russell Elementary
  - b. Dixon Primary
  - c. Dixon Intermediate
  - d. Pea Ridge Elementary
  - e. Avalon Middle
  - f. Sims Middle
  
- iv. Choice Zone 4 containing:
  - a. Gulf Breeze Elementary
  - b. Oriole Beach Elementary
  - c. Gulf Breeze Middle
  - d. Gulf Breeze High
  - e. Navarre High
  - f. Holley Navarre Middle
  - g. Woodlawn Beach Middle
  - h. Holley Navarre Primary
  - i. Holley Navarre Intermediate
  - j. West Navarre Primary
  - k. West Navarre Intermediate

In addition, the SRCSD would:

- v. Maintain attendance zones for each school.
- vi. 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 Reassignment/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.
- vii. Grandfather in all students enrolled at a school prior to the extension of controlled School Choice to a zone.
  - viii. Offer choice to students entering kindergarten, middle school, high school or any district school for the first time.
  - ix. Once assigned, guarantee placement in the school of choice through the highest level at that school.
  - x. Grant priority to students living in the attendance zone of a school.
  - xi. Grant priority to students having older siblings in a school.
  - xii. Grant priority to students with parents claiming military preference.
  - xiii. 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.
  - xiv. Allow students to transfer to other schools in their choice zone through the request for reassignment.
  - xv. Allow students to transfer to out-of-choice-zone schools through the request for reassignment process.

#### **E. Transportation**

- Florida Statutes and Administrative Rules require that transportation be provided for students living more than two miles from their school of assignment.
- Transportation will be provided for students assigned by the District to special programs such as Exceptional Students Education and English Language Learners.
- 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 reassignment/transfer or McKay Scholarships Program.
- Transportation to a school outside the students assigned school zone is the responsibility of the parent.

#### **F. Application Process**

##### ***a. 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.

##### ***b. 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 District School's Coordinator for Federal Programs program to coordinate services.

*c. 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 Program at every IEP 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.

*d. Parent Request for Reassignment and Controlled School Choice Plans*

Applications for Request for Reassignment 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 reassignment 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.

**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 Reassignment/ Transfer. Parents may submit an application for a school reassignment/transfer request beginning May 15<sup>th</sup> and ending June 15<sup>th</sup> each calendar year for the beginning of the subsequent school year. No applications will be accepted after June 15<sup>th</sup> for requests to start the school year unless the parent/student has established residence in Santa Rosa County after June 15<sup>th</sup> of the current year. Reassignment determinations may not be made prior to July 15<sup>th</sup>. Once reassignment determinations have been made, no further reassignment 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 Superintendant for Curriculum and Instruction within one week of receiving notice that they have been denied school choice. The Assistant Superintendant will review the School Choice Application and present his findings to the parent within two 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 established 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 with 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.