



# School Choice Plan

~~2021-2022~~ 2022-2023



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## Santa Rosa County School Choice Programs

### A. Background

The Santa Rosa County School District serves approximately ~~29,000~~ 30,000 pre-kindergarten through grade twelve students in ~~34~~ 36 school centers. These centers include ~~1~~ 2 Pre-K centers, 17 elementary level schools, 7 middle schools, 6 high schools, 1 K-12 combination school, 1 technical ~~center~~ college, 1 K-8 school, 1 Virtual School 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. All schools have instructional television accessible to all classrooms. The Office of Professional Learning 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 with appropriate modifications at other schools. The district staff organization, with directors for elementary, middle, and high schools, workforce education, Continuous Improvement, 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~~ Cognia Inc. 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. Stewart B. McKinney-Bruce Vento Act School of Origin

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 child or youth experiencing homelessness in their school of origin, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the child's or youth's parent or guardian or it is determined by the district McKinney-Vento Liaison and child welfare agency that school of origin transportation is not in the best interest of the child;
- (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.

#### 2. ~~John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program~~ Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA)

(FL Statute Rule 6A-6.0970, F.A.C., June 14, 2015)

~~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.~~

On May 11, 2021, Governor DeSantis signed House Bill 7045 into law, resulting in several changes to the state funded scholarship programs, including extensive expansion of the Family Empowerment Scholarship Program.

Beginning with the 2022-2023 school year, the FES-US will include the John M. McKay Scholarship

This branch of the Family Empowerment Scholarship Program is designed to offer families of students with disabilities, as young as 3 years of age, access to additional education options. Families may choose to enroll their student in another public school, or they may take the opportunity to receive a personal education savings account (ESA) for their student. With an ESA, parents receive a deposit of public funds into government-authorized savings accounts with restricted, but multiple, uses. An ESA can be used to fund not only items such as private school tuition and fees, but also online learning programs, private tutoring, community college costs, higher education expenses and other approved customized learning services and materials. Families apply **and annually renew** for participation in FES UA through one of the approved SFOs, which are responsible for determining eligibility, awarding and distributing funding to eligible student accounts, and approving eligible expenditures.

#### 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](http://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.

In the Spring of 2022 the FLDOE will share further information about the application procedures for the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities. If you have questions you may contact Rachelle Wood, ESE Administrative Intern.  
Email: [woodrl@santarosa.k12.fl.us](mailto:woodrl@santarosa.k12.fl.us)

#### 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.

1. 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:

- Program availability (determined by the student's IEP) 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.)**
- Parent should also complete a District Request for Student Transfer form to state the use of McKay Scholarship within the Santa Rosa County School system.
  - Document on the form the approval of the McKay Intent as well as alternate school choice.
  - Verification of ESE program will be done by ESE Admin as well as affiliated program facilitator to determine appropriate services and/or supports in requested school.
  - Verification submitted to designated Level Director for final approval of public school.

**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 15<sup>th</sup>.

In the Spring of 2022 the FLDOE will share further information about the Determination of Eligibility for the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities.

If you have questions you may contact Rachelle Wood, ESE Administrative Intern.  
Email: [woodrl@santarosa.k12.fl.us](mailto:woodrl@santarosa.k12.fl.us)

### 3. Parent Request for Student Transfer (In-County and Controlled Open Enrollment)

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.

- (a) Each 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/choice/>
- (b) The Request for Student Transfer (**In-County and Controlled Open Enrollment**) period is from ~~April 9<sup>th</sup> – May 24<sup>th</sup>~~ April 8<sup>th</sup> – May 23<sup>rd</sup>. In-County, Court Orders, and Military Preference requests submitted after the transfer period may be held until enrollment numbers can be evaluated for the upcoming school year. In this case, the district grade level director will make decisions based on available capacity. The parent/guardian is responsible for submitting the form to the district grade level director at the Douglas A. Dillon Administrative Center located at 6032 Highway 90, Milton, Florida. The request will be evaluated based on established criteria and recommended to the Santa Rosa County School Board for action. The parent/guardian will be notified of the School Board's decision.
- (c) **In-County, Court Orders, and Military Preference transfer requests will be considered first.** If these specific types of student transfer requests are denied, they will automatically be reconsidered under Controlled Open Enrollment.
- (d) Transfers are considered individually, and approval granted on space availability and in accordance with the Student Progression Plan, Sections 4.111, 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.
- (e) The Santa Rosa County School District is **NOT** responsible for the transportation of students if the request for transfer is approved.
- (f) 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.

- (g) **A new request must be submitted when the student progresses from Primary school to Intermediate school, Intermediate or Elementary school to Middle school, or from Middle school to High school.**
- (h) The eligibility of high school students to participate in interscholastic athletics may be affected under the regulations of the Florida High School Activities Association (FHSAA). Procedures for athletic eligibility will be initiated by the school to which the student is assigned, if applicable.
- (i) 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.
- (j) **No request for transfer will be processed for a student for whom disciplinary action is pending.**
- (k) As determined by the grade level director only, a student may seek a transfer based upon a Change of Guardianship with 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.
- (l) 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".
- (m) Student transfers will be considered if one of the following criteria is met in accordance with school capacity:

**In-County Residents**

- a. 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.
- b. 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.
- c. If an academic/extracurricular program exists in a school and is not available in the school in which the student resides.
- d. Students who have siblings enrolled at a school other than their residentially zone school may apply for reassignment to that same school based on sibling support. The student must be attending the school the same year as the requested reassignment.



Students assigned for sibling support may remain at the assigned school until they change levels.

**All Florida Residents**

- a. Court-ordered action on a student with supporting documents
- b. Military Preference with supporting active duty orders

**Controlled Open Enrollment**

(The SRCSD's Controlled Open Enrollment Plan is in response to the legislative mandate established by Section 1002.31, Florida Statutes)

- a. If a student does not meet any of the criteria above or resides in a Florida county other than Santa Rosa County, a parent/guardian's **Request for Student Transfer** will be considered for **Controlled Open Enrollment**.
- b. All In-County, Court Ordered, and Military preference parent requests will be considered first.
- c. All other decisions on whether to recommend the transfer to the Santa Rosa County School Board for action is based solely on available capacity\* at the requested school.

\*Available capacity will be determined based on a chart posted on the district website that will clearly show available capacity at each school. As already noted above, capacity is defined by the SRCSD as 80% of the available student stations based upon the Florida Inventory of School Houses (FISH) report.

**D. Transportation**

- (1) Transportation will be provided for students assigned by the district to special programs such as Exceptional Student Education (ESE).
- (2) Transportation may also be provided to students in foster care to ensure school stability, if the school district designee and child welfare agency designee reach a consensus that school stability transportation is in the best interest of the student.
- (3) Transportation will not be provided to the assigned school for students with approved student transfer requests.
- (4) Transportation to a school outside the students assigned school zone is the responsibility of the parent.
- (5) Transportation will be provided for eligible students for whom school of origin service is determined to be in the student's best interest by the school district's McKinney-Vento Liaison or through request for McKay Scholarships Program.

**E. Application Process**

(1) 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 Director for Federal Programs program to coordinate services.

(2) 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 SRCSD 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.

[Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities \(FES-UA\)](#)

[In the Spring of 2022 the FLDOE will share further information about the Determination of Eligibility for the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities.](#)

[If you have questions you may contact Rachelle Wood, ESE Administrative Intern.](#)

[Email: woodrl@santarosa.k12.fl.us](mailto:woodrl@santarosa.k12.fl.us)

(3) Parent Request for Transfer (In-County and Controlled Open Enrollment)

Applications for Request for Transfer are available at every school site, district offices, and via electronic copy. Deadlines if applicable are noted on the application form. Information regarding the School Choice through In-County request for student 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 according to the timelines established by this plan.

(4) 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 15th through July 31st each year with late registration continuing through the first two weeks of the school year if space is available. Parents of students interested in participating in a full-time virtual instruction program must contact the Principal, Blended Academy and Santa Rosa Online, 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.

## F. Application Timelines

Parents may choose at any time during the year to apply for the School Choice Programs available with the exception of Controlled Open Enrollment. Parents may submit an application for a school transfer request beginning ~~April 9<sup>th</sup> – May 24<sup>th</sup>~~ April 8<sup>th</sup> – May 23<sup>rd</sup> for the beginning of the subsequent school year. Applications submitted after May ~~25<sup>th</sup>~~ May 23<sup>rd</sup> may be held until enrollment numbers can be evaluated for the upcoming school year unless the parent/student has established residence in Santa Rosa County. Transfer determinations may not be made prior to the May School Board Meeting each year. Once initial transfer determinations have been made, it is not likely any transfer requests will be considered until after the FTE period in October.

### Target Timeline for School Choice Determinations

Draft School Choice Plan to School Board	February School Board Meeting
Post Capacity Chart and Plan on website	<del>April 9, 2021</del> April 8, 2022
Application Window	<del>April 9 – May 24, 2021</del> April 8 – May 23, 2022
Controlled Open Enrollment Application Closed	<del>May 24, 2021</del> May 23, 2022
In-County, Court Orders, Military Preference to Board	May School Board Meeting
Parent/Guardian Notifications Begin	First Day After May School Board Meeting
<del>Consider Controlled Open Enrollment Request/Lotteries</del>	<del>May 14 – May 28, 2021</del>
Controlled Open Enrollment Transfers to Board	First June School Board Meeting
Parent/Guardian Notifications Begin	First Day After First June School Board Meeting

## G. Appeals

A parent may appeal the decision of the school district by making it known in writing to the appropriate Grade Level Director within one (1) week of receiving notice that they have been denied school choice. The Grade Level Director along with the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment will review the Request for Student Transfer application and present his findings to the parent within two (2) weeks of receiving the appeal notice

## H. Parent and Family Engagement

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.

