



# School Choice Guidelines and Procedures

## I. Delaware School Choice Program

- A. The General Assembly of the State of Delaware enacted an enrollment choice program within the public system of the State for the school year beginning July 1, 1996. It is the Goal of the General Assembly to increase access to educational opportunity for all children throughout the State regardless of where they may live.
- B. The Parent of a student from another school district enrolled in a Colonial School District school or program through the School Choice Program is responsible for transporting the student to/from their Choice School or to/from the nearest bus stop serving the Choice School provided the bus has space available (without reimbursement). If requested by the Parent, the Colonial School District Transportation Office will assign a Choice Student a bus stop. The Parent is responsible for dropping child off and picking child up at school or bus stop when Choice School is opening late or dismissed early.
- C. Colonial School District will hold at least one School Choice Public Information Session by October 31. This Information Session will provide information about the School Choice opportunities in the District's schools and/or programs, criteria, requirements, and deadlines for the next school year.
- D. The capacity of each school will be reviewed annually by the Superintendent's Office in conjunction with the Board prior to the start of the Choice process.
  1. By no later than November 30 of each year, the Board will provide the Delaware Department of Education with notice of the capacity and projected enrollment of each school and program for the following academic year.
  2. The Capacity and Projected Enrollment figures may be revised until January 30.
  3. The numbers will be used as a guideline to decide how many students will be issued Choice Invitations and/or be placed on Choice Waiting List for each school and/or program.
  4. The District may disapprove an application because of lack of capacity in the Choice School and/or Program for which the School Choice Application is submitted.

## II. Definitions

- A. "District of Residence" shall mean any reorganized school district in which the Parent of a student resides (lives).
- B. "School of Residence" shall mean the school assigned to Parent's residence.
- C. "Parent" shall mean parent or legal guardian of the child.
- D. "Receiving District", "District", "Board of Education" or "Board" shall mean the Colonial School District. Since the District includes more than one school, if a parent of a child applies to enroll his or her child in a public school program within the District of Residence other than the school in which the child would normally be enrolled based on his or her residence, the Colonial School District shall also be considered the Receiving District under this policy.
- E. "Capacity" shall mean the maximum number of students that a program or school can contain as determined solely by considerations of physical space, physical resources, and class size for each grade level.
- F. "Projected Enrollment" shall mean the total number of returning students and new attendance zone students the District anticipates will enroll for the following academic year.
- G. "Lack of Capacity" shall mean that the Choice School and/or Program calculates Projected Enrollment for the following academic year to be at least 85% of its Capacity.
- H. "Good Cause" shall mean a change in a child's residence due to a change in family residence, a change in the state in which the family residence is located, a change in a child's parent's marital status, a change caused by a guardianship proceeding, placement of a child in foster care, adoption, participation by a child in a foreign exchange program, a reported and recorded instance of "bullying" against their child as defined in Delaware Law-Title 14, or participation by a child in a substance abuse or mental health treatment program, or a set of circumstances consistent with this definition of "Good Cause". Required official documentation must support the "Good Cause" reason.
- I. "School-Age Child" shall mean a child that is at least 5 years-old before August 31 of the current year per Delaware Law-Title 14. If applicable, children who will not be 5 years-old by August 31 may request information regarding the Kindergarten Early Admission Process through the Colonial School District's School Choice Office.



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## Application Procedure

- A. Any Parent of a School-Age Child may apply to enroll his or her child in a school or program in the District by submitting a School Choice Application developed by the Delaware Department of Education either in paper form to the Colonial School District Choice Office or on-line form beginning the first Monday of November through 4 p.m. of the second Wednesday in January to be considered for the following school year for Grades 1 - 12.
- B. The Kindergarten School Choice Application submission period begins the first Monday in November and remains open until the first day of school (of applying school year).
  1. Kindergarten School Choice Applications for any child not turning 5 years-old by August 31 will not be considered without prior written approval of Kindergarten Early Admission from the Colonial School District's School Choice Office.
- C. Parents are permitted to identify up to three school and/or program choices on the School Choice Application in preference order.
- D. The online School Choice Application can be found at [www.schoolchoicede.org](http://www.schoolchoicede.org). Paper copies of School Choice Applications are available at all Colonial School District schools and the Colonial School District Choice Office located in the District's Administration Building (318 E. Basin Road, New Castle, DE 19720). All paper School Choice Applications must be received by the Colonial School District's Choice Office located at 318 E. Basin Road, New Castle, DE 19720, by 4 p.m. on the second Wednesday of January.
- E. Any child not currently enrolled in or pre-registered in a public school in the State of Delaware must pre-register at his/her School of Residence before submitting a School Choice Application. Otherwise, the School Choice Application will not be marked complete for processing and will not be considered for acceptance.
- F. Parents who do not know their child's School of Residence can look up this information by selecting School Feeder Search found on the following website: [www.dataservice.org](http://www.dataservice.org).
- G. All personal data on a student's School Choice Application must match the personal data listed in their school's database if student is currently enrolled in a State of Delaware public school or the pre-registered school's database if student is not currently enrolled in a State of Delaware public school or applying for Kindergarten Choice.
  1. Personal data includes student name, address, date of birth, and parent/guardian name.
  2. If student's personal data does not match, the School Choice Application will not be marked complete for processing and will not be considered for acceptance. This includes not being considered in the Lottery process.
  3. It is the Parent's responsibility to correct any personal data discrepancies by either correcting the student's School Choice Application or by contacting the student's current school (if public school) or School of Residence (if non-public school or Kindergarten applicant).
  4. It is also important for the Parent to maintain accurate contact information and notify the Colonial School District Choice Office of any changes in student's personal data to ensure successful communication.
  5. It is not the District's responsibility for missed communication due to inaccurate or out-of-date contact information.
- H. Although Kindergarten School Choice Applications may be submitted up until the first day of the applying school year, it is strongly recommended that the Parent pre-registers their child at his/her School of Residence as early as possible in order to be considered before seat capacity of a Choice School becomes full.
- I. Kindergarten applications that are received by the Choice Office either by paper or online but have not pre-registered at their School of Residence, will not be marked complete for processing and will not be considered for acceptance until the child is pre-registered at his/her School of Residence. This includes not being considered in the Lottery process.
- J. Kindergarten Applications will continue to be reviewed and processed on a weekly basis until the first day of school. Please note: Capacity may be limited for certain schools and/or programs.
- K. Any child interested in New Castle Elementary School's Chinese Immersion Program or Kathleen H. Wilbur Elementary School's Spanish Immersion Program, must complete a School Choice Application regardless of School of Residence. Also, kindergarten screening through Colonial School District's School Choice Office is required for all children applying for Kindergarten acceptance in New Castle Elementary School's Chinese Immersion Program or Kathleen H. Wilbur Elementary School's Spanish Immersion Program through School Choice.
- L. All students will be notified that a School Choice Application has been received. If the notice is not received by the Parent within 10 school days after the application deadline, the Parent must contact the Choice Office to determine if the application has been received.



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## School Choice Application Criteria for Consideration and Invitation

- A. School and/or Program capacity.
- B. Returning students who continue to meet the school or program's Academic Requirements, Attendance Requirements, and also comply with the District's Code of Conduct.
- C. Siblings of students who are already enrolled in the Choice School and who will be returning to the Choice School for the following academic year, provided that the sibling seeking priority meets the requirements for the Choice School and/or Program and has completed the Choice Application during the open Choice window. Note: Siblings of Choice Students residing in the Colonial School District may be given priority over siblings residing outside of Colonial School District. Siblings exiting the Choice School are not considered as priority.
- D. Students residing in Colonial School District provided that they have completed the Choice Application during the open Choice window.
- E. Children of District employees provided that they meet the criteria of the Choice School and/or Program.
- F. Students residing outside of Colonial School District provided that they have completed the Choice Application during the open Choice window.
- G. If a student is waitlisted for a higher priority school, they will be considered for their second choice school. If waitlisted for the second choice school, they will then be considered for their third choice school.
- H. Any student who is accepted for enrollment in a school and fails to be promoted to the grade for which School Choice Applications was made will have his/her Choice Invitation rescinded. Parents may write a letter to the Colonial School District Choice Office to request a seat at the retained grade. Placement will be made on a case-by-case basis only if space is available.

## School Choice Invitation

- A. After the lottery has processed, the Colonial School District Choice Office will notify the Parent the status of their child's School Choice invitation in writing by email or letter after the February Board meeting.
- B. Invited applicants must respond to the School Choice invitation by the date indicated in the email or letter (third week in March).
- C. Any School Choice invitation responses not received by the Colonial School District Choice Office by the date indicated in the email or letter (third week in March), will have their Choice Application marked as no response, and changed to decline status.
- D. If there are more School Choice Applications received for a school and/or program than there are available seats, the computer lottery will determine the Choice School selection for invitation. All remaining students will be placed on a ranked Waiting List for each school and/or program.
- E. If an applicant is placed on a Waiting List, that list will be maintained until the first day of the applying school year, even if a student accepts an invitation to another school. If an opening should occur, the Colonial School District will contact the Parent by email, letter, and/or phone.
- F. The ranked Waiting List may be established for each school and/or program based on the selection criteria and the random number assigned to each applying student and for students who submit a late application that meets the provisions of Good Cause or kindergarten in the order in which the application was received.
- G. Any student who is not invited to any of their three choices may contact the Choice Office after the close of the assignment process to request assignment to any school that is not oversubscribed if such a school is chosen over the School of Residence. These students will remain on the Waiting List of Choice School(s) until the first day of school.

## Duration of Enrollment in Choice School

- A. A student will be enrolled in the Choice School until completion of the Grade Configuration (end of Grade 5, end of Grade 8, end of Grade 12).
- B. A student accepted for enrollment in a District school or program shall remain enrolled for a minimum of two years unless, during the two-year period, the student completes the Choice School's grade configuration, the student's Parent(s) cease to be residents of the student's original District of Residence, or at the conclusion of any academic year during the two-year period, the student ceases to meet the District's Academic Requirements, Attendance Requirements, or comply with the District's Code of Conduct (see Section VII-Termination of Choice School Enrollment).
- C. Once a Choice Student's grade configuration at his/her Choice School has ended, it is the Parent's responsibility to submit a new School Choice Application if they are interested in having their child attend a school that is not their Resident School for the next grade configuration during the open period to submit School Choice Applications (first Monday in November to 4 p.m. of the second Wednesday in January) or submit a Good Cause School Choice Application with required supporting documentation if "Good Cause" for not meeting the deadline exists.



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## Termination of Choice School Enrollment

- A. Enrollment in a Choice School will automatically terminate at the completion of a student's grade configuration at the Choice School.
- B. Enrollment in a Choice School may be terminated if the reason for the Choice School request/approval was due to a student's daycare circumstance and that daycare circumstance is no longer relevant.
- C. Enrollment in a Choice School may be terminated at the end of the school year if student fails to meet academic requirements. Meeting the academic requirements is defined as meeting the District or State's standards for promotion to the next grade level or completion of the necessary credits to be on track for graduation.
- D. Enrollment in a Choice School may be terminated at the end of the school year if a student fails to comply to the District's attendance requirements. Failure to comply with attendance requirements means that the student has 15 or more unexcused absences and/or a combination of 25 or more excused/unexcused absences, tardies, early dismissals, and or late pick ups.
- E. Enrollment in a Choice School may be terminated at the end of the school year if a student fails to comply with behavior requirements. Termination due to behavior shall mean that the student has at least 3 out-of-school suspensions; a combination of at least 5 in-school or out-of-school suspensions; and/or the student's conduct results in expulsion, placement in an alternative education program, or other action subject to the discretion of administration for serious violation(s) of the District's Code of Conduct.
- F. A Parent may apply for end-of-school-year School Choice Termination by submitting a School Choice Termination Request Form before December 1. After December 1, Parent may apply for end-of-school-year School Choice Termination if the deadline was missed due to "Good Cause" reason(s) as defined in this policy by submitting a Good Cause School Choice Termination Request Form along with required supporting documentation.
- G. The provisions in this policy shall apply unless the District, at its sole discretion, agrees to maintain a child in a Choice placement even if he/she fails to meet the academic requirements of being promoted to the next grade. Due to the unique educational and developmental needs of primary age children, students in Kindergarten through Grade 3 and students with IEPs in Kindergarten to Grade 12, exceptions may be granted to maintain a child in a Choice placement upon the written recommendation of the school principal.
- H. Once a child's Choice School status has been terminated, the child is expected to return to his/her School of Residence the next school year unless the child has been accepted for enrollment in a school or program in another district.
- I. Choice Students who change their address after acceptance into their Choice School must notify both the Choice School and the Colonial School District Choice Office within 60 days of the move, and must also provide proof of the change in residence to both the Choice School and Choice Office regardless of the location of the new residence or Choice status could be terminated.
- J. Students who have been terminated from School Choice are not permitted to submit a School Choice Application the following school year.

## Transportation

- A. The Parent of a student enrolled in a Colonial School District school or program through the School Choice Program is responsible for transporting the student to/from their Choice School or to/from the nearest bus stop serving the Choice School provided the bus has space available (without reimbursement).
- B. If requested by the Parent, the Colonial School District Transportation Office will assign a Choice Student a bus stop.
- C. Parent is responsible for dropping child off and picking child up at school or bus stop when Choice School is opening late or dismissed early.

## Interscholastic Sports

- A. A student enrolled in Grades 10 through 12, inclusive, shall not be eligible to participate in interscholastic athletic contests or competitions during the first year of enrollment in the Choice School if the student was enrolled in a different school during the preceding school year unless the interscholastic sport was not offered at the previous school.
- B. Choice Students shall be governed by the regulations set forth by the Delaware Secondary School Athletic Association (DIAA) with regard to eligibility of transferring students. DIAA Regulations can be found at the following website: <http://www.doe.k12.de.us/Page/1670>
- C. It is the Parent's responsibility to contact the DIAA regarding any eligibility concerns.