



Council For Lifelong Learning Public School Choice

Fact Sheet

September 2001

<p>1. What is public school choice?</p>	<p>School choice is the practice of allowing parents to choose from among a variety of schools. Options that supplement public schools include magnet schools, schools-within-schools, alternative schools, year-round schools, dual enrollment, and controlled open enrollment. In Florida, "controlled open enrollment" means a public education delivery system that allows school districts to make student school assignments using parents' indicated preferential school choice as a significant factor. The idea behind school choice is that the competition for students among schools may increase the quality of educational services.</p>
<p>2. Are districts required to offer school choice?</p>	<p>No. The 1996 Legislature required school districts to design a controlled open enrollment plan, but did not require districts to implement the plan. The controlled open enrollment program is offered in addition to the existing choice programs such as magnet schools, alternative schools, special programs, advanced placement, and dual enrollment.</p> <p>School districts must adhere to federal desegregation requirements when implementing public school choice. A school district with schools operating on both multiple session schedules and single session schedules shall afford parents of students in multiple session schools preferred access to the controlled open enrollment program of the school district. In addition, each school district is required to develop a system of priorities for its plan.</p>
<p>3. Has the state appropriated money for school choice?</p>	<p>In 1998 the Legislature appropriated \$5 million for public school choice incentive grants. The 1999 Legislature increased the amount to \$12 million, and the 2000 Legislature also appropriated \$12 million for the grants. The 2001 Legislature did <u>not</u> specifically appropriate funds for this purpose. These funds may be used to provide alternatives for public school students attending failing schools. (See the Opportunity Scholarships Fact Sheet.) The Department of Education makes these funds available through a competitive process to support school districts that choose to implement a controlled open enrollment plan. However, any district that receives a public school choice incentive grant in 1999-2000 and continues the program in 2000-2001 shall receive no less than the amount the district received in 1999-2000.</p>

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<p>4. Have any districts implemented public school choice open enrollment programs?</p>	<p>In 1997-98, Bay, Dade, Lee, Manatee, and St. Lucie received federal reform funds and piloted an open enrollment demonstration project known as the Public School Choice Model Grant Program. These five districts plus the following seven districts received incentive grants in 1998-1999: Flagler, Orange, Osceola, Pinellas, Sarasota, Seminole, and St. Johns. Except for Orange and Osceola, the same districts received grants during 1999-2000. In addition, Alachua, Brevard, Broward, Gadsden, Leon, Marion, Polk, and Santa Rosa districts received grants in 1999-2000.</p>
<p>5. Are there reporting requirements for Florida's school choice programs?</p>	<p>The Commissioner of Education must develop an annual report on the status of school choice. The report is due 90 days prior to the convening of the regular legislative session.</p> <p>The 1999 Legislature added the requirement that each school district annually report the number of students applying for and attending the various types of public school of choice in the district, including schools such as magnet schools and public charter schools.</p>
<p>6. What are the applicable statutes and rules?</p>	<p>Section 228.057, F.S. -- Public school parental choice</p> <p>2000-2001 General Appropriations Act, S.A. 88</p>
<p>7. Where can I get additional information?</p>	<p>Department of Education Division of Public Schools Office of Public School Choice (850) 414-0780</p> <p>Florida Department of Education Publications "Public School Parental Choice", October 1996</p> <p>"Annual Report: Public School Choice Controlled Open Enrollment Plans", December 1998</p> <p>Department of Education Division of Public Schools Memorandum 00-019 "Public School Choice Open Enrollment Grant Application" August 18, 1999</p> <p>The Florida House of Representatives Committee on General Education (850) 414-9780</p>