

ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING ENROLLMENT/REGISTRATION/ZONING/CUSTODY

ENROLLMENT

6.1.2 Eligibility for Admission to Decatur City Schools

b. Definition of a Bona – Fide Resident – A child's status as a bona fide resident of Decatur shall be determined on a case by case basis. As a general rule, a child shall be considered a bona fide resident of the place where the parent or legal guardian having the legal primary/physical custody or control of such child permanently resides. Where it appears that a child is living at an address in Decatur for the sole or primary purpose of establishing residency for school zone or admission purposes, such child shall not generally be considered a bona fide resident. Where the family of a child has heretofore resided in a permanent home outside Decatur and the child and one or more, but less than all, members of the family obtain a dwelling within Decatur, but the remainder of the family remains in the same permanent house outside Decatur, such child generally shall not be considered a bona fide resident of Decatur except in those cases where there has been a divorce or legal separation and the child is in the legal primary/physical custody of a parent who has established residency in Decatur incident to the divorce or legal separation. It is the intent of this policy to deny resident status to those who are living in Decatur solely or primarily for purposes of establishing residency for school purposes.

In order for a child to establish a bona fide residence in Decatur, or in a particular school zone in Decatur, separate and apart from the residence of the child's parent or other person having lawful custody or control of such child under a court order, such child must establish to the reasonable satisfaction of the Superintendent or his designee that (a) the child presently intends to remain in Decatur or such school zone permanently, or for an indefinite period of time or for a definite period of time ending on a date after, and ascertainable without reference to, the current school year; and (b) the child's presence in Decatur or such school zone is not primarily or solely for the purpose of attending the Decatur public schools or the school facility serving students residing in such school zone.

The bona fide resident child of a Board employee shall attend either (1.) the school for which the student is zoned based upon the residence address; (OR) (2.) the school at which the Board employee works, or such applicable school zone as if the student lived at the school facility; OR (3.) such school zone is assigned by the Superintendent. If a Board employee's resident child was accepted for attendance during the previous school year at a school other than as defined herein, then that student shall be "grandfathered" and shall be allowed to continue at such school until the end of the grade levels at such school. At that time, the student must return to the correct zone system provided herein.

All children who do not qualify as bona fide residents of Decatur under the above definitions and standards shall be considered "nonresidents".

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE ZONE and CLASS ASSIGNMENT

*Decatur City Schools does not generally allow students to attend a school out of their assigned school zone (See BOE policy for exceptions). School assignments are based on the physical residence of the parent or legal guardian (as determined by DCS). Use of another individual's address for the purpose of securing another school for convenience and/or hardship is not allowed.

*Parents must use their physical home address to enroll. Parents having multiple addresses may be subject to a request for additional documentation and a scheduled conference to determine enrollment eligibility and school placement based upon the address in which a homestead exemption is claimed. This is subject to verification. Use of another individual's address for the purpose of securing another school for convenience and/or hardship is not allowed.

6.1.3 Attendance Zone and Class Assignment

a. Attendance Zone Assignment – Students will be assigned to the school serving the attendance zone in which his or her parent(s) or legal guardian who has physical custody reside(s). A student whose parent or legal guardian moves from one attendance zone to another during the school year will be transferred to the school attendance zone in which the new residence is located. The student may be permitted to remain in the school attendance zone that serves the former residence until the end of the school year with the approval of the Superintendent. A parent or legal guardian who has documented plans to move to a new attendance area during the first or second grading period of the school year may have his or her child enrolled in the school serving the new residence upon approval by the Superintendent or his or her designee.

b. Class Assignment – Principals will assign students to classes in keeping with school accreditation standards and any procedures or criteria that may be established at the system or school level.

*Acceptable proof of residence include a current Decatur Utility bill, a current, uniform, corporate lease with the parent/child listed on the lease and contact information of the leasing agent, or a sales contract dated within 30 days of closing.

*Affidavits for individuals not able to secure any of the above will require notarization by both parties and current utility bill of the **owner** of the residence. Affidavits are not accepted on complexes with a leasing agency. Example: A leasee from complex ABC cannot be the signee unless the ABC lease allows the unit to be subleased, allowing someone to use that address.

*All enrollments are subject to home check and verification as needed by the school system. This includes verification that the enrolling parent/legal guardian continues to reside at the address provided.

TRANSFERS AND WITHDRAWALS

6.1.2(d)

The Superintendent and staff shall develop procedures necessary for the transfer and withdrawal of students from one school to another within the system and from this system to another system. The procedure must be in compliance with State law, State Board of Education policy, and with the policies of the Decatur City Board of Education.

Students whose parents/legal guardian moves from within the city limits of Decatur from one attendance zone to another during the school year will be transferred to the school serving the new residence. However, those students may be permitted to remain in the school that serves the former residence until the end of the school year in which the change of resident occurred. In addition, those students may be allowed to continue to attend the high school where they completed their ninth (9th) grade year until graduation upon written request of the parent/legal guardian and approval from the Superintendent or his/her designee. The Superintendent or his/her designee may revoke any such permission if the student is frequently absent or tardy to school. Students whose enrollment in Decatur City Schools is interrupted by transferring to another institution or system are no longer eligible to remain in the high school where they completed their ninth (9th) grade year and will be assigned to the school serving the attendance zone in which their parent/legal guardian's residence is located upon their re-enrollment. Transportation will not be provided by Decatur City Schools to students who choose to continue attending the school serving the former residence of their parent/legal guardian.

NONRESIDENT/OUT OF DISTRICT TUITION PAYING STUDENTS

Decatur City Schools allows students living outside the city limits of Decatur to pay tuition and be "tuition paying nonresident" students. This process allows non-Decatur residents to pay tuition to attend Decatur City Schools. It does not allow individuals to request a specific school nor does it allow residents of Decatur to pay to attend a certain school for which they are not zoned. Students applying for Nonresident/Tuition paying status will be rated using a scoring matrix system to determine their admission eligibility on a year-to-year basis.

CUSTODY

*Certain situations will require proof of custody/guardianship. Generally, the best documents to present are court documents (such as Court Orders). In situations where documents cannot be submitted, a conference may be required to review other possible acceptable documents in which consideration may be given. Decatur City Schools does not accept notarized documents such as delegation of parental authority, power of attorney or any other such paperwork which provides non-court approved transfer to custody of a child.

*A Delegation of Parental Authority is not acceptable except in the cases of Military Deployment, or incarceration of the primary legal guardian.

*Temporary Delegation of Parental Authority - Temporary delegations of parental authority pursuant to § 26-2A-7 of the Code of Alabama shall not be determinative of the bona fide residency of the child for purposes of admission. Parents residing in other school systems will not be permitted to circumvent residency requirements and school district/zone boundaries by executing a temporary delegation of parental authority.

*DHR placement via an Official Safety Plan is acceptable for enrollment purposes for the length of the plan.

*Updates to the student informational database due to changes to custody orders are the responsibility of the custodial parent. Decatur City Schools is not a party to custody agreements or court decrees related to custody. When matters involving custodial issues arise, Decatur City Schools will generally abide by the wishes of the parent/guardian who enrolled the student and/or whose address is being used for enrollment purposes

We hope this information helps clarify any questions you may have regarding these matters.

Dwight Satterfield
Deputy Superintendent