



# ***Gilchrist County School District Controlled Open Enrollment (COE) Public School Parental Choice Plan***

October 2022

Beginning with the 2017-2018 school year, each district school board must adopt a controlled open enrollment plan that allows a parent from any school district in the state to enroll his or her child in and transport his or her child to any public school that has not reached capacity. For more information, please see the GCSD website (<https://www.gilchristschools.org/>).

## Message from the Florida Legislature



The Florida Legislature recognizes the value of an educational system and provides numerous and meaningful options for students and their parents. In order to promote and encourage parental involvement and ensure students have access to a school that meets their needs, the Florida Legislature enacted Section 1002.31, Florida Statutes, which directs each school district to develop a controlled open enrollment plan.

[www.fldoe.org](http://www.fldoe.org)



In an effort to meet the needs of the students who reside in Gilchrist County, Florida as well as to provide an opportunity for those who reside outside of the county to seek enrollment in the Gilchrist County School District, the following Controlled Open Enrollment Public School Parental Plan options are provided:

#### **In-County School Selection for Gilchrist County Residents (GCSD Policy 5.03/D)**

- According to GCSD Policy 5.03/D: *The School Board shall establish residential attendance zones for each school. All students, unless otherwise provided by School Board rule or authorized by the School Board's order, shall attend the school serving the student's residential attendance zone. A student's residence is the residence of his/her parent(s), legal guardian, legal custodian, or other such person as defined by any order issued by a court of competent jurisdiction of the state of Florida and by Florida Statutes. Any student residing in the School District shall be assigned to a school for attendance by the Superintendent or designee.*
- Parents may request reassignment to attend an out-of-zone school using the application.
- Parents participating in this school choice option are required to provide their own transportation to the nearest public bus stop in the school district that delivers students to the approved school.

#### **Out of County Student Requesting to attend a Gilchrist County School (Florida Statute 1002.31)**

- According to 1002.31, F.S., Controlled Open Enrollment is defined as a public education delivery that allows school districts to make school assignments using parents' indicated preferential educational choice as a significant factor.
- Parents may request Out of County attendance using the Controlled Open Enrollment application found on the website under Controlled Open Enrollment.
- Eligibility Requirements
  - A parent from any school district in the state whose child is not subject to a current expulsion or suspension may enroll his or her child in and transport his or her child to any public school that has not reached capacity in the district.
  - The Gilchrist County School District is charged by 1002.31, F.S. to maintain socioeconomic, demographic, and racial balance in all schools when implementing controlled open enrollment. Our goal is to ensure that this process selects families for enrollment in a non-biased manner. The random-selection lottery procedure will help to ensure that this goal is achieved. In addition, data from the October and February survey count weeks will be reviewed to ensure the targets for each school will be proportionate to the community as a whole.

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- Requested school must be on the Controlled Open Enrollment (COE) available school list.
- Pre-K programs are not mandatory. Therefore, COE options are not available for Pre-K students. Pre-K out-of-county requests should be made directly with the Pre-K Program Director.
- Factors Considered
  - A determination is made on the current capacity of each school as determined by class size pursuant to s. 1003.03 and s.1, Art. IX of the State Constitution in conjunction with projected class size numbers for each school in order to ensure each school has the capacity to sustain the additional out-of-county students over time (until the highest grade level at the school).
  - The calculation for compliance with maximum class size pursuant to s. 1003.03(4) is the average number of students at the school level.
  - Calculations to determine COE eligible schools will be made and updated annually.
  - Students residing in the district may not be displaced by a student from another district seeking enrollment under the controlled open enrollment process.
  - Once this determination has been made, the names of the schools that have capacity for public school choice will be posted on the Gilchrist County School District's website ([www.gilchristschools.org](http://www.gilchristschools.org)) with the application so parents may apply accordingly.
  - A school is considered open for COE when the school's projected enrollment is less than 80% of the determined capacity of the school.
- Availability of Transportation
  - 1002.31, F.S. states that a school district may provide transportation to students associated with public school parental choice.
  - GCSD will provide transportation when there are seats available on the appropriate route for the out-of-county student as decided by the Transportation Department.
  - Out-of-county students may ride Gilchrist County School buses provided the student boards at the nearest, in-county, public bus stop (voting precinct, etc.) and the bus is not overcrowded (GCSD School Board Policy 5.031D).
  - School routes are designed to deliver students to a zoned school. When seats are available on a route, the first stop for an out-of-county, school choice student would be at the first available existing stop within the district and then to the appropriate zoned school.
  - Special connecting routes or extension of existing routes will not be created to transport an out-of-county, school choice student.

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- Routes will be reconfigured annually and the availability of transportation for COE is not guaranteed from year to year. It will be determined on whether or not the route has open capacity for COE students.
- Preferential Treatment will be provided to all of the following through the Controlled Open Enrollment Process:
  - Dependent children of active duty military personnel whose move resulted from military orders
  - Children who have been relocated due to a foster care placement in a different school zone
  - Children who move due to a court-ordered change in custody due to separation or divorce, or the serious illness or death of a custodial parent
  - Students residing in the district
  - Students reapplying for enrollment due to the transition of schools from Grade 5 to Grade 6
- Controlled Open Enrollment and Athletics
  - A school district may not delay eligibility or otherwise prevent a student participating in controlled open enrollment from being immediately eligible to participate in interscholastic and intra-scholastic extracurricular activities.
  - A student may not participate in a sport if the student participated in that same sport at another school during that school year, unless the student meets one of the following criteria:
    - Dependent children of active duty military personnel whose move resulted from military orders
    - Children who have been relocated due to a foster care placement in a different school zone
    - Children who move due to a court-ordered change in custody due to separation, divorce, or the serious illness or death of a custodial parent
    - Authorized for good cause in district per district policy/procedures (involvement in an incident that is considered catastrophic [tragic, devastating] in nature.
- Application Process
  - Only applications received in the time frame posted on our website will be considered.
  - One application should be submitted for each child applying for enrollment.
  - Parents may obtain applications from any of our four public schools in Gilchrist County, the district office, or on the district's website ([www.gilchristschools.org](http://www.gilchristschools.org)).

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- Students previously approved to attend as an out of county student will not need to reapply for Controlled Open Enrollment unless they are making the following grade level transitions:
  - Ending Pre-Kindergarten and entering Kindergarten
  - Ending 5<sup>th</sup> Grade and entering 6<sup>th</sup> grade
  - After withdrawing from the school district
- Students with siblings may request to attend the same school on each application based on the following:
  - Sibling is defined as brother, sister, half-brother, half-sister, step-brother, or step-sister that lives in the same household.
  - Verification will be made by the district and additional documentation may be required.
  - Applications indicating a request for siblings to attend the same school will be placed in the lottery as one unit, and, if selected, all will be accepted.
- Application Review
  - All Controlled Open Enrollment applicants will be accepted if the requested school has capacity.
  - If the number of Controlled Open Enrollment student applications is greater than the number of seats available for a particular school, then prioritized/preferential students will be admitted first and a lottery procedure will be utilized to fill the remaining slots.
  - If the lottery is utilized, all applications will be numbered (with siblings grouped) after being chosen randomly.
  - If there are students who do not enroll after being approved, final determinations for additional approvals will be made by the first day of school if there are still slots available at the school.
- Notification of Acceptance/Denial
  - All applicants will be notified via US mail by the deadlines posted on the website (see Controlled Open Enrollment) of acceptance/denial.
  - A parent must accept the opportunity by initiating the enrollment process on the district's online registration portal within ten business days of being notified.
  - If a student is not approved for attendance, it is the parent's responsibility to enroll the student in the appropriate school in the district that corresponds with their residence or to seek enrollment in another school district.
  - Upon obtaining approval for enrollment, the approved student will be allowed to remain at that school until he/she completes the highest grade level at that school. The application process must be repeated when a student is due to transfer to a new school.
- Appeals Process

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- The appeals process will be automatically initiated after the lottery process is complete. All denied applications indicating a hardship (see below) will be reviewed by a committee convened by the Superintendent.
- Appeals will be processed within ten days of the denial.
- Decisions made by the Superintendent/the Committee on the appeal are final.
- Hardships – There is a place on the application to identify a hardship; the hardship will only be considered through an appeal process if the student is NOT chosen through the procedures outlined in this document. A hardship is defined as one of the following:
  - The student is an immediate family member (living in the same household) of a GCSD employee.
  - Students with siblings already attending the requested school.
  - Students currently enrolled as a Gilchrist County resident who move out of county and wish to remain at their school.
  - Students experiencing other extraordinary or extenuating circumstances.
- If the original application did not indicate a hardship and circumstances have changed, parents may file a written appeal at the Superintendent's office and the appeals process will be followed.
- If approved, students may be revoked at any time during the school year due to poor attendance, tardiness, or discipline issues.
- Determining Capacity
  - The number of students who can be served by a school is identified and validated yearly on the Florida Inventory of School Houses (FISH) Report. A school has reached capacity when it has filled at least 80% of its student stations. Additionally, available personnel (number of classroom teachers) must be considered when considering capacity at each individual school.
  - If a school has enrollment at or exceeding 80% of its student stations, then the school will not be open for Controlled Open Enrollment.
  - If a school's enrollment is less than 80% of its student stations, then the school will be open for Controlled Open Enrollment.
  - If a school is open and a particular grade level has enrollment exceeding the state class size requirements, that grade level will be closed.
  - The total capacity of each school will be calculated at the end of the fourth quarter each year and posted on the website.
  - Open seats by grade level and by school will be posted on the website and updated within the first three weeks of the first quarter and at the end of each quarter.