



Controlled Open Enrollment FAQs

1. Q. What is Controlled Open Enrollment (COE)?

A. Controlled choice options are permitted in accordance with Florida Statute 1002.31 and pursuant to School Board Rule 5.03 and will provide additional opportunities for students to attend any school in the state other than their zoned school that has available capacity. COE will provide parents greater choice options.

2. Q. When does COE go into effect?

A. COE will be available beginning in the 2017-18 school year.

3. Q. How is the school district defining capacity and determining which schools are available for COE?

A. A determination of the schools with available capacity is updated annually, and will be posted on the school district's website at the following link: www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/choice. Specifications, plans, elements and commitments contained in the school district's Educational Plant Survey, Five Year District Facilities Work Plan and long-range student projections are incorporated into the district's capacity determination for controlled open enrollment.

For the 2017-2018 school year, a school will be subject to Controlled Open Enrollment when it has been determined that the school's enrollment is less than 80% of permanent Florida Inventory of School House (FISH) capacity. Available capacity will be the difference between the number of then-currently enrolled students and 80% of FISH capacity.

This determination considers the rapid growth in St. Johns County School District, which is greater than 20% growth over the past five years and ensures available seats remain at schools for students who move into the school zone.

4. Q. What is the process to apply for COE and how will the lottery work?

A. Applications are available on the School District's website during an open enrollment period as listed in the updated schedule for each year. Paper copies of the application are also available for those without access to a computer. One application is required for each school to which the student would request consideration. (For example, if the student would be willing to attend two Controlled Open Enrollment elementary schools, two separate applications would be required.)

Applications will only be accepted during the application window. Once the window has closed, all applications will be randomly numbered with the assistance of a computer program. Available seats will then be assigned to the applicants for that school starting at 1 and ending at the total number of seats available. (For example in 2017-2018, Controlled Open Enrollment students will be accepted for Durbin Creek Elementary from 1 to 30.)

The application window will run simultaneously for both St. Johns County residents and out-of-county residents. There will be two separate lotteries, with in-county and out-of-county students being numbered separately. The out-of-county applications will only be considered if there are still remaining open seats after the completion of the in-county lottery.

Once notified of a lottery selection of an available seat, the parent/guardian must accept and enroll the student in the specified school. If a student happens to receive a lottery selection for more than one school, the parent/guardian must select one and decline the other. If seats re-open due to a declined selection, the student with the next number in the lottery will be notified and offered the seat. This process will only continue until the first day of school. After the first day of school, the wait list will be discontinued.

5. Q. If my child is selected in the lottery to attend a COE school, do I have to formally accept the transfer?

A. Yes. Once notified of a lottery selection of an available seat, the parent/guardian must accept the assignment within 10 business days and enroll the student in the specified COE school for the 2017-2018 school year. If a student happens to receive a lottery selection for more than one school, the parent/guardian must select one and decline the other. Specific details will be provided in the notification.

6. Q. Will siblings receive a preference under COE? How will the preference work? Do I submit one application per family, or per student?

A. Applications with a verified sibling priority shall be noted and maintained in a separate sibling list. These applications will be given a lottery number along with all other applications. However, when one sibling is selected, the remaining sibling(s) will be given a priority to attend the same school by allowing them to take the next number or to be placed on the waitlist only behind other siblings. If siblings cannot be placed at the same school, a hardship request may be requested.

Siblings are defined as a brother, sister, half-brother, half-sister, stepbrother or stepsister, living in the same household. Verification will be required.

7. Q. Will an application submitted on February 13th be given preference over an application submitted on March 10th?

A. Applications submitted during the COE window are given equal consideration regardless of whether they were submitted on the first day of the window or the last day.

8. Q. If my child is not selected through COE is there a waitlist?

A. Yes, your child will be placed on a waitlist. If seats re-open due to a declined selection, the student with the next number in the lottery will be notified and offered the seat. This process will only continue until the first day of school. After the first day of school, the wait list will be discontinued. The waitlist will be dissolved on the first day of the school year.

9. Q. If my child is not selected through COE is there an appeals process?

A. There is no appeal process for Controlled Open Enrollment as it is based strictly on a lottery procedure.

10. Q. If my child does not get placed through COE, can I apply for a hardship waiver?

A. You may apply for a hardship waiver, but please note, not being selected by the lottery for Controlled Open Enrollment does not constitute a hardship.

11. Q. If my child has an IEP is he/she eligible to apply for COE?

A. Yes, your child may apply, but if they are accepted, an IEP Team will convene to determine whether the student's needs can be adequately addressed and to ensure the IEP can be implemented at the chosen school. If not, the student will not be enrolled, but placed at the appropriate school based on their attendance zone or appropriate placement for services if they are

a resident of St. Johns County. Students residing in another county whom the District is not able to serve will be expected to enroll in their home county.

12. Q. My child is currently serving Out of School Suspension or being recommended for Expulsion. Can I still request a transfer through COE?

A. No. Students currently subject to OSS or expulsion are not eligible for transfers through COE.

13. Q. Can I apply for COE mid-year?

A. No, COE assignments will take place only once prior to the new school year during a designated COE application window. Students are able to return to their zoned school at any time.

14. Q. Does my child have to apply each year for COE?

A. No, for purposes of continuity of educational choice, a student who transfers under controlled open enrollment may remain at the Controlled Open Enrollment school until the student completes the highest grade level at the school. After completion of the terminal grade of that school, the student must return to their zoned school or apply for and be granted another lottery selection through controlled open enrollment. Students residing in another county, must return to their school district in the absence of another lottery selection.

15. Q. If I have a unique situation and am not selected through the lottery for COE placement, can the principal of the school approve a waiver?

A. No. Due to many unique situations throughout the District, hardship waivers can only be granted through the District's School Services office. Any parent who believes they have a true and unique hardship may apply for an Out of Zone Transfer Request.

16. Q. I am current SJCS D employee and my child is attending a school other than their zoned school, do I need to apply for COE to keep them at their school?

A. No. SJCS D employees may seek a renewal of their current transfer approval through the District's School Services office.

17. Q. Is Transportation provided by the school district for COE students?

A. No. No district transportation options are available to any choice option in St. Johns County. Transportation must be arranged and provided by the parent/guardian.

18. Q. Will my child who is zoned for the school be displaced by a student who is not zoned for the school?

A. No. Students residing in St. Johns County may not be displaced by a student from another school district. Additionally, students residing in St. Johns County will receive preferential treatment in the lottery system with first access to available seats.

19. Q. Can a transfer approved through COE be rescinded?

A. Yes. Controlled Open Enrollment placement may be rescinded if:

- Incorrect or false information was provided in the application;
- Attendance, tardiness or discipline/behavior problems develop at the receiving school.

20. Q. Is COE available for Pre-K Programs?

A. No. Since Pre-K Programs are not mandatory, COE options are not available for Pre-K students.

21. Q. Can my Pre-K child automatically stay at the elementary school they are presently attending for Kindergarten?

A. No, you must submit an application to choose a school for Kindergarten even if you want the same elementary school they are attending for Pre-K.

22. Q. How will COE impact the application process and enrollment criteria for Career Academies and other focused programs of choice in St. Johns County?

A. There will be no impact to the current application process or programs of choice/career academies. In accordance with Florida Statute 1002.31 the District will maintain existing academic eligibility criteria for public school choice programs.

Additionally, no St. Johns County high school currently has available capacity for students to transfer to under COE.

23. Q. Why are there only four schools available for COE? I thought this law would allow me to send my child to any school in the state.

A. Florida Statute 1002.31 provides that a parent may enroll and transport his or her child to any public school in the state *that has not reached capacity in the district, subject to maximum class size.*

Due to rapid growth in St. Johns County, there are only four schools the district has determined meet its definition of capacity. See previous question on how capacity is determined for further details.

24. Q. If I live in St. Johns County at the time of the lottery selection for COE and secure a seat in a St. Johns County school, but then move out of St. Johns County, do I have to forfeit my child's COE seat?

A. No. Once you are accepted for COE you may stay at the school until the terminal grade of the school.