



## **SCHOOL DISTRICT OF HERNANDO COUNTY CONTROLLED CHOICE PLAN**

**2026-2027~~2025-2026~~**

The School Board of Hernando County employs what is commonly referred to as a Neighborhood School concept. Students are assigned to school attendance zones based on the student's legal residential address. A Controlled Choice Program is designed to give all parents the opportunity to select a school other than their child's zoned school. Approval to attend a school outside of a student's zone can be rescinded due to poor attendance, grades, or behavior or if the student withdraws from a program (e.g., AICE, IB) on which approval was based.

Examples of School Choice Options:

- Controlled Parental Choice
- Career Technical Programs
- International Baccalaureate Program
- Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education Program
- Thematic Programs
- Magnet Programs (refer to Magnet Program Procedures)
- Hernando eSchool (contact 352-797-7072 for application information)
- McKay and Family Empowerment Unique Abilities (FES UA) Scholarships (contact [www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/](http://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/) for application information)
- Charter Schools (contact Charter School for application information)

### **Controlled Parental Choice**

⇒ Applications are required when:

- a. The request is for initial entry of a student in a school other than his/her zoned school.
- b. Boundary changes place a student in a different neighborhood school, and the parents want their child to remain at the school the student was previously zoned for before the changes were made.

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- c. There is a change of home address which places the student in a different neighborhood school and the parents want their child to remain at the school. The principal must agree, and the approval is limited to the remainder of the school year.
- d. A school is severely overcrowded, there are no other alternatives for relief, and the Superintendent has deemed that the impact of student reassignment must be reviewed and reconsidered.
- e. A parent of a Hernando County student is requesting attendance in another county or a parent living in another county is requesting attendance in a Hernando County School.

### **Application Process**

⇒ Controlled Parental Choice, non-Magnet Career Technical Programs, Cambridge AICE, International Baccalaureate, and Thematic Programs:

- a. Access to applications for Controlled Parental Choice, as well as Career Technical Programs, Cambridge AICE, International Baccalaureate, and Thematic Programs when not available at the zoned school are available online during the open enrollment period which is established yearly by the School Board. Access to applications for Home School families seeking to participate in interscholastic sports at their non-zoned school are available during the open enrollment period established yearly by the School Board. Parents without a computer or Internet access may seek assistance from their nearest school, public library, or District Office.
- b. Parents should complete an online application from January 6<sup>th</sup> through March 6<sup>th</sup> as established by the School Board. Application is available on [www.hernandoschools.schoolmint.net](http://www.hernandoschools.schoolmint.net). Families must create an online account in order to submit an application. All notifications will be made through the SchoolMint program. No applications will be accepted prior to January 6<sup>th</sup>.
- c. No applications are available outside of the open enrollment period. A documented hardship application can be obtained through the School Choice office. Cambridge AICE and International Baccalaureate applications are not subject to open enrollment period. You must be accepted into the respective program first.
- d. Schools at capacity, which is defined as 90% of state-determined utilization, are not available for Controlled School Choice. These will be determined by the Superintendent's office (refer to the Capacity Report posted on the Controlled Choice webpage at [www.hernandoschools.org](http://www.hernandoschools.org) ).
- e. Parents will be notified through parental email address provided on the SchoolMint application on or around March 13<sup>th</sup>.

⇒ Magnet Programs

- a. Parents are to complete the application process during the Magnet School's

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open enrollment period established yearly by the School Board.

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- b. Refer to the approved Magnet Program Procedures for further details on their application process. The current procedure can be found under "Students and Families" on our website at [www.hernandoschools.org](http://www.hernandoschools.org).

### **Preference for Admission**

#### **(in no particular order and pending available capacity)**

- ⇒ Dependent children of active duty military personnel; members or veterans of the uniformed services who are severely injured *and* medically discharged or retired for a period of one year after medical discharge or retirement; and members of the uniformed services who die on active duty or as a result of injuries sustained on active duty, for a period of one year after death (F.S. 1000.36 and 1003.05).
- ⇒ Children who have been relocated due to foster care placement in a different school zone.
- ⇒ Children who move due to court ordered change in custody due to separation or divorce, or the serious illness or death of a custodial parent.
- ⇒ Siblings residing at the same address, requesting to be assigned to the same school with the exception of a student who is exiting fifth, eighth, or twelfth grades or enrolled through a specific program such as Magnet, International Baccalaureate or Career Technical Programs.
- ⇒ Children of Hernando County School District Employees.
- ⇒ Residents of Hernando County, pursuant to F.S. 1002.31 (2)(e).

### **Continuity of School Assignment**

- ⇒ Once a School Choice assignment has been approved, a student may remain in attendance up to the highest grade level offered in the chosen school. The principal has the right to rescind approval due to poor attendance, grades, and/or behavior.
- ⇒ Once a student is approved and registered for a controlled parental choice, magnet or theme program, he or she will no longer be eligible for any other school choice options for that school year.

### **Change of Residence**

- ⇒ Parent(s) / guardian(s) who can demonstrate they are purchasing, building or renting a home in a different zone from where they are currently living (original electric or water bill in their name, rental agreement, notarized statement from a landlord, deed or construction contract showing commencement of construction) **do** require an application through School Choice Special Circumstances procedures to attend new zoned school.
- ⇒ Parent(s) / guardian(s) who move and wish their child(ren) to remain at the current school for the balance of the school year must request reassignment for special

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circumstances through the School Choice Department and receive approval from the District Hardship Committee. **If approved, attendance will be for the balance of current school year only.**

### **Transportation**

- ⇒ The parent(s)/guardian(s) will be responsible for providing transportation when their student is approved to attend a school outside of their attendance zone. Transportation will be provided to certain Exceptional Education Students when required by their Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

### **Rescinding of Approved School Choice**

- ⇒ Approval of a School Choice application may be rescinded if:
- a. False information was provided (F.S. 837.06 and F.S. 92.525 – providing false information is a criminal act); F.S. **837.06 False official statements.**— **Whoever knowingly makes a false statement in writing with the intent to mislead a public servant in the performance of his or her official duty shall be guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.**
  - b. It is determined by the Superintendent and/or the Principal that enrollment at a requested school is having a negative impact on the student's educational progress;
  - c. The student withdraws from a course of study that was the basis for enrollment at the requested school (e.g., Career Technical Programs, Cambridge AICE, International Baccalaureate);
  - d. The student does not maintain any of the following: academic requirements for the course of study, earn passing grades for promotion in grades K – 8 and in grades 9 – 12, a 2.0 grade point average (GPA), 90% attendance, repeated violations of the Student Code of Conduct, and/or if the student is chronically tardy to school.
  - e. Out-of-County (OOC) students who commit level 4 offenses as defined by the Hernando County School District Student Code of Conduct will be returned to their zoned district.

The decision to rescind a School Choice approval requires discussion between the parent and the school administration, and between the school administration and the Supervisor of School Choice. An elementary or middle school student whose reassignment has been rescinded will return to his/her zoned school at the end of the quarter. A high school student whose reassignment has been rescinded will return to his/her zoned school at the end of the current semester. Rescinding school choice approval requires written documentation that the parent has received prior notification of the principal's intent to revoke choice.

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## **Rescinding of School Choice Procedures**

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- ⇒ The Principal or designee will contact the Supervisor of School Choice about the possibility of school choice approval being rescinded.
- ⇒ The Principal or designee will meet with the parent to discuss concerns and the possibility of school choice being rescinded. Conference notes will be documented.
- ⇒ Documentation will be sent to the Supervisor of School Choice.
- ⇒ If academic, behavioral, and/or attendance concerns persist, the parent will be notified in writing that school choice is being rescinded, and the student must return to his/her zoned school. A copy of the letter will be sent to the Supervisor of School Choice. The letter will include language that informs the parent that an appeal may be requested through the Supervisor of School Choice.
- ⇒ The Supervisor of School Choice will form a committee of administrators to review the documentation. After a careful review and further investigation, the committee will uphold or deny the appeal.

### **Controlled School Choice Appeals**

- ⇒ Once an application for Controlled School Choice has been denied, the student is expected to attend his/her zoned school and may re-apply during the next open enrollment period for enrollment the following school year.
- ⇒ Parents may request a review before the Hardship Committee based on a documented hardship situation. Board approved hardship criteria include:
  - a. A medical condition as verified in writing by a physician that requires treatment or supervision in proximity to the school being requested.
  - b. A situation where the student requesting reassignment has been the victim of a crime and/or violence by another student.
  - c. There has been a death of a student's parent(s) or sibling(s).
  - d. Relocation due to foster care placement, court-ordered change of custody (due to separation or divorce), or the serious illness of a custodial parent.

The Hardship Committee shall consist of the Executive Director of Student Support Programs, Director of Student Services, Director of Exceptional Student Education, Supervisor of School Choice, and the District Athletic Director. *Parents who are denied their appeal through the Hardship Committee may appeal the decision to the Superintendent of Schools. The School Board retains the right to consider an appeal of the decision to deny a hardship appeal. The procedure for requesting an appeal is located on page 10 of this document.*

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## **Promoting Parental Involvement and Disseminating Information**

- ⇒ The district believes that parental choice is a vital part of a child's education. The district accepts responsibility for providing information, as well as assisting parents in making school choice decisions for their children.
- ⇒ Information regarding school choice open enrollment process is made available to parents and the community via:
  - Local newspaper advertising, when possible
  - School newsletters, when possible
  - Automated telephone messages announcing open enrollment timelines
  - School marquee announcements, when possible
  - Posting on District website and school websites
  - Application guidelines and a "Question and Answer" on the district website
  - Letters and flyers mailed to directors of private preschools and daycare centers
  - School-based meeting for families
  - Social Media (Facebook, Twitter)
  - Parent communication on report card
- ⇒ The parents of students being bused for desegregation purposes may submit a written request to the School Choice Department to object to busing and opt out of participation in the District's voluntary desegregation plan. When a parent makes such a request in writing, that student shall attend his/her zoned school.

## **Attendance Zone Changes**

- ⇒ As new schools are built, the District will form rezoning committees to consider setting the new school's boundaries as well as revising the zones of affected schools.

## **Additional Information Regarding Choice Option**

- ⇒ Career Technical Programs  
Career Technical Programs typically entail three to four years of coursework and are offered at varying high schools. Students are required to maintain a "B" average in their program to continue on to the next level and pass the industry certification exam for the program. Career Technical Education Specialists conduct orientation meetings regarding high school programs in the fall for eighth grade students at each middle school. All applications must be submitted during the online enrollment period (January 6<sup>th</sup> through March 6<sup>th</sup>). Students who withdraw from courses required in the selected high school career technical program will return to their zoned school at the end of current semester.
- ⇒ Charter Schools  
Charter Schools are nonsectarian schools of choice designed to deliver programs to meet the needs of the community. Funding for charter schools comes from the state and is sponsored by the local school District but privately operated. Charter Schools have the freedom to set their own rules on curriculum, teaching style, personnel and discipline rules. Contact the charter schools directly for

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application information.

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- ⇒ John M. McKay and FES UA Scholarship Programs for Students with Disabilities  
A parent of a student, who has been identified as disabled and has a current Individualized IEP or Section 504 accommodation plan, may request that the student attend another public school in the district provided that school can provide the services the student needs to accomplish the goals and objectives on the student's IEP. The McKay and FES UA Scholarship Programs may also offer the student the opportunity to attend a public school in an adjacent district or receive a scholarship to attend a participating private school. Parents wishing to find out more information about this program should contact the School Choice office or visit <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice>.
- ⇒ International Baccalaureate Program (IB)  
A school with an IB program is a school offering students a rigorous and relevant curriculum that is recognized internationally. These schools are designed to attract a diverse student body wishing to participate in a demanding four-year curriculum (2 years of preparation and 2 years of IB coursework) leading to final examinations and a qualification that is welcomed by leading universities around the world. These schools have an attendance zone. Parents must submit an application to the district and meet the application criteria. Schools with an IB program must conduct orientation meetings regarding their school programs during the month of December and/or January. All applications must be submitted during the online enrollment period (January 6<sup>th</sup> through March 6<sup>th</sup>), except when the IB coordinator accepts students after the deadline. Students who withdraw from courses required in the program will return to their zoned school and may not select an alternate program in order to remain at the school, unless a Hardship application is received and approved.
- ⇒ Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE)  
A school with a Cambridge AICE program is a school offering rigorous, pre-university courses emphasizing the following skills: higher-order thinking; verbalization; writing; problem-solving; teamwork; and investigation. These schools are designed to attract a diverse student body wishing to discover new abilities and explore Math, Science, Language, and Arts/Humanities. Coursework culminates with AICE examinations, and students may earn an internationally- recognized AICE diploma. Cambridge AICE requires an application with the school and the district. Schools with an AICE program must conduct orientation meetings regarding their school programs during the month of December and/or January. All applications must be submitted during the online enrollment period (January 6<sup>th</sup> through March 6<sup>th</sup>), except when the AICE coordinator accepts students after the deadline. Students who withdraw from courses required in the program will return to their zoned school and may not select an alternate program in order to remain at the school, unless a Hardship application is received and approved.
- ⇒ Thematic Programs  
A school with a thematic program offers curriculum and academic instruction based on a central theme. These schools have specific attendance zones and

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accept a limited number of students outside of their attendance zone based on student vacancies at specific grade levels.

⇒ Magnet Program

A school with a magnet program is a school offering curriculum based on a specific theme or instructional method. For more information, refer to the approved Magnet Procedures on our website at <https://www.hernandoschools.org> under "Students and Families".

## **EQUITY**

*It is the policy of the School Board of Hernando County, Florida, not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital status, or handicap in its educational programs or employment practices. By operating in this manner, the School Board adheres to the provisions of Federal Law and other applicable laws.*

*Specifically, Hernando District Policy states, "It is the policy of the Hernando County School Board not to illegally discriminate or to allow its employees to illegally discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital status, disability, pregnancy, military status, ancestry, or Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 (GINA) in its educational programs or employment practice." The District also provides equal access to its facilities to the Boy Scouts and other identified Title 36 patriotic youth groups, as required within 34 C.F.R. 108.9.*

*In accordance with Florida Administrative Code, national origin minority or English Language Learners (ELL) students shall not be subjected to any disciplinary action because of their appropriate use of a language other than English.*

*To file concerns, please follow the complaint procedures found in School Board Policy.*

*Compliance officers for Employee related issues are the ~~Executive~~ Director of [Labor Relations and Professional Standards-Business Services](#) 352- 797- 7005, Director of Human Resources 352-797-7005. Compliance officers for student related issues are Director of Student Services 352-797-7008 and Director of Exceptional Student Education 352-797-7022..*

*See School Board Policy 1122, 3122 and 4133. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)*

## **THE POLICY OF NONDISCRIMINATION OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF HERNANDO COUNTY**

*GENERAL: It is the policy of the Hernando County School Board not to illegally discriminate or to allow its employees to illegally discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital status, disability, handicap or other legally protected status in its educational programs or employment*

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*practices. By operating in this manner, the School Board adheres to the provisions of Federal Law and other applicable laws.*

*EMPLOYMENT: Neither the Hernando County School District nor its employees shall illegally discriminate in its employment policies and practices on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, age or any other legally protected status as defined by applicable law.*

*STUDENTS: The Hernando County School Board prohibits exclusion of any student from participation in or the denial of the benefits of any educational program or activity as well as any and all forms of illegal discrimination against any student on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital status, disability or other legally protected status as provided by applicable law.*

*PRECEDENCE: This policy shall take precedence over any other statement in the policies, procedures, rules and regulations of the Hernando County School Board wherever such may appear unless in conflict with any collective bargaining agreement.*

*In accordance with Florida Administrative Code, national origin minority or English Language Learners (ELL) students shall not be subjected to any disciplinary action because of their appropriate use of a language other than English.*

#### **F.S. 1000.05**

*It is the policy of the Hernando County School district not to illegally discriminate or allow its employees to illegally discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital status, disability or GINA in its educational programs or employment practices.*

*For questions regarding equity within the school system, please contact Matthew Goldrick; by email [goldrick\\_m@hcsb.k12.fl.us](mailto:goldrick_m@hcsb.k12.fl.us), phone 352-797-7005, or mail 919 N. Broad St. Brooksville, FL 34601. To file concerns, please follow the complaint procedures found in School Board Policy.*

*See School Board Policy 1122, 3122 and 4122. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)*

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## **Hernando County School District**

### **Process for Board Consideration of Hardship Appeals**

1. If a parent contacts school board member(s), send to Executive Director of Student Support Programs.
2. Executive Director sends to Supervisor of School Choice.
3. Has the parent/guardian already contacted the Supervisor of School Choice? (If not, Supervisor of School Choice takes the appeal to the District Hardship Committee). If yes, proceed to next step.
4. Does the request demonstrate a documented hardship for the student that is otherwise prohibited by the Controlled Choice and/or Magnet policy? If not, refer back to Supervisor of School Choice. If yes, proceed to next step.
5. Parent provides a written appeal with supporting documentation (e.g., legal, medical) to the Supervisor of Choice, who will forward the appeal and original hardship denial paperwork to the Executive Director of Student Support Programs for distribution to the Superintendent and Board. The board shall have a hearing within thirty (30) business days to consider the appeal, which at the parent/guardian(s) election shall be closed to the public to protect student privacy information. A decision shall be made by the Board and communicated in writing to the Superintendent, Executive Director of Student Support Programs, Supervisor of School Choice, and the parent/guardian. Decisions of the Board shall indicate the term of the approval (e.g., current school year only, through the highest grade level). If an appeal is granted, the student will be subject to the provisions of the Choice and/or Magnet policies. Please refer to the approved Controlled Choice Plan and/or Magnet Program Procedures for conditions of continued attendance.

*F.S. 120.57(2)*

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