

STUDENT ADMISSION AND ASSIGNMENT

The St. Martin Parish School Board shall have the authority and responsibility for the continued education of all students who have been properly admitted and assigned to the public schools under its jurisdiction in St. Martin Parish. All students must be eligible for admission and attend the appropriate school in the attendance zone where he/she resides unless a valid transfer is obtained. The following requirements and procedures shall apply to the admission and assignment of students to schools in the District.

The School Board shall admit a student to its schools once the Administration determines that the student is eligible for admission and has been properly registered by the parent/legal guardian under the policy set out here and such procedures as may be implemented by the Administration.

Each student shall be assigned to attend school at the grade-level appropriate school within the attendance zone where he resides with his parent/legal guardian unless the student is granted a valid transfer to a school in another attendance zone. To ensure a fair and consistent implementation of this assignment policy, the School Board shall require that all students be subject to the residency verification policy as set out below.

I. Eligibility for Admission or Readmission

If the student meets all of the criteria stated below, the School Board shall grant admission or readmission on a non-discriminatory basis. No student shall be denied admission or readmission because of race, religion, sex, disability, or other protected status. No student shall be denied admission or readmission because he/she previously voluntarily withdrew from school, is pregnant, is a parent, and/or is married.

A. Admission Criteria

1. In general, a student who meets all of the following criteria shall be eligible for admission or readmission:
 - a. Resides in the geographic boundaries of the District;
 - b. Meets the eligibility requirements for school entrance pursuant to statutory provisions;
 - c. Is nineteen (19) years of age or younger on September 30th of the calendar year in which the school year begins or is twenty (20) years of age on September 30th of the calendar year in which the school year begins and has sufficient course credits that he/she will be able to graduate within one (1) school year of admission or readmission, with the condition that the admission or readmission of a student who will be twenty (20) shall be limited to admission or readmission to grade twelve (12);

- d. Has not received a high school diploma or its equivalent; and
- e. Is otherwise eligible for enrollment in a public school pursuant to state law and the policies of the School Board and the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

2. Admission of Students with Exceptionalities

The admission or readmission of a student with an exceptionality shall be subject to federal and state law governing the age of eligibility for services for students with exceptionalities.

3. Admission of Expelled Students

No student who has been expelled in accordance with state law from any public school in the State of Louisiana shall be admitted to any school in the District except upon review and approval of the School Board.

No student who has been expelled from any nonpublic school in the State of Louisiana or from any school, public or nonpublic, outside of the State of Louisiana for committing any of the offenses enumerated in state law as grounds for an expulsion shall be admitted to any school in the District except upon review and approval of the School Board.

4. Admission of Students who Commit a Felony

The conviction of any student of a felony or the incarceration of any student in a juvenile institution for an act, whether committed in Louisiana or any other state or country, which had it been committed by an adult would have constituted a felony in Louisiana, may be sufficient cause for the Superintendent to refuse admission of the student to any school in the District except upon review and approval of a majority of the elected members of the School Board.

5. Admission of Homeless Students

Except as provided above with regard to students who have been expelled, no provision in this or any other School Board policy shall be interpreted to impede the immediate or continued enrollment of homeless youth as addressed in policy JBCBB, Homeless Children and Specifically, the School Board shall comply with the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §11431, with regard to the registration, enrollment, and assignment of any child who is homeless, as defined under that federal law.

B. Pre-admission Requirements

No student shall be granted initial admission to any school in the District until the following items are presented to the appropriate school official by the parent/legal guardian:

1. An official birth certificate

A short-form birth certification card shall be acceptable. Only records from the local or state registrar of vital statistics shall be accepted for children born in Louisiana, except as otherwise provided herein. In the event a student presents for admission within fifteen (15) days of or after the first day of class in any given year, the child shall be conditionally admitted but the parent/legal guardian must submit the required certificate as follows: (a) for a child born in Louisiana, within fifteen (15) days of the date of initial registration; or (b) for a child born outside of Louisiana, within thirty (30) days of the date of initial registration. In cases where birth certificates and/or birth verification forms cannot be obtained, the Superintendent or his/her designee may accept other positive documentary proof of age and parentage that may be available; however, such discretion must be exercised on a case-by-case basis in consideration of special extenuating circumstances. The Superintendent or his/her designee shall also retain the discretion to consider the circumstances on a case-by-case basis to determine whether or not a student may be permitted to continue in school upon failure to submit the required birth certificate.

2. Immunization records

A doctor's immunization record or other satisfactory evidence of immunity to or immunization against vaccine-preventable diseases according to the age appropriate schedule approved by the Louisiana Office of Public Health, Department of Health and Hospitals shall be acceptable.

3. Previously Attended School Records

When a student is transferring from a school outside of the District, all official school records from the school(s) where the student previously attended must be provided. The information needed to request and access such records as well as the necessary authorization to obtain and/or access any and all such records must be provided.

4. Kindergarten Records

When a student is registering to attend the first grade in the District but did not attend kindergarten in the District, acceptable evidence of completion of at least a full-day public or private kindergarten for a full school year must be presented. Alternatively, before being admitted to the first grade, the student must satisfactorily pass an academic readiness screening administered by the District.

5. Proof of Bona Fide District Residence

As provided below, acceptable evidence that a student actually resides with his/her parent/legal guardian in the geographical boundaries of the District must be submitted to determine both bona fide residence for admission to any school in the District and for assignment to a particular school within the proper attendance zone. Only the limited circumstances addressed below shall provide exceptions to this requirement.

II. REGISTRATION

Each student seeking to attend school in the St. Martin School District shall be required to register at the school to which he/she is assigned according to the attendance zone of his/her residence.

All students attending schools in the District during school year 2015-2016 shall be required to re-register for the 2016-2017 school year.

All students presenting for first time enrollment in the District shall be required to complete the initial registration requirements.

All students must provide residency verification every school year subsequent to their initial registration or re-registration in order to continue attending schools in the District.

A. Registration Procedure

In order to register a child to attend school in the District, the parent/legal guardian must complete a registration form, as provided by the District, and submit the required residency verification documentation, as described below. No child shall be granted admission in the District or permitted to attend class, participate in extra-curricular activities (including athletics), or otherwise be supervised in any manner by the District until the required registration, including valid residency verification, is completed and approved.

B. Residency and Verification

1. Residency Defined

A student's residence shall be the place where he/she lives with his parent, legal guardian, or, under certain particular circumstances, with an adult other than his/her parent/legal guardian. A student shall only have one (1) residence for school admission and assignment purposes. A student's residence shall be the place where he/she predominantly takes meals, sleeps, and maintains his/her personal belongings.

2. Verification Requirements

The District shall verify the residency of each student according to the procedures set forth below.

a. First Time or Re-Registration

Each student entering the District for the first time or reentering after interrupted attendance shall be required, consistent with paragraphs (b)-(f) below, to verify his/her residence address as part of the registration process.

b. Home Visits

The Supervisor of Child Welfare and Attendance shall have the discretion to determine when a home visit may assist in the residency verification process and to conduct such home visits as and with the assistance of such employees and/or other personnel he/she may be deemed appropriate. The failure of a parent, legal guardian, or other adult/person with whom a student is claimed to reside to permit and/or to cooperate with any home visit that may be made by the Supervisor of Child Welfare and Attendance and/or his/her designees for purposes of residency verification may be cause to deny admission, assignment, or transfer, as applicable.

c. Students Residing with Parent or Legal Guardian

The parent or legal guardian of a student seeking to be admitted in any District school must provide at least two (2) of the items numbered (1) through (6) below as verification of their residential address. Each document must include a physical 911 address and be in the name of the parent/legal guardian. No document with a post office box as an address shall be accepted.

- 1) Property tax records;
- 2) Mortgage documents or property deed;
- 3) Apartment or home lease or notarized statement of the verified property owner (by submitted property deed or other valid ownership documentation) identifying himself/herself as the property owner, describing the property, the term of lease, and identifying the leaseholder;
- 4) One (1) current utility bill showing the physical residence address for service at that address (Note: Multiple utility bills shall not be accepted for residency verification; only one (1) utility bill together may be submitted along with another of the listed documents to meet this requirement);
- 5) Affidavit and/or personal visit by a designated District official; and
- 6) In every case where a student is living with a legal guardian who is not a verified parent (by birth certificate), the court decree declaring the District resident to be the legal guardian of the student must be presented.

3. Students Residing with Adults Other Than Parent/Legal Guardian

A student who resides with an adult other than a parent or legal guardian must provide the following to verify his/her residency:

- a. The adult claiming District residency must meet the criteria of sub-part b above, as required of a parent or legal guardian; and
- b. The adult must provide a notarized document stating his/her relationship to the student, confirming that the student will be actually residing in his/her home for a period of time encompassing the entire upcoming school year, and fully explaining the reason(s) for the living arrangement. In order to validate residence with an adult who is not a parent or legal guardian for school admission and assignment purposes, the Superintendent or his/her designee must consider the reasons for such residence arrangement on a case-by-case basis and must determine that the reasons are extraordinary such that they support the exception which allows a residence. School attendance in the District or a particular attendance zone shall not be an acceptable reason for validating residence with an adult who is not a parent or legal guardian.

- c. No “custody by mandate” or “provisional custody” shall be acceptable to validate residence with an adult who is not a parent or legal guardian, regardless of any familial relationship.

4. Homeless Students

As provided above, the School Board shall comply with the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §11431, with regard to the assignment of any child who is homeless, as defined under that federal law.

III. ASSIGNMENT

As long as the School Board is subject to compliance with the terms of a desegregation order governing student assignment and, in the event such an order is no longer applicable, until further action by the School Board, the attendance zones approved by the United States District Court in the desegregation case shall be utilized for purposes of student assignment.

The School Board shall assign each student to the grade-appropriate school within the attendance zone of his/her residence as determined by the residency verification process. Any student may apply for a transfer from the attendance zone of his/her residence to another attendance zone and such transfer request shall be granted or denied in accordance with the provisions set out below.

IV. TRANSFERS

A student may be granted a transfer from one attendance zone to another only in two (2) circumstances:

1. He/she moves his/her actual residence from one attendance zone to another;
2. He/she is granted a valid transfer pursuant to the policy below.

No transfer shall be permitted other than those approved, according to the provisions herein, by the Supervisor of Child Welfare and Attendance in conjunction with the Transfer Request Review Committee, as provided below. Transfers can be restricted in the event that cumulative transfers under the options provided are found to be undermining the goals of the desegregation order.

The decision of the Supervisor of Child Welfare and Attendance may be appealed to the Superintendent, whose decision shall be final.

A. Transfer Requests

1. Requirements

Any parent/legal guardian who desires a transfer from one attendance zone to another within the District must comply with the following requirements:

- a. Fully complete a transfer request, in writing and on the form provided by the District;
- b. Provide all of the information and documentation required for the particular type of transfer requested, as detailed below; and
- c. Provide any further information pertaining to the requested transfer as may be requested by the Supervisor of Child Welfare and Attendance.

All students desiring a transfer for the 2016-2017 school year for any reason, whether currently attending on a Majority-to-Minority (“M-to-M”) or other transfer, must submit a new transfer request by May 1, 2016. The only students who are not required to reapply are those M-to-M students who began attending grades preK-5 at Catahoula Elementary during the 2015-2016 school year.

2. Deadline

The completed transfer request must be submitted to the Supervisor of Child Welfare and Attendance by the end of the business day on May 1st prior to the academic school year for which the transfer is requested. An exception to this deadline may apply only if the Transfer Review Committee determines that the reason for the request did not arise or was not known/could not have been known before the deadline as evidenced by supporting documentation. Failure to be aware of the deadline shall not be an acceptable reason for extending the deadline.

B. Transfer Request Processing

The Supervisor of Child Welfare and Attendance shall convene and serve as chair of a Transfer Review Committee which shall be composed of four (4) central office administrators and four (4) principals from within the District, of whom four (4) shall be black and four (4) shall be white or another race. The Supervisor of Child Welfare and Attendance and the Truancy Coordinator shall serve as two (2) of the central office administrators on the Committee.

The Transfer Review Committee shall consider all properly submitted transfer requests in order to determine whether the request should be granted or denied. The Committee shall have the discretion to request further information from the parent/legal guardian if such is necessary or would assist in reaching a fair conclusion as to the validity of a transfer request. Failure of a parent/legal guardian to comply with a request for further information may be grounds to deny a transfer request.

The Supervisor of Child Welfare and Attendance shall ensure that proper notice, via the method he/she deems to be most effective, is provided to the parent/legal guardian within a reasonable time following the decision of the Transfer Review Committee. Such notice shall include whether the transfer was granted or denied and, if denied, the reason for such denial.

C. Duration of Transfers

Majority-to-Minority (“M-to-M”) transfers shall continue until the student completes the highest grade offered at the school to which the transfer was granted; no re-application is necessary (except as provided above). However, if the M-to-M student changes his residency during the term of his M-to-M transfer, the parent/legal guardian must notify the school principal and, if his/her qualification for an M-to-M transfer shall be redetermined based on his new residential school zone. Further, once the M-to-M transfer student completes all grade levels at the receiving school, the student must apply for a new M-to-M transfer if he/she desires to continue his/her education at the next grade-level school in the attendance zone.

All transfers other than M-to-M transfers shall be granted and valid for one (1) school year only and students must reapply every year by the deadline. Receiving a transfer for one (1) school year shall not ensure that the same transfer will be granted for subsequent years.

D. Applicability of All Desegregation Orders

The School Board shall comply with all provisions related to M-to-M transfers which are included in any desegregation order relevant to student assignment..

E. Reasons for Transfer

Transfers shall be approved only if the student is eligible for one of the following reasons.

1. Majority-to-Minority Transfers

Majority-to-Minority (“M-to-M”) transfers will be available for any student in grades kindergarten through 12 whose race is in the majority at his/her grade-appropriate school in his/her residential attendance zone school to transfer to a grade-appropriate school in another attendance zone where his/her race is in the minority. Any student meeting this requirement shall be granted an M-to-M transfer.

- a. Transportation - The District shall provide all students granted M-to-M transfers with free transportation to and from school. To the extent that the District may provide any student with free transportation to and/or from events held outside of regular school hours, the District shall extend the same courtesy to students granted M-to-M transfers.
- b. Capacity - The School Board will ensure that a space is made available at the school to which a student is granted an M-to-M transfer. The lack of capacity at a receiving school shall not be justification for denying any M-to-M transfer request.
- c. Home School - The school to which the M-to-M student transfers shall become the student's home school for all purposes until the student completes all grade levels at the particular school. The M-to-M transfer may not be revoked due to disciplinary, academic, capacity, or other reasons.
- d. Race Designation - A student who is granted an M-to-M transfer may not obtain a subsequent M-to-M transfer based on a race designation different from that which was provided upon original enrollment in the District or upon which the initial M-to-M transfer was granted.

2. Child of Employee Transfers

Regardless of residence within or outside the District, children of school administrators, teachers, and other faculty members, non-instructional support personnel, and other personnel assigned to a particular school shall be granted a transfer to attend the school to which the parent is assigned. Transportation will be provided by the parent at no cost to the District.

3. Health of the Student

A student may be granted a transfer where attendance at his/her residentially assigned school would place his/her physical or mental health in jeopardy and where attendance at another school would better meet his/her health needs, subject to the following requirements.

- a. The student's application for such a transfer must include a statement of support signed by at least two (2) non-associated medical doctors or mental health providers, which must provide:

- 1) A certification of the student's health condition; and
- 2) An explanation, in detail, of why attendance at the sending school places the student's health in jeopardy and why attendance at the requested school is better for the student's health condition.

b. At least one (1) of the doctors providing the required supporting statements must be the student's treating physician.

5. Safety of the Student

A student may be granted a transfer if his/her safety is in jeopardy if attendance continues at his/her residentially assigned school, subject to the following requirements.

a. A student's application for such a transfer must include a statement signed by the student's parent/guardian and/or the principal of the sending school which must provide:

- 1) An explanation of the potential harm to the student in that school;
- 2) Any supporting documentation that may be available; and
- 3) An explanation of how the transfer will address the student's specific safety concerns.

6. Extraordinary Hardship Transfers

A student may be granted a transfer based on an extraordinary hardship arising from a situation that does not fall within any of the student transfer provisions listed above but which warrants the transfer of that student to another school in the District (including, but not limited to, a natural disaster, incarceration of the custodial parent/legal guardian, severe illness of a parent/legal guardian, domestic abuse in the student's home, neglect or other child welfare needs), subject to the following requirements.

a. The student's parent/guardian and/or appropriate child welfare official may apply for an exceptional hardship transfer, which application must provide:

- 1) A signed, dated, and notarized statement providing:
 - a) a detailed explanation of the exceptional hardship;
 - b) why the hardship requires a transfer from the sending school;
 - c) why the receiving school can best accommodate the exceptional hardship; and
 - d) supporting documentation, if any is reasonably available to the applicant.
- 2) In addition to many other circumstances that may also not qualify as an exceptional hardship, child care needs will not qualify as an exceptional hardship under this provision.

V. Unapproved Out-of-Zone Attendance

In the event an employee of the District has reason to believe that a student is attending school in an attendance zone other than his/her residential or valid transfer attendance zone, the employee shall be required to provide such information to the school principal and the Supervisor of Child Welfare and Attendance, who shall conduct an investigation to determine the proper assignment for the student. If it is determined that a student is not attending school in the proper attendance zone, the Supervisor of Child Welfare and Attendance shall issue such notices and take such steps as necessary to withdraw the student from the improper attendance zone and, if within attendance is proper at another school in the District, to enroll the student in the proper attendance zone.

VI. Falsification of Documents or Other Misrepresentation of Residency

As long as the District is subject to compliance with the terms of a desegregation order governing student assignment, a person shall be subject to penalties for perjury or for making a false statement in a federal legal proceeding if he/she presents or is complicit in the presentation and/or processing of any document that is falsified or otherwise constitutes a fraudulent document presented or otherwise presents or is complicit in making other false representations for the purpose of having a student assigned to a District school for which the student is not zoned to attend under the provisions of this policy.

Regardless of whether a desegregation order is applicable to student assignment, falsification of any documents or presentation of false information for the purpose of obtaining a student's admission, assignment, or transfer to/in the District shall be grounds for rejecting admission, assignment, or transfer without further consideration. The Superintendent or his/her designee shall have the discretion to make such determination, which shall be final.

The Superintendent shall ensure that notice of this provision is published to all District employees and the public in the manner he/she deems most effective and efficient to make this provision known to all persons who may be affected by it.