

# GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT REASSIGNMENTS ON GROUNDS OF HARDSHIP

## Introduction

In order to be granted a school reassignment on the basis of a hardship a parent<sup>1</sup> must demonstrate a serious and continuing hardship which cannot reasonably be eliminated or reduced by means other than a reassignment. Even if a hardship is shown, the reassignment request may be denied if the reassignment would interfere with the orderly and efficient administration of the New Hanover County School System in general or the requested school in particular (examples include overcrowding at requested school or lack of appropriate staff or services offered at requested school). The following guidelines are intended to address the most common situations in which hardships are claimed. The Hearing Panel and the Board will decide each case on its own unique circumstances while giving due consideration to these guidelines and attempting to be fair and consistent with all applications. Additional information may be required from the parent or legal guardian. The standard for showing a hardship may be different in certain circumstances; for employees of the New Hanover County Schools according to the Employee Benefit Policy, 8130, and for a student whose parent or legal guardian is on active military duty. They need only show a substantial inconvenience and will not be required to show a substantial hardship.

### A. GROUNDS SUFFICIENT TO SHOW A HARDSHIP:

1. Student needs to be somewhere after school and cannot get there in time from assigned school. Examples:
  - care for elderly or disabled relatives  
  
(Ex: student needs to get home to care for grandparent until parent(s) get home from work. There must be no other means for the family to look after the relative between the time when the student can get home from the requested school and the time he/she would get there from the assigned school. The student must be primary caregiver during this time. The parent must demonstrate why the difference between the time the student can get home from the assigned school versus the requested school, creates a hardship).
  - work / internship / student / volunteer opportunity  
  
(Ex: student has unique job, internship, educational or volunteer opportunity that he/she will miss if he/she goes to assigned school. Parent must demonstrate how the extra time it takes to get to the after school event from the assigned school creates a hardship).

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<sup>1</sup> As used in these Guidelines the term "parent" includes legal guardian or legal custodian, as those terms are defined in the Student Assignment Plan, where applicable.

2. Single parent leaves for work early and wants to drop child off at school on the way to work or have elderly relative drop child off at closer school rather than wait for bus.

\* Applicants must show something more than a substantial inconvenience. If there is no legitimate safety issue, the child can wait for the bus to the assigned school. Leaving elementary school children at the bus stop may constitute a safety issue but not for middle or high school students unless they have a serious disability causing a real safety concern. Also, if the parent can obtain a child care provider (such as a relative, friend, neighbor, older sibling, babysitter, etc.), without substantial financial hardship, to supervise the child until the bus comes, there is no hardship.

3. Parents living together but not married, each has his/her own child(ren) and one of the children is reassigned. The others can be reassigned to the same school as if they were siblings, if the sibling privilege otherwise would have applied.

4. Serious documented mental or emotional problem(s). A professional opinion of doctor that not getting the requested school is likely to cause serious long-term damage to child's emotional or mental well-being, and explaining why, is ordinarily required to show a hardship. A letter from a doctor saying it is "in best interest of child" is not ordinarily sufficient to warrant reassignment.

5. Safety issues

- Where the student has been assaulted or bullied at the assigned school or by students from feeder schools who will be attending the assigned school and there is a substantial likelihood that these problems will continue at the assigned school despite interventions by the school.

6. Academic issues

- If a unique program or course is offered at the requested school and it is important for student to take it or participate in it, a reassignment can be granted. However, the Panel should not allow students to pick their school by simply finding a course or program there which is not offered at their assigned school.

7. Child care center offers transportation home from school only at requested school. Parent(s) must demonstrate why they could not use a child care center that picks up from the assigned school or make other transportation arrangements without substantial financial hardship. Enrolling a student for the first time in a child care center near the requested school at the time of the reassignment request will ordinarily not be indicative of a hardship.

(Ex: If mom works at child care facility or the child has been in same child care for several years, a reassignment can be granted.)

8. After school child care is provided in the home of an elderly relative who lives in a different school attendance area and either (i) cannot drive or (ii) lives unreasonably far from any school bus drop off point from the assigned school. In this case, the student may be re-assigned to the school in the elderly relative's school attendance area. The parent must demonstrate that no child care or transportation arrangements can be made with the child going to the assigned school without substantial financial hardship.

B. GROUNDS NOT SUFFICIENT TO SHOW HARDSHIP:

- student does not like change
- don't like teachers
- friends go elsewhere
- siblings had bad experience
- thought house was in another zone
- teachers and staff at assigned school are not familiar with student
- student changed schools last year
- babysitter or other care giver lives or works in district for requested school or closer to requested school than assigned school (except for elderly relatives - See Sections A-2 and A-8 above)
- requested school is closer
- parents/siblings went to requested school
- athletic preference