

HAWTHORNE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Richard A. Spirito
Superintendent of Schools

March 5, 2020

Dear Hawthorne Parent(s) and/or Guardian(s),

As you may be aware, the Hawthorne Public Schools recently approved a policy to allow students from neighboring towns to pay tuition and attend Hawthorne High School. However, please allow me to provide some clarification and specifics regarding this new policy.

The idea of school districts accepting tuition paying students is not uncommon. In fact, a number of districts throughout the state of New Jersey allow for students to pay tuition and attend their high schools. Previously, an option for school districts was to enroll in the New Jersey Interdistrict Public School Choice program sponsored by the New Jersey Department of Education. There are 124 school districts participating in this program throughout the state but no new districts are being accepted. A second option for school districts is to engage in a send-receive relationship whereby a district educates students from another community on a tuition basis. A third option is for districts to simply adopt their own policies and allow for this practice.

In Hawthorne, the Board of Education and Administration considered adopting their own policy after being approached by parents in neighboring towns and due to decreased enrollment at Hawthorne High School. It was also felt that this new policy would generate some revenue for the district, help offset expenses and support future budgets. The Board of Education and Administration began the process by investigating and reviewing policies and application procedures currently in place in districts throughout Bergen and Passaic Counties and in February 2020, Hawthorne adopted a new policy and application procedures.

As you will see from this new policy and application, we have included very strict requirements and documentation to be considered for attendance at Hawthorne High School. These requirements include submitting two years of attendance and discipline records, two years of academic records, and two years of standardized test scores. The process also includes a mandatory interview with administration and two recommendations from staff members at their current school. All of these required documents will be reviewed prior to acceptance and payment of tuition. Finally, if after this review the student were to be admitted, they would be required to maintain these high standards for the length of their stay at our High School.

This new policy also includes the following provisions:

- The Superintendent or his designee will certify that admission of an additional pupil would not be detrimental to the school district.
- The Superintendent or his designee certifies that the needs of the pupil are such that no additional expenditures, beyond the private tuition charged, will be needed.
- All pupils will be accepted in accordance with this policy on a first come, first served basis in grade levels that would allow for these additional students.
- The application process must be completed annually and in succeeding school years, those attending as private tuition pupils will be given preference over new non-resident applicants for attendance.

To date, Hawthorne High School has accepted one 10th grade student from the borough of North Haledon who has completed the application process and is currently attending Hawthorne High School. Any further applications will be considered as per the guidelines provided above.

It is our hope that this letter provides clarification regarding this new policy and the process the district will follow prior to admitting out of district students to Hawthorne High School. However, should you have any further questions, we encourage parents and community members to visit our website via the link below or contact the Superintendent's office at 973-427-1300.

https://www.hawthorne.k12.nj.us/registration/tuition_paying_pupil_registration_

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard A. Spirito". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "R".

Richard A. Spirito
Superintendent of Schools