



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Louisiana Department of Education—Public School Choice Policy

In May 2012, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) approved Louisiana’s ESEA Flexibility Waiver Application. As part of Louisiana’s revised state-designed accountability system, Louisiana’s local educational agencies (LEAs) must offer school choice, but will no longer be required to implement the traditional one-size-fits-all ESEA interventions. Instead, Louisiana is revising its Public School Choice Policy to align with *Louisiana Believes*, which recognizes that families and local leaders know best how to select schools to educate their children.

Through Louisiana’s Public School Choice policy, children assigned to failing public schools are provided the option to enroll at their community’s highest performing public schools. At the same time, Louisiana’s policy recognizes that school districts need flexibility over how they fund the cost of transporting students who exercise this choice. By removing mandated financial set asides, Louisiana has empowered local superintendents and educators to determine how to support Public School Choice without triggering a cycle of disinvestment within their lowest-performing schools.

This policy is in effect for the school year starting on July 1, 2012 and supersedes any other written document you may have received prior to today’s date. If you have any questions or comments about this policy, please do not hesitate to contact Bernell Cook of the Office of Student Programs via email at Bernell.Cook@LA.GOV.

Public School Choice Policy

In recognition that Louisiana’s children deserve access to a high quality education regardless of family income and zip-code, all children enrolled at F schools must be provided the opportunity to transfer to a higher performing public school within their local school district. Districts with schools projected to have a letter grade of “F” will be notified on July 24, 2012. Eligible families must be contacted and offered Public School Choice by their local school district within ten business days of receiving such notification.

Process

The Louisiana Department of Education developed the following selection criteria for Public School Choice for local school districts.

1. Local school districts must develop a listing of available enrollment slots at higher performing receiving schools broken down by school by grade level. *Higher performing schools for the purposes of Public School Choice are non-F schools.*
2. Local school districts must place children attending F-schools at a higher performing school based upon the following criteria:
 - a. Develop list of all students attending F-schools. The list must be broken down by grade level.
 - b. Students attending the lowest performing F-schools, as determined by School Performance Scores (SPS), will be given the highest preference.
 - a. For each request form, match students with the highest performing school with available enrollment slots. If parents rank multiple receiving schools, match students to their top request at which there is an open seat. If no match is made, students will remain at their current school.

Louisiana Believes.

- i. Follow this process in ascending order until all choice request forms from all F-schools are reviewed.
4. Notify families in writing on the status of their request form within a reasonable time period.

Procedural

Local school districts with F-schools should maintain sufficient documentation to verify the district offered choice consistent with this policy, such as:

- Listing of all students enrolled at F-schools schools.
- Listing of all high performing schools with available enrollment seats, broken down by grade level.
- Copies of all submitted Choice Request Forms.
- Documentation to support application of Selection Criteria.

In alignment with *Louisiana Believes*, local school districts are no longer required to set aside funds out of their Title I, Part A allocations in order to pay for choice-related transportation. The school district could set aside a necessary and reasonable amount to cover such costs, or the district could use other funding sources such as MFP funding.

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