

Frequently Asked Questions about School Choice

Why is school choice a good idea?

It creates a more personalized learning experience. Research shows that children learn in a variety of ways, and parents know that children have different talents and interests. School choice allows parents to select the type of instruction, and the type of school focus, that appeals to each child. By getting students excited about school, they become more engaged. And as their knowledge and skills increase, so does their confidence.

Can my child attend a school outside of our neighborhood school's attendance zone?

It doesn't matter where you live as long as you reside in Beaufort County. If your application is approved, your child can attend a school choice program outside your regular attendance zone.

What choices are available?

The Board of Education has approved a variety of instructional options, and many of those options are available at multiple schools. A complete list is available on the School Choice Headquarters page at the district's website.

How do I apply?

Complete an online application on the School Choice Headquarters page of the district website. Online applications will be posted on the Beaufort County School District's website beginning Saturday, February 1, 2020. Completed online applications must be submitted by midnight Saturday, February 29.

Can I submit my application after the February 29 deadline?

If you can document that you moved to Beaufort County – or to a different location within Beaufort County – after the deadline but before July 31, 2020, you may submit an application. Information on post-deadline application procedures will be made available March 1 on the School Choice Headquarters website.

Do I have to submit a new application each year?

Once approved, you no longer need to re-apply each year for that school and program so long as you continue to reside in Beaufort County. The student may remain enrolled until completing the grades offered at that school.

Can my children stay at a choice school if they are no longer enrolled in that school's choice program?

No. If your children leave a choice program at a school outside your regular attendance zone, they must enroll at the school that serves their neighborhood.

Can my child transfer to a school to participate on an athletic team or in an extracurricular activity?

Transfers are not allowed for students to participate in extracurricular programs or sports. Also, approved transfers do not guarantee athletic eligibility while attending out-of-zone schools (see the Beaufort County Schools Athletic Handbook on the District website).

If my child is approved for a choice program, are siblings considered “pre-approved” for that program?

While consideration will be given to siblings, approval of one child’s school choice application does not guarantee that siblings will be approved for that choice due to possible building capacity issues. Separate applications must be submitted for each child.

Can my request be denied?

Yes. Records of excessive absences, tardiness, discipline matters or academic concerns may be grounds for not approving or renewing a request, or immediately terminating a transfer at the principal’s discretion. In addition, if the number of choice applications at a school would cause the school to exceed its overall enrollment capacity, or if approved applications would push an individual choice program beyond its capacity, a lottery would be held to determine which applications are approved. Nine schools potentially have no availability for choice because they are at or above capacity in terms of overall student enrollment. Those schools are Coosa Elementary; H.E. McCracken Middle; Hilton Head Island High; Hilton Head Island Middle; May River High; Okatie Elementary; Pritchardville Elementary; Red Cedar Elementary and River Ridge Academy. Parents may still apply at those schools, however, and if limited space becomes available, a lottery would be held later this spring.

Will seats in choice programs be approved on a first-come, first-served basis?

No. School choice applications will be reviewed after the February 29 deadline, and if the number of applicants for a particular program is greater than the number of available seats, a lottery will be used to determine which students are enrolled.

If my child’s application to attend a choice program at an out-of-zone school is approved, will school bus transportation be provided?

No. Bus transportation is provided only to schools in your regular attendance zone.

Can I appeal a denial of my school choice application?

Yes. An appeal must be made in writing and postmarked within two weeks after the district mails a notification that an application has been denied. Please mail it to P.O. Drawer 309, Beaufort, SC 29901. Within that same time frame, an appeal also may be hand-delivered to the Beaufort County School District, Office of Instructional Services, at 2900 Mink Point Blvd., Beaufort, SC 29902.

Can I apply if I live outside the Beaufort County School District?

No. Only documented Beaufort County residents may participate in the district’s school choice program.

What if I no longer wish for my child to attend a school choice program?

Students may return to the school zoned for their neighborhoods at any time during a school year.

Will I have to pay any extra fees to attend a choice program outside our neighborhood school's attendance zone?

No. Beaufort County students who attend choice programs will not pay extra tuition, although families will be responsible for their students' transportation if they live outside the attendance zone for the school choice program they will be attending.

Will schools offer traditional classroom instruction in addition to their special "choice programs"?

All district schools maintain a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics focus, as well as a core includes the arts, world languages and technology.

Beaufort County's school choice options come in two forms:

- School-within-a-school: A traditional curriculum is offered for students who live in that attendance zone. That traditional curriculum includes a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics focus as well as a core in the arts, world languages and technology. But in addition to that traditional curriculum, the school also offers a specific "choice option" available to students who live both inside and outside the regular attendance zone. Example: Beaufort Elementary School offers a traditional elementary-grades curriculum, but also two "choice options" in Montessori and AMES.
- School-wide: All enrolled students participate in a particular, focused instructional method. Example: Lady's Island Elementary engages all of its students with a school-wide arts-infused approach.

Do I have to submit a choice application if the instructional option I want for my child is already available at the school that serves our current neighborhood's attendance zone?

No. The only exceptions are cases where the school choice option requires an additional, program-specific application. Those exceptions include Classical Studies at Beaufort Middle, the Montessori programs at Beaufort Elementary and River Ridge Academy, or the AMES (Advanced Math, Engineering and Science) programs at Beaufort, Pritchardville and St. Helena elementary schools.

Are school choice options available to Pre-K children?

No. If children are determined to be eligible for prekindergarten, they must attend the schools in their attendance zones.