



## Schools of Choice

### **Administrative Procedure 1.A.140**

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**Board Governance Policy Cross Reference: Policy 1, 2, 3, 16**

**Legal Reference: Manitoba Public Schools Act**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

With the provisions of the Schools of Choice initiative, students may apply for admission to any school in the province.

Please read the following information carefully in order that you understand schools of choice.

#### **A. SCHOOLS OF CHOICE**

##### **1) What is the basic right to attend?**

Every school board shall designate a school to which a resident student is entitled to attend. A student may choose not to attend his or her designated school.

##### **2) What is a “designated school”?**

A designated school is generally the closest school to the student’s residence within their home school division which offers the most appropriate education required by the student and which has available space. Parents will still have the ability to choose a school other than the one designated by the school board. A few conditions may apply, as outlined in this guide.

##### **3) What is “choice”?**

Choice means the ability to choose a school to be attended inside or outside of the home school division. If a student wishes to attend a school other than the designated school because it is, for example, more convenient for parents for after-school child care purposes, this could be considered a reason to exercise school choice.

**4) What is a “sending” or “home” school division?**

The sending or home school division is the division in which the student’s reside (or age of majority student resides), where school taxes are paid and where the student would ordinarily attend school.

**5) What is a “receiving” school division?**

The receiving school division is the division, other than the home division, where a student chooses to attend.

**6) Where do parents find information to help them choose a school?**

School boards will publish or make available to parents and students information about their schools, programs, and enrollment procedures.

**7) If a student does not want to exercise school choice, will this affect his or her right to attend the designated school?**

No. Divisions must give priority to students identified to attend the designated school.

**8) Is there priority of admissions under schools of choice?**

Yes. Schools will enroll students in the following order of priority:

- students designated to attend that school,
- students residing in the school division, and
- other Manitoba students.

**9) Is a school required to accept a student who wishes to exercise his choice?**

Yes. A school will enroll a student unless:

- space is not available,
- special equipment or physical facilities required by the student are not available,
- enrolling the student would be detrimental to the continuity of his or her education,
- the program is not suited to the age, ability, or aptitude of the student,

- enrolling the student would be detrimental to order, discipline and well-being of the students in the school, or
- proper notification is not provided by the parent or student.

**10) Who decides if there is space?**

The school decides if space is available.

**11) If there are more applications than vacant seats, how are the vacant seats filled?**

Schools will have to determine a fair method for prioritizing admission, in addition to the conditions mentioned above.

**12) Who decides if a program is suitable for a student?**

The school, in consultation with parents and students, will determine if a program is suitable for the learning requirements of students.

**13) Can a student be refused admission to a school of choice on the basis of past academic performance?**

No, except where the student is applying for specialized programming that has criteria or prerequisites that have been met by students already enrolled in that program.

**14) Can a student be refused on the basis of past disciplinary problems?**

Yes. A request can be denied if, in the opinion of the receiving division, disciplinary problems can be addressed only through additional support, which is available in the home division, and if the home division chooses not to pay for such support outside its boundaries.

**15) How does a student apply for school of choice? Are there any forms to fill out?**

Yes, there will be forms to fill out and submit to the school of choice. Parents must apply to potential receiving schools no later than May 15. The Department will develop a notification form that parents will use to advise the receiving school of a student's desire to transfer to a school of choice for the next school year.

**16) Can a student apply to more than one school at a time?**

Yes, provided that proper notification to potential receiving schools is given and that application deadlines are met in all cases. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that all forms are filled out correctly and completely and are submitted on time to receiving schools. Parents must decide on the school to be attended as soon as is reasonably possible and notify the schools involved.

**17) When are students notified if they have been accepted into their school of choice?**

The receiving school must advise the parents and sending school no later than June 30 whether or not the student has been accepted.

**18) Can parents still apply to a school of choice after May 15 notification deadline?**

Yes, but the school can refuse to accept a student because of the missed deadline.

**19) Can choice be exercised after the May 15 deadline has passed?**

Perhaps. The exercise of school choice after the May 15 deadline has passed will be considered on a case by case basis by the school divisions involved. Parents are advised to consult with home division and receiving division officials about whether admission will be considered and whether transfer fees will be paid on their behalf. The home division is not obligated to send the transfer fee after the deadlines, parents may be responsible for paying this fee to the receiving division for the first year in order to exercise school choice. (For further information, please see Part B of this guide.)

**20) If a school of choice does not work out, or if a parent changes his or her mind, can a student return a) to his or her former school division and b) to his or her former school?**

a) Yes. A student who has chosen to attend a school of choice may withdraw from that school and return to the home division. The home school board shall, at that time, designate a school for the student.

b) Generally yes, however, there is no guarantee that the designated school will be the school previously attended by the student. If the student chooses a different school in the home division from the one designated, his or her enrollment is subject to space and programming considerations, as noted in Point 9, above.

**21) Does a student have to reapply every year to continue to attend the school of choice?**

No. Once a student has exercised choice and is accepted into that school, he or she is entitled to attend that school. The student is assumed to be in attendance at that school year after year unless he or she wishes to exercise choice and leave.

School boards will keep track of local demographic trends so that schools can enroll designated and non-designated students alike. Boards are permitted to slow or stop movement of non-designated students into division schools so that designated students can be accommodated.

**22) Does this mean that the brothers and sisters of a student exercising choice will be accepted into the same school?**

Not necessarily. Admission of a student because of choice does not guarantee that brothers and sisters will have access to the school.

**23) If a school denies a parent's request for admission under choice, is there an avenue of appeal?**

Yes, to the school board. Within the framework of legislation and regulation, school boards have the final authority in the decision to admit students to a school. Parents are encouraged to consult and work with school divisions should they have any concerns.

**B. FEES**

**1) Will parents pay fees to exercise school choice?**

No, not in most cases, provided that deadlines have been met. Parents will not be required to pay a fee to enroll their child(ren) in one of the four programs recognized by Manitoba Education and Training in a school of choice inside or outside the home division. (The four recognized programs are English, Francais, Immersion or Technology Education.) Instead, the home division will pay an

annual transfer fee to the receiving division in an amount to be determined by the department.

**2) If a student was eligible for special needs funding in his or her home division and decides to go to school in another division, does that funding go to the receiving school division?**

Yes. Special needs funding goes to the school division attended by the student provided that the student has been accepted by the receiving division.

**3) Are transfer fees automatically sent to the receiving school division on parents' or students' behalf?**

Yes. Once choice has been exercised within deadlines, a transfer fee is paid by the home division. If a student returns to the home division during the year the transfer fee, or a portion of it, may be returned to the home division at the discretion of the receiving division.

The sending division is not obligated to pass on the transfer fee to the receiving division if the parental confirmation date is missed.