

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Federal Title I

School Choice Option





Frequently Asked Questions About the Federal Title I School Choice Option 2005–2006 School Year

Introduction

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB Act) is a federal law that requires school districts to offer families in certain federally funded Title I schools the option to transfer their children to other public schools in the same school district. Your child's school may participate in the Federal Title I School Choice Option in the upcoming school year. To help you understand the School Choice Option, we are providing you with answers to some questions that you may have.

How was my school identified for this program?

There are specific federal rules under the NCLB Act that apply to the annual performance of students in Title I schools. In Maryland, students in Grades 3 through 8 and Grade 10 take the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) test each year. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) sets specific MSA improvement goals in reading and mathematics for all schools. These goals are known as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Title I schools offer parents the Federal Title I School Choice Option if one of the following occurs:

- The school does not meet the state improvement goal for two or more consecutive years and is identified for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring.
- Once identified, the school meets the target for one year, but not the next.

Schools must continue to offer the Federal Title I School Choice Option until state improvement goals are met for two consecutive years. When the targets are met for two consecutive years, the School Choice Option is no longer offered.

Will my neighborhood home school always be in this program?

Not necessarily. Efforts are being made to improve the academic performance of your home school. If the school demonstrates two consecutive years of academic progress on MSA, then it will be removed from the program. Also, schools that meet the state goals for two or more consecutive years no longer are required to offer School Choice Option. Previously approved students can continue to attend the designated school until the end of the elementary grade span, but transportation will not be provided.

Do I have to transfer my child to another school?

No. The decision is entirely up to you and should be based on what you think is best for your child. Many factors should be considered, including the fact that there are special resources at your home school that are designed to improve student achievement. Most of these special resources may not be available at the other school. School staff is available to talk with you if you have any questions regarding the needs of your child.

To which schools may my child transfer?

Not all schools in the district are able to accept transfer students. The schools designated as choices for your child are listed in the enclosed Fact Sheet. These designated schools, which are not identified as in need of improvement, are selected using a combination of factors. These factors include capacity to accept additional students and distance from the home school.

How can I get more information about the designated schools?

Additional information about the designated schools is available at your home school, from the designated schools, from the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Web site at www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org, or from the MSDE Web site at www.mdreportcard.org.

Will transportation be provided to the designated school?

Yes. However, priority will be given to low-income, low-achieving students if there are insufficient funds to transport all students who apply. The length of the ride will be affected by the distance to the designated school and the number of students participating in the School Choice Option.

Will transportation always be provided?

Not necessarily. Transportation service to the designated school is provided only as long as your current home school receives Title I funds and is required to offer the Federal Title I School Choice Option. If your home school were to no longer receive Title I funds or the school meets the state goals for two consecutive years, MCPS would allow students already enrolled in a designated school to continue until the end of the elementary grade span, generally Grade 5. However, transportation no longer would be provided.

How will priority for transfer requests be determined?

Students identified as low-performing and low-income will be given priority for their first choice of a designated school. Local school staff, using existing information and data available at each school, will determine which students match this priority. A random lottery selection process will be used for this group if requests exceed spaces at the first-choice school. All other students will be considered for their first choice on a space-available basis. A random lottery selection process also will be used for this group if requests exceed space availability. Siblings will be given preference to be placed in the same school; however, there is no guarantee that MCPS will be able to accommodate all sibling requests. MCPS will identify additional designated schools if requests exceed spaces available at designated schools.

What if my child is receiving special education services?

Designated schools for special education students who receive more than 15 hours per week of services or who are enrolled in special programs were selected based on a combination of factors. These factors included the availability of an equivalent special education program that matches the student's Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) and transportation time from the home school to the designated school. The designated schools are not identified as in need of improvement, or for corrective action or restructuring. Families with special needs students are encouraged to contact the Division of School-based Special Education Services at 301-517-5070 for additional information.

How do I apply for the Federal Title I School Choice Option for my child?

If you decide to apply, you must complete the enclosed application and return it to your child's home school by June 17, 2005. An alternate deadline is offered only for families who move into the attendance area of an identified Title I school after July 15, 2005; the alternate deadline for families new to the attendance area of the neighborhood area is July 16, 2005.

How will I be informed that my child's application is

approved?

A letter will be mailed to your home by June 24, 2005, if you apply by June 17, 2005. Families new to the school who apply by July 16, 2005 will be notified within two weeks, and the letter will include the name of the designated school and directions for completing the enrollment process at the designated school.

If my application is approved, how do I enroll my child in the designated school?

Families must go to the designated school to enroll their child and to provide the information necessary to arrange transportation. Families are strongly encouraged to enroll their child at the designated school no later than July 5, 2005, in order to ensure that transportation is in place prior to the start of the school year.

How are decisions appealed?

You may appeal a School Choice Option decision by writing to the Chief Operating Officer, 850 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, Maryland 20850. The chief operating officer, serving as the superintendent's designee, must receive the appeal no later than 15 days following the date of the denial. The appeal should state the reason(s) for asking for a review of the decision. Additional information that you wish to have considered should be included. If the superintendent or his designee denies your appeal, you may appeal to the Board of Education by writing to the Board President, 850 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, Maryland 20850, within 30 days of the date of the superintendent's denial letter, but as soon as possible.

How can I learn more about the Federal Title I School Choice Option?

To learn more about the Federal Title I School Choice Option, families can attend the scheduled meeting at their home school, and/or contact their home school principal or the Division of Academic Support, Federal and State Programs Office at 301-230-0660.

This document is available in an alternate format, upon request, under the Americans with Disabilities Act, by contacting the Department of Communications, 850 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, Maryland 20850, 301-279-3391 or 1-800-735-2258 (Maryland Relay).

Individuals who need sign language interpretation or cued speech transliteration in communicating with the Montgomery County Public Schools may contact Interpreting Services in Programs for Deaf and Hard of Hearing at 301-517-5539 or 5582 (Voice/TTY).

The Montgomery County Public Schools prohibits illegal discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, marital status, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, physical characteristics, or disability. Inquiries or complaints regarding discrimination should be directed to the Office of Human Resources, 7361 Calhoun Place, Suite 401, Rockville, MD 20855, at 301-279-3361 (for employment) and the Office of School Performance, 850 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, MD 20850, at 301-279-8715 (for educational programs and activities). Inquiries or complaints regarding Title IX issues such as gender equity and sexual harassment should be directed to the Title IX coordinator, Office of Strategic Technologies and Accountability, 850 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, MD 20850, at 301-279-3581.



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