

SCHOOL CHOICE

School Choice opportunities are intended to draw a diverse group of students from around Gaston County Schools to concentrate on a given theme or emphasis, such as school choice programs, balanced calendar schools and high school academies. K-12 School Choice programs are only available to residents of Gaston County.

1. Admission decisions for School Choice may take into account the following:
 - a. maintaining a socio-economic and geographic balance that is reasonably reflective of the school system as a whole;
 - b. efficient use of school facilities;
 - c. Academic, behavior and attendance requirements;
2. The superintendent or designee shall schedule an application period for School Choice prior to the beginning of each school year. Specific windows of time are established each year for the acceptance of School Choice applications. Only complete applications received during the application process will be considered. Applications for siblings must be submitted at the same time.

“Sibling” is defined as:

 - biological brothers/sisters who are living in the same home with a parent (including adoptive parent) or legal guardian at the permanent domicile;
 - step brothers/sisters by marriage who are living in the same home with a parent (including adoptive parent) or legal guardian at the permanent domicile.
3. A separate application must be submitted for each child.
4. Each application shall first be reviewed to ensure that the student satisfies the program admission criteria. Upon acceptance, the parent(s) and student must each agree in writing to fulfill all requirements as set forth in the *Expectations Agreement* for that program. If siblings seek enrollment in the same program, each must also meet the admissions criteria and sign the *Expectations Agreement*.
5. In each grade, if fewer students apply for admission than the space available in such grade, all qualified applicants shall be admitted. If several spaces remain open, the Program Choice application period may be extended for that program to provide additional opportunities for students to enter the program.

6. In each grade, if more students apply for admission than the number of spaces available, admission shall proceed according to the following order:

a. students in the final grade currently enrolled in a program (e.g., 5th grade or 8th grade) will automatically be seated to the corresponding pathway if they continue to meet the program requirements. If there is not sufficient space, the students shall be selected by randomized lottery. This School Choice policy does not apply to Highland School of Technology or Gaston Early College.

b. Sibling Priority for Entrance Year (Kindergarten, Sixth Grade, & Ninth Grade): The District has a priority of supporting families remaining together within the same school facility. Entrance Year applicants with siblings enrolled in the School Choice Program of application during the open enrollment period and who will be returning to that site for the upcoming school year will be given priority admission for up to fifteen percent (15%), not to exceed twenty percent (20%), of the available entrance year seats within the school to be filled with siblings. Families must complete the sibling survey form provided in the application to the school of enrollment prior to the open enrollment period. In addition, the application for the incoming kindergartner must be made during the open enrollment period. This School Choice policy does not apply to Highland School of Technology or Gaston Early College.

Applicants who are part of a multiple birth (twins, triplets, quadruplets, etc.) will be admitted when one of them is selected for admission to the same School Choice Program through the sibling lottery selection process. However, each of the multiple birth siblings must meet the eligibility requirements for the selected School Choice Program and not place the grade level over capacity.

c. all remaining qualified applicants shall be selected by randomized lottery; and students who are not admitted to a school choice program during the application period shall be placed on a waiting list in the order determined by the randomized lottery. Students shall be admitted from the waiting list as spaces become available until the waiting list has been exhausted.

Sibling policy only applies to children within the same facility. Open seats will be offered by alternating between the sibling waiting list and the regular waiting list. Waiting lists will expire at the end of the terminal year. Terminal years are defined as the completion of fifth grade, eighth grade, and twelfth grade.

7. All student applicants will be notified in writing as to their application qualification standing, their acceptance into the program, or their placement on the waiting list.

8. When the parent(s) and student are notified they have received a seat in the program, parent(s) and student must acknowledge acceptance in writing within 14 calendar days to guarantee his/her placement. If a written acceptance is not received and school cannot

determine the student's intent to enter the program; placement shall be offered to the next student on the school choice program waiting list, if applicable.

Adopted: 02/19/2018