APS Policy Review Team
2110 Washington Blvd
Arlington, VA 22204

TO: Arlington School Board
FROM: Policy Review Team
THROUGH: Dr. Francisco Durán, Superintendent
DATE: December 5, 2025
RE: Proposed revisions to Policy J-5.3.31 Options and Transfers

This policy is up for its regular 5-year review and is scheduled for Board Information on December 18.

Staff are proposing the following changes to J-5.3.31 Options and Transfers.

- Remove unnecessary language.
- Clarify that students may only apply to transfer to neighborhood schools that are accepting transfers.
- Update language in sections on option schools/programs and neighborhood transfers for clarity.
- Reorder sentences in various parts of the policy.
- Minor technical changes.

This policy has been reviewed by the Policy Review Team and the Policy Subcommittee and has been posted for public comment.

Arlington Public Schools provides a range of learning opportunities to respond to the interests and needs of all students through a system of neighborhood and option schools and programs.

Every student is assigned to a neighborhood school on the basis of the home address which is used to enroll the student in school.

Students may apply to transfer to another neighborhood school accepting transfers or apply for admission to option schools or programs. Applications and deadlines are available online or at the Welcome Center.

These option schools and programs are provided to the extent possible given financial constraints and capacity limits. Information about preschool, neighborhood and option schools/programs, along with application processes, periods, and deadlines are widely communicated and published each year in a timely manner.

Neighborhood Schools

Neighborhood schools have attendance areas established by the School Board. Every student is guaranteed admission to the elementary, middle, and high school serving the attendance area in which the student resides.

Option Schools/Programs

Arlington Public Schools:

1. provides access to option schools/programs for all students including students with disabilities and English learners;
2. provides a rational and transparent process for admission to option schools/programs; and
3. adjusts seat allocations at the option schools/programs as needed.

Transfer to a Neighborhood School

In accordance with the Annual Enrollment Management Plan, if space is available at a neighborhood school, Arlington Public Schools may provide an opportunity for neighborhood transfers through the lottery application process. These opportunities are evaluated on an annual basis.

Applications

Arlington Public Schools publicizes the due date and the procedures for applying to an option school/program or a neighborhood school that is accepting transfers. Parents/guardians submit applications to Arlington Public Schools. Arlington Public Schools will conduct a double-blind lottery to determine admission for the available seats. If the number of applicants exceeds the available seats, Arlington Public Schools will maintain a waitlist.

Keeping Families Together

Arlington Public Schools will keep elementary school siblings in the same school to the extent possible given eligibility requirements, financial constraints and capacity limits. Siblings who will be concurrently enrolled at the same elementary school in the same school year will receive priority in admission. Twins/multiples, although admitted as two, will be treated as one in all applications for option schools/programs.

Program Continuity
Once a student is admitted to an option school/program or accepts a transfer to a neighborhood school that is accepting transfers, enrollment will be continuous through the grade levels of that school/program, unless the school is involved in a boundary change. In such cases, the Board may make a different decision as part of the boundary change adoption.

Transportation
Transportation is provided according to School Board Policy E-5.1 Student Transportation Services. Parents/guardians are responsible for transportation when the student accepts a transfer to another neighborhood school that is accepting transfers.

Extenuating Circumstances
Families with extenuating circumstances may request a school placement at a school other than their neighborhood school. Requests for an administrative placement shall be submitted and evaluated according to Policy J-5.3.32 Administrative Placements.

Reporting to the School Board
Each winter, the Superintendent will update the School Board on enrollment levels at each school/program and any related transportation issues and will make recommendations to achieve the goals stated in this policy.

Definitions
Siblings-Children who have at least one parent/guardian in common, and the parent/guardian has full or shared custody.

Twins/Multiples- Siblings who are concurrently enrolled in the same grade.

References
School Board Policy I-1.34 Early Childhood Preschool Programs
School Board Policy J-5.3.32 Administrative Placements

Policy Adoption and Revision History
Adopted June 1, 2017
Renumbered (former Policy 25-2.2) effective July 1, 2018
Revised June 25, 2020, Effective June 25, 2020
Amended February 16, 2023. Effective February 16, 2023

~~Arlington Public Schools seek to distribute students evenly among our schools and provide stability in individual school enrollments while meeting the educational needs of Arlington's diverse student population.~~ Arlington Public Schools provides a range of learning opportunities to respond to the interests and needs of all students through a system of neighborhood and option schools ~~as well as countywide~~and programs.

Every student is assigned to a neighborhood school on the basis of the home address which is used to enroll the student~~'s place of residence~~in school.

Students may apply to transfer to another neighborhood school accepting transfers or apply for admission to ~~countywide programs or~~ option schools or programs. Applications and deadlines ~~and transfer forms~~ are available online or at the Welcome Center.

~~Arlington Public Schools carries out a sustained, vigorous, inclusive, and culturally appropriate program to communicate clearly the attributes of all its schools and programs, including preschool, to assist families and students in making informed decisions. Arlington Public Schools provides a range of learning opportunities to respond to the interests and needs of all students through:~~

~~1. A blend of neighborhood and option schools/programs.~~
~~2. Equitable access for all students.~~

~~Preschool goals are defined in School Board Policy I-1.34 Early Childhood Preschool Programs.~~

~~This blend is~~These option schools and programs are provided to the extent possible given financial constraints and capacity limits. Information about preschool, neighborhood and option schools/programs, along with application processes, periods, and deadlines are widely communicated and published each year in a timely manner.

Neighborhood Schools

Neighborhood schools have attendance areas established by the School Board. Every student is guaranteed admission to the elementary, middle, and high school serving the attendance area in which the student resides.

Option Schools/Programs

~~Option schools/programs provide specialized instructional programs.~~ Arlington Public Schools:

1. provides ~~equitable~~ access to option schools/programs for all students including students with disabilities and English learners; ~~and~~
2. provides a rational and transparent process for admission to option schools/programs~~, which is differentiated to support the integrity of the instructional models~~; and

~~3. offers preschool at each of the elementary option schools/programs; and~~

~~4.~~3. adjusts ~~enrollment levels~~seat allocations at the option schools/programs as needed.

Transfer ~~t~~To ~~a~~A Neighborhood School ~~That Is Accepting Transfers~~

In accordance with the Annual Enrollment Management Plan, if space is available at a ~~N~~neighborhood school~~s~~, Arlington Public Schools may provide an opportunity for ~~accept~~neighborhood transfers ~~to the extent possible given financial constraints and capacity limits~~through the lottery application process. These opportunities are evaluated on an annual basis.

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Applications

Arlington Public Schools publicizes the due date and the procedures for applying to an option school/program or a neighborhood school that is accepting transfers. Parents/guardians submit applications to Arlington Public Schools. Arlington Public Schools will conduct a double-blind lottery to determine admission for the available seats. If the number of applicants exceeds the available seats, Arlington Public Schools will~~:~~

- ~~Conduct a random double-blind lottery to determine admission for the available seats.~~
- ~~M~~ maintain a waitlist.

Keeping Families Together

Arlington Public Schools will keep elementary school siblings ~~together~~ in the same school to the extent possible given eligibility requirements, financial constraints and capacity limits. Siblings who will be concurrently enrolled at the same elementary school in the same school year will receive priority in admission.

- ~~Siblings are children who have at least one parent/guardian in common, and the parent/guardian has full or shared custody. Twins/multiples are siblings who are concurrently enrolled in the same grade.~~
- Twins/multiples, although admitted as two, will be treated as one in all applications for option schools/programs.
- ~~Siblings who will be concurrently enrolled at the same elementary school will receive priority in admission.~~

Program Continuity

Once a student is admitted to an option school/program or accepts a transfer to a neighborhood school that is accepting transfers, enrollment will be continuous through the grade levels of that school/program, unless the school is involved in a boundary change. In such cases, the Board may make a different decision as part of the boundary change adoption.

Transportation

Transportation is provided according to ~~Arlington Public Schools Transportation Policy (~~School Board Policy E-5.1 Student Transportation Services~~)~~. Parents/guardians are responsible for transportation when the student accepts a transfer to another neighborhood school that is accepting transfers~~, unless otherwise directed by the School Board as part of another decision~~.

Extenuating Circumstances

Families with extenuating circumstances may request a school placement at a school other than their neighborhood school. Requests for an administrative placement shall be submitted and evaluated according to Policy J-5.3.32 Administrative Placements.

Reporting to the School Board

Each ~~fall~~winter, the Superintendent will update the School Board on enrollment levels at each school/program and any related transportation issues and will make recommendations to achieve the goals stated in this policy. ~~As a result of the annual update, the School Board may need to make adjustments to the policy and Arlington Public Schools may need to make adjustments to the~~

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~~implementation procedures.~~

Definitions

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Twins/Multiples- Siblings who are concurrently enrolled in the same grade.

References

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