

July 13, 2017

Dear Members of the _____ Board:

Recently, the Orange County Board of Education has received an increased number of interdistrict attendance appeals. The purpose of this letter is to provide local board members and district administrators with guidance as to the philosophy of the Orange County Board of Education in reviewing interdistrict attendance appeals.

Generally, the Orange County Board of Education will consider a number of issues in the best interests of the child when hearing an interdistrict appeal, including, but not limited to, the following:

1. The transportation needs of the family;
2. The child care needs of the family;
3. Other siblings in the family. For example, when the student has a sibling or other member of the household attending school in the receiving district, to avoid splitting the family or household's attendance;
4. The continuity of the child's current educational program (e.g., completion of elementary school, middle school or high school). For example, to allow the student to complete a school year when his or her parents or guardians have moved out of the district during the year;

5. Whether the specialized academic classes, programs or other educational opportunities offered by the school district of residence are demonstrably equivalent (e.g. during class hours and not after school, similar course offerings, similar number of courses) to the specialized academic classes, programs, or other educational opportunities offered by the school district requested (e.g. Magnet programs, technology, or STEM or STEAM programs, music or art programs);
6. The parent's place of employment;
7. Other relevant issues that impact the child's attendance at school.

The Orange County Board of Education, after hearing a number of appeals, has the following suggestions to facilitate the interdistrict transfer process at both the district and County Board of Education level:

1. Allow electronically submitted interdistrict attendance applications and make paper forms available in a number of languages so that parents do not have to take time off from work to request an interdistrict transfer;
2. Allow sufficient time to file interdistrict attendance requests;

3. Provide sufficient notice of change of policies and post current policies on interdistrict attendance requests on the district's website;
4. If the district denies the interdistrict attendance request, the notice of the appeal to the Orange County Department of Education should have the contact information at the Orange County Department of Education in the letter;
5. Consider granting appeals on a one-time basis and not requiring the parents or guardians to apply on an annual basis so that the student may continue to attend the school in which he or she is enrolled;
6. If the school district decides to grant appeals on an annual basis, the district should notify parents in writing that the district's current policy may be subject to change.

The Orange County Board of Education would also recommend that school districts have school finder software on their district Website so that parents can determine the school of attendance based on their address when they move into the district. We are finding that many times real estate industry sources are inaccurate when it comes to the school of attendance. Districts may also want to meet with realtors and apartment managers, and urge them to convey accurate information regarding school attendance.

Thank you for consideration of our concerns. We hope these suggestions will make the interdistrict attendance process more transparent and more efficient for both districts and parents.

John W. Bedell, Ph.D., President

David L. Boyd, Vice President

Rebecca "Beckie" Gomez

Linda Lindholm

Ken L. Williams, Jr., D.O.

cc: District Superintendent