1. District Application Process:

Planning for school choice includes establishing policies to ensure fair application procedures and equitable selection criteria. Student selection policies must be nondiscriminatory, clearly communicated, legally sound, and uniformly applied. This section of the plan should include an overview of the entire process, including but not limited to timelines and dates of enrollment and application periods. The School District should provide locations where parents can access and return applications. The description should also include an explanation regarding how parents are informed by the School District that their application/declarations have been received and what subsequent steps must be taken by the parent or School District.

Section 1002.31(5)(a), Florida Statutes

Describe:

- Application process, including:
  - locations where applications can be obtained and returned
  - application timelines
  - priorities for admissions
  - process for assigning students
  - District contact information for parental response
- How and when parents will be notified of student assignments
- How the application process will accommodate new students entering or transferring schools during the school year
- How admission will be accomplished fairly so as not to favor those families who are best informed.

- **Out-of-Zone/School Choice application is available online.** Parents/Guardians have the option of filling out the online application from home or the public library. In addition, computer access is provided for parents/guardians at all District schools and the administrative building.
- **Out-of-Zone priority application time frame is from December 15th through January 15th for the upcoming school year.** School Choice priority application time frame is the month of January for the upcoming school year.
- **Out-of-Zone applications, which require specified reasons under board policy, are processed on a first come first serve basis.** School Choice applications are processed on a lottery basis, if needed.
- **Student assignments are awarded after the anticipated enrollments, school capacities, and class sizes are calculated.**
- **The District contact information is posted on the District website as well as available at all school sites and departments.**
- **Reminders are sent home with students and notification is advertised through the local newspaper, the news, the education channel and other media services.**
- **Parents/Guardians are notified via electronic email throughout the summer.**
- **Students entering Collier County Public Schools for the first time, have the one time option of choosing a school outside their zoned school; approval is based on space available at the school and at the specific grade level.** Transfer of school once the school year has begun is not allowed unless unusual circumstances exist.
2. Parental Declaration Process:

A carefully developed process for allowing parents to declare school preferences is a critical part of a successful school choice program and provides parents with an equitable means of obtaining their choice of schools. Districts must ensure that the process fulfills all legislative requirements. Each District’s plan should include a summary of the process that outlines how a parent or guardian informs the school District of his or her intent to participate in the choice program. The process must include the means by which parents have an opportunity to submit a formal application or request to the school District regarding their choice.

Section 1002.31(5)(b), Florida Statutes

Describe:
- How choices are publicized
- Contents of application package
- School District’s policy relating to selection of schools
- Timelines for submitting preferences
- Description of options

- During the month of October, prior to the opening of the application timeline for Out-of-Zone/School Choice, written reminders are sent home with students. In addition, notification is advertised through the local newspaper, the news, the education channel and other media services.
- An online application is available requiring basic information such as student name, address, zoned school, school requesting and reason (if applicable).
- Information on explanation of process, requirements, timelines, board policies and description of options is available online at http://www.collierschools.com/ParentalChoice.

3. Sibling Placement:

Parents with more than one child enrolled in a school usually prefer to have their other children attend the same school if it is the same educational level (elementary, middle or secondary). To meet legislative requirements, the District’s choice plan must provide a process that encourages the placement of any sibling of a student already enrolled in a school to receive priority for admission to the same school. This section should describe the provision(s) for the placement of siblings as a priority in aligning parental preferences and choices. This may be used in conjunction with other quality indicators (i.e., lottery procedure).

Section 1002.31(5)(c), Florida Statutes

Describe:
- How priority will be given to siblings
- How parents can coordinate choices

- Any incoming sibling of a student already enrolled in existing choice options is given priority in order to avoid splitting families with two or more children concurrently in the same level.
- Parents/Guardians can select up to three choices of schools. Assignment of seats is based on space availability.
4. Lottery Procedure to Determine Student Assignment:

If the number of applicants for a school exceeds the number of available seats, student selection must be made in a fair and equitable manner. Once preferences are honored, such as the placement of siblings or exceptional students, a random selection process is recommended for filling the remaining openings. If technology is available, a computerized lottery procedure equalizes student assignment in addition to making the registration process more efficient. The plan should explain how the School District maintains a process by which parents who did not receive any of their preferences may participate in a lottery system. This system would assign students through an arbitrary and non-biased manner, offering all parents an equitable opportunity for choice.

Section 1002.31(5)(d), Florida Statutes

Describe:
- The District’s lottery procedure
- How student assignment will be organized for students in existing choice programs

- **When the number of applicants for School Choice exceeds the number of available spaces, a lottery is conducted. All students who applied within the priority application time frame will be placed in the lottery and names are selected randomly until all spaces have been filled. Siblings are kept together to avoid splitting families.**

- **Students who are in existing Choice options are usually approved as long as the application is resubmitted and space still exists at the school. Students who are in existing Choice programs are automatically counted in the schools’ projection.**

5. Appeals Process for Hardship Cases:

Plans must include an appeals process for parents and guardians of students who are not placed in the school or program of their choice or whose assignment presents a severe hardship. A severe hardship must be clearly defined in the choice plan and the process for appeal outlined. The plan should describe the process that allows for parents who work in certain areas of the School District to be provided choice outside their home-zoned school so their children could attend schools closer to their job sites. Other instances may include, but not be limited to, issues with day care and special needs determined to be “hardship cases” by the School District. The process may also include the method by which an official appeal could be made from the parent to the School District describing the case, how parents are informed that such a process exists, how appropriate follow-up would be sent to the parent, the School District decision process through a hardship appeal committee or superintendent, and how parents are informed of the decision. Timelines should also be provided.

Section 1002.31(5)(e), Florida Statutes

Describe:
- Procedures, measures, and steps for appeals process
- Possible exceptional cases
- Criteria for granting exceptions

- **When an Out-of-Zone request is not approved due to space at a school, parents/guardians have the option to appeal that denial as long as additional information is provided to support a hardship. This process is provided in the denial letter for their original request. The appeal process and notification to parents/guardians is done via US Mail throughout the summer.**
Possible exceptional cases could include: single parents; work location and schedule; after school care and/or medical recommendations.
Criteria for exceptions could include the hardship reasons, as long as the request is based on board policy. Also, space at the grade and school requested is a determining factor.

6. Procedure to Maintain Socioeconomic, Demographic, and Racial Balance:
Racial balance within schools should be considered in the development of a public school choice plan. Deliberately designed goals and checkpoints for assessing goal achievement need to be embedded in the plan. The plan should include a brief statement from the school District acknowledging the necessity of maintaining socioeconomic, demographic, and racial balance within public schools. This may be addressed in conjunction with other quality indicators (i.e., lottery procedure).

Section 1002.31(5)(f), Florida Statutes
Describe:
• How the District plans, will ensure racial/ethnic balances and maintain equity among all schools
• How the plan will affect existing desegregation requirements. Consider whether they will have to be revised, if necessary
• Any enrollment target for the race/ethnicity of students for each school

N/A – Our District is not currently under a federal desegregation order.

7. Availability of Transportation:
Safe, efficient, and fair transportation is important to a successful school choice plan. Choice plans that do not adequately address transportation needs may exclude students whose parents cannot transport them across town or to other school zones within the District. Financial support for transportation is a critical factor in a choice program. The school District plan should explain the process for informing parents of the status of transportation to their schools of choice. If parents are required to provide transportation for their child(ren) to the new school, the school District must have included that information in the choice plan. School Districts may also permit parents to transport their student(s) to existing bus stops, provided there is ample seating. In some cases, school Districts may be able to accommodate children or coordinate transportation schedules with public transportation so that students who reside in further areas of the District may still receive District-funded transportation to choice schools.

Section 1002.31(5)(g), Florida Statutes
Describe:
• How the District will ensure that students have access to transportation to enable them to attend the school of their choice
• The cost of transportation provided or how the cost of transportation will be reimbursed to parents, if applicable
• How transportation offerings are made equitable

Parents exercising choice options under Out-of-Zone or School Choice must provide transportation to and from the chosen school.
8. Process for Promoting Strong Parental Involvement, Including the Designation of a Parent Liaison:

Districts must establish a process for involving parents and the community in developing the choice plan. Advisory boards formed early in the planning process and given access to key information can be essential to the success of choice plans. Parents and the community provide valuable feedback and can act as a sounding board for new ideas and strategies. The plan should describe the process by which parents are provided opportunities to actively participate in events and programs at their child’s school. This may include various fairs, meetings, PTO/PTA events, an open house, and parent night activities to welcome parents and educate them on the availability of choice throughout the District. There must be evidence of a strong effort toward promoting parental involvement in all areas and levels of choice to help increase student achievement. Information should be readily available to parents on how to better assist their child in becoming successful in their new environment.

A parent liaison or parent representative may serve as a contact person related to controlled open enrollment and school choice programs, and as an additional resource in the community. Parents can seek assistance from the liaison in making informed decisions regarding choice, while the schools and School Districts can utilize the liaison to disseminate information to parents to increase awareness of choice.

Section 1002.31(5)(h), Florida Statutes

Describe:
- How parents and the community can be involved in the planning process
- Role of each school’s advisory council
- Process that is used for designating parent liaisons (i.e., self-nominations, majority vote, appointments, etc…)
- Role of each parent liaison

- **Reminder flyers are sent to schools for postings, distributions and PTO/PTA meetings. The reminder flyer includes the priority application time frame, the contact information, an online link for further information and locations of computers that can be used to access information.**

9. Strategy for Establishing an Information Clearinghouse:

One of the greatest challenges presented by choice is that of communicating information to all parents. If parents are to make informed choices, they must have access to current and easily understandable information regarding particular schools. Districts may find it necessary to inform residents annually about the availability of open enrollment options. One method is to develop a District communication/marketing plan that highlights each school’s programs and encourages parents to visit the school. Communication must reflect the letter and the spirit of the law. While the distribution of information is critical, it can potentially become a significant cost. Also, equity questions may arise if poorer less literate or non-English-speaking families do not receive sufficient and appropriate information. Information centers can help parents obtain materials, assistance, and forms required to register new students and apply for new school assignments. An extensive community outreach program by the District and each school is essential. The plan should describe the locations where publications, brochures, and other information related to controlled open enrollment are available to parents. This may include a parent resource center for parents to visit to receive information related to open enrollment and other choice programs, including but not limited to No Child Left Behind and magnet programs.
Section 1002.31(5)(i), Florida Statutes

Describe:
- Locations of all clearinghouses and the role of clearinghouses
- Roles of parent volunteers
- How the District will make parents aware of the availability of translators
- Qualifications of translators
- Services offered by the clearinghouses
- How the services offered and the availability of choices will be publicized

- Information is provided to parents via the District website and parent guide.
- Information is provided in different languages on the website. The Choice & Out-of-Zone Manager and staff are bilingual and are able to provide translation services to the public.
- Services are offered through the local newspaper, education channel, website, school newsletters.
- Reapplication reminder notices are sent to all current students exercising their Choice option.