

Dept. of Public Instruction: Application period begins Feb. 5 for public school choice program

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MADISON — Online applications for public school open enrollment for the 2018-19 school year, Wisconsin's public school choice program, will be available on the Department of Public Instruction website beginning Feb. 5 through April 30.

Traditionally, children in Wisconsin are assigned to public school districts based on the location of their parents' home. Open enrollment is a tuition-free opportunity for parents to apply for their children to attend a public school in a school district other than the one in which they live.

The state's public school open enrollment program has been in operation since the 1998-99 school year and is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. In the first year of open enrollment, 2,464 students transferred from their home district to a nonresident public school district. Last year, 58,347 students transferred through open enrollment. Program statistics for the 2017-18 school year will be available in fall of 2018.

Under public school open enrollment, parents may apply during the three-month application period to the school district they wish their children to attend using the online application website. Application deadlines are firm. Early and late applications are not accepted. Districts will notify parents by June 8 whether their open enrollment applications have been approved or denied. Although an alternate

application procedure allows parents to apply for open enrollment outside of the three-month application period, there are more restrictions associated with the alternate procedure.

Transportation to and from a nonresident school, in most circumstances, is the responsibility of the parent. However, some school districts may provide partial transportation. Parents with questions should call the nonresident school district office to find out if any transportation will be provided. Reimbursement of a portion of transportation costs is available for families whose children are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals based on federal income guidelines.

The open enrollment program is funded by state general equalization aid transfers between sending and receiving school districts, with the transfer amount calculated on statutory provisions. For the 2017-18 school year, the transfer amount is \$7,055 per student. The transfer amount for students with disabilities is \$12,207. Resident districts cannot deny any student's open enrollment application for cost reasons.

To assist parents in submitting open enrollment applications, a directory of public school districts is available on the DPI website. To find additional information about open enrollment, visit the department's Public School Open Enrollment website. More information also is available from local school districts or from an open enrollment consultant at DPI, (888) 245-2732 (toll-free), or openenrollment@dpi.wi.gov.