

Arlington Public Schools – 869 Massachusetts Avenue – Arlington, MA 02476  
Buffer Zone – Request for Preferred Schools

*Buffer Zone: Parents/Guardians of students residing in a buffer zone must request one of the designated elementary schools in the zone. A buffer zone is a defined area for which individual addresses may be assigned to one of two elementary schools. Students in these zones do not have a designated home school until such time as they are assigned to a school. Please complete the form below and return to:*

Arlington Public Schools, Central Registration Office, 869 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington, MA 02476.

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Registration Grade Level (Grade when entering district): \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: M F

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street City State Zip

Name of Parent (s) or Legal Guardian (s): \_\_\_\_\_

Home Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_ Cell #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle the buffer zone assigned to your address.

Bishop/Brackett	Brackett/Dallin	Peirce/Stratton
Bishop/Stratton	Dallin/Peirce	
Bishop/Thompson	Hardy/Thompson	

Name of Preferred School: \_\_\_\_\_

*Families may include details supporting their preference, such as friends attending a school, neighborhood considerations (please attach separately), or length of residency (documentation required).*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian Date

**Wait List Option\***

I would like to be placed on the wait list for my preferred school choice: Yes No

Please provide the best and most immediate contact information (phone number or email): \_\_\_\_\_

***\*If there is an opening between April and the start of school, the Central Office will notify the family at their indicated contact method and ask if they wish to be granted enrollment at their wait list school.***

*Please note that wait list assignments will be determined by completion/submission date of the APS Registration Packet at the Central Registration office at Arlington High School.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
For Office Use Only

Name of Approved School: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent of Schools Date

## ASSIGNMENT OF STUDENTS TO SCHOOLS/BUFFER ZONES/OPEN ENROLLMENT

The establishment or change of school attendance areas may be required when an overcrowded condition or underutilization exists in an existing school, or when there is development of new residential areas, or when there is the opening of a new school.

The Committee will confer with the community prior to setting new attendance lines, taking active steps to ensure that all stakeholders and residents are informed and notified via outlets where Arlington residents receive information about town related matters. Such notification to take place at least 60 days prior to setting new attendance lines.

The Committee's primary basis for judgment must be equity of educational opportunity for all students rather than the personal desires of any one group.

The Superintendent is authorized to make exceptions to attendance lines and/or school assignments for individual children in the best interests of the student and/or the school. The Superintendent may exercise this authority for any of the following purposes:

- Manage disparities in class sizes between schools and/or prevent or alleviate a condition of classroom overcrowding.
- Preserve family integrity, where two or more children from a single family are of elementary school age and at risk of separation between schools.
- Assist families facing temporary dislocations or changes in their living situation.
- Facilitate school construction or renovation projects.
- Provide specialized services addressing specific student needs.
- Address any other situation which the Superintendent deems to be an extenuating circumstance.

The Arlington School Committee establishes two other ways in which exceptions in school assignments may be made: Buffer Zones and Open Enrollment

### **Buffer Zones**

The School Committee establishes certain "Buffer zones", addresses on or near certain elementary school district boundaries, as areas from which new students in that elementary school district may be assigned to either one of the immediate elementary school districts. Once a student is assigned a school, that will be his or her school until graduation unless he or she applies for, and is granted, open enrollment or if the child requires a programmatic change or school change as necessitated by the Superintendent or for other unforeseen circumstances. Subsequent assignments of siblings in a given family will be made to the same school.

Use of the buffer zones is only done when there is a material enrollment problem between the two schools. With respect to the assignment of new families residing in Buffer zones, class size equity is the primary driving factor of using the buffer zones. Any use of the buffer zones will strive for neighborhood continuity and cohesion. It should be accomplished with the least amount of disruption to families and the local community.

To determine a material enrollment problem, the Superintendent will calculate the potential class

sizes at the schools using the 2011 district boundaries. When the superintendent determines there is a material enrollment issue, it should be addressed through voluntary measures first. These include use of family preferences within the buffers, outreach to families in the district and open enrollment. Family preferences will be granted where they help address a material enrollment problem.

Finally, if voluntary measures are not sufficient to address class equity issues, the Superintendent will make assignments. Any assignment across the 2011 district lines will be made using the following criteria:

- The distribution of students within the buffers to maximize cohesion
- Family and neighborhood equity

For further specificity regarding timeline and priorities please refer to the attached Guidelines JC-E.

The following areas, described in the attached map, are designated as Buffer zones, subject to annual review by the Superintendent of Schools and the School Committee.

The Superintendent of Schools shall have the sole responsibility of the assignment of new families residing in Buffer zones, in accordance with School Committee policy.

### **Open Enrollment**

Open enrollment is defined as a condition whereby a resident of the Town whose child resides in one elementary school district may request admission to a school in another elementary school district. If they do not receive authorization to do so, the family may re-request each year thereafter. Once a child is open enrolled in an elementary school, by default they are in that school for the rest of the elementary years without having to reapply unless there is a redistricting. Redistricting makes all open enrollments null and void and interested parents would have to reapply.

While students have a right to attend the elementary school in the elementary school district where they reside, the Arlington School Committee endorses a policy of open enrollment, subject to certain provisions set forth below which are designed to support the class size policy of the Arlington Public Schools, to ensure even utilization of individual building resources and staff throughout the system, and to protect the educational well-being of the students.

Families residing in buffer zones will have priority to their first choice school over **other** open enrollment applicants.

The Superintendent will use the following criteria for deciding upon granting of open enrollment requests:

- Manage disparities in class sizes between schools and/or prevent or alleviate a condition of classroom overcrowding.
- Preserve family integrity, where two or more children from a single family are of elementary school age and at risk of separation between schools.
- Assist families facing temporary dislocations or changes in their living situation.
- Facilitate school construction or renovation projects.

- Provide specialized services addressing specific student needs.
- Address any other situation which the Superintendent deems to be an extenuating circumstance.

Transportation to and from school is up to the family of the open enrolled student. The superintendent has sole authority of granting open enrollment requests.

The Superintendent of Schools shall have the sole responsibility of the assignment of students who request open enrollment, in accordance with School Committee policy.

### **Reporting**

Each year, by the second meeting in October, the Superintendent will report to the School Committee on the implementation of this policy and its effectiveness. A key focus will be on class size equity and how the policy is impacting and working towards improving it.

The report will include but not be limited to a description of buffer use, open enrollment and their effectiveness. It should answer questions like:

- “Are the desired results being achieved, and if so, is this attributable to the buffer zone and open enrollment policy or other factors?”
- “Is class equity improving?”
- “Are imbalances smaller?”
- “What buffers are being activated, by how much and what’s the flow between districts?”

The data will include but not be limited to:

- Numbers on class size by school, grade and class including appropriate history for comparison
- Numbers by specific buffer, using the full list of 6E buffer designations, showing the number of students in each sub-buffer and those assigned to other districts
- The percent of family preferences granted and percent of assignments made
- The average class size by school and grade.

The report will be made available to the public on the School Committee website. The data will respect the confidentiality of individuals and families.

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 71:37C; 71:37D; 71:37I; 71:37J

Board of Education Regulations Pertaining to Section 8 of Chapter 636 of the Acts of 1974, Regarding Magnet School Facilities and Magnet Educational Programs, adopted 2/25/75

Board of Education Regulations Pursuant to Chapter 636 of the Acts of 1974, adopted 9/10/74

Board of Education Regulations Pertaining to the Preparation of Racial Balance Plans which Involve Redistricting, adopted 4/24/73

CROSS REF.: FA/FB/FBB Facilities Planning Enrollment Projections

EEA Student Transportation Services

EEAA Safe Travel Policy Walkers and Riders

Date: Revised and Approved November 15, 2012

## **BUFFER ZONE/OPEN ENROLLMENT GUIDELINES**

School assignments are made based on a student's home address. Some street addresses may fall within a Buffer Zone, which is a zone between two elementary schools used to help evenly distribute students to schools.

### **Buffer Zone Usage:**

Buffer Zone school assignments are made by the Superintendent based on enrollments at the partner schools in the Buffer Zone. When a student whose home address is in a Buffer Zone enrolls in the Arlington Public Schools, the Superintendent will assign the student to a school. Once a student is assigned to a school, all siblings will attend the same school.

### **Buffer Zone FAQs:**

#### 1. How do families get to provide input-can they state a preference?

Families may state a preference at the time of enrollment. Their preference can be noted on the enrollment form. Families may include details supporting their preference, such as friends attending a school, neighborhood considerations, or length of residency(documentation required).

#### 2. Is there a "default" school in a Buffer Zone?

No, there is no default school. When a student living in a Buffer zone enrolls, their school assignment is noted as "Buffer Zone" until they are assigned to a school by the Superintendent.

#### 3. What class size differential causes a decision one way or another?

There is no minimum class size differential for the Superintendent to make a determination based on enrollment. It is at the Superintendent's discretion.

#### 4. What other guidelines are used?

Of primary importance is educational equity across the district. For other factors please refer to File JC.

#### 6. Will there be a wait list?

Yes. On the form a family may state whether or not they wish to be put on a wait list if they are not granted their first choice. There will be a space to provide the best and most immediate contact method(i.e. cell phone, home phone, business phone, email, or other). If there is an opening between April and the start of school the central office will notify the family at the preferred contact method and ask if they wish to be granted their wait list school. If the family is

not able to respond within a reasonable time the central office will go to the next family on the wait list about the opening. Preference will be given to those who meet the factors listed in File JC.

7. What is the timeline to be followed in assigning families?

*For Kindergarten enrollment:*

In March through early April, Kindergarten enrollment takes place at central registration, and all families submit registration forms.

In April, where material imbalances are projected to occur based on enrollments, the Superintendent will solicit volunteers through outreach to buffers and all schools.

In early May, families living in Buffer zones who enrolled during the Kindergarten registration period receive a letter telling them what school they will attend.

Kindergarten students who enroll after the normal Kindergarten enrollment registration period but before May 23rd will receive their school assignment by June 1st.

After June 1st enrollees are assigned on a rolling admission within 7 business days.

At each stage in the registration process, the waitlist will be reviewed and assignments will be made from the waitlist in accordance with the principles outlined in policy JC.

*For move-in and other non-Kindergarten enrollments:*

The Superintendent will make a determination within five business days of a student registering. This will apply for summer registration as well as mid-school year registrations.

*For Open-Enrollment notification:*

By August 1st or for the next round of requests by the Friday before Labor Day.

8. Can a family be assigned before a child gets to school age or before they move into an Arlington residence?

No. In order to register, a family must be enrolling a school age child who lives (sleeps) in the residence. School registration cannot be made on the basis of a purchase and sale agreement, but only after the closing of the real estate transaction and the move into the residence. The Arlington Public Schools require proof of residence.

9. If needed, will the Bishop bus travel to Buffer Zones to transport additional students to the Bishop Elementary School?

Yes, Buffer Zones have been created with potential Bishop School bus routes in mind.

CROSS REF.: FA/FB/FBB Facilities Planning Enrollment Projections  
EEA Student Transportation Services  
EEAA Safe Travel Policy Walkers and Riders  
JC Assignment of Students to Schools/Buffer Zones/Open Enrollment

Date: Adopted and Approved: November 15, 2012