Additional Detail: School Choice

November 2015
There are five different types of public school choice in Delaware.

- Delaware’s school choice program is the vehicle by which parents can enroll their children in any public school in Delaware, provided the school has capacity and parents follow the school choice application process.
- Families may choose from the following school choice options:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of choice</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Application Process</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Within-district choice</td>
<td>Students apply to attend a school or program within their same district, but different from their feeder pattern school.</td>
<td>Parents and students complete the application form available online. The application is due by the second Wednesday in January of each year.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cross-district choice</td>
<td>Students may apply to attend a school or program in a public school district outside of their district of residence.</td>
<td>Same as in-district choice process.</td>
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<td>Magnet schools</td>
<td>Students from any district may apply for admission to any magnet school in the state. Magnets are public schools that accept students based on demonstration of skills aligned with the school's area(s) of focus (academics, the arts, etc.).</td>
<td>Each magnet school's application process is different. Specific processes are outlined on the individual schools’ websites.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocational technical (vo-tech) schools</td>
<td>Students may apply to schools in the county in which they reside. Vo-tech schools are public schools governed by independent district boards. Curriculum combines academic instruction, career training, and structured work experiences.</td>
<td>Applications are available from the schools and online. Requirements for each vo-tech program vary slightly and are posted on each school's website.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public charter schools</td>
<td>Charter schools are public schools governed by independent boards. They do not have “feeder patterns” like neighborhood schools.</td>
<td>Parents complete the online application form and submit it by the second Wednesday in January.</td>
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</table>

Approximately one in three Delaware public school students exercises school choice, as shown in the chart below.

Percentages and Numbers of Delaware Students Participating in School Choice, 2013-14

- Not choice: 68% (90,832)
- Within-district choice: 13% (16,849)
- Choice-out: 8% (11,078)
- Public charter schools: 5% (7,245)
- Vo-tech: 6% (7,365)

Note: "Not Choice" refers to students attending their feeder pattern school. Choice to magnet schools is included as either within-district choice or cross-district choice. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.
In the last 10 years, enrollment in Delaware's public schools has risen, while enrollment in private schools has decreased.

**Student Enrollment Trends by School Type**

- **Total enrollment in public schools**: +12% (13,994 students)
- **Traditional public**: +6% (7,199 students)
- **Total enrollment in non public schools**: -29% (-8,282 students)
- **Public charter**: 119% (6,795 students)

Note: Public charter schools authorized by the Red Clay Consolidated School District are counted under the “Public charter” total only. Total enrollment in non public schools is inclusive of private school and home school enrollment.

Delaware has a variety of school options throughout the state, with significant school choice options located in New Castle County.

**New Castle County**
**Magnet Schools**
(All located in Red Clay School District)
Cab Calloway School of the Arts
Conrad Schools of Science
Lewis Dual Language Elementary*

**District-Approved Charters**
(All located in Red Clay School District)
Charter School of Wilmington
Delaware College Preparatory Academy
Delaware Military Academy

**State-Approved Charters**
Las Americas ASPIRA Academy
Delaware Academy of Public Safety
EastSide Charter
Family Foundations
Gateway Charter
Kuumba Academy
MOT Charter
Newark Charter
Odyssey Charter
Prestige Academy
Thomas Edison Charter
La Academia Antonia Alonso
First State Montessori Charter
Design Lab Charter
Delaware STEM Academy**
Delaware MET
Freire Charter
Great Oaks Charter

**New Castle County, Continued**
**Vocational Technology**
Delcastle High
Hodgson High
Howard High
St. Georges High

**Kent County**
**Magnet Schools**
N/A

**District-Approved Charters**
N/A

**State-Approved Charters**
Providence Creek
Academy of Dover
Campus Community
Positive Outcomes
Early College High School
First State Military Academy

**Vocational Technology**
POLYTECH High School

**Delaware**
**MET**
Freire Charter
Great Oaks Charter

**Sussex County**
**Magnet Schools**
Southern Delaware School of the Arts

**District-Approved Charters**
N/A

**State-Approved Charters**
Sussex Academy

**Vocational Technology**
Sussex Tech

*Unlike the other magnet schools in the state, Lewis has a natural feeder pattern.

**Slated to open in 2016-2017.**

Source: Delaware Department of Education. (2015). Online School and District Profiles. [profiles.doe.k12.de.us](http://profiles.doe.k12.de.us)
A universal enrollment system could help to streamline the current school choice process for students and families.

- **November 30:** Deadline for receiving districts to notify DDOE of the capacity of each school and applicable program in the district for the coming school year. (Can be revised up until January 30.)
- **January 30:** Final deadline for receiving districts to notify DDOE of the capacity of each school and applicable program in the district for the coming school year.
- **June 15:** Deadline for receiving districts to approve or disapprove applications for admission to kindergarten.
- **November 30:** Deadline for receiving districts to notify DDOE of the capacity of each school and applicable program in the district for the coming school year.
- **December 31:** Final deadline for receiving districts to notify DDOE of the capacity of each school and applicable program in the district for the coming school year.
- **Second Wednesday in January:** Parents interested in applying for school choice option(s) for the coming school year must submit the standard application form to DDOE or receiving district.
- **Last Day of February:** Deadline for receiving district school board to approve or disapprove applications for admission for programs in grades one through 12.
- **Five Days After Board Decision:** Receiving districts must notify parents and children's districts of residence of the board's final decision.
- **June 30:** Waiting lists for enrollment in programs for the coming school year expire.
- **June 30:** Waiting lists for enrollment in programs for the coming school year expire.
- **Through the First Day of School:** Parents enrolling their children in kindergarten may submit the standard application form to receiving districts.
- **Before the Second Wednesday in January:** Receiving districts must adopt and make available their choice policy (seeking to eliminate discrimination against choice students) before the application deadline.

Source: Del Code, Title 14, Chapter 4. [http://delcode.delaware.gov/title14/c004/index.shtml](http://delcode.delaware.gov/title14/c004/index.shtml)
In March 2015, Governor Jack Markell announced the creation of a needs assessment and strategic planning process for all Delaware public schools, the Statewide Review of Educational Opportunities (SREO).

- The SREO, managed by the State Board of Education, will review current opportunities and trends related to school choice patterns in an effort to quantify areas of unmet need for Delaware families.

- Specifically, the SREO will examine the “specialized educational opportunities” in schools across the state, the number of students participating, as well as any waiting lists.
  - “Specialized educational opportunity” includes, but is not limited to, arts programs, science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs, gifted/talented programs, world language immersion, IB, AP, career technical education, dual enrollment, or programs for English learners.
  - The report will include analysis of district schools, vocational-technical schools, magnet schools, charter schools, schools with special need students, and private/parochial schools.

- The SREO will be completed in winter 2015 and will be used to develop a statewide strategic plan to address the projected future educational needs of Delawareans.

Sources:
24.5 percent of parents nationwide report having the ability to send children to a chosen public school. Between 1993 and 2007, the percentage of children attending a chosen public school rose from 11 percent to 16 percent nationwide.

Delaware is:
- One of 21 states that currently require school districts to allow students to cross district boundaries to attend school.
- One of 23 states that currently require school districts to allow students to transfer to another school in their same home district.

Source: Education Commission of the States (ECS). (2013). “Open Enrollment is on the Menu—But Can You Order It?”
Delaware’s charter school population has significant variations when compared to the national demographics of charter school students.

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<tr>
<td><strong>Student Enrollment</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Charter Students</td>
<td>11,078 (8%)</td>
<td>2.3 million (4.6%)</td>
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<td><strong>Charter School Student Demographics</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English learner</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Delaware’s charter school population is:
- A higher percentage of total public school students than the national average
- A higher percentage of white students than the national average

1 Source: Delaware Department of Education
2 Source: National Center for Education Statistics (most recent data available)
Note: Data on low-income, English learners, and special education students is available by state for all public schools from NCES, but it is not disaggregated to the school level to allow for charter school designation.
Delaware should consider the following action steps related to school choice in terms of parental and student access and school quality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Potential Action Steps</th>
<th>Progress Underway</th>
<th>Supporters</th>
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</table>
| **Increase equity across the choice system**  | • Consider efforts to improve information on public school quality and services, and continue to simplify equal access to all schools through a common application process.  
• Provide improved funding equity for charter schools, particularly for costs associated with facilities. | • Enrollment Preferences Task Force  
• SchoolChoiceDE.org  
• Charter School Performance Fund | • Delaware Charter Schools Network  
• Delaware PTA |
| **Increase excellence across the system**     | • Provide parents and the public with better information about school performance via school performance reports.  
• Develop a common framework for school performance across all educational options. | • Delaware Charter School Performance Framework  
• GreatSchools.org | • Delaware Charter Schools Network  
• Delaware Department of Education (DDOE)  
• Delaware PTA  
• Vision Coalition of Delaware |
| **Be strategic about the growth of all new school options** | Utilize the statewide strategic plan, based on the SREO, to take action to address the stated needs with regard to supply and demand of educational opportunities in the state. | Statewide Review of Educational Opportunities | • Delaware Charter Schools Network  
• DDOE  
• State Board of Education |