



CATALINA FOOTHILLS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT #16

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Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

Arizona has an Open Enrollment law that gives nonresident families --Arizona residents who do not live in the school district they want their children to attend -- the option of enrolling their students in any public elementary (grades K-8) or high school (grades 9-12) in the state. It is a parental choice statute that has been in effect since September 1994.

In District 16, open enrollment students make up approximately 39% of our total K-12 student population. Parents are aware that we are admitting more open enrollment students, and the number of applications has increased commensurately over the last several years. For a few years we did not admit nonresident students to our middle and high schools, and we had just a few openings for elementary school age children. Our capacity has increased over the last several years, and we now have nonresident children attending schools at all grade levels. This year there are more than 1,900 open enrollment students in the Catalina Foothills School District.

Every school district in Arizona has a local policy that defines under what conditions open enrollment students will be admitted. In our case, capacity of a school, program, class, or service determines whether we have room to accept students who do not live within our school district boundaries. It is not an exact science by any means when deciding whether or not to allow open enrollment students to come to our schools. We must preserve some extra capacity for resident students since their enrollment fluctuates somewhat throughout the year when families move in and out of the school district.

At the elementary school level, capacity is determined primarily by a class size maximum. It is to your benefit to indicate more than one school as a preference.

At our middle and high schools, capacity is determined more by our ability to build a schedule of classes for a student. For example, a ninth grade student residing in another part of Tucson may decide to apply to our high school to take a course schedule of Honors English 9, Standard Geometry, Global Issues, Biology, Spanish 2, and Concert Band. If we can't schedule most of these courses because the class sections have been filled with resident students, we may deny the open enrollment application if no other schedule alternatives are possible.

Open enrollment applications are for one year only. A student's parent/guardian must apply again the next year. Rarely do we deny applications for continuing open enrollment students. We try to admit students for each year of their school career. We recognize that educational stability in one place is important. Siblings of open enrollment students must be admitted and are given preference over a new applicant to the program. As a result, there are times when we say no to a whole family because we do not have room for all of their children in our schools, or we ask parents if not admitting all of their children is acceptable.

Ideally, open enrollment is a win-win scenario for us and for nonresident families. It is a program that makes it possible for our school district to operate more efficiently by maximizing regular class sizes and the capacity of our special programs and services.

Thank you for your interest in our district.

Sincerely,

Mary Kamerzell, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools