

In the Spring of 2021, the state legislature passed and Governor Stitt signed S.B. 783 into law for Oklahoma. It was known as the Education Open Transfer Act and went into effect in January of 2022. As is often the process when a law is passed which affects the operations of public schools, the legislature provides the general direction and then rely on the State Board of Education to write the “fine print” or specific details of how the law will be interpreted and enforced. This process can become complicated and interpretation early in implementation is often fluid. Such was the case with administration of the open transfer law and how individual districts developed their local policies. In developing the policy for Guthrie Public Schools, four separate revisions were necessary prior to the start of this school year.

The law requires school districts to accept any request of a family to transfer into their district if there is available capacity. Each school board sets what their capacity will be for each grade and must make those capacities available publicly (we post them on our district website). Once a transfer request is approved, the transfer remains approved for the remainder of the students’ academic career provided there are no issues with attendance or discipline of the transfer student. Transfers may be denied if the requesting student has demonstrated discipline or attendance issues at their previous school district. Requests involving students with special needs are considered based on the services required for the student and the existing capacities of students in those specialized programs.

School districts are allowed some local discretion with their policies. At Guthrie Public Schools, if a family requests a transfer and capacities are available for at least one of the siblings, all siblings will be admitted regardless of capacity provided they meet behavior and attendance requirements. Eligible children of all GPS employees will be admitted regardless of capacity restrictions as well as any student who has attended our district for at least three years and moves outside the district. Special consideration is also afforded to students under the custody of the Department of Human Services as well as children of parents on active military duty.

Naturally, this change has come with some misconceptions and misunderstandings. Elementary transfer students will be assigned to the most appropriate school based on capacity not geography. Elementary students residing inside our district are still subject to the district attendance zones as this law does not affect students within our district boundary. Parents are solely responsible for transportation of all students on an approved transfer. Finally, residency requirements for athletic participation governed by the OSSAA have not changed and eligibility is not guaranteed with an approved transfer.

Previously, GPS had taken a very conservative approach to admitting transfers based on our capacities. Since we have changed our policies following the passage of the law, we have seen relatively little impact on our student count. As the second semester began, we have 37 students who have transferred into our district.

Because I am proud of the great things we are doing, it is exciting to receive the students who live in other districts and want to CHOOSE GUTHRIE. If you have further questions about student transfers, we have placed a large amount of helpful information on our website at:

<https://www.guthrie.net/vnews/display.v/SEC/Student%20Transfers> .