

REGULATION MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Related Entries: JEA-RB, JED, JED-RE, JEE-RA
Responsible Office: Chief of Teaching, Learning, and Schools

Enrollment and Placement of International and Foreign Students

I. PURPOSE

To set forth the procedures for enrolling and placing exchange, foreign, and international students in a Montgomery County public school, which are subject to all requirements and definitions in Policy JEA, *Residency, Tuition, and Enrollment*, and Regulations JEA-RB, *Enrollment of Students*, and JEA-RE, *Tuition-based Enrollment*

II. DEFINITIONS

A. *International Students* are defined as –

1. Students from countries other than the United States and its territories with bona fide residency in Montgomery County who have not attended school in the United States or a U.S. school system (e.g. a Department of Defense school or an accredited American International school in a foreign country) at any time during the prior two years.
2. U.S. citizens who attended a foreign school outside the U.S. for more than two years. This does not include students who attended schools operated by the United States government, such as the U.S. Department of Defense, or an accredited American International school.

B. A *foreign student* is defined as any person of school age who comes to the United States with visa status to study.

1. An *exchange student* holds a J-1 Visa (J-1) and is under an approved exchange program.
2. A *non-immigrant student* holds an F-1 Visa (F-1) and must be approved by

the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

III. BACKGROUND

- A. The International Admissions and Enrollment Office (IAE) is the only unit in MCPS authorized to start and monitor compliance with procedures and regulations for the admission of non-immigrant visitor status (F-1) and exchange students (J-1).
- B. The following students must be referred to IAE prior to enrollment in MCPS:
 - 1. International students
 - 2. U.S. citizens who have not attended a U.S. school, an accredited American International school, or a school run by the U.S. government at any time during the prior two years
 - 3. Foreign students, including non-immigrant students (F-1) and exchange students (J-1)
- C. A student who has attended a U.S. school system during the prior two years may enroll at his or her home school or consortia office.
- D. IAE will provide assistance with the interpretation of documentation, including educational records.
- E. IAE will evaluate foreign transcripts according to Metropolitan Association of Foreign Student Advisors (MAFSA) National Grading Scales for grade placement and credit awarding purposes.

IV. PROCEDURES

- A. Parent/Guardian/Sponsor responsibilities
 - 1. Contact IAE for an intake appointment, which shall require the presence of the student(s)
 - 2. Complete the New Student Information Form
 - 3. Present enrollment documents as delineated in Regulation JEA-RB, *Enrollment of Students*, to IAE
 - 4. Present final official school records (with official translations as needed)

including partial and current school years and national test scores as delineated below.

- a) For elementary and middle school-aged students, official school records are required for the last year the student attended school.
- b) For high school-aged students, official school records are required for the last three years the student attended school.
- c) Copies are not accepted; however, schools may send records directly to IAE via email as a PDF attachment or via regular mail.
- d) High school students who are old enough to have graduated, but cannot provide school records, must provide a letter from the ministry of education or comparable level of authority in the district the student last attended that confirms the student has not graduated.
- e) Note that transcripts of high school students who may have completed the equivalent of a U.S. high school diploma (such as through the Cambridge Assessment and International Education program, a transcript review, or national examination) may be subject to further evaluation before an enrollment decision is made.

B. IAE Processing Responsibilities:

- 1. Procedures for processing the enrollment of international students:
 - a) Verify each student's birth date and immunization record, parent/guardian's identity, and residency; and review the student's visa status, if applicable
 - b) Review each student's educational history; evaluate academic credentials; evaluate final/official school records; recommend awarding of official school credits, according to Maryland state and MCPS regulations; determine school assignment; and recommend grade placement
 - c) Assess and determine whether or not a student has completed the equivalent of a U.S. high school diploma in another school system, which impacts their eligibility for enrollment in MCPS
 - d) Review each student's record for special education documentation, including an Individualized Education Program or equivalent or a

psychological or educational assessment for the purpose of consideration for special education services

If such documentation is found, the IAE supervisor will notify the principal of the school at which the student is eligible to enroll, as well as the special education cluster supervisor assigned to that school.

- e) Identify information shared during the intake process that may lead a school team to monitor a student for possible referral for screening for special education services

The IAE supervisor will report this information to the principal of the school at which the student is eligible to enroll, as well as to the special education cluster supervisor assigned to that school.

- f) Identify, screen, and refer ESOL students with limited or no previous education to the Multidisciplinary Education Training and Support (METS) Program.
- g) Complete the IAE Intake and Referral process
- h) Inform the parent/guardian of the next steps to be taken regarding residency and tuition, if applicable

2. Procedures for processing the enrollment of exchange students:

- a) MCPS provides free education to exchange students who enter the U.S. through an exchange program organization to reside in Montgomery County with a confirmed host family for a maximum of two academic semesters.
- b) MCPS may provide unofficial records, such as report card printouts, if requested to exchange students, their parents/guardians, host families or student exchange organization.
- c) The maximum number of exchange students will not exceed 50 students in MCPS and no more than 5 students at any single MCPS high school per academic school year.
- d) The IAE supervisor determines an applicant's eligibility and grants approval subject to the applicant meeting all of the following conditions:

- (1) The exchange program organization must be approved by the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel.
- (2) The exchange program organization must adhere to federal regulations issued by the United States Department of State.
- (3) The exchange program organization must adhere to applicable MCPS regulations and guidelines for the admission and enrollment of exchange students.
- (4) The authorized representative of the exchange program organization must live within a 120-mile geographic radius of Montgomery County. This person is responsible for students placed in MCPS.
- (5) The applicant must be enrolled in a secondary school program in the country of residency and must be at least 15 years old and no older than 17 at the time of enrollment in MCPS.
- (6) The applicant must not have completed the equivalent of a high school program. Exchange students are not eligible for a diploma, graduation, or credit evaluation.
- (7) The exchange program organization must have arranged for the applicant to have a current J-1 visa for the duration of school attendance and to live with a confirmed host family that has bona fide residency in Montgomery County.
 - (a) Host families must have a successfully completed criminal background check before the application can be approved.
 - (b) MCPS will not approve applications for students who reside with temporary host families. If an extreme circumstance/hardship situation results in a change in host family, the foreign exchange program organization is responsible for finding a new host family that is able to support the student's continued enrollment in the original school of enrollment within the same school cluster. The student will be

referred to the school serving the community where the new host family resides.

- (8) The period of enrollment may range from one to two full academic semesters. Exchange students coming from a country with an academic calendar opposite to that of MCPS may attend two consecutive academic semesters in two different academic calendar years.
 - (9) The applicant's current visa status and immunization compliance must be verified.
 - (10) The applicant's school records must indicate a B or better grade average, or the equivalent.
 - (11) The applicant must present school recommendations that affirm the applicant's good behavior and ability to adapt to a different school environment.
 - (12) The applicant must demonstrate, via an approved English proficiency assessment, the ability to function academically in English without ESOL support.
- e) Applications and supporting documentation for exchange students are accepted only from April 15 to June 30 for the next academic year, and from October 15 to December 15 for the second semester of the current year. (Refer to MCPS Form 335-66, *Application for Admission of Exchange Students in MCPS*)
 - f) The IAE Guidelines for the Admission and Enrollment of Exchange Students in MCPS are available on the MCPS website.
3. Procedures for processing foreign student status applicants for I-20, *Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant F-1 Student Status* (I-20 Form):
- a) Foreign students who reside in another country and come (or intend to come) to the United States with the sole intention to study are considered nonresident students in MCPS and their admission in school is subject to the completion of the I-20 Form, by IAE.
 - b) The following conditions must be met in order to obtain an I-20 Form in MCPS:

- (1) The applicant's parents do not reside in the United States.

IAE verifies the applicant's immunization compliance, visa status, and bona fide Montgomery County residency of the applicant's sponsor.
 - (2) The applicant must be at least 15 years old and no older than 17 years old and must have completed at least the equivalency of eighth grade.
 - (3) The receiving school is not overutilized and is available according to the factors in MCPS Regulation JEE-RA, *Transfer of Students*.
 - (4) The applicant has demonstrated, via approved English proficiency assessment, ability to function academically in English without ESOL support.
 - (5) The applicant's school records indicate a B or better grade average, or the equivalent.
 - (6) The applicant presents school recommendations that affirm the student's good behavior and ability to adapt to a different school environment.
 - (7) The applicant's sponsor pays school tuition in advance for the duration of the projected stay, as indicated on the I-20 Form.
 - (8) The applicant's sponsor provides evidence of financial capability to provide the student with a means of support.
 - (9) The applicant's sponsor provides a notarized custody letter from the applicant's parents.
- c) The period of enrollment may range from one full semester to a maximum of one academic year.
 - d) Applications for I-20 Forms are accepted only from April 15 to June 30 for the next academic year, and from October 15 to December 15 for the second semester of the current year.
 - e) IAE is responsible for assisting students who are required to

complete an I-20 Form in complying with U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regulations pertaining to their nonimmigrant student status.

C. Local School Principal/Designee Responsibilities

1. Direct inquiries, and forward all documentation, from public and private organizations and individuals regarding the processing, enrollment, and placement of international and foreign students, including exchange (J-1) and non-immigrant students (F-1), and U.S. citizens who have not attended a U.S. school at any time during the prior two years, to the IAE for review and response.
2. Do not sign any immigration forms. IAE is the only unit in MCPS authorized by the DHS to sign these forms.
3. Enroll international, exchange, and immigrant students after processing has been completed by IAE. If the IAE Intake Form is stamped "BEFORE STUDENT CAN BE ENROLLED TUITION MUST BE PAID OR TUITION WAIVER MUST BE APPROVED BY IAE," the student must not be enrolled until additional notification is received from the Division of Controller that tuition has been paid or a tuition waiver letter has been received from IAE. (See MCPS Regulation JED-RA, *Residency and Tuition*)
4. Withdraw exchange students and non-immigrant students at completion of their approved academic program.

Related Sources: Code of Maryland Regulations §13A.03.02.09

Regulation History: Formerly part of Regulation 560-1 and JED-RA; established as a new, separate regulation August 26, 1987; revised May 2, 1995; revised July 6, 2001; revised September 15, 2003; revised February 24, 2005; revised November 21, 2006; revised April 19, 2011; revised March 5, 2021.