

District accepts record number of 112 applications from families who want their children to attend local schools

The Port Washington-Saukville School Board on Monday approved a record number of open enrollment requests from parents who want to send their children to Port-Saukville schools.

The board accepted 112 of the 114 incoming requests. It denied applications for two students — a special-education pupil and a child seeking placement in the early childhood peer program — because there is not enough room in those programs.

The board also approved 72 of the 75 requests from parents who live in the district and want to send their children to other schools. Applications for three special-education students were denied because of financial concerns.

Wisconsin's open enrollment program allows parents to send their children to any public school in the state provided both the incoming and outgoing districts approve the applications, which must be submitted in February.

Districts can refuse to accept non-resident students if they do not have room in a particular grade level or program to accommodate that child or for disciplinary reasons.

Districts can also refuse to allow resident special education students to leave the district if the departure would cause a financial burden for the resident district, which is responsible for special education costs regardless of where the child is educated.

Supt. Michael Weber noted that approving the 112 incoming applications doesn't mean the district will have that many new students when the 2011-12 school year begins in September. Parents still may opt to keep their children in their current schools or send them to other districts. Several parents who applied to the Port Washington-Saukville School District also applied to other school systems, Weber said.

"How much of this actually happens remains to be seen," he said.

The district's experience is indicative of a flurry of open enrollment activity throughout the state this year, Weber said.

"What we're seeing is a reflection of the popularity of open enrollment and the desire of parents to have choices in where their children are educated," said Weber, who was a member of the state's open-enrollment planning committee when the program was created 13 years ago.

The number of applications received by the district this year is more than double the number it typically receives.

PW-S open enrollment requests soar

Written by Bill Schanen IV

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Usually the number of incoming and outgoing applications are roughly equal. This year, the district received 52% more incoming applications than outgoing.

Of the incoming applications, 64 (56%) were submitted by residents of the Northern Ozaukee School District in Fredonia.

Weber said the fact that 17 non-resident students have applied for admission to the district's 4-year-old preschool program is telling, noting that a child's resident district must offer the same program under the open enrollment law.

"Since they have to be coming from districts that offer the same program, that's a pretty good indication of the desire of parents to have their children educated in this district," he said.