



105 Schools of



Choice

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Parents and Students Have Educational Options in Gratiot and Isabella Counties

When classes start this fall, an educational option will again be available to public school students in Gratiot and Isabella counties. The nine public school districts in Gratiot and Isabella counties are participating in a cross-district *Schools of Choice Program* for the current school year:

All students residing in participating districts can choose to attend the school that best meets their individual needs. The participating districts include: Alma, Ashley, Beal City, Breckenridge, Fulton, Ithaca, Mt. Pleasant, St. Louis, and Shepherd.

Schools of Choice Highlights:

- **Parents interested** in having their children participate in the *Schools of Choice Program* must complete an application for each student and submit it to the Gratiot-Isabella Regional Education Service District.

- **The number of students** allowed to participate is determined by space availability.
- **Parents are responsible** for the transportation of their child to and from school.
- **Students are eligible** for Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) activities following MHSAA guidelines.
- **All requests for transfer** are treated individually. There are no guarantees of any siblings receiving admission into the *Schools of Choice Program*.

A close-up

look at Gratiot-Isabella Schools of Choice Program

In an effort to provide a quality education for all students in the region, Gratiot-Isabella Regional Education Service District (GIRESD), in cooperation with its constituent districts, is offering a *Schools of Choice Program*. The Gratiot-Isabella (G-I) *Schools of Choice Program* allows parents and students a choice to attend any public school in Gratiot and Isabella counties, regardless of where they live. At the present time, only legal residents of the two counties will be considered in this plan.

This brochure is designed to help parents learn about the program and the policies and procedures that have been developed to ensure student success.

Information regarding graduation requirements, application policies, athletics, and transportation are included. Please call Gratiot-Isabella RESD at 989-875-5101, ext. 2337 for further information and to receive a copy of the *Schools of Choice* application.



An application form is available by calling the Gratiot-Isabella Regional Education Service District at 989-875-5101, ext. 2337.

To help parents become familiar with the participating districts in Gratiot and Isabella counties, a brief description of each district is located on the Application Deadline Schedule that you will find inserted in this brochure. However, to make the best decision regarding participation in the cross-district *Schools of Choice Program*, parents should contact the district they would like their child to attend and schedule a visit.

What parents or guardians need to know about Gratiot-Isabella Schools of Choice

The **application process** for the Gratiot-Isabella counties *Schools of Choice Program* has been designed to guarantee all applicants a fair and equitable opportunity. Parents or guardians should be aware of the application timelines, length of transfers, and graduation requirements. Listed below are the guidelines regarding the application process.

1. Students must be at least five years old by December 1 of the current school year to be eligible for the *G-I Schools of Choice Program*.

2. All transfers under the *G-I Schools of Choice Program* take place at the beginning of the school year. No mid-year transfers will be allowed.

3. The number of transfers allowed under the *G-I Schools of Choice Program* are determined by space available in each participating district and the space available at each building. The net loss to the district cannot be greater than one percent (total per year) or be out of compliance with the guidelines of the local district's choice plan, or any local board policies.

4. Requests for transfer by students who are from another district, already attending the Choice School, will have priority over other student requests for transfer through the *G-I Schools of Choice Program*. The net loss to the district cannot be greater than one percent (total per year) or be out of compliance with the guidelines of the local district's choice plan, or any local board policies.

5. All participants in the *G-I Schools of Choice Program* are expected to attend their school of choice for the entire school year. Requests for student transfers during the school year back to the student's home district will be granted only under extreme extenuating circumstances.

6. Prior to entering the *Schools of Choice Program*, students who are not currently attending a public school in either Gratiot or Isabella counties due to expulsion or dropout must be readmitted to their local school district, attend school and demonstrate success prior to participating in the *G-I Schools of Choice Program*. The choice district reserves the right to refuse enrollment to a student who has demonstrated disciplinary behavior problems in his/her home district.

7. A student approved for transfer to a choice district is allowed to remain in the choice district until his / her class graduates from that school, unless overcrowding or redistricting occurs. The student does not need to reapply for admission to the same choice school each year once approved for transfer under the *G-I Schools of Choice Program*.

8. Applications for the *G-I Schools of Choice Program* will be available from the participating school districts and the Gratiot-Isabella RESD and should be returned to the GIRESD. Applicants will be notified in writing as to whether they have been accepted into the program, if their choice school is available. Parents or guardians will have an opportunity to accept or reject acceptance into the program.

9. Parents, guardians, and students desiring to participate in the *G-I Schools of Choice Program* are required to meet with a building administrator or district representative of the choice school to discuss school rules, curriculum, parent involvement, graduation requirements, grade placement and other school-related issues.

Since most high school and middle school class schedules are developed prior to completion of the Schools of Choice application process, students requesting transfers to another school district should be aware that not all class requests may be granted. Prior to submitting a *G-I Schools of Choice* application, it is required that the student and his / her parents or guardians meet with a counselor or school administrator at the school of choice to determine class availability.

10. Schools of Choice applications will allow students to list a first and alternate choice. There is no guarantee that space in the schools selected will be available.

11. A student requesting a transfer is allowed to request which district he / she would like to attend, but requests for specific buildings or teachers will not be allowed. (The net loss to the district cannot be greater than one percent (total per year) or be out of compliance with the guidelines of the local district's choice plan or any local board policies.)

12. The number of openings in a particular program for participating district students will be determined by optimum size for a particular program or classroom, which is the number of students that can be accommodated without increasing district expenditures for staff or equipment. (The net loss to the district cannot be greater than one percent (total per year) or be out of compliance with the guidelines of the local district's choice plan or any local board policies.)

13. Applications from participating district students under an I.E.P. shall not be considered if the receiving district is not currently providing the programs and services called for in the I.E.P.

14. An application form must be completed for each student wishing to participate in the *G-I Schools of Choice Program*. There are no guarantees of any siblings receiving admission into the *G-I Schools of Choice Program*. If a student has siblings currently attending the choice school, they will be given the first priority for any opening.

15. If there are more requests for admission to a district / building than space available, or in excess of the one percent net loss, a lottery will be held to determine which applicants will be accepted for transfer to that school. Lottery selection will include all family members requesting the choice district. The lottery will be coordinated by the *G-I Schools of Choice* application committee.

16. A student and his / her parents or guardians may wish to appeal the decision regarding the application for transfer. Such an appeal may be filed only for arbitrary or capricious violation of the *G-I Schools of Choice* policy and must be filed within thirty (30) days of notification to GIRESD. The parents, guardians, or student must explain the reasons for appeal in writing. The appeal will be reviewed by a committee consisting of one representative from the home school, one from the choice school, and one from the GIRESD, at a scheduled meeting of which the student, parents, or guardians will be notified. This appeal review will take place within ten days of GIRESD receipt of the appeal.



Graduation/Promotion Requirements and Curriculum Issues

For more information
contact:
Gratiot-Isabella RESD
1131 E. Center Street
P.O. Box 310
Ithaca, MI 48847-0310
989-875-5101
TDD 989-875-8720

Each school district in Gratiot and Isabella counties has developed a curriculum that is based on the State of Michigan Content Standards and Benchmarks. In addition, each district has its own locally approved grading system and graduation requirements. While there are similarities of requirements among districts, parents or guardians should be aware of the following conditions of the *G-I Schools of Choice Program*:

1. **Participants are required** to graduate with the number of credits determined by the district they are attending at the time of graduation.
2. **Before a student transfer** actually takes place, parents or guardians, and student will be required to meet with a counselor/administrator in the choice school district to review all rules, regulations, grading system, and graduation requirements. Parents or guardians of high school students will be asked to sign a waiver which will accompany the *Schools of Choice* application. The waiver states that they have read and agree to abide by choice school's graduation requirements.
3. **All districts will supply**, at the request of parents or guardians, a current listing of graduation requirements for the high school they wish to have their child attend. To receive a copy of graduation requirements, parents or guardians should contact the high school principal of the school of choice.
4. **Upon acceptance** into the program, a current listing of outcome requirements from that building will be supplied to participants.
5. **Schools of Choice students** may participate in their choice district's summer programs, pending space availability.



Transportation Guidelines

Transportation is a key issue in the *G-I Schools of Choice Program*. It is the sole responsibility of parents or guardians to transport their children to and from the choice school. The following is a list of the transportation guidelines for the *G-I Schools of Choice Program*.

1. **Parents or guardians** will be responsible for transporting students to and from school in the *G-I Schools of Choice Program*.
2. **Parents or guardians** may have the option to drive their child to a pre-approved bus stop in the school district of choice, if space is available on the bus. Once the child is transported from school to the bus stop, it is the responsibility of the parents or guardians to provide transportation home for the child. Parents or guardians should also be aware that on those rare occasions when school closes early due to weather, etc., it is also their responsibility to provide transportation home for the child.
3. **Parents or guardians** will assume the responsibility for the safety of the child at the bus stop.
4. **Students participating** in the *G-I Schools of Choice Program*, who are eligible to ride a school bus, are required to follow rules, regulations, and bus discipline policy of the choice district.
5. **G-I Schools of Choice participants** will be expected to arrive at the choice school on time every day.





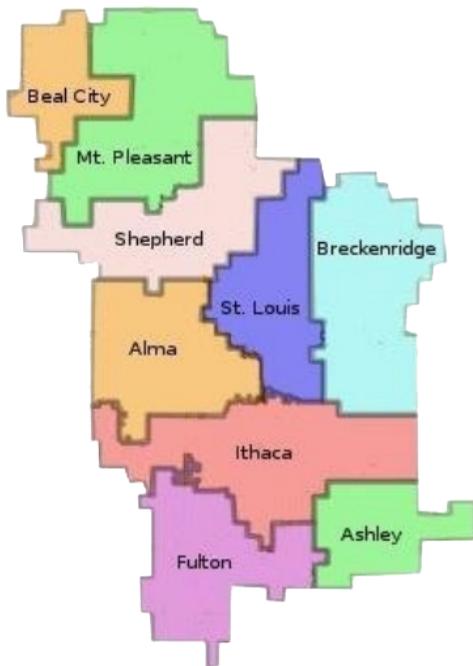
Athletic Policy



The focus of the G-I *Schools of Choice Program* is based on academics, not athletics. Therefore, students and parents or guardians should be aware of the following conditions for transferring;

1. **Students will follow** the choice district's policies for participation in the school's athletic activities.

2. **A student athlete** (junior high/middle or high school) participating in a G-I *Schools of Choice Program* is eligible to participate in an inter-scholastic athletic contest according to the rules and regulations as defined and governed by the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA).



Gratiot-Isabella Schools of Choice Participating Districts

- ▶ Alma Public Schools
- ▶ Ashley Community Schools
- ▶ Beal City Public Schools
- ▶ Breckenridge Community Schools
- ▶ Fulton Schools
- ▶ Ithaca Public Schools
- ▶ Mt. Pleasant Public Schools
- ▶ St. Louis Public Schools
- ▶ Shepherd Public Schools

GIRESD

The **Board of Education** of Gratiot-Isabella Regional Education Service District complies with all federal and state laws and regulations of the United States Department of Education and the Michigan State Department of Education.

It is also the policy of Gratiot-Isabella Regional Education Service District Board of Education that no person on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, age, marital status, limited English, or handicap shall be discriminated against, excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination in any program, employment practice, or activity for which it is responsible or for which it receives financial assistance from the United States Department of Education or the Michigan State Department of Education.

Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.
TDD (989) 875-8720