

4029 STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE POLICY [REQUIRED]

The Governing Board of The Biome School adopts the following policy effective on that date that the policy is adopted by the Board.

The Biome School is committed to ensuring and facilitating the proper educational placement, enrollment in school and checkout from school for foster children.

In order to facilitate this process and to serve as the educational liaison for The Biome School's foster children, The Biome School will designate a staff member to oversee and assess The Biome School's foster care program.

The Biome School's educational liaison for foster care children will serve in an advisory capacity to:

- Ensure and facilitate proper educational placement, enrollment in school, and checkout from school;
- Assist foster care children when transferring from one school to another or from one school district to another, including, among other things, proper transfer of credit, records, and grades;
- Request school records within two (2) business days of placement of a foster care child in The Biome School;
- Submit school records of foster care pupils within three (3) business days of receiving a request for school records from another school or school district; and
- Facilitate access to student records to any child placing agency for the purpose of fulfilling education case management responsibilities required of the juvenile officer or by law and to assist with the school transfer or placement of a child under foster care.

The Biome School recognizes students in foster care experience mobility in and out of the foster care system and from one home placement to another that may disrupt their education, and which may create barriers to academic success and on-time graduation. The Biome School, in collaboration with state and local agencies, will work to minimize or eliminate educational barriers for students in foster care, particularly in enrollment, transfer of student records, and transportation to their school of origin, where appropriate. For purposes of this policy, "school of origin" is the school in which the student is enrolled at the time of placement in foster care. The Biome School will, to the largest extent possible, ensure that a child in foster care enrolls or remains in his or her school of origin, unless a determination is made that remaining in the student's school of origin is not in the student's best interest.

In determining the student's best interest for purposes of this policy, the following factors will be considered:

1. Preference of the student;
2. Preference of the student's parent or educational decision making;
3. The student's attachment to the school, relationships with staff and peers;
4. Placement of the student's siblings;
5. Influence of the school climate on the student, including safety;
6. Availability and quality of the services in the school in meeting the student's educational and socioemotional needs;
7. History of school transfers and their impact;

8. Impact of the length of commute;
9. Whether the student has a disability under the IDEA or Section 504;
10. Whether student is an EL student receiving language services.

A foster care child whose home placement is changed may remain enrolled and attend their school of origin, or return to a previously attended school in an adjacent district. The Biome School will accept for credit full or partial course work satisfactorily completed by a foster child while attending a public school, nonpublic school or non-sectarian school in compliance with The Biome School policies, regulations and practices.

If a child in foster care is absent from school due to a decision to change the placement of a pupil made by a court or child placing agency, or due to a verified court appearance or related court-ordered activity, the grades and credits of the pupil will be calculated as of the day the pupil left school and no reduction in grades will occur as a result of the pupil's absence under these circumstances.

If a foster care student transfers into The Biome School prior to or during a school year, The Biome School will initially honor the placement of the student in educational courses and programs based on the student's prior enrollment or educational assessments; will provide comparable services to transferring foster care students with disabilities based on the student's current IEP; and will make reasonable accommodations and modifications to address the needs of a student with disabilities, subject to an existing 504 or Title II Plan in order to provide equal access to education. The Biome School will conduct evaluations, where necessary, to ensure proper placement and services.

The Biome School will waive specific courses required for graduation if similar course work has been satisfactorily completed at another school. Similarly, The Biome School may waive prerequisites for placement in a The Biome School course or program based upon courses taken at a prior school. If a waiver is denied for reasonable justifications, The Biome School will provide an alternative means of acquiring the required course work so that graduation may occur on time. If foster care students who transfer at the beginning of their senior year or during their senior year are deemed ineligible to graduate after all alternatives have been considered, the sending school district and The Biome School will ensure that a qualified student who satisfied graduation requirements of the sending school, will receive a diploma from the sending school.

Students in foster care who have completed the graduation requirements of The Biome School while under juvenile court jurisdiction will receive a diploma in the same manner as other The Biome School students.

Transportation

Some students in foster care who are residents of the City of St. Louis may need transportation to remain in their school of origin when it is in their best interest. To facilitate transportation for such students, The Biome School will collaborate with the state and/or local child welfare agencies to ensure that transportation for such students is arranged, provided, and funded. If there are additional costs incurred in providing transportation to the school of origin, The Biome School will provide such transportation if:

- a) The local child welfare agency agrees to reimburse The Biome School for such costs;
- b) The Biome School elects to pay the costs; or
- c) The Biome School and the local child welfare agency agree to share the cost.

Dispute Resolution

In the event that a caregiver or education decision-maker disputes The Biome School's decision regarding the best interest or the provision of other educationally related services for a student in foster care, the caregiver or education decision-maker may use The Biome School's dispute resolution procedure.

During the pendency of the dispute resolution, the student shall remain in his or her school of origin in order to minimize disruptions and to reduce the number of moves between schools. Similarly, students attending their school of origin are entitled to continue to receive transportation during the appeal.

In the event of such dispute, The Biome School will inform the educational decision-maker or parent of their right to appeal the Best Interest Determination in a language and format reasonably calculated to inform the parent/educational decision-maker of their rights. They will also be provided with the following:

1. Contact information for The Biome School's foster care point of contact.
2. An explanation of the Best Interest Determination.
3. A step-by-step description of how to appeal the Best Interest Determination at Level I.
4. A statement advising that the student will remain in the school of origin, receiving all appropriate educational services during the pendency of the appeal.
5. Timelines for dispute resolution at each level.
6. Notice of rights to appeal to DESE if the parent/educational decision-maker is not satisfied of the level decision.

Level I

In order to appeal from the Best Interest Determination, a parent/educational decision-maker must submit their appeal in writing. This writing must contain the following:

1. The school in which enrollment is sought.
2. The basis for seeking enrollment.
3. The requesting parent/educational decision-maker's name and contact information.

If the appeal is submitted by email, the subject line should provide "Foster Care Appeal."

The appeal letter must be submitted within ten (10) weekdays of receiving The Biome School's notice of the right to appeal the decision. Failure to timely submit an appeal letter may result in dismissal of the appeal.

The Chief Executive Officer/designee will arrange for a personal conference with the parent/educational decision-maker, the student where appropriate, and the student's case manager or point of contact. Prior to the meeting, the Chief Executive Officer will have reviewed the documentation from the Best Interest Determination meeting. The conference will be arranged within ten (10) days of receipt of the appeal letter and will be conducted as soon as practicable.

Within five (5) days of the conference, the Chief Executive Officer/designee will inform the parent/educational decision-maker as well as other parties attending the meeting of the Chief Executive

Officer/designee's decision. The decision will be communicated in writing. The written decision will include the following:

1. Copy of the complete Level I appeal packet (appeal, Best Interest documents, notices, and decision).
2. The decision and an explanation of the decision.
3. Directions concerning the procedure to appeal the decision to Level II, including the DESE foster care point of contact, including that individual's name, phone number and email address.

Level II

If the parent/educational decision-maker disagrees with the Level I decision, they may submit a written and dated appeal letter headed "Foster Child Appeal" which must include:

1. The school in which enrollment is sought and the basis for seeking such enrollment.
2. The parent/educational decision-maker's name and contact information.
3. Best Interest Determination notes and reports.
4. Copy of the Level I appeal letter.
5. Copy of The Biome School's Level I decision.

The appeal letter must be submitted to the DESE contact person and The Biome School's Chief Executive Officer within five (5) days of receipt of the Level I decision. The Biome School will have five (5) days from receipt of the Level II appeal letter to submit its response, which will be headed "Foster Child Appeal." Documents submitted after the stated deadline will not be considered.

The State's decision will be made by a three-person panel including the DESE foster care point of contact, an additional DESE representative, and a representative of the state child welfare agency. The panel will make its decision within thirty (30) days of receipt of the Level II appeal letter. The DESE foster care point of contact will send the written decision to the parent/educational decision-maker and the Chief Executive Officer. The decision will include:

1. Copy of the Level II packet.
2. The decision and its explanation.