

# Principal's Notes

## Open Enrollment: What it Means for Amsterdam Families

### **A Heads-Up from Mrs. Stewart**

Whether your child is currently in Kindergarten or is about to exit the walls of Amsterdam after finishing 6th grade this year, the new state legislation will affect you and your family. The purpose of this communication is to clarify what happens to school enrollment for children who live in Amsterdam School District as they approach 7th and 8th grade.

This communication is NOT to be confused with the Open Enrollment Policy that Amsterdam is currently developing for students who reside outside of Amsterdam School District but would like to apply to attend Amsterdam School District. Our school board is developing a strategic plan and goals to address its Open Enrollment Policy for out-of-district children. More information will be available and communicated as that policy is finalized over the next 2 months.

### **A Little History**

Amsterdam School District is a public K-8 district, and the children living within its boundaries are also in Manhattan High School District (grades 9-12). In the public school world, this would typically mean a child living in Amsterdam School district would attend Amsterdam Elementary from grades K-8. Once that child became a 9th grader, he or she would attend Manhattan Public High School. However, since the 1950s, Amsterdam has worked collaboratively with Manhattan to arrange for Amsterdam's 7th and 8th grade students to attend school in the Manhattan Elementary School District. Reasons for this include limited space and staffing at Amsterdam and greater opportunity for coursework variety and extracurricular activities. Annually, Amsterdam and Manhattan have crafted a tuition agreement, in which Amsterdam School pays tuition to Manhattan to support both the education of Amsterdam students attending Manhattan, as well as the bussing costs to get students to Manhattan daily.

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### **Open Enrollment: Now What?**

With the passage of House Bill 203 in the Montana State Legislature, the annual agreement between Manhattan and Amsterdam cannot look the same any longer. Now any child residing in

Montana can apply to attend any public school and be accepted, with certain limits applying, such as building capacity. The limits to this are identified in HB 203, with a few parameters being left to local control of school districts' boards and their policy 3141.

What does this mean for 7th and 8th grade students who live in the Amsterdam School District? Manhattan has prioritized acceptance of Amsterdam students, meaning incoming seventh graders will have a seat at the table in Manhattan as long as there is room and meet behavioral/attendance requirements. Once these Amsterdam kids are enrolled in Manhattan for 7th grade and attend there, these same kids will be guaranteed an 8th grade spot at Manhattan, as well. **HOWEVER**, each of these students (who reside in Amsterdam School District) must complete Manhattan's open enrollment application process for **each** year, 7th grade and 8th grade year. In this instance, students who reside in Amsterdam School District are treated no differently than students who reside in any other district in the state.

### **Okay, So What IS the Open Enrollment Application Process?**

- Amsterdam students currently in 6th grade will need to submit their application to attend 7th grade in Manhattan by February 16.
- Students who reside in Amsterdam School District that are currently 7th graders at Manhattan need to submit their application to attend 8th grade in Manhattan by February 16.

The application requires that families:

- Complete the Google Form online called the [Non-Resident Request Form](#)
- Complete and submit Section I of the [FP-14](#) form (hard copy) to Manhattan School
- Provide previous 3 years of child's behavior and attendance records from school

To retrieve attendance and behavior records from Amsterdam, there is a records request available at the Amsterdam Office that must be completed, as well. These items must be provided to Manhattan by February 16. Incomplete applications are not accepted. All of this information and more, including Manhattan's full Policy 3141, is on Manhattan's school [website](#), and I strongly encourage parents to read it carefully.

### **My Child is an Amsterdam 6th grader who resides in Amsterdam School District--What do I do?**

Email communication went out to your family on Wednesday, January 24, explaining the process. A hard-copy of the FP-14 form was sent home with 6th graders on Thursday, January 25. For your convenience, Amsterdam will help facilitate getting all of the paperwork submitted to Manhattan for 6th grade families. If you turn your FP-14 form into the Amsterdam Office by Monday, Feb 12, I will hand deliver the 6th grade forms to the Manhattan Office by February 16. You will still need to complete the Non-Resident Request Form and the records request form.

### **My Child is an Amsterdam 6th grader who does NOT reside in Amsterdam School District or Manhattan School District--What do I do?**

If you would like your child to attend Manhattan next fall, you will need to complete the open enrollment process for Manhattan, as well. However, placement is not prioritized or guaranteed. The alternative is that your child could attend whichever home district in which he or she currently resides or you could apply to a different public district of your choice.

## **My Child is a 7th Grader who resides in Amsterdam School District and attends Manhattan Middle School. What do I do?**

Communication was sent home yesterday to these families from Manhattan School District, with the link to application forms and policy provided. If you want your child to attend Manhattan next fall, you must complete the Open Enrollment process described above. Your child's seat is guaranteed for 8th grade, since they are currently attending 7th grade at Manhattan Middle School, but this applies ONLY if you complete the application process.

## **My Child is an 8th Grader who resides in Amsterdam School District and attends Manhattan Middle School. What do I do?**

You do not have to do anything! Assuming you want your child to attend high school in Manhattan, no action is needed. Manhattan High School district is the district in which your child currently resides.

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**Marisa Stewart**

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