

From: Pisarik, Holly <HollyPisarik@gov.sc.gov>
To: hggillespie@gmail.com hggillespie@gmail.com
Date: 3/22/2016 9:21:43 AM
Subject: Fwd: Emma Gillespie

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Dee Christopher <christopherd@fortmillschools.org>
Date: March 21, 2016 at 4:29:40 PM EDT
To: "Pisarik, Holly" <HollyPisarik@gov.sc.gov>
Cc: "craig@pisariklawfirm.com" <craig@pisariklawfirm.com>, Felicia Walker <WalkerF@fortmillschools.org>, Gales Scroggs <scroggsg@fortmillschools.org>, Sue Gulledge <gulledges@fortmillschools.org>
Subject: RE: Emma Gillespie

Good Afternoon Ms. Pisarik. I apologize for just now getting back with you. I was out of town most of last week and am just now getting caught up with e-mails.

I understand your request as wanting Algebra 1 first semester in order for Emma to be able to take Physical Science Honors during 2nd semester. Currently Emma does not meet the prerequisite, but could if Algebra 1 is scheduled first semester. My answer at this time is we will need to wait to see if this is even possible. We will bring our master scheduling based on student requests in the next month. As you can imagine this is an enormous task for our administration and counselors as we schedule over 2100 students and over 900 sections of classes. I am in favor of making this happen if possible. I have copied Ms. Walker and Ms. Gulledge on this e-mail for their information. We will not begin working on individual student schedules until July 11 when a few counselors will be back on campus.

I recognize this is not a final answer, but hope you will understand the complexity of our schedule. Ms. Walker and Ms. Gulledge have this request and will make every reasonable effort to have Emma in the classes she is recommended to take.

Thanks.

M. Dee Christopher
Principal
Fort Mill High School

From: Pisarik, Holly [mailto:HollyPisarik@gov.sc.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, March 16, 2016 1:22 PM
To: Dee Christopher <christopherd@fortmillschools.org>
Cc: craig@pisariklawfirm.com
Subject: FW: Emma Gillespie

Hi Mr. Christopher,

My daughter Emma Gillespie is currently an 8th grader at Banks Trail Middle School and a rising 9th grader to Ft. Mill High School. Below you will find correspondence between Ms. Walker and me regarding a scheduling request I made at Emma's high school planning meeting and again to Ms. Walker. Understanding that Algebra I is a prerequisite to Honors Physical Science, I requested that Emma be allowed to take Algebra I first semester of 9th grade and Honors Physical Science second semester.

To support the request, I provided relevant background information. Our family moved from Columbia to Ft. Mill. In Columbia, Emma was in the Gifted and Talented program. Although she did not meet the state standards for the program, Richland One allows for alternate paths, including teacher recommendation. Emma excelled in the Gifted and Talented program. When we moved, Ft. Mill School District would not allow Emma to continue in Gifted and Talented based on its district policy. Emma does not perform well on standardized tests, but many of her teachers have realized that Emma's test scores are not a true representation of her abilities.

Emma has been in non-gifted and talented classes in middle school, and she has made straight As with little effort. Emma earned these grades while also balancing Beta Club and playing volleyball, basketball, and soccer for Banks Trail. Although I am proud of Emma for maintaining her grades, it has been incredibly frustrating to observe that she has done so without being challenged, with little to no homework, and rarely or ever having to study for tests. Recognizing Emma's ability to do higher level work, her teachers recommended her for Honors Physical Science and Honors World Geography.

Although Ms. Walker states in her e-mail below that there is no school policy on point, Ft. Mill's Sequencing Courses policy is contained on page 7 of the Fort Mill Schools Program of Studies. This policy allows for exceptions at the principal's discretion. Thus, I am requesting you grant an exception to allow Emma to sequence her courses to first take Algebra I and then Honors Physical Science. I, along with Emma's teachers, believe it is in Emma's best interest to be in the class that most closely aligns with her ability and that allows her the most class options as she progresses through high school. I hope you agree. I understand from Ms. Walker that other requests have been made for an exception to this policy. I'm assuming because the policy specifically gives you discretion, you analyze each situation to determine the best interest of the child, rather than applying a blanket prohibition.

I have called your office twice to schedule a meeting. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this request. Thank you for your assistance.

As an unrelated aside, you taught me many moons ago at Castle Heights. I guess that makes us both old J

Sincerely, Holly

From: Felicia Walker [<mailto:WalkerF@fortmillschools.org>]
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2016 2:41 PM
To: Pisarik, Holly
Subject: RE: Emma Gillespie

Hi Mrs. Pisarik. I remember and I sent the information on March 8, but based on this email I realize that the email address that I used was incorrect. I never received a message that it was undeliverable; therefore, I apologize. As I stated in our conversation, the attached information does not refer to policy about hand scheduling. You won't find this in any school's policy. The information references our district's prerequisite.

Felicia R. Walker
9th Grade Administrator
Fort Mill High School

From: Pisarik, Holly [<mailto:HollyPisarik@gov.sc.gov>]
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2016 2:31 PM
To: Felicia Walker <WalkerF@fortmillschools.org>

Subject: Emma Gillespie

Hi Ms. Walker,

It was nice talking to you about my daughter's scheduling for next year. When we spoke early last week, you were going to e-mail me a copy of the policy that day that you were relying upon to deny my scheduling request.

Just a reminder – Emma's 8th grade teachers recommended her for honors physical science in 9th grade, but despite her teachers' belief that Emma is capable of the work, I was told at the IGP meeting and again by you that Emma could not enroll in honors physical science because by policy the school could not guarantee a child a certain schedule or class sequence. I understand that Algebra I is a prerequisite for physical science, and I am not requesting an exception to this policy. As you will recall, I requested that Emma be scheduled for Algebra I first semester of 9th grade in order to complete the pre-requisite, and then be scheduled for honors physical science second semester of 9th grade. As I explained, I, along with Emma's teachers, believe it is in Emma's best interest to be in the class that most closely aligns with her ability and that allows her the most class options as she progresses through high school.

I look forward to receiving a copy of the policy. Thanks again for your help.

Thanks, Holly

Holly G. Pisarik
Chief Legal Counsel
Office of Governor Nikki R. Haley
O: 803-734-8465 C: 803-322-6255