

Students that Live in Housing Not Subject to the PAUSD Parcel Tax

There are approximately 687 students lawfully attending PAUSD schools who live outside the school district and thus in housing that is not subject to the PAUSD parcel tax or to property taxes that flow to the PAUSD schools. They are:

- 557 students in the court-ordered Tinsley Voluntary Transfer Program
- 116 students who are the children of PAUSD employees
- 14 students who were permitted to attend PAUSD for other reasons

There are approximately 120 other children whose families live in the PAUSD boundaries and attend PAUSD schools but whose housing is exempt from Palo Alto property taxes (but not PAUSD parcel taxes); these children live with their families in exempt Stanford housing (generally graduate student housing). Most children of Stanford staff and faculty, however, live in non-exempt housing; their families pay property taxes (as well as parcel taxes) in the same manner as other Palo Alto residents.

The specific facts connected with each set of students listed above are described below.

Court Ordered Transfers: The Tinsley “Voluntary Transfer Program”

Following a lawsuit against PAUSD and other local school districts, the San Mateo County Court in 1986 ordered Palo Alto Unified and several neighboring school districts to enroll in their schools a limited number of early-elementary-aged minority students who reside in the Ravenswood City School District (covering East Palo Alto and parts of Menlo Park). Over the last two decades, the Tinsley Voluntary Transfer Program (VTP), as it became known, grew as students moved up through the grade levels and additional students enrolled in the program.

Host districts like PAUSD currently receive 70 percent of the state per-student funding that otherwise would have gone to Ravenswood for most students transferred. To be enrolled in the court-ordered program, students must reside in the Ravenswood School District, be a listed minority, and be in kindergarten, first grade, or second grade.

As of the beginning of the 2004-2005 academic year, 557 PAUSD students were part of the VTP. The Court's order limits the number of new transfers to 60 per year. Students who drop out of the VTP are not replaced unless they are in kindergarten or first grade. Accordingly, if a 5th grade student drops from the program, that student is not replaced by another candidate for transfer. If a VTP family moves out of the Ravenswood district, even if nearby, the student is removed from the PAUSD's schools.¹

The transfer students are “voluntary” only in the sense that the parents voluntarily opt to transfer their children here; for host districts such as PAUSD, the VTP is not a discretionary expense, but rather is court-ordered and mandatory. A more detailed description of the VTP, its history and general impact, is posted on the PAUSD web site.²

¹ Additional questions about the PAUSD Voluntary Transfer Program should be directed to 329-3736 or vtp@pausd.org.

² http://www.pausd.palo-alto.ca.us/parents/programs/vol_transfer.shtml

Children of Employees

Since 1990, a contracted PAUSD employee who works at least 80 percent time but who does not live in Palo Alto may request an interdistrict transfer in order for his or her child to attend PAUSD schools. Each transfer request is subject to the approval of the school board, which reserves the right to cap the number of such students. This type of transfer occurs in many school districts throughout the nation. As of the beginning of the 2004-05 school year, PAUSD had 116 such transfers.

This interdistrict transfer is an important benefit, enhancing PAUSD's ability to recruit and retain employees. Some of the District's employees start their work days exceptionally early; their ability to bring their children to Palo Alto allows them to do so.

PAUSD also has found that this benefit reduces employee turnover. Teachers and staff with children in the PAUSD schools are far more likely to remain employed in the district in order to provide educational quality and consistency for their children, saving the district the considerable cost of recruiting, hiring and training new employees. The student transfers enhance employee morale and give teachers a greater understanding of curriculum throughout the grades. To many who have studied this program, the benefits outweigh the incremental cost.

This benefit is used by a small fraction of the PAUSD's 1,000+ employees.

Interdistrict Transfers due to Health and Safety of Child

This year, approximately 14 children are in attendance in the PAUSD primarily for health and safety reasons. The specific reasons such requests are granted vary widely. These situations, few in number, are handled on a case-by-case basis.

Children of Stanford Students

Approximately 3.9 percent of the PAUSD students are children who live on the Stanford campus. Of these 400 or so students, 120 live in housing that is not subject to regular property taxes. Stanford University's other parcels' property tax contributions, however, comprise over 10 percent of the PAUSD's annual revenues. In addition:

- Each Stanford parcel pays parcel taxes (even those that are exempt from regular property tax).
- Stanford staff and professor on-campus households pay property taxes, as well as parcel taxes. About 70 percent of the PAUSD's students who live on the Stanford campus live in fully taxable faculty and staff housing.
- Similarly, Stanford's parcels used for other nonacademic purposes pay both property and parcel taxes. This includes the Stanford Shopping Center, the Stanford Bookstore, Stanford Industrial Parks and the Hyatt Classic Retirement Community sited on Stanford land off Sand Hill Road.

Stanford supplements its contributions to the PAUSD schools by providing land on which four PAUSD school sites sit (Nixon, Escondido, Gunn and part of Palo Alto High) at no cost to the PAUSD. In addition, Stanford recently donated \$10 million to the school district to assist it in the opening of Terman Middle School.

Children Whose Parents Falsify Palo Alto Addresses

Under PAUSD district guidelines, a child must live in the Palo Alto Unified School District every day and night of the week to attend the PAUSD schools. On occasion, the district will discover nonresidents who have falsified information in order for their children to attend the PAUSD's well-respected schools.

While the numbers of families attesting that they live here when they do not is not believed to be large, the district is cognizant of this practice and has procedures in place to address it:

1. When parents enroll their child in the PAUSD, they are required to sign a statement of residency with proof of home ownership or leasing arrangement.³ Whenever they change addresses, they are required to re-verify residency.
2. Principals, teachers and support staff at each school look out for students whom they suspect do not live in Palo Alto. Most of the children identified as non-residents are brought to the district's attention by school personnel.
3. Complaints or concerns that are called into the principals or central administration, anonymously or otherwise, are fully investigated.

The PAUSD also contracts for the services of a private investigator. Due to significant budget cuts, however, the private investigator time is limited. The PAUSD now relies primarily on administrative staff to follow up on suspected non-resident students.

Other

There are other types of student transfers that other school districts permit, which the PAUSD has disallowed for the last ten or so years: I-20 transfer requests from foreign students with student VISAs that are not part of a licensed foreign exchange program and Allen Bill transfers for children of employees who work elsewhere in Palo Alto.

³ http://pausd.org/parents/registration/proof_res.shtml.