

## IRN Guidance Document

The state assigns a unique six-digit Information Retrieval Number (IRN - found in the Ohio Educational Directory) for each school building that is reporting at least one student. There also are many types of entities that request IRNs for financial billing purposes. Building and district IRNs are used in the state's accountability system to identify the entity (if any) to which a student's data should be attributed. When stricter federal reporting guidelines were implemented, the Ohio Department of Education developed a policy on how and when to issue a new IRN for a building versus when to transfer an existing IRN. This updated document is designed to provide additional clarification and guidance on IRNs and to help district and building personnel understand when a new IRN may be assigned and when an existing IRN should be transferred.

### There are several reasons why a school or district may need IRN guidance including:

- cases where a large increase or decrease in student population causes a district to make changes to the number of buildings it operates;
- when a new community school opens or an existing community school amends its charter and reconfigures its operation into two or more schools;
- when a district is updating its facilities due to participation in the Ohio School Facilities Commission's Classroom Facilities Assistance Program (CFAP);
- situations where a district reconfigures its buildings as part of the Corrective Action and/or Restructuring requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act.

### General Guidance for New IRN Issuance versus Transfer of Existing IRN

State and federal laws increasingly emphasize accountability at the building level and the need to track student progress over time. To meet those goals, ODE has modified the meaning of the word "school" as it pertains to an IRN assignment. Instead of thinking of a "school" as a physical plant with a specific name and location/address, ODE's policy is to define a "school" as a conceptual student body headed by an administrator dedicated to that group of students.

To ensure that progress is tracked over time, the IRN guidelines are written so that a school district should transfer an existing IRN when a conceptual student body remains essentially intact regardless of the name of the building or the physical location where those students are attending classes. In cases where the student body in the new entity is substantially changed, a new IRN may be requested. The examples below provide additional details and will help to further guide districts.

### Transfer of Existing IRNs

In general, an existing IRN should be transferred if at least one of the following is true:

1. **A district opens a new building that does not house a newly -configured student body.** In many cases, this happens when a district is replacing an existing building either on its own or as part of the School Facilities Commission's Classroom Facilities Assistance Program (CFAP). When a facility is replaced, it is important to look at the student body that is being served by the old and new buildings. If the student body is very similar (either the students themselves are transferring from the old building to the new one or the neighborhoods and grades being served by the two buildings are substantially similar), the district should transfer the IRN from the old building to the new one.
2. **An existing school changes its location or its name, but the students being served remain the same.** When a facility is replaced, a district will sometimes decide to build the new school at a different location either because there is not enough land at the original location to erect the new building while continuing to operate the old one or because the district decides it makes good business sense to move the building. If the student body being served by the old and new buildings is substantially similar, (either the students themselves are transferring from the old building to the new one or the neighborhoods and grades being served by the "old" and "new" buildings are substantially similar), the district should transfer the IRN from the old building to the new one. In addition, if a building changes its name, but the student body being served by the building is substantially similar, the district should keep the same IRN. This guideline applies in cases

where the name change is occurring because a building is being replaced or because the community simply decides to rename an existing school.

3. **A school or a group of schools is reconfigured and the new configuration does not result in a unique student body.**

School districts have the ability to reconfigure their buildings to change the grades contained therein. Sometimes a reconfiguration is done to accommodate changes to the student population. Other times it is done to help the district save money. Still other districts reconfigure their buildings because they believe it will allow for better teaching and learning. If the reconfiguration results in the student population in a building being substantially similar to the population as it existed prior to the change, the existing IRN should be used. For example, if a district decides to change from a K-6 and 7-8 configuration to a K-5 and 6-8 configuration, the district should keep the existing IRNs. In this example, only the 6<sup>th</sup> grade is changing buildings, which means that both schools will continue to serve substantially similar student populations to those served prior to the move.

4. **A district closes (or merges) buildings and the student body of each building after the closure is substantially similar to the student body of each building before the closure.**

As student populations shift, districts will sometimes decide to close a building and merge the students from the closed building into one or more other buildings. If the students are distributed among other buildings such that they represent a minority of the total student population in those buildings, the district should continue to use the existing IRNs. For example, assume a district with five buildings that house students in grades K-5, decides to close one school. If the district redraws the attendance territories so that each of the four remaining buildings receives approximately one-fourth of the students who had attended the closed building, the district should keep the existing IRNs of the four open buildings versus asking for new ones. In an instance where multiple buildings are merging, it is recommended that the district retain the IRN of the building from which the largest majority of students originated.

#### **New IRNs**

In general a new school IRN may be issued if at least one of following criteria is met:

1. **A district opens a new building that results in the creation of a unique student body.**

In many cases, this happens when a district is experiencing an increase in its student population and is increasing the total number of buildings it operates. It also can happen when a large school (often a high school) breaks into several "small schools" and each small school houses a unique student body with its own administrator/principal. Small schools are sometimes housed in the same building as the "old" large school, but the new schools offer specialized courses of study and usually are designed to serve students with specific needs or interests. If the student population being served in the new building is unique, the district may apply for a new IRN.

2. **A new charter is issued by the State Department of Education.**

A new charter is issued whenever a new community school opens and the new school would request a new IRN. A charter also would be issued when a new public school district is created and any buildings associated with the new district would receive new IRNs.

3. **A school or a group of schools is reconfigured and the new configuration results in a unique student body.**

Districts may decide to reconfigure their buildings in a way that leads to a new student body being housed in each building. An example of this is a district with four neighborhood schools each serving students in grades K-5 that decides to reconfigure to a district-wide service area with one building serving all of the district's kindergarteners, another building serving grades 1-2, another building serving grades 3-4 and another building serving grade 5. In this case, none of the new buildings would serve a substantially similar student body when compared to the buildings as they existed prior to the reconfiguration and thus it may be appropriate for the district to apply for new IRNs.

**If a district believes that a building qualifies for a new IRN, there are seven general requirements that must be met. These requirements include:**

1. The building provides preschool, elementary, and/or secondary instruction;
2. The building has one or more teachers;
3. The building has at least one assigned administrator;
4. The building has an anticipated enrollment of more than 10 students;
5. The building has students who will likely remain in the school continuously for one year or more;
6. The building is designated as a separate entity for purposes of financial reporting;
7. The building either has its own facility or has multiple entities within the same facility but each provides unique curricula.

If a district believes that a building meets the guidelines to request a new IRN, district personnel should submit an ODE IRN request form (through e-mail, fax, or regular mail) that provides the data that is required to be listed in the ODE directory including: school name, address, grade span, phone, principal, etc.

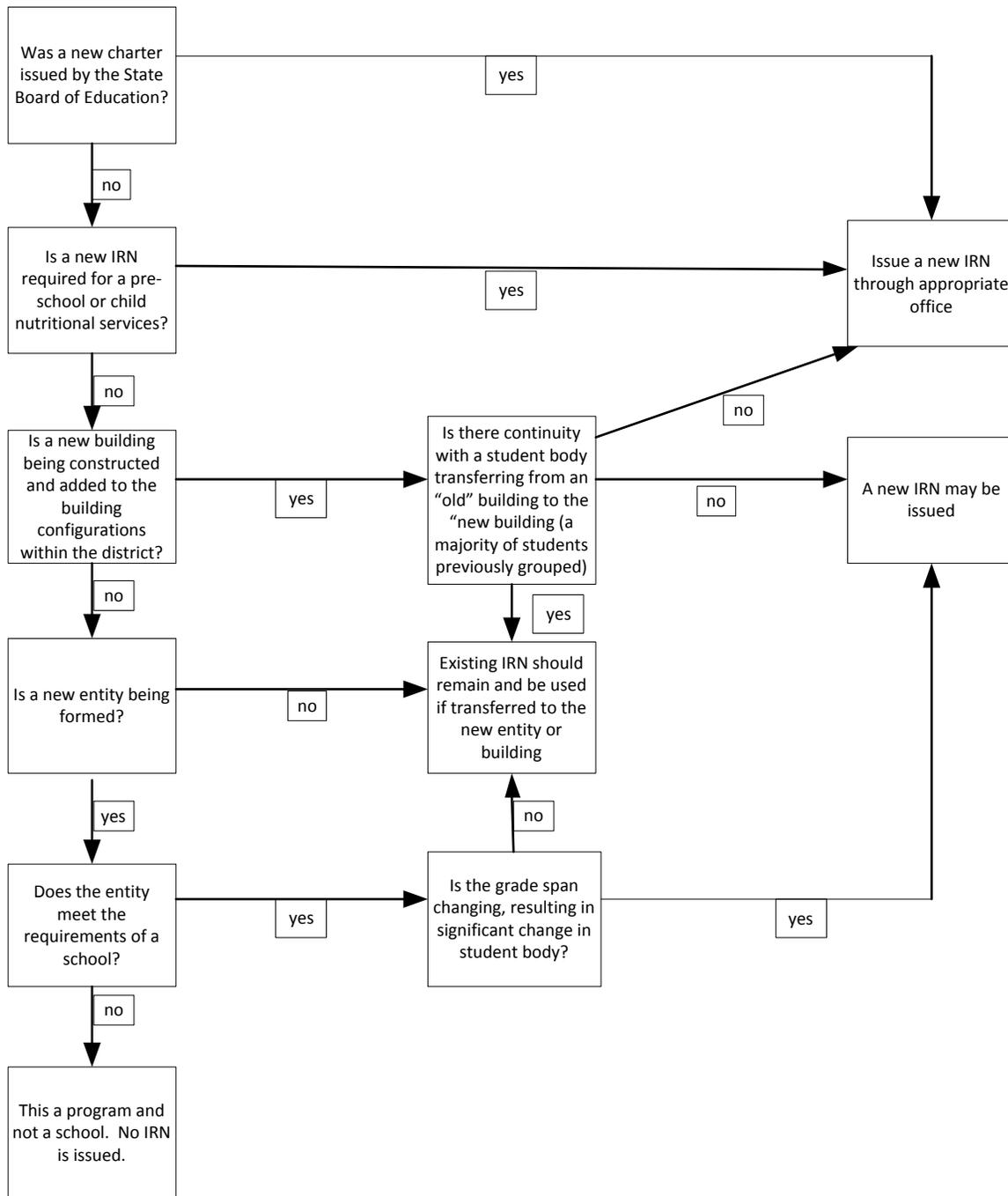
If the request is approved, ODE will enter this information into the Ohio Educational Directory system (OEDs) as "under construction." The district then can begin to use the new IRN internally, but must notify the department when the school officially opens. The department will not move forward with issuing a new IRN unless a district confirms their desire to do so.

If a school with a new IRN will open in the middle of an academic year, the district must report the students attending that new school under a single IRN for the entire school year. If a school opens on or before December 31<sup>st</sup> of the academic year, the students should be reported under their new IRN for the *entire* school year. If the school opens on or after January 1<sup>st</sup> of the year, the students should be reported under their old IRN for the *entire* school year. The district has the option of reporting all students with the new IRN in October even though they may not be in that building until December of that school year.

**Updating Information in the Ohio Educational Directory system (OEDS)**

Updates to the Ohio Educational Directory system (OEDs) can be made via the web interface located at <http://webapp2.ode.state.oh.us/oeds-r/query/default.asp>. The updates that can be made by organizational administrators include changes in grade spans, updating the names of key organizational staff, addresses changes, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, school type, enrollment figures, and others. This interface will allow users more access to their data and will permit the general public to view more information about the schools and districts than was previously available.

**Answer Tree for New IRN Request**



**Contacts at ODE for Questions Regarding IRNs**

Depending on the type of entity and type of task you are interested in learning more about, the contact person at ODE varies, for a list of individuals to contact by entity type and task please access the link below.

<http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?Page=3&TopicRelationID=3&Content=124596>