

**LOWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**SCHOOL ASSIGNMENT POLICY File: JCA**

All students in grades pre-school to grade 12 enroll at the Family Resource Center. This policy outlines assignment criteria unique to pre-school, grades kindergarten to 8, and high school (grades 9-12).

**Preschool Programs**

Lowell Public Schools offers Full-day and Half-Day Preschool Programs to children 4 years old by September 1st.

Students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs):

Three and four-year-old students with IEPs are assigned to preschool based on IEP, required services, residency, and available space. Children with IEPs are provided preschool programming on or before their third birthday in accordance with Part B of the Individuals with Disability Education Act.

**Pre-Registration Period for Preschool:**

Lowell Public Schools holds a pre-registration period for preschool during the months of February through April each year. At the time of registration, parent(s)/guardian(s) will be asked to indicate three (3) school choices. There are a limited number of full-day preschool placements in select schools. At the time of registration parent(s)/guardian(s) must identify school preference. A student's Preschool Placement is for one-year and has no bearing on a student's kindergarten placement.

All families must register at the Family Resource Center.

To register your child, you must provide the following documentation: proof of residency, child's birth certificate, current immunization/health records, and photo ID of parent/guardian(s) registering the child.

Given no transportation is provided to preschoolers, we strongly encourage families to consider selecting schools where the family can ensure on-time, regular attendance by the student.

**Preschool Lottery:**

Families pre-registering are entered into the Preschool Lottery. The Early Childhood Department diligently considers gender and minority status in adherence with a child's lottery status.

A random and blindly generated five digit number is assigned to each student at the conclusion of the registration period (no later than May 15), and stored in the district's Student Information

Management System. Any family registering after the pre-registration date will automatically be entered on the Preschool Waitlist by date of registration. The Early Childhood Department will maintain the Preschool Waitlist.

Pre-registered families will receive written notification providing the student's lottery number and their proposed school assignment in June. Families MUST respond in writing to the letter selecting from one of the following options upon receiving notification of preschool assignment:

- Accept placement
- Accept placement and remain on waitlist at preferred school
- Reject placement and remain on waitlist at preferred school
- Reject placement and seek alternative preschool programming

Families MUST return the proposed assignment letter within 15 days to the Early Childhood Department indicating one of the selections above. Upon receipt of the proposed assignment letter, the Early Childhood Department will generate an official assignment letter. Families not responding to pre-registration letters by June 30 will be placed on the waitlist in order of their lottery numbers.

Students accepting and receiving assignment letters, must attend school or contact their child's assigned school within five days from the start of preschool to maintain enrollment. After five school days, if the family has not contacted the school or the child has not attended, the child will be unenrolled and their seat will be filled by a student on the Waitlist. Student with IEPs, in foster care or covered under McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act are exempt from this policy.

### **Attendance:**

Preschool Attendance: It is the parent(s)/guardian(s)' responsibility to ensure regular attendance. Regular attendances matters. Given that there is limited space available in Lowell Public Schools for preschool-age children, the district has established an attendance policy. Children with unexcused absence of more than 10% of the total number of days of school will be provided written notice and may be unenrolled.

To withdraw a preschooler:

Parent(s)/guardian(s) must provide a written request to the school to withdraw a student, and then forward the request to the Early Childhood Department.

### **Kindergarten through Grade 8**

To ensure equity in the Lowell Public Schools for all students, students will be assigned to a school in Kindergarten through Grade 8 based on the following placement criteria:

1. Space Availability - space available in a particular school, program or grade is defined according to the policy in effect as to class size.

2. Sibling Preference - all students whose parents make timely application to a particular school and already have other children attending that school are given priority of assignment for that school.
3. Ethnicity Balance - new assignments and transfers must meet requirements of ethnicity balance. The goal is to achieve an ethnicity balance within each school, program and grade that reflects, within 10% above or below, the ethnicity percentage of the zone as a whole.
4. Place of Residence (proximity of residence to school) - all other priorities being equal, the student living within the school neighborhood street directory as defined by the Lowell School Committee, has priority of assignment for that school.

In addition to using placement criteria 1 through 4 above, the Family Resource Coordinator will also consider McKinney-Vento, Foster Care, Special Education, gender, and English Language Learner status, to ensure students in all schools are being placed equitably. The placement criteria above will be the primary criteria for all placements and transfers for Kindergarten through Grade 8 under this policy.

### **Kindergarten Registration and Lottery**

Students may attend kindergarten in the Lowell Public Schools (LPS) if they are 5 on or before September 1st.

Annually, the LPS will hold a pre-registration period for kindergarten in the spring. Pre-registration takes place at the Family Resource Center and the dates of pre-registration will be announced on the district website, Facebook page, Twitter and other means of communication no later than March 1<sup>st</sup>.

All families are encouraged to enroll for Kindergarten during the pre-registration period. For schools where there are more pre-registration requests than seats available, a lottery will be held. The kindergarten lottery will be held no later than May 15<sup>th</sup> each year and the lottery will determine registration and initial waitlist placement. The date of the lottery will be published on the district website, Facebook page, Twitter and other means of communication no later than May 1<sup>st</sup> and the results of the lottery will be published online no later than the next business day following the date of the lottery.

All registration applications received AFTER the published pre-registration period will be placed on the waitlist on a first-come first-served basis where open seats are not available within a requested grade and school.

### **Grades 1-8 Transfer Applications and Lottery**

All families are encouraged to submit transfer requests for the subsequent school year during the transfer pre-registration period. Pre-registration takes place at the Family Resource Center and the dates of pre-registration will be announced on the district website, Facebook page, Twitter and other means of communication no later than March 1<sup>st</sup>.

For schools where there are more pre-registration transfer requests than seats available, a lottery will be held. The transfer lottery will be held no later than May 15<sup>th</sup> each year and the lottery will determine the first round of transfer placements and initial waitlist placement.

All transfer applications received AFTER the published pre-registration period will be placed on a waitlist on a first-come first-served basis.

All students who are currently on transfer wait lists for the 2019-2020 school year and prior years will remain on the waitlist per the 2019-2020 school assignment policy. All new transfer requests for the 2020-2021 school year and beyond will follow the rules and procedures of the 2020-2021 school assignment policy.

### **Private, parochial or charter school students**

Student attending private, parochial or charter schools and who are seeking placement in the Lowell Public Schools, must register beginning April 1st if they desire placement in the subsequent school year. Students who register for but fail to attend the Lowell Public Schools will be removed from all waitlists at the time they are discharged from active status in the Student Information Management System.

### **Waitlist**

At the time of registration, the parent/guardian will be asked to indicate three (3) school choices in order of preference. Students who are not assigned to their first choice school will be placed on a waitlist based on their second and third school choices at the time of registration.

**Students on the waitlist from 2019-2020 shall have priority over newly enrolled students to the school system when determining placement.** Routine placements from the waitlist will be made beginning on June 1st and continue until August 10th, to be effective the subsequent school year. During peak registration times, from August 10th through September 15th, the Family Resource Center will make every effort to give priority to students on the waitlist. The Family Resource Center will cease making placements from the waitlist for the current school year following the 20h day of school.

To strive to meet the requests of families, calls from the waitlist will be made in the following order:

Students for whom there are three (3) schools chosen, and the student did not receive a placement at their first choice.

Students who were placed in, and are registered for, neither their first or second choice school  
Students who were placed in, and are registered for, their second choice school.

The order of names on the waitlist will be determined through the use of a randomly and blindly generated five (5) digit number that will be generated annually and stored in the district's Student Information Management System. The district will apply Placement Criteria 1 through 4 (above) based on the random number and the date of request.

Students must be pre-registered (before August 15th) or active students in the Lowell Public Schools to remain on the waitlist.

The adult listed as the primary contact in the Student Information Management System will be notified by the Family Resource Center by telephone if their child is eligible for a transfer off of the waitlist.

In the event the primary contact cannot be reached, the Family Resource Center shall notify the second contact listed for the student, provided that the second contact is listed as residing with the student and is listed as a custodial parent or legal guardian.

Except during the peak times of August 1<sup>st</sup> to the last day of transfers, families have forty-eight (48) hours to accept the transfer. After forty-eight (48) hours, if the family has not accepted the transfer assignment, the student will be removed from the waitlist for that school. During peak times, seats cannot be held. The Family Resource Center will make reasonable attempts to contact families to accept placement from the waitlist. Families will be asked to accept placement at the time they are called from the Family Resource Center.

Families may accept placement within forty-eight (48) hours of the call, but during that time seats will continue to be offered to other families until they are filled. Students will not lose their place on the waitlist during peak times if they are not able to respond prior to the seat being filled.

If parents anticipate being away during the summer, they must submit via email their contact information to the Family Resource Center Coordinator. Families are responsible for maintaining current mailing addresses and phone numbers on file with the Lowell Public Schools in the Student Information Management System.

Beginning with the 2020-21 school year, the all waitlists will initially be generated by a lottery.

Students already on the waitlist from the 2019-20 school year will be grandfathered until the terminal grade for which the student is currently waitlisted at a family's request.

After the 2019-20 waitlist transfer deadline, all students will be removed from the waitlist and a new lottery will be held annually for grades K-8. Families may request to be in the lottery for the upcoming school year by coming to the Family Resource Center by a date that will be

published no later than March 1st. The lottery for grades 1-8 will be held by the end of May each year.

### **Publishing the Waitlist**

The district will publish, on the district website, a graph representing the number of students on each school's waitlist. The district will also provide family members with information regarding their child's placement on the waitlist, either through a list of student identification numbers, or by providing student-specific information in the parent portal of the district's Student Information Management System.

This information will be updated weekly by the District's Data Department.

### **Out of Zone Placements**

Students who move from one geographical zone to the other in the city may request to remain in the school they presently are attending until the end of the school year in which they enrolled in the school prior to change of address provided that:

- The ethnicity balance of the school is not adversely affected.
- The parent provides transportation to and from school or the child's transportation needs can be accommodated by existing school bus routes.
- The student is not chronically absent or excessively tardy.

The Attendance Supervisor shall determine if a student is not eligible for out of zone placement, based on this requirement. Such a finding will result in a student being placed at a school in their geographical zone. The transfer must be approved by the Chief Equity Officer.

Parents/legal guardians may request a school of choice outside the zone in which they reside based on their child care needs provided that:

- There is space available at the grade level at the school.
- The ethnicity balance of the school is not adversely affected.
- The parent provides transportation to and from the school.
- The student is not chronically absent or excessively tardy.

The Attendance Supervisor shall determine if a student is not eligible for out of zone placement, based on this requirement. Such a finding will result in a student being placed at a school in their geographical zone. The transfer must be approved by the Chief Equity Officer.

Students who move from one geographical zone to the other will be removed from all waitlists in their previous zone. At the time of registration, families may choose to be placed on waitlists for schools in their new zone.

## **Transfers**

Once a student has attended a school, a parent who is dissatisfied with the assignment may request a voluntary transfer. **Only one transfer per year is allowed and must be requested through the Family Resource Center before the 20<sup>th</sup> day of school** or no later than forty-five (45) calendar days after the initial placement of the student in the school. Voluntary transfer requests will be honored if there are available seats.

Transfers requested after the 20<sup>th</sup> day of school will be reviewed on a case by case basis by the Chief Equity Officer.

## **Grades 9-12**

Students wishing to enroll in Lowell High School or the Career Academy, a full-service Community High School, may do so at the Family Resource Center.

All high school students are encouraged to bring with them, at the time of enrollment, their current transcripts. Missing transcripts will delay the development of a full and accurate schedule but will not delay students from attending the high school.

Upon enrollment students will be assigned a house by the Family Resource Center Coordinator. House placements will take into consideration McKinney-Vento, Foster Care, Special Education needs, gender, and English Language Learner status, to ensure students in all houses are being placed equitably.

All transfers out of the high school and into an alternate setting must be approved by the Chief Equity Officer or the Special Education Director.

## **Appeals**

Any appeal of a placement decision must be made in writing, addressed to the Chief Officer for Equity and Engagement.