

School Assignment Policy 2020-21 Addendum FILE: JCA

I. Overview

- a. For the 2020-21 school year, due to COVID-19 related safety-requirements, Lowell Public Schools will operate two (2) full time school models - an in-person model and a remote learning model.
- b. Lowell Public Schools students in grades 1-12 will attend the school to which they were assigned in the 2019-20 school year and engage in a remote learning platform for the 2020-21 school year. Students who were in grade 4 in 2019-20 will be considered students in the middle school to which their grade 4 school feeds.
- c. The District recognizes that some families may prefer in-person instruction for their children. There will be opportunities available for in-person instruction under this policy based on the capacity that has been assessed for each school building and grade levels within the school building.
- d. This policy addendum is for the 2020-21 school year only.

II. Kindergarten

This section of the policy will discuss how kindergarten placements will be determined in the 2020-21 school year.

a. Kindergarten: Lottery

Families who pre-registered their child for kindergarten between May 26th-June 30th (noon) were entered into the kindergarten lottery. Families who secured a seat through the lottery will be eligible to attend that school in the **2021-22** school year.

b. Kindergarten: School Assignment 2020-21 due to COVID-19 Safety Requirements

Due to COVID-19 safety and health requirements, there will be limited in-person enrollment. During the 2020-21 school year, all kindergarten students will be assigned to the school closest in distance to their home for the following reasons: equitable access to options, transportation limitations and safety. This will help to ensure that families have the same access to options and avoid online from becoming the default option for families who do not have or cannot afford their own means of transportation. It also eliminates time on the bus and reducing long travel times decreases safety and health risks.

The school closest to a family's home will be assigned by the Transportation Office. Street listings would be posted along with schools attached to those streets. This

assignment will be for one (1) year only, and will only apply to incoming Kindergarteners.

For incoming Kindergarten students who have older siblings in the school for which they secured a seat through the lottery, they will have the choice of selecting the school where their sibling is located or selecting the assigned school closest to them for the 2020-21 school year. Additionally, families may opt to submit a transfer request for the older sibling to attend the school that the Kindergarten sibling has been assigned to as the closest school to their home. Transfers for this circumstance are still subject to availability of space within the school (See section III D).

III. In-person Instruction

Families who wish to attend their school for in-person instruction (defined as the regular school hours of their school, 5 days per week) will be afforded the opportunity to do so by affirmatively selecting this option and receiving an in-person seat assignment by the Family Resource Center. This part of the policy will outline the processes for selecting in-person instruction.

a. In-person Instruction: District Application

The District will make available to families an application for those who wish to select in-person instruction for their child(ren). The application will be posted on the district's website and social media. It will also be sent to parents of currently enrolled students through email. The information gathered from this application will be used in running the lottery, should there be a need to lottery available seats for in-person instruction.

b. In-person Instruction: Health and Safety

The availability of in-person instruction and the district's in-person health and safety implementation guidelines will be determined and continually assessed using up-to-date data and guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the Massachusetts Department of Health and the Lowell Department of Health.

When families select in-person instruction, they agree to and understand the health and safety expectations as outlined by the district including but not limited to wearing a mask and abiding by social distance guidelines.

c. In-person Instruction: Lottery

Schools will have reduced capacity during the 2020-21 school year due to social distancing guidelines. If the number of family requests for in-person instruction exceeds the number of seats available, a lottery will be held to fill all available seats.

To ensure compliance with federal and state laws and to fulfill the district's commitment to equity and access, seats will be filled utilizing a weighted formula.

Weighting Criteria

- Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)
- Students identified with a 504 Plan (for learning related accommodations)
- Students identified for McKinney Vento services
- Students identified as English Learners (ELs)
- Students in entry grades of each level (K-2; 5th grade; 9th grade)
- Families who have more than one child enrolled in Lowell Public Schools
- Students of Lowell Public Schools personnel

Criteria will be assigned weights through guidelines which will be published prior to the lottery and developed by a cross-departmental team and reviewed by staff counsel.

Available seats for in-person instruction will be assigned based on a lottery using weighted criteria that will take place each month during the 2020-21 school year.

d. In-person Instruction: Transportation

In order to mitigate safety and health concerns, families who opt for in-person learning may be responsible for providing transportation to and from their child's school. Some transportation seats may be available; however, due to limited seats, a lottery will be conducted for the assignment of available seats.

The lottery weights will follow the priorities outlined for the school assignment lottery:

- Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)
- Students identified with a 504 Plan (for learning related accommodations)
- Students identified for McKinney Vento services
- Students identified as English Learners (ELs)
- Students in entry grades of each level (K-2; 5th grade; 9th grade)
- Families who have more than one child enrolled in Lowell Public Schools
- Students of Lowell Public Schools personnel

While we continue to work to reduce risks of exposure during busing, we will only provide busing to students which we are legally required to transport, i.e. K-6 students who are assigned to schools 2 miles or more from their residence as determined by the Transportation Office.

Furthermore, per the guidelines of state and federal law, transportation will be available for those individual students who qualify for transportation e.g. Special Education, 504s, or McKinney-Vento.

e. In-person Instruction: Transfer Due to Lack of Transportation

Families who prefer an in-person learning seat at a school within walking distance to their home - as defined by a school within two miles of their residence as determined by the Transportation Office - may make a transfer request to this school for consideration. The transfer should be requested prior to the lottery for in-person seats. The student will be assigned to that school provided that there are no students on the waitlist for that grade. Families who are granted a transfer under these circumstances understand that this is a one year only placement.

f. In-person Instruction: Transfer Request

If a family decides that they would prefer online instruction after securing a seat in the lottery, they may choose this option and their seat will be given to the next person on the waitlist. Once a student has begun attending school in-person, they must request a transfer to remote learning and wait to be assigned a transfer approval and starting date. Transfers will be reviewed and approved regularly, and the issuance of a new assignment will be determined by the Family Resource Center.

g. In-person Instruction: Illness and Absence

If a student must quarantine due to COVID, their seat will be held for one (1) month until they return. If the student chooses to continue with online learning at the end of their quarantine period, they may do so and their in-person seat will become available for another student.

If a family secures a seat for in-person learning through the lottery and the child has chronic absenteeism as defined by the Attendance Office, they will forfeit their seat and resume their schooling through the online platform and their in-person seat will become available for another student.

h. In-person Instruction: Timeline

August 19: Survey made public so families may opt into in person instruction.

August 27: Survey closes

September 4: Lottery held for in person instruction

September 4 - School Opening: Families notified

i. In-person Instruction: Appeals Process

If a family requests a different placement based on an extenuating health or safety reason or a change in family circumstances resulting in the need for a different placement, they can submit an appeal to the office of the Chief Equity Officer. The Chief

Equity Officer has been designated by the Superintendent to hear all appeals and make all decisions. There is no further appeal.

IV. Transfers

This section of the policy will discuss transfer situations which are not related to the above section (In-person instruction)

a. Transfers: Change of Address

If a family moves and their new address is now out of zone, they must select a new school. When they move and select a new school, a family will be provided the opportunity to complete a survey if they would like in-person instruction. Their request for in-person instruction will follow the guidelines as outlined above.

b. Transfers: Waitlist

Students who were placed on the waitlist during the 2019-20 school year will remain on the waitlist until the following school year (2021-22). The only students who will be moved from the waitlist, if there is space availability, during the current school year, will be siblings.

c. Transfers: General requests

Under the current school assignment policy, families may request transfers from one school to another for various reasons. Families are allowed one of these transfer requests per year. **No general transfer requests will be honored during the 2020-21 school year.** The only transfer requests honored during the current school year will be those as related to in-person instruction (see above).

V. Students new to the district

- a. Students who move into the District after the start of the school year will be afforded the same opportunities as those already enrolled in the District. They will be immediately enrolled into remote learning and then will have the opportunity to select in-person instruction as those students already enrolled in the District. At the time of enrollment they will be allowed to complete the application for in person instruction and their name will be part of the monthly lottery for in-person instruction seats.

VI. Preschool School

This part of the policy will outline the preschool assignment policy for the 2020-21 school year.

- a. Families entering children in the preschool lottery will have the opportunity to participate in remote learning.
- b. The District recognizes that some families may prefer in-person instruction for their children. There will be opportunities available for in-person instruction based on the capacity of preschool classrooms within our school buildings.
- c. This policy is for the 2020 -21-school year only.
- d. Returning and new students: with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) will have the opportunity to determine preference for in-person or remote learning.

VII. Preschool Lottery Assignment

- a. Pre-registered students will be assigned to one of their selected schools based on available space and randomly assigned lottery numbers from lowest to highest.
- b. Families must confirm acceptance of preschool school assignment within 72 hours.
- c. At time of acceptance, please select your preference for either in person learning or remote learning.
- d. The District recognizes that some families may prefer in-person instruction for their children. In-person instruction under this policy is based on lottery number and building capacity.

VIII. Preschool--in-person instruction

- a. Priority will be given to families that took part in the lottery process and have requested to be included on the waitlist.
- b. The following considerations for additional in-person seats will then be used based on date registered:
 - Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in order to ensure access to required services and special education educators. Classroom placements are made in accordance with IEPs.
 - Students identified with a 504 Plan (for learning related accommodations)
 - Students identified for McKinney Vento services
 - Students identified as Dual Language Learners
 - Students in entry grades of each level (K-2; 5th grade; 9th grade)
 - Families who have more than one child enrolled in Lowell Public Schools
 - Students of Lowell Public Schools personnel
- c. Preschool placements for peer models are only for one year.
- d. If a family secures a seat for in-person learning through the lottery and the child does not attend during the first three days of school, the family will be contacted and the student may be unenrolled, and the next student on the waitlist for in-person learning will be called for that seat.

- e. If a family secures a seat for in-person learning through the lottery and the child has unexcused absences of more than 10% of the total number of days of school, the family will be provided written notice, the family contacted, and may be unenrolled. If unenrollment occurs, the next student on the waitlist for in-person learning will be called for that seat.
- f. If a student must quarantine due to COVID, their in-person seat will be held for the period of one (1) month. Alternatively, a family may choose to move their child to online learning permanently and give up their in-person seat for the remainder of the school year.
- g. If a family decides after securing an in-person seat in the lottery wishes to opt out they may consider the on-line options but will forfeit their in person seat. Transfer requests will be reviewed and approved on a monthly basis. Transfer requests based on required quarantine and/or documented health related matters shall be communicated to building principals and forward to the Early Childhood Department.
- h. Families who opt for in-person learning will be responsible for providing transportation to and from their child's school. Transportation is only provided to Special Education students. Students with 504 Accommodation Plans and McKinney Vento students who are eligible for transportation in accordance with state and federal laws.

VIII. Preschool: Health and Safety

- a. The availability of in-person instruction and the district's in-person health and safety implementation guidelines will be determined and continually assessed using up-to-date data and guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the Massachusetts Department of Health and the Lowell Department of Health. When families select in person instruction, they agree to and understand the health and safety expectations as outlined by the district including but not limited to wearing a mask and abiding by social distance guidelines.