

Lowell Public Schools

# Update on Student Assignment Policy Analysis

January 8, 2021



LOWELL

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

# Our Fundamental Commitments to Equity

- Eliminate the racial, ethnic and linguistic achievement and opportunity gaps among all students
- Provide equitable funding and resources among the district's diverse schools
- Engage all families with courtesy, dignity, respect and cultural understanding

# Agenda

1. Overview of 2020-21 School Assignment Policy Adopted in January 2020
2. Review of 2020-21 Temporary School Assignment Policy Adopted in August 2020
3. Discussion on process and policy development for 2021-22

# Review of 2020-21 School Policy Assignment Policy

Students will be assigned to a school in Kindergarten through Grade 8 based on the following placement criteria:

1. Lottery - Annually, LPS holds a pre-registration period for kindergarten in the spring. For schools where there are more pre-registration requests than seats available, a lottery will be held.
  2. 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.
- Space Availability - space available in a particular school, program or grade is defined according to the policy in effect as to class size.
  - 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.
  - 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.
  - 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

# Review of COVID-19 Temporary School Policy Assignment Policy

- a. 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.
  - b. 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. Kindergarten: Families who secured a seat through the lottery will be eligible to attend that school in the 2021-22 school year. During the 2020-21 school year, all kindergarten students will be assigned to the school closest in distance to their home. 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.

# Why revisit the current school assignment process?

## Pros

- Strengthen connection between home and school
- Streamline registration process
- Reduce transportation costs and ride time on buses

## Cons

- Socio-economic divide
- Need to ensure educational equity and access
- School building capacity

# Process Steps

## ***Learnings of Current Year***

Review of temporary policy for Kindergarten students that was implemented for 2020-21

- Racial Diversity
- Socio-economic Diversity
- School Enrollment

## ***Study of Current Student Body***

Review current LPS student home addresses and zones to inform future projections

- Racial Diversity
- Socio-economic Diversity
- School Enrollment
- Magnet Schools and City-wide School Options
- Transportation

## ***Community Outreach***

- Conduct family survey
- Provide findings of study and survey results to families and community members
- Listening and Feedback Sessions

# Recommended Timeline – Reports and Activities

## ***Review of Report of Learnings of Current Year***

*Subcommittee Meeting, January 11-15*

## ***Review of Projection Report (using current student addresses to project future enrollment trends and patterns)***

*Subcommittee Meeting, January 25-29*

## ***Community Engagement***

Conduct family survey by January 22

Provide findings of study and survey results to families and community members via zoom sessions and gather input, February 1-12

## **Review of Community Engagement Input Sessions**

Subcommittee Meeting, February 16-23

## **Final Policy Changes Made and Policy Adopted,**

Regular School Committee Meeting, by March 3, 2021



## Questions for Discussion

Are the implications for current kindergarten students clear regarding the current “temporary” school assignment policy?

Does the current process, including subcommittee meetings, meet the committee’s expectations?

Will the recommended time-line for analysis work within the committee’s decision-making process?