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TO: Mr. Liam Skinner, Superintendent of Schools

FROM: Alice Brown-Le Grand, Assistant Superintendent of Student Support Services

DATE: January 14, 2026

RE: Summary of Proposed Changes to the K–12 School Assignment Policy

As part of the Lowell Public Schools Strategic Priority 4: Supportive and Efficient Systems, a team has been working on Initiative 4.2, Design and implement equitable and efficient systems for student assignment, school enrollment and access to high quality academic programs with a focus on optimizing operational efficiency and access to transportation. The focus of this work to date has been to review and update based on the district needs, our kindergarten enrollment policy.

In 2021, Lowell Public Schools revised the Kindergarten registration and enrollment process from a single lottery to a three-lottery system. The rationale for this change was to increase access to preferred (lottery) schools for families who enroll later in the spring and early summer. Under the current policy, lotteries are typically conducted in early May, mid June and a final round in early July, after the close of the school year.

After several years of implementation, clear patterns and concerns have emerged from both building principals and families. Most notably, the second and third lottery rounds have resulted in significant delays in final school placements. Elementary principals report that these delays limit their ability to finalize classroom rosters, assign staff, plan classroom configurations, and provide timely information to teachers and parents prior to the start of the school year. The late completion of the final lottery, often occurring after the school year ends, compresses critical planning timelines and creates operational challenges for schools.

Families have also expressed a strong preference for receiving school placement information as early as possible, particularly prior to summer travel and childcare planning. The lateness of the second and third lotteries further delays notifications, with some families receiving assignments

in early July if they remain in the process after not receiving their first choice. Additionally, many elementary schools traditionally host Kindergarten orientation or information sessions before the end of the school year; however, the current three-lottery system prevents full participation, as not all students have been assigned at that time.

District enrollment data further indicates that the majority of Kindergarten registrations occur early in the cycle, reducing the overall effectiveness of multiple lottery rounds. In prior years, approximately 76% of Kindergarten registrations were submitted before the conclusion of the second lottery, and approximately 86% of students enrolled during the lottery period overall, with only about 14% enrolling during the summer months. Data also shows that at least 70% of active LPS PK and CPPI students register during the first lottery window.

Proposed Policy Changes

Based on the operational impact, family feedback, and enrollment data, it is proposed that the Kindergarten lottery be reduced from three lotteries to a single lottery, that is to occur no later than May 15th. This change is intended to improve efficiency, provide earlier and more predictable school placements for families, and allow schools sufficient time to plan and prepare for incoming Kindergarten students.

In addition, the following related policy clarifications and adjustments are also proposed:

- **PreK to K:** Changing the language in the preschool registration period from “A Students Preschool placement is for one year and does not have bearing on a student’s kindergarten placement” to “A Students Preschool placement is for one year and may not have any bearing on a student’s kindergarten placement”. This is to create flexibility in Prek to K placements as the early childhood team will be exploring these options over the coming months.
- **Sibling Preference:** Sibling preference will continue to apply only to in-zone placements. Out-of-zone school choice will not be permitted in the Kindergarten lottery, even if a sibling is currently enrolled at the school. Currently, sibling preference for out of zone students is only allowed if there is space available. For lottery schools this makes this impossible as students in the lottery are placed first typically taking all available seats. This is not a policy change but just a clarification.
- **Appeals:** Changing the person responsible for the placement appeals from the Chief Equity Officer to the Assistant Superintendent of Student Support Services or Superintendent designee.

- **Withdrawals:** This is not a policy change but to include in the policy existing practice.

Collectively, these proposed changes are intended to provide equitable access, early family notification and clarity, and operational readiness, while aligning the Kindergarten assignment process more closely with demonstrated enrollment patterns and school-based planning needs.

Thank you for your consideration of these policy changes.