

(Proposed) 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 Programs (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 not included in the lottery. Preschool programming will begin on their third birthday in accordance with Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Pre-Registration Period for Preschool:

Lowell Public Schools holds a registration period for preschool lottery during the months of February through March each year. At the time of registration, parent(s)/guardian(s) will be asked to indicate three (3) different school choices. A student's preschool placement is for one year and **may not have any** bearing on a student's kindergarten placement. There are a limited number of full-day preschool placements in select schools (Bartlett Community Partnership, Cardinal O'Connell Early Learning Center, Frederic T. Greenhalge Elementary and Murkland Elementary). Families must register on-line or at the Family Resource Center. Families can access computers and support to submit the on-line application, as needed.

To be included in the preschool lottery, families must register by completing on-line application and provide the following documentation (unless the student qualifies for McKinney-Vento services) before the deadline:

- proof of residency,
- child's birth certificate,

- current immunization/health records, and
- photo ID of parent/guardian(s) registering the child.

Given the fact that transportation is not provided to preschoolers, we strongly encourage families to consider selecting schools where the family can ensure on-time, regular attendance by the student. Regular attendance is required, and children missing more than 10% of total days of attendance may be unenrolled in the program given the scarcity of preschool seats in the community.

Preschool Lottery:

Families registering before the deadline are entered into the preschool lottery. A random and blindly generated five-digit number is assigned to each student at the conclusion of the registration period (no later than May 3rd) and recorded against their registration number. Any family registering after the lottery pre-registration deadline will automatically be placed on the preschool waitlist by date of registration. The Early Childhood Department will maintain the preschool waitlist.

Pre-registered families will receive written notification (an Email) providing the student's lottery number and their proposed school assignment before May 31st. Families must respond in writing to the email, selecting from one of the following options upon receiving notification of preschool assignment:

- Accept placement
- Accept placement and remain on waitlist at preferred school until October 15.
- Reject placement and remain on waitlist at preferred school until October 15.
- Reject placement and seek alternative preschool programming

Families must return the proposed placement offer response via email within 7 business days to the Early Childhood Department indicating one of the selections above. Families not responding to the preregistration placement offer within 7 days will be placed on the waitlist in the order of their lottery numbers. Upon receipt of acceptance of the proposed placement offer, the Early Childhood Department will generate an official assignment letter by June 30th.

The Early Childhood Department diligently considers gender and minority status in adherence. Students accepting and receiving assignments 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. Students with IEPs in foster care or covered under McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act are exempt from this policy.

Attendance: Preschool

It is the parent(s)/guardian(s)' responsibility to ensure regular attendance.

Regular attendance matters. Given that there are limited seats in preschool classrooms available in Lowell Public Schools for preschool-age children and high demand, the district has established an attendance policy.

Children with unexcused absences of more than 10% of the total number of days of school will be provided with written notice of attendance concerns. Families not meeting the conditions of the written attendance notice may be unenrolled by the school. Schools must notify the Early Childhood Department about any child that is unenrolled. Unexcused absences are defined in the [Elementary & Middle School Handbook](#). See attendance 3-1.

Children may be unenrolled if they are absent for more than 10% of their total days of membership without an excused absence. For example, a child enrolled for 50 days should have no more than 5 absences. A child enrolled for 180 days should miss no more than 18 days. Regular attendance supports children in learning routines, making connections with peers, and actively engaging in exploring and applying new concepts and skills.

Kindergarten Registration and Lottery

Students may attend kindergarten in the Lowell Public Schools (LPS) if they are 5 on or before September 1. **All current preschool students enrolled in Lowell Public Schools are required to re-register for kindergarten in order to be eligible for enrollment. Preschool placement in a particular school does not guarantee placement in the same school for kindergarten.**

Each year, the Lowell Public Schools will hold a pre-registration period for kindergarten starting in February. Pre-registration shall take place through the Family Resource Center. The specific dates for pre-registration will be published annually on the district's website, social media, and other official communications channels.

In instances where the number of pre-registration applications exceeds the number of available seats at a given school, a lottery process shall be conducted. **The kindergarten lottery will be held no later than May 15 of each year and will be used to establish the waitlist for kindergarten placement.** The lottery will determine the waitlist placement for kindergarten. To be included in the lottery, pre-registration must be completed before or before the deadline for the lottery. **The deadline to be included in the lottery will not be later than April 5. The pre-registration start date, deadline to be included in the lottery, and the lottery date will be published on the district website, social media, and other means of communication no later than January 31st annually. Out-of zone school choices are not allowed for lottery schools.**

The kindergarten lottery shall be a weighted lottery that considers the following priorities: siblings, McKinney-Vento status, minority/non-minority balance (for schools whose enrollment is above or below the targeted minority/non-minority balance of the zone). The "proximity of home to school" (the school assigned as closest to a student's home by the neighborhood street directory created by the Transportation Department) lottery weight will also be added for non-citywide schools that hold a lottery for open seats. The results of the lottery will be published online within a week following the date of the lottery. This applies only to schools where demand for seats (early registrations) exceeds the number of seats available.

Families who did not receive a seat in the lottery will be called with the option of selecting their second or third choice, if they are not lottery schools. If they are lottery schools, the family will choose new schools. All school options will be approved after considering some factors like space availability, English Language and Special Education percentages in that particular school. Families will be required to accept the options by sending an email to the registrar or staff designated by the Family Resource Center Coordinator within 48 hours. Failure to respond within 48 hours of receipt of notification will mean they forfeit their option, and the Family Resource Center will place the student in school according to the placement criteria (1-4) cited below.

To ensure equity in the Lowell Public Schools for all students, students will be assigned to a school in kindergarten to 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 class size.
2. Sibling Preference - Students whose parents submit timely registration for a particular school and have a sibling currently attending that school will be given priority for school assignment to that school. Timely registration is the period during which the registration opens to the deadline to be included in the lottery. Enrollment in a preschool does not qualify a student for sibling preference. **Sibling preference does not apply to an out-of-zone placement.**
3. Diversity Balance - As relates to the minority/non-minority balance, the goal is to achieve a balance within each school, program and grade that reflects, within 10% above or below, the minority/non-minority percentage of the zone as indicated by the Voluntary Consent Decree. In addition, other factors which contribute to a school's diversity will be considered such as gender, English learner status and economic status as part of the district's goal to ensure equity across schools.
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 Transportation Department has priority of assignment for that school.

For schools where no lottery is required, seats will be filled incrementally throughout the summer following the placement criteria 1-4 as listed above.

Private, Parochial or Charter School Students

Students attending private, parochial or charter schools and who are seeking placement in the Lowell Public Schools may register beginning February 1 if they desire placement in the subsequent school year.

To be accepted for enrollment, families must register by completing on-line application and provide the following documentation (unless the student qualifies for McKinney-Vento services) before the deadline for kindergarten lottery to be included in the kindergarten lottery.

Registration for grades 1-12 will be reviewed and accepted continuously if they have the complete document.

- Student's birth certificate
- Student's fully updated immunization record, and a current physical exam (dated within one year of enrollment date)
- Student's transcript (for high school students only)
- IEP with pages signed if your child receives Special Education Services
- Photo ID of parent/guardian registering the child
- Proof of residency (copy of current utility bill, lease, or mortgage that is dated within the last thirty days).

Registration submitted without the required document will be considered incomplete. Families will be notified of any missing documents, and if the required documents are not provided within 48hrs of notification, the registration will be returned. Parents may resubmit the registration once all required documents are available.

Grades 9-12

New students wishing to enroll in Lowell High School, a full-service Community High School, may do so through 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 high school.

House placements will take into consideration McKinney-Vento, Foster Care, Special Education needs, minority/non-minority balance, gender, and English Language Learner status, to ensure students in all houses are being placed equitably.

Out of Zone Placements

Active students

Students who move from one geographical zone to the other in the city **may request to remain in the school they are presently attending** provided that:

- There is space available at the grade level at the school.
- The minority/non-minority 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.

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

- There is space available at the grade level at the school.
- The minority/non-minority balance of the school is not adversely affected.
- The parents provide transportation to and from school.

The Attendance Supervisor shall recommend if a student is not eligible for out of zone placement, based on this requirement. Such a finding may result in a student being placed at a school in their geographical zone. The transfer must be approved by the Assistant Superintendent of Student Support Services.

Newly Enrolled Students

Parents/legal guardians who requested an out of zone school for their initial placement will only be approved if the placement criteria 1-3 has been reviewed and the family confirmed that they agreed with the following in writing:

- For incoming future siblings, siblings' preferences will not be considered for an out-of- zone placement.
- The parents will provide transportation to and from school.
- The student will be transferred to a school in their geographical zone if the student is chronically absent or excessively tardy.

Student Transfer and Waitlist Policy

Once a student has attended a school, a parent who is dissatisfied with the assignment may request a voluntary transfer no later than 10 working days after the initial placement of the student in the school. Voluntary transfer requests will be honored if there are available seats. Transfer requests after the 20th day of school will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Assistant Superintendent Student Support Services or as assigned by the Superintendent.

All current fourth graders enrolled in the fifth grade will follow the current feeder pattern designated by the district and posted on the Lowell Public Schools website.

Transfer Eligibility

Only one (1) transfer request per student per academic year is allowed. All transfer requests must be submitted through the Family Resource Center prior to the published deadline.

The district will hold an annual transfer lottery for currently enrolled K-8 students who wish to transfer to another school within Lowell Public Schools. The transfer request period will start on February 1 each year. Students must be actively enrolled in the Lowell Public Schools at the time of the request to be eligible for inclusion in the lottery. **Active preschool students or incoming Kindergarten students are not eligible to request a transfer to a new school. Out of zone transfer requests may not be included in any lottery. The Special Education department must confirm placement of students with IEP services in the transfer lottery, to ensure specialized services can be provided.**

Transfer lottery and Waitlist Procedures

The deadline to submit a transfer request and be included in the transfer lottery shall be the last day of the school year. Transfer requests will be honored based on space availability, and the lottery is weighted. Requests received after the last day of school will be honored in the order they are received. Routine placements from the waitlist will be made beginning on July 1 and continue until the 20th day of school. During peak placement period, from August 13 through the 20th day of school, the Family Resource Center will make every effort to prioritize transfer placements for students on the waitlist over new entrants. No placements from the waitlist will be made after the 20th day of school, and no waitlist will be maintained beyond that date.

Notification

The adult listed as the primary contact in ASPEN will be notified by the Family Resource Center, by telephone or email, if their child is eligible for a transfer from the waitlist. All phone calls will be logged into the student's file in the ASPEN.

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.

Families have forty-eight hours (two business days) to accept the transfer. The family must accept the transfer in writing by emailing the Family Resource Center. After forty-eight hours (two business days), if the family has not accepted the transfer assignment in writing, the family has forfeited their seat and the next student will be called.

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

Publishing the Waitlist

The district will publish, on the district's 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 System. This information will be updated at least bi-weekly by the District's Data Department.

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 20th day of school or no later than twenty (20) 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 20th day of school will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the **Assistant Superintendent Student Support Services or Superintendent designee**. All current fourth graders enrolling in the fifth grade **for the 2022-23 school year** will follow the current feeder pattern designated by the district and posted on the Lowell Public Schools website.

Address Changes

For families who move to a new residence in the city, the family must complete a change of address form with the Family Resource Center and submit proof of their new address. The Family Resource Center accepts the following as acceptable proof of address: current gas bill, current electricity bill, current cable/internet bill, mortgage statement, or lease. Current is defined within the past 30 days. Only one proof of address is required. If families are unable to produce sufficient documentation or if their housing is insecure, the McKinney-Vento Liaisons will assist families. The district abides by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

If a family moves out of zone, the family will be asked at the time of their address change to provide three school choices in their new zone. Families will be placed in their new zone unless an out-of-the-zone placement is requested (see Out of Zone Placements).

Families who change addresses over the summer and require a new in-zone placement will be given priority over students on the waitlist. Families are encouraged to update their new addresses over the summer with the Family Resource Center by August 15th. This will ensure students are placed in zones prior to the start of the school year, and families can request bussing with the Transportation Department if they are eligible for bussing.

Families will be reminded, and encouraged, to update their new address over the summer through messages announced on the district website, social media, and other means of communication.

Appeals

Any appeal of a placement decision must be made in writing on the district's approved form, addressed to the **Assistant Superintendent Student Support Services or Superintendent designee** within 10 business days of attending the school.

Withdrawal

Once a student has started attending a school, the attending school has the responsibility to withdraw a student if required. The next school the student would be attending must be confirmed by the school before withdrawal, except for preschool students or students less than 6 years old. The Family Resource Center may withdraw active students only when schools are on summer vacation, and no school staff are available.