

LOWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL ASSIGNMENT POLICY File: JCA

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 Special Education needs, 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.

Registering and Selecting Schools

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 three (3) school choices at the time of registration.

Students on the waitlist 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 36th day of school.

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

1. Students for whom there are three (3) schools chosen, and the student did not receive a placement at any of the three choices.
2. Students who were placed in, and are registered for, their third choice school.
3. 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.

Students who are placed from the waitlist to their second or third choice school may retain their place on the waitlist for a higher choice school, provided that the family makes this request at the time of placement; however a student may accept a waitlist transfer only once during a school year and will not be eligible for another waitlist transfer until the following school year.

Except during the **peak times** of August 10th through September 15th, 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.

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.

Routine Removal from the Waitlist

To maintain a current and accurate waitlist, the following procedures will be used to routinely remove students from the waitlist:

- On or about January 2nd, the Family Resource Center will remove from the waitlist all requests for schools in which the student is attending the highest grade level offered by that school.
- Within thirty (30) days of the adoption of this policy, and in subsequent years on or about January 15th, the Family Resource Center will generate, for families occupying a place on the waitlist, a letter requesting families to submit notice in writing if they wish their child to remain on the waitlist. Written requests to remain on the waitlist must be received by the Family Resource Center no later than the Friday before the Presidents' Day Holiday in February, or sixty (60) days after this policy is adopted, whichever is later. Families have an affirmative responsibility to provide this written notice to the Family Resource Center, without regard to their receipt of notification from the district of this deadline.
- Families may request removal from the waitlist at any time.
- A revised waitlist will be published no later than March 30th each year, or sixty (60) days after the adoption of this policy, whichever is later.

Out of Zone Requests

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

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.

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.

Note: Private, parochial or charter school students, 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.

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 36th day of school, or no later than forty-five (45) calendar days after the initial placement of the student in the school.

Students who no longer require a Special Education or English Language Learners program placement at a school that is outside of their zone of residence are allowed to remain at the same school for one year. After that, the student is considered newly enrolled and is expected to attend a school within his/her zone.

Preschool Programs

Lowell Public Schools offers integrated Preschool programs for three (3) and four (4) year old children who have an Individual Education Plans (IEP) and for children who are four (4) years old by September 1st. To ensure equity in the Lowell Public Schools for all students, students who are not placed pursuant to an IEP will be assigned to a preschool program 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. **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. No transportation is provided for Preschool.
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.

The **Early Childhood** Coordinator will also consider gender and English Language Learner status to ensure students in all schools are being placed equitably. A student's Preschool placement is a one year placement only and has no bearing on a student's kindergarten placement. All families must register at the Family Resource Center for kindergarten.

Preschool Lottery

The order of names considered for placement in a preschool program will be determined through the use of a randomly and blindly generated five digit number that will be generated at the conclusion of the registration period, and stored in the district's Student Information Management System. The Early Childhood Coordinator will maintain the Preschool waitlist.

At the 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 three school choices at the time of registration.

Preschool placements will be made by August 15th.

Preschool Attendance

It is the parents' responsibility to ensure regular attendance.

Appeals

Any appeal of a placement decision must be made in writing, addressed to the Deputy Superintendent for Student Support Services.