

SAMPLE POLICY

ENROLLMENT AND LOTTERY GUIDELINES

Developed for New Hampshire Charter Schools

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Federal and state law require charter schools to use lottery for student selection if the number of eligible students exceeds the number of spaces available. The 10% rule in New Hampshire generally requires lottery by grade; however, some charters allow for multi-grade or ungraded classes. Charter schools are allowed to have contracts with school districts; thus, there may be lotteries by district held either by the charter school or the district, as determined. In all cases there has to be choice and lottery for spaces available.

Chartered public schools in New Hampshire are required to have a lottery policy under Rule 318.05 (b) (1) (5) submitted with its charter application.

The sample lottery guideline that follows has questions and answers that address problems charter schools around the country have had with lottery. It may be wise to think through these topics and include the details that will protect your school from being challenged about student selection.

SAMPLE POLICY

The <x> Charter School has established an official procedure for accepting applications for deciding enrollment. If more students apply than there are available seats, <name of school> has procedures for conducting one or more lotteries to determine enrollment.

DEFINIIONS:

Founding Board of Directors: For purposes of this policy, the founding board of directors will be defined as key persons who contributed extensively to either the <founding organization> and/or <name of school's> initial Board of Trustees who served at least <number of months> during the school's founding. Founding members of <name of school> include: In the initial year only, the <name of school> charter allows 4 spaces for the children of founding members.

[Note: NH Charter schools may designate spaces for founders' children. The definition of founding board members is needed to clarify to what specific list of adults the provision applies. It does not mean that every board member has preferential placement for his/her children.]

Late Application means received after the Application Deadline but before the beginning of school.

Lottery means a publicly posted and publicly conducted random drawing from names of student applicants desiring admission to <name of school>.

Lottery Adult means the independent adult who actually draws ID-numbered objects representing student applicants from a container that contains ID-numbered objects for all students.

Sibling Preference: A sibling of a student already enrolled at <name of school> and who seeks admission is accepted without requirement of going into a lottery. Any other eligibility criteria and guidelines stay in place, however.

Waiting List means a list of applicants desiring admission when space becomes available.

What is the admissions process?

1. Applications are initiated by a parent or legal guardian completing and submitting the school's student application form. This can be downloaded at <web site>
2. Applications submitted up to the announced enrollment decision date will be reviewed by a Recruitment & Admissions Committee. The review will be for completeness, legal town of residence, age/grade of student, and confirmation that parent has reviewed the instructional program and policies with a member of the recruitment committee.
3. Completed applications will be sorted by entering grade.
4. If a school district has contracted to secure a block of spaces for district choice placements, then applications will be sorted out for these towns with a lottery for each town. The number of spaces in the general lottery will then be reduced by this number.
5. Lottery ID numbers will be assigned to each applicant in the order that applications are received.
6. If a lottery is to be conducted, the following guidelines will apply:
 - a. the lottery will be conducted by an adult who is unaffiliated with the charter school who has no child applying to attend.
 - b. applicants will receive confirmation of being in the lottery, with their lottery number, and the date, time, and place of the lottery.
 - c. on the day of the lottery, the lottery adult will check to assure that each applicant's lottery number is on a lottery device (e.g. small ball, object, or paper).
 - d. all the objects with lottery ID numbers will be placed in a container.
 - e. prior to drawing ID-numbered objects, the lottery adult will assert that all the lottery numbers have been double-checked and all eligible children are included.
 - f. only the lottery adult will draw ID-numbered objects from the lottery container.
 - g. personnel from the school's Recruitment & Admissions Committee will monitor selections to assure no one town or grade is oversubscribed (in accordance with NH statute).
 - h. any student from any town who is not chosen will go on a waiting list in order of draw from the lottery; the waiting list should be available for anyone to see,
 - i. should students be selected who require placement confirmation from their districts (students in special education or over exceeding the 10% rule), the Recruitment and Admissions Committee will contact the school for confirmation approval. Should the student's enrollment not be authorized, the next eligible student on the wait list will be contacted for admission.
 - j. as openings occur, students on the wait list will be contacted according to their order on the wait list, according to the grade level of opening.

Questions parents may ask, for which the charter school should know an answer. Suggested answers are provided.

Can students from outside the town where the charter school is located apply?

Yes. For state-sponsored charter schools, all students in the state may apply. If the town wants to have a contract for a block of spaces, the law allows for a contract between any district and the charter school. There is a district authorization model for charter schools that are exclusive to a certain district. If a specific number of spaces is contracted by a specific town, there will need to be more than one lottery.

What is the "cutoff" date for enrollment applications?

The <name of school> charter school will not have a final cut-off date for enrollment in its first year and will continue enrollment applications and selection of students at designated intervals until the enrollment is full for the year.

Or

The <name of school> charter school will have a cut-off date of <date>. If there are still spaces available, the school will set additional date and will continue until all spaces are filled. A lottery will be held in any enrollment period where the number of students exceeds spaces.

How is the child's grade level at <name of school> decided?

Any child applying for enrollment will be required to have successfully completed the preceding grade level and show documentation affirming prior schooling—home, district, or other.

The presumption about grade placement is that the majority of children, having successfully completed the previous grade, will be academically and developmentally ready for the next grade and not a lower or higher grade. Exceptions to this general grade-placement guideline require an affirmative vote by a majority of <name of school> trustees or will be handled according to any subsequent Board policy regarding changes in grade placement.

Is there a sibling preference at <name of school>?

Yes, the <name of school>'s charter gives preference to siblings. The reason for this is the school's commitment to family and family involvement. Founders and charter drafters believed preference to siblings was beneficial--to the siblings, the family, and the school community in general--to keep young siblings together whenever possible and desired.

The most common example of sibling preference is when a younger sibling of a child already enrolled wishes to attend the school. That younger sibling is automatically granted admission to and need not apply through the lottery (assuming any other eligibility guidelines are met).

There are other instances of sibling preference, such as two siblings applying for admission in the same year. In this example, if a lottery is in place by grade, then if the first sibling is selected, e.g. for grade 4, then the second sibling would automatically be allowed into grade 3.

First year guideline: Given the 10% limitation per grade per school (New Hampshire charter school law), in the first year of student selection, lotteries will have siblings in one unit.

Or

No, our school does not give sibling preference. Each student seeking admission must apply separately.

How does sibling preference affect class size?

This school is committed to class size of approx. 22 students. Sibling preference will not influence this guideline. However, it is possible to imagine a scenario in which the sibling preference policy could conflict with class size guidelines or where the sibling is not apt to thrive in a charter school with a particular curriculum philosophy and goals. Should this become a concern, some additional guidelines will be developed to assure the charter's original goals and purposes are maintained.

How does the waiting list work?

The waiting list is determined (at the time of the lottery) in the order that lottery numbers are drawn. Openings in the school are offered to those on the waiting list in strict numerical order. An applicant cannot defer an offer and keep his/her spot on the waiting list. If an offer is declined, that applicant is removed from the waiting list and the opening is offered to the next applicant.

There are no time constraints on the waiting list. The waiting list "follows" the class year after year. A child on the 3rd-grade waiting list, for example, may eventually be offered an opening in 4th grade the following year, or in 5th grade the year after. Applicants on the waiting list have the responsibility of keeping the school informed of phone number and address changes.

How does sibling preference affect the waiting list?

Families on the waiting list are well advised to review the school's sibling preference policy, if there is one. A sibling of an already-enrolled child may be offered admission before any child on the waiting list.

How does year-to-year admissions work?

Once admitted to the school, an eligible student will automatically qualify for enrollment in subsequent years without being subject to an additional lottery. If, however, a student withdraws from the school, then that student will be considered a new student for future admission purposes and may be subject to lottery, depending upon vacancies.

Is there ever a tuition?

Not to parents applying to the school under the choice provisions and 10% allowances.

Charter schools can establish what their school tuition would be for a student who applies from outside the state or outside the eligibility quotas for state-sponsored placements.

How do parents know the lottery is fair?

Procedures are in place to assure the lottery and selection of students is random and fair:

In the half-hour before the lottery, parents/guardians will have the opportunity to examine the lottery devices and verify that their ID number is in the lottery. Only the independent adult will pull the ping pong balls from the drum. All applicants will receive notification of their status. It is the responsibility of the school and the lottery adults to monitor applications prior to the lottery and to conduct the lottery in such a way as to eliminate the possibility of bias or over-enrollment in any grade.

What if my child is enrolled and we move? Can we continue?

Yes, parents who move retain their child's place unless they are in a choice position obligated to a specific school district. If the latter is the case, that student would then be ineligible to continue in a district-specific placement without the district's approval. That student, however, would be eligible in a non-district-specific space. Should this situation arise and if the child is thriving, the charter school would work to find a solution for continued placement.

We're moving to another part of the country for a year. Can we leave the charter school and reclaim our spot when we return?

Situations like this would be handled on a case by case basis. The school staff would weigh issues such as length of absence and ability to stay connected to the curriculum or whatever issues they deem pertinent at the time.
