

# LOGISTICS

## ***Enrollment Policy and Applications for Admission to Learning First Charter Public School (LFCPS)***

*The mission of Learning First Charter Public School is to prepare a diverse cross section of Worcester children for success as students, workers and citizens by providing them with a high quality education at prevailing public school costs.*

Learning First Charter Public School, located in Worcester, Massachusetts, serves six hundred and sixty six students in kindergarten through grade eight. The LFCPS enrollment process is not integrated with that of Worcester Public Schools. (603 CMR 1.05(11)). The school has, and implements, a *Student Recruitment and Retention Plan\** in order to reach out to all types of families from all across the city so that, each year, new students can apply to be admitted to grades K-8 through a public lottery system. (M.G.L. Chapter 71, 89(f); CMR 603 1.05(1)). Learning First does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in the English language or a foreign language, or prior academic achievement.(M.G.L. Chapter 71, 89(m); 603 CMR 1.05(2)).

All applicants will be notified in writing of the rights of students with diverse learning needs to attend LFCPS and to receive accommodations and support services, including students who have disabilities, require special education, are English language learners, are in the foster care system, or meet the definition of homelessness. Information regarding the availability of services is presented in school outreach materials, the Staff and Student Handbook, and on the school's website. (603 CMR 1.05(4)). The school does not use financial incentives to recruit students. (603 CMR 1.05(3)(a)).

### **1. Eligibility Criteria for Enrollment:**

- a. All applicants must be a resident of Massachusetts to apply to and attend a Massachusetts charter school.
  - i. Proof of Worcester, Massachusetts residency at time of application ,such as a driver's license, utility bill, or any other TWO separate bills with the address must be provided in order to prove residency
1. A student who meets the definition of McKinney-Vento as being homeless will be considered eligible to apply regardless of residency documentation. Homeless students, however, must still provide reasonable proof of residency to receive an admission *preference* based on where they are temporarily living. What is reasonable proof of the city or town in which a homeless student is temporarily living depends upon the circumstances. In some situations, if other reasonable

documentation is not available, an affidavit may be sufficient. Homeless students should receive a residency preference based on the location of their temporary residence; if their temporary residence is located within the charter school's sending region, they are entitled to a residency preference. The location of a student's prior permanent residence does not provide a residency preference for admission.

2. A student who is enrolled in foster care is eligible to enroll in their school of origin or school district they are currently placed in depending upon the determination of the child's best interest, including consideration of the appropriateness of the setting, proximity to the school, academic, and social emotional benefits.

- b.** Kindergarten students must be verified to be 5 years old by September 31. The school may request a birth certificate or equivalent proof of age.

- c.** Applicants must have successfully completed the grade preceding the grade to which they apply. Proof of grade completion may be in the form of an end of year report card or a letter from a school. Students who are retained before enrolling into LFCPS may be placed at the end of the waitlist for their new grade level, depending on availability of an open seat in a grade other than the grade originally applied for.

- i.** Learning First Charter Public School does not administer tests to potential applicants or predicate enrollment on results from any test of ability or achievement. (603 CMR 1.05(3)(a)).

- ii.** After a student is enrolled, the school may determine through placement testing provided to all students, whether the student needs to be placed in a grade other than the one for which he/she applied. If this is the case, LFCPS must provide a space in the appropriate grade.

- d.** Participation in the LFCPS school tours and information sessions is not a condition of enrollment. Learning First does not conduct student or family interviews to determine enrollment eligibility. (603 CMR 1.05(3)(a)).

## **2. Description of the Enrollment Process:**

- a.** Learning First will provide public notification of open enrollment, via the outlets described in our ***Student Recruitment and Retention Plan***, and offer school tours and information sessions so parents/guardians can gain a strong understanding of the school's mission, programs and policies.

- i.** Public notices of all application deadlines will take place at least one month in advance.

- ii.** LFCPS will not set any principal application deadlines or hold any enrollment lotteries for student admission for the upcoming school year until after January 1, and shall conclude its principal enrollment process no later than March 15 of each year. (603 CMR 1.05(3)(c))

- b.** Applications are available through the main office, at 51 Gage Street, Worcester, MA 01605 until a specified date in the first week of February, to be

determined each year. The lottery location, date and the application deadline, is on all student applications.

- i. No information requested in the application, including language spoken at home or race/ethnicity is intended to or will be used to discriminate.
- ii. Right to Attend notices will be included with all application materials.
- iii. The school will not disclose any student information to anyone without parent/guardian written permission. This is on the student application.
- iv. Upon request, LFCPS will provide the names and addresses of students to a third party mail house for mailings, unless the parent requests that the school withhold their child's information. This is on the student application.

c. The school determines the number of spaces available per grade level based on our class size targets. If the school has more student applicants than available seats, a public lottery will be held. The lottery date, time and location are published on the student application and all advertisement documents outlined in ***Student Recruitment and Retention Plan***. These documents are all posted publicly at least one week prior to the lottery date.

d. A neutral party draws the names in a public session, and assigns an enrollment or waitlist number to each candidate. (When the parent completes the application, s/he may request that the school use a student number rather than a name, in order to protect privacy during the public lottery. The family will be informed of their number prior to the lottery.)

e. Written notification is mailed home to all applicants to inform them of their wait-list or acceptance status. Parents/guardians are given seven (7) business days from the day the letter was mailed to accept their child's slot and schedule a registration appointment, or it will be forfeited.

f. If the family does not attend a scheduled registration appointment and/or does not contact the school to reschedule registration, the school will follow up with the family to verify whether or not they will accept the slot. If the family does not respond to verification requests within seven (7) business days, the slot will be forfeited.

g. If a child enrolls in the school, but fails to report, the school will follow the DESE attendance and dropout reporting guidelines to determine if the child is still enrolled in school.

e. In accordance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act, Learning First will immediately enroll homeless students in school, even if they do not have the documents usually required for enrollment, such as school records, medical records or proof of residency.:

1. Homeless students have a right to either remain in their school of origin or to attend school where they are temporarily residing;
2. Students who choose to remain in their school of origin have the right to remain there until the end of the school year in which they get permanent housing;

3. Students who chose to enroll in school where they are temporarily residing must be enrolled immediately, even if they do not bring the records usually required for enrollment with them; and
4. If a homeless student arrives without records, the school district's designated Homeless Education Liaison must assist the family and contact the previously attended school system to obtain the required records.

### **3. Description of the Lottery Procedures:**

Each March, a student lottery is held at the school or a community venue to fill spots that will be open in the following school year. The lottery is open to the public and a notice will be given at least one week prior to the event. A neutral party will draw the lottery.

- i. The school will determine the number of spaces available each year by grade level; this is determined by the number of students who withdraw and/or are retained.

- ii. At the annual lottery each applicant's name (or number) is recorded in numerical order by grade level.

1. Siblings (resident or non-resident) of students who are already in attendance at the school in the year of application are given preference for admission over non-siblings (603 CMR 1.05(6)(b)), as follows:

- a. Siblings are potential students who currently have a sibling attending the charter school at the time of the lottery.

- b. Siblings of alumni/ae are not given a preference.

- c. Siblings of applicants who have been accepted for admission but are not yet attending, (including twins), are not given a preference.

- d. Siblings are children who share a common biological or legal parent as opposed to children who may live in the same household but do not share a common parent. For example, a foster child does not receive sibling preference. However, children who live in different households but share a common parent are siblings for purposes of sibling preference. (603 CMR 1.02)

1. Proof of sibling status is required.

If a student moves out of the local city or town but remains enrolled, that student's siblings have preference in admission even though they are nonresidents at the time of application. The non-resident transportation policy will be followed.

- e. Sibling Waitlist Preference: In keeping with the philosophy of admitting the siblings of currently attending students whenever possible, siblings of currently attending students whose names appear on the waitlist receive preference admission during the school year even over students whose names precede them numerically on the wait list in any given grade. Wait listed siblings also take precedence over new sibling applicants in filling available seats prior to the annual lottery.

2. Residents of Worcester are given preference for admission over non-resident students. Names of Non-resident students will be drawn separately, after the names of resident students have been drawn and listed. If there are more spaces available than eligible applicants from Worcester and who are siblings of current students, and there are more eligible applicants from outside of Worcester than spaces available, the charter school shall hold a second tier to the enrollment lottery.

3. Those students for whom enrollment in the charter school would cause the sending district to exceed their tuition cap will not be offered admission but will remain on the waiting list until the next year's lottery is held. If those students are siblings of students currently in attendance at the school, the state may pay the child's tuition, subject to appropriation.

iii. All applicants not selected in the enrollment lottery are drawn and placed on a waiting list for one year following the lottery date, in the order the names were selected while also taking into account sibling and resident preference.

iv. Students on the waitlist are contacted in numerical order during the year following the lottery.

v. Students who decline an available seat during the school year but who wish to remain on the waitlist may remain on the waitlist but must reapply for each school year.

vi. If the principal enrollment process fails to produce an adequate number of enrolled students, the lottery process may be repeated if a waiting list does not exist and the required lottery process is strictly followed, including public notification and deadlines.

vii. As space becomes available during the school year, the school may repeat the enrollment process to fill these openings and to meet the requirements of G.L. c.70, 89(n). (603 CMR 1.05(8)).

#### **4. Description of the Waiting List Policy:**

a. LFCPS will keep accurate records of the waitlist, including name (first, middle, last), date of birth, city or town of residence, and grade level for students who entered the lottery but did not gain admission. The school will keep a record of actions taken to fill an empty seat. (603 CMR 105(10)(a)).

i. The waitlist will be submitted to the DESE one time between March 15 and June 1, or as per DESE protocol.

ii. All waitlist records will be kept for 7 years.

iii. Any changes will be submitted within 30 days of a student coming off the waitlist, or as per DESE protocol.

b. If a student stops attending the charter school or declines admission, the next available student on the waitlist for that grade will be offered admission until the vacant seat is filled.

i. When a student withdraws, an attempt to fill a vacant seat will be made up until Feb 15<sup>th</sup>, excluding seats in grades 5 through 8. Learning First is not required to fill a vacancy after February 15; a vacancy not filled after February 15<sup>th</sup> moves into the subsequent grade.

c. No student will be admitted ahead of other eligible students on the waiting list unless said student is either a sibling of a currently attending student or a resident of Worcester.

d. Applicants on the waiting list will be informed of an offer of admission by telephone and/or email or mail.

i. It is the parent's responsibility to inform the school of any changes in contact information. If the school calls to offer the slot and the telephone number on file is not valid and if email and/or mail receives no response, the school will go to the next applicant on the waitlist.

ii. Once a parent is contacted for an open seat, they are given three (3) business days to accept their child's slot. If the school does not hear from the family, the school will presume the family is not interested and offer the slot to the next available student on the waitlist.

iii. If the family accepts a slot but the child does not enroll within 2 weeks, the school will go to the next applicant on the waitlist.

e. Students who have declined an offer of admissions and wish to remain on the waitlist will be maintained on the waitlist but must reapply for admission the following year.

## **5. Application for Admission Requirements:**

a. None of the information provided on the application to LFCPS, such as language spoken in the home or race/ethnicity, is intended to be or will be used to discriminate. Learning First Charter Public School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in the English language or a foreign language, or prior academic achievement.(M.G.L. Chapter 71, 89(m); 603 CMR 1.05(2)).

b. The application does not require dual parent/guardian signatures, nor submission of the student's social security number.

c. The application requires student name (first, middle, last), date of birth, city or town of residence, and grade level.

d. A copy of the LFCPS application is available on our website or from the main office at the school.

e. An application will not be considered complete unless it is accompanied by proof of residency (2), and the child's birth certificate or equivalent proof of age. This information can be uploaded to the website or presented at the main office of the school. See homeless student exemptions mentioned above.

## **6. Unenrollment**

- a. If a student moves out of Massachusetts they are no longer enrolled in LFCPS. Current students must reside in MA to remain enrolled.
- b. Leave of absences may not be granted. Students must unenroll from a charter school. If a student then wishes to re-enroll a new application must be submitted before the lottery application deadline and begin the process anew. There is no preference given for alumni students.