

FOUR RIVERS CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT POLICY

Approved Oct 23, 2017 by FRCPS Board of Trustees

Approved Nov 16, 2017 by Acting Commissioner Jeff Wulfson

I Introduction & General Policy Statements

- A. Four Rivers Charter Public School (FRCPS) enrolls a new 7th grade annually and enrolls new students in grades 8 through 12 as vacancies occur in accordance with the school's backfilling policy found on p. 4 (VII-F).
- B. FRCPS does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed or religion, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special needs, proficiency in the English language or a foreign language, or prior academic achievement.
- C. FRCPS has and will implement a student recruitment and retention plan. The plan can be found in the Annual Report posted on the school web site – www.fourriverscharter.org.
- D. The FRCPS application process is not integrated with that of the school districts.
- E. All applicants will be notified in writing of the rights of students with diverse learning needs to attend the charter school and to receive accommodations and support services, including students who may have disabilities, require special education, or are English language learners.
- F. Information regarding the availability of services at the school may be found in the following places: the Student and Family Handbook, Admissions Handouts and Brochure, and on the school's website under "Admissions."
- G. FRCPS does not charge an application fee for admission or use financial incentives to recruit students.
- H. The total number of students attending FRCPS will not exceed the total number of students reported in the school's pre-enrollment submission to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in the previous spring, in accordance with 603 CMR 1.08. The school will not admit students in excess of the schools maximum enrollment of 220.
- I. FRCPS does not provide transportation to or from school. For students who are residents of the town of Greenfield, Greenfield Public Schools provides the same level of school bus service to FRCPS students as they provide to students attending the other public schools in town, for the beginning and end of the regular school day. There is no late bus.

II Eligibility Criteria for Enrollment

If an applicant does not meet the following criteria, the applicant will be notified in writing:

- A. The applicant must be a resident of the state of Massachusetts to apply for admission and to attend FRCPS. Proof of residency will be required at the time an offer of admission is made (except in the case of homeless students). See Residency Requirements defined on page 6.
- B. Applicants are required to successfully complete the grade prior to the grade for which they seek admission. Proof of successful completion is due one week before the start of the school year and can be in the form of a transcript, progress report, or affidavit from the sending school district. Students who are unable to prove successful completion of the prior grade will have their offers of admission rescinded and will be un-enrolled. Prior grade completion for home schooled students will be worked out on a case by case basis.

- C. Students whose parents would willingly put them in either of two grades may not apply for two grades but must select the grade for which they are applying before the lottery.
- D. The school does not administer tests to potential applicants or predicate enrollment on results from any test of ability or achievement.
- E. The School does not require potential students to attend interviews or informational meetings as a condition of enrollment. However, students and their families are strongly encouraged to attend an information session, as these are the most efficient way to get a feel for the school, the faculty and the program, and our expectations for students and their families.

III Preferences in Enrollment

- A. Siblings (resident or non-resident) of students who are already in attendance at the school in the year of application have preference for admission over non-sibling resident students. See Siblings defined on p.6.
- B. Four Rivers is defined as a regional school; enrollment priority will be given to residents of the Four Rivers region over non-residents. The Four Rivers region is comprised of the towns served by the 6 high school districts in Franklin County: Greenfield Public Schools, Frontier Regional, Gill-Montague Regional, Mohawk Trail Regional, Pioneer Valley Regional, and Ralph C. Mahar Regional.

IV Application Process

- A. FRCPS will not set any principal application deadline or hold any enrollment lotteries for student admission for the upcoming school year until after January 1st, and shall conclude its principal enrollment process no later than March 15th of each year. The application deadline for the initial lottery is generally set for a week day during the last week of February each year.
- B. FRCPS will give reasonable public notice, at least one month, of all application deadlines.
- C. Applications for the next school year are available on or before January 1st each year and may be obtained by calling or visiting the school, attending an information session, or by printing an application from the school web site - (www.fourriverscharter.org/admissions).
- D. Applications received by the initial deadline will be offered a place OR, if there are more applicants than openings in any grade, the school will hold a lottery at least 2 days after the application deadline on a date posted publically at least a month advance.
- E. Applications received AFTER the initial deadline (late applicants) will be held by the school. If the initial lottery fails to fill all the available spots, or if wait lists from the initial lottery are exhausted, then the school may hold one or more interim lotteries for these late applicants. Interim lotteries will be posted publically at least one month in advance of an application deadline and lottery date.
- F. Proof of residency will be required with the application. See VIII-B Residency Requirements Defined on page 6.

V Lottery and Enrollment Procedure

- A. FRCPS will determine the number of spaces available each year in each grade.
- B. In cases where there are fewer spaces than eligible applicants, students shall be accepted for admission by a lottery process.

- C. Each lottery will be conducted in public in the office building at the school (The Farmhouse).
- D. Each lottery will be conducted electronically, and a neutral party, chosen from outside the school community, shall certify that the process is fair and that the selection process is random.
- E. Siblings of students who are enrolled at the time of the lottery will receive preference, followed by applicants residing in the towns of the 6 school districts in Franklin County (in-region). Students residing outside the 6 districts receive the lowest priority (out-of-region).
- F. A separate lottery will be held for each grade. All applicants for a grade will be entered into one lottery. An initial random lottery order will be electronically generated. After this initial rank order is created for all applicants, preference for admission will be applied. Siblings over non-siblings, and residents over non-residents. Applicants not offered admission will be placed on a waitlist in the order their names were drawn (electronically determined).
- G. In cases where offering admission to a student from the wait list who is not a sibling of another student currently attending the charter school would exceed the district charter tuition cap, the student should be skipped but kept on the wait list. In cases where enrollment of a student who is a sibling of a student already attending the charter school would exceed the district charter school tuition cap, and the school has not admitted other students prior to admitting the sibling, the sibling may be offered admission, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will provide tuition for the sibling, subject to appropriation. G.L. c.71, &89(i); 603 CMS 1.05(10)(b).
- H. Applicants will be notified by telephone and in writing (offer of enrollment letter) on lottery day.
- I. Wait-listed students who are subsequently offered admission will be telephoned and a formal written offer will be mailed the same day.
- J. Families may Accept or Decline an offer of enrollment, by completing and returning the offer letter.
 - For students receiving an offer in the initial lottery or any time up to August 15th, they will have ten calendar days from the date of the mailing of the school's notification to accept or decline their offer of admission.
 - For students receiving an offer after August 15 or during the school year, they will have 3 calendar days from the date of the mailing of the school's notification to accept or decline their offer of admission.
- K. Students who do not respond to their offer of admission by the stated deadline, their offer of admission will be assumed to have been declined. FRCPS will offer the space to the next student on the waiting list.
- L. Students who accept their offer must begin attending Four Rivers within 10 days of their **anticipated start date** (e.g., the first day of school) in accordance with Four Rivers' attendance policy. Students who do not attend Four Rivers within the 10 day window will be considered to have declined their offer of admission and will be un-enrolled from the school. Students' anticipated start date may be determined by the school.
- M. All applicants not selected in an enrollment lottery will be placed on a waiting list in the order the names were selected while also taking into account sibling, as defined in this policy, and resident preference requirements, both of which may change over time.
- N. Students who are offered enrollment from the wait list will have ten calendar days from the date of the mailing of the school's notification to accept the offer of enrollment by signing the offer letter and returning it to the school.
- O. All students who decline an offer of enrollment will be asked to use the form provided in their mailing or to otherwise record their declination in writing. If they refuse, a note to that effect will be entered into the record.
- P. Students who decline an offer of admission, but change their mind later, must reapply.
- Q. If a student stops attending the school or declines admission, the next available student on the waitlist for that grade will be offered admission until the vacant seat is filled.

- R. Students who have withdrawn from the school and wish to return later must reapply for admission.
- S. No student will be admitted ahead of other eligible students on the waiting list unless said student is either a sibling or a resident of the charter school's region, or as described in 603 CMR 1.0.05(10)(b).
- T. The school may choose to accept late applications for grades where a wait list has already been established from the initial lottery; however the school will exhaust the initial wait list before holding additional lotteries.
- U. If the initial enrollment process fails to fill available admission spaces, FRCPS will repeat the application and lottery process as described above.
- V. As spaces become available during the school year, the school may repeat the enrollment process to fill openings and meet the requirements of Massachusetts charter school law, G.L. c.70, & 89(n).

VI Wait List

- A. The school will keep accurate records of the wait lists in each grade, including full name, date of birth, city or town of residence, mailing address, telephone number and grade level of students who entered the lottery but did not gain admission.
- B. FRCPS shall maintain wait lists only for the school year for which the student sought admission. When the next enrollment period begins, those students whose names are still on the current year's wait list may reapply and take part in the lottery for the next school year.
- C. Applicants will be notified by telephone and in writing (offer of enrollment letter).
- D. Families may Accept or Decline an offer of enrollment, by completing and returning the offer letter.
 - For students receiving an offer in the initial lottery or any time up to August 15th, they will have ten calendar days from the date of the mailing of the school's notification to accept or decline their offer of admission.
 - For students receiving an offer after August 15 or during the school year, they will have 3 calendar days from the date of the mailing of the school's notification to accept or decline their offer of admission.
- E. Students who accept their offer must begin attending Four Rivers within 10 days of their **anticipated start date** (e.g., the first day of school) in accordance with Four Rivers' attendance policy. Students who do not attend Four Rivers within the 10 day window will be considered to have declined their offer of admission and will be un-enrolled from the school. Students' anticipated start date may be determined by the school
- F. If a student stops attending FRCPS or declines admission, the next available student on the waiting list for that grade, subject to preferences at the time of admission, will be offered admission until the vacant spot is filled.
- G. The wait list is not static, and preferences may change over time, which may affect the order of the wait list. It is important for families to update their contact information as soon as possible, as this new information may move them up or down on the wait list. For example, a student moving into the FRCPS sending region will move up on the waiting list based on their original random lottery ranking and taking into consideration their new preference for admission. Alternatively, a student who moves out of the FRCPS sending region will move down on the waiting list based on their original random lottery ranking and taking into consideration no longer receiving a preference for admission.

Examples:

- *If there is a student on the wait list whose older sibling graduates, drops out, or transfers prior to receiving an offer of admission, they lose their sibling preference.*

- *Alternatively, for example, if twins apply and one receives an offer and another is wait listed, Twin B gains sibling status on the first day Twin A attends, and moves up on the wait list in accordance with their original random lottery number.*

- H. Students who decline an offer of admission, but change their mind later, must reapply.
- I. In conformance with G.L. c. 71, & 89, when a student stops attending the school for any reason up to February 15th, the school will attempt to fill the vacant seat in grades 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. A vacancy in grades 7 - 11 that is not filled after February 15th may move into the subsequent grade, to be filled in August/September of the next school year.
- J. If a student leaves grade 12 after the school year has begun, the school will attempt to fill the vacant seat only up through September 30th.
- K. Students who have withdrawn from the school and wish to return later must reapply for admission (see V. Admissions Process).

VII Information on the Application

- A. The application requires the signature of only one parent/guardian, unless a court order indicates otherwise for an individual applicant.
- B. The application to FRCPS does not require submission of the student's social security number.
- C. By signing the application, the parent/guardian certifies that all the information is correct. If any of the information is incorrect as of the application deadline date, the application will be void. It is the parent's responsibility to submit accurate information, and to confirm that FRCPS has received the application prior to the deadline.
- D. If any information on the application changes after the lottery and while a student is still on the waiting list, it is the parent/guardian responsibility to contact the school to update information (for instance if the family has moved or contact information has changed).
- E. In cases where there are fewer spaces than eligible applicants, students shall be accepted for admissions by a lottery process.
- F. All information requested in the application, such as language spoken at home or race/ethnicity, is not intended and will not be used to discriminate.
- G. The School does not disclose applicant information with the following exceptions:
 - When required by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for research or accountability purposes.
 - The school is required by law to provide upon request names and addresses of students to a third party mailing house for mailings unless the parent requests that the school withhold their child's information (M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 89g). The *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA), a Federal law, requires that Four Rivers Charter Public School, with certain exceptions, obtain a parent's written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from their child's education records. However, the school may disclose appropriately designated "directory information" without written consent, unless the parent advised the school to the contrary by signing a form provided by the school. The primary purpose of directory information is to allow Four Rivers Charter Public School to include this type of information from the child's education records in certain school publications. Examples include: An annual yearbook, academic and other school recognition of achievement, graduation programs, sports activity sheets and reporting of game results, a playbill showing the student's role in a drama production.

- H. **Directory information**, which is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released, can also be disclosed to outside organizations without a parent's prior written consent. Outside organizations include, but are not limited to, colleges and universities that wish to mail information to the child, and companies that manufacture class rings or publish yearbooks. In addition, two federal laws require local educational agencies (LEAs- like Four Rivers Charter Public School) receiving assistance under the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA) to provide military recruiters, upon request, with three directory information categories – names, addresses and telephone listings – unless parents have advised the LEA that they do not want their student's information disclosed without their prior written consent.
- Upon request, the school will provide the names and addresses of students to a third party mail house for mailings, unless the parent or legal guardian requests that the school withhold their child's information.
 - **Disclosure of Student Information Opt-Out Form.** Student and parents may opt out of the disclosure of student information by signing a form, which may be obtained from the school Registrar at any time during the school year.
- I. Applications of students who were not admitted will be kept for 3 years and then destroyed. This includes applicants who declined an offer and those who remained on the waiting list and were never offered a place.

VIII Residency requirements defined

- A. Students whose families live in the towns represented by the six school districts of Franklin County, Massachusetts, receive preference for enrollment, at the time an offer of admission is made, over non-residents. Proof of residency may be required (except in the case of homeless students). Families that own property but do not have their primary residence in one of the six districts will not be considered residents. If a student lives in two households, and one of those households is in one of the sending districts, that student will be considered a resident.
- B. Reasonable proof of current residency will be required at the time an offer of admission is made. Proof can be:
- Utility bill in the parent/guardian's name (not water or cell phone) dated within the last 60 days
 - Mortgage payment dated within the last 60 days.
 - Current lease, Section 8 Agreement or Landlord Affidavit
 - W2 form dated within the last year or a Payroll stub dated within the last 60 days
 - Bank or credit card statement dated within the last 60 days
 - Letter from an approved government agency dated within the last 60 days. *These are: Department of Revenue (DOR), Children and Family Services (DCF), Transitional Assistance (DTA), Youth Services (DYS), Social Security, any communications on Commonwealth of Massachusetts letterhead.*
- C. Out-of-region applicants must be residents of Massachusetts.
- D. Students enrolled in the school whose families move out-of-region but still reside within Massachusetts will be able to continue to attend the school.
- E. Homeless Students: For the purposes of receiving preference for admission based on residency, FRCPS will work with students who may be considered homeless to establish proof of current or temporary residency on a case by case basis.

IX Siblings defined

- A. Siblings are defined as children who share a common biological or legal parent, as opposed to children who live in the same household but do not share a common parent. The school may require proof of sibling status, such as a birth certificate or adoption papers.
- B. Qualification to receive a sibling preference:
 - Children living in the same household who also share a common biological or legal parent.
 - Children who live in different households, but share a common biological or legal parent.
 - Siblings of students who are due to graduate at the end of the school year in which the lottery is held.
 - If a student moves out of school region but remains enrolled, the student's siblings have preference in admission even though they are out-of-region at the time of the application.
- C. Those NOT qualified to receive a sibling preference.
 - Children who live in the same household but do not share a common biological or legal parent.
 - Foster Children.
 - Siblings and children of alumni/ae.
 - Siblings of applicants who have been accepted for admission but are not yet attending (including twins).