



HOLYOKE COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL

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Holyoke Community Charter School Enrollment Policy April 2021

I. General Policy Statements

1. The Holyoke Community Charter School (HCCS) lottery is open to all eligible students, on a space availability basis. Holyoke Community Charter School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, creed, ethnicity, gender, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in the English language or a foreign language, homelessness, or prior academic achievement. (M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 89(m); 603 CMR 1.06(1); 603 CMR 1.06(8))
2. Enrollment in HCCS is limited to kindergarten through grade 8 and cannot exceed its approved maximum enrollment. The total number of students attending a charter school in a given school year cannot exceed the total number of students reported in the school's pre-enrollment submission to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in the previous spring.
3. Priority for enrollment is given to children that reside in Holyoke and Chicopee, followed by children in the rest of the state of Massachusetts.
4. Enrollment is subject to satisfying all the relevant requirements contained in this policy and final notice of acceptance by HCCS and satisfaction of all the criteria contained therein.
5. HCCS' application process is independent of and not integrated with that of the Holyoke Public School district or the Chicopee Public School district.
6. HCCS has and implements a student Recruitment & Retention Plan as outlined in M.G.L Chapter 71, Section 89(f); CMR 603 1.05(f).
7. 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. This information regarding the availability of services is provided as part of the application for enrollment and is posted on the school's website.
8. The school does not charge an application fee for admission or use financial incentives to recruit students.
9. Relevant state laws and regulations will supersede this enrollment policy, if there is a conflict.

II. Eligibility Criteria for Enrollment

Applications will be accepted from any child meeting the schools' residency and age requirements. HCCS accepts applications from students entering Kindergarten through sixth grade.

Residency requirements

All applicants must be a resident of Massachusetts to apply, to enroll, and to attend the Holyoke Community Charter School. Preference is given to residents of the cities of Holyoke and Chicopee. "Non-residents" will be defined as Massachusetts residents who live outside the city of Holyoke and Chicopee. Once a student is attending the school, they may stay at the school even if their town of residence within Massachusetts changes.

Applicants will be required to provide reasonable proof of residency.

Reasonable proof of residency can be established by providing any TWO of the documents from the following list (items cannot be from the same bullet):

- A Utility Bill (not water or cell phone) dated within the past 60 days
- A Deed, Mortgage Payment dated within the past 60 days, or Property Tax Bill dated within the last year
- A current Lease, Section 8 Agreement, or Landlord Affidavit
- A W2 form dated within the year or a Payroll Stub dated within the past 60 days
- A Bank or Credit Card Statement dated within the past 60 days
- A Letter from an Approved Government Agency* dated within the past 60 days

**Approved government agencies: Departments of Revenue (DOR), Children and Family Services (DCF), Transitional Assistance (DTA), Youth Services (DYS), Social Security, any communications on Commonwealth of Massachusetts Letterhead.*

Residency Requirements for Homeless Students

This residency policy does not apply to homeless students. A student who meets the definitions of McKinney-Vento as being homeless is eligible to apply regardless of residency documentation. The McKinney-Vento Act prohibits students who meet the definition of homeless from being barred from enrollment due to lack of required 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's is temporarily living depends upon the circumstances and will be handled on a case-by-case basis. In some situations, if other reasonable documentation is not available, an affidavit may be sufficient. Homeless students will 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.

If an applicant fails to meet resident eligibility criteria, the application will not be accepted. In addition, the parent/guardian must provide reasonable proof of current residency or sibling status at the time an offer of admission is made.

Age requirements

- Kindergarten: Children must be five years of age by September 1st of the year of enrollment in order to be eligible for the kindergarten.

III. Application Process

Applications are made available at the school. Applications can be mailed, faxed, or emailed by contacting the school's Admission Officer. A deadline for accepting applications shall be set and given at least one month in advance of any enrollment period. The principal application deadline and/or enrollment lottery for the upcoming school year will be no earlier than January 1 and will conclude no later than March 15.

Any and 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 (M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 89(m); 603 CMR 1.06(2)).

There is no requirement for potential students or their families to attend interviews or informational meetings as a condition of application, admission, or attendance. The school does not administer tests to potential applicants or predicate enrollment on results from any test of ability or achievement.

IV. Lottery Procedures

HCCS will hold an annual enrollment period for applicants. The enrollment period will be advertised widely throughout the region and will include public information sessions for interested families. A lottery will be held at a publicized date to be determined by the school (between January 1 and March 15). The lottery is held at the Holyoke Community Charter School, 2200 Northampton Street, Holyoke, MA. The date and time will be publicized at least one week prior to the lottery taking place. All eligible applications received by the deadline will be entered into a public lottery, if required. Applications submitted after the deadline will not be entered into the lottery. If HCCS does not receive enough applications in any enrollment period, it may lengthen the enrollment period.

The school will determine the number of spaces available each year by grade level. In the case where there are fewer spaces than eligible applicants, students shall be accepted for admission by the lottery process. Applicants will be placed in the lottery by grade as of the upcoming academic year. One single lottery will be held at the end of each enrollment period.

Each application will be assigned a random identification number. An unbiased party will draw these numbers by grade at a public meeting. The lottery will establish a fair and random list of students by grade ranked in ascending numerical order according to their lottery draw. After the random lottery order is determined, preference for admission will then be applied. Offers of admission will be made taking into consideration enrollment preferences and based on the number of seats available. In the case where there are more applicants than available seats, student names will be placed on the waitlist by grade in the order the names were selected.

If the principal enrollment process fails to fill the available admission spaces, a fair and open lottery process may be repeated. Public notice will be given at least one month prior to the application deadline. The date, time, and location will be publicized at least one week prior to the lottery taking place.

V. Preference for admission

Preference for admission is given at the time an offer of admission is made. Based on openings available in each grade, the school will offer enrollment to applicants from the waitlist created by the lottery in original rank order and according to preference in the following order:

1. Siblings will get preference for enrollment as long as they are the sibling of a currently enrolled student. Once a new student is attending (either resident or non-resident), any siblings on the waitlist will receive sibling preference. It is the responsibility of the parent/legal guardian to inform HCCS of any sibling currently on the list and provide reasonable proof of sibling status. Siblings are defined as students who have a common parent, either biologically or legally through adoption.
2. Residents of Holyoke and Chicopee
3. Non-residents of Holyoke and Chicopee

VI. Waitlist

When a student is placed on a waitlist, within two weeks, the parents/guardians will be notified in writing of their position on the waitlist. This communication will be provided by mail and email, in the case where an email address has been provided.

The order of a student's placement on a waitlist may change depending on preferences (as identified above) that exist at the time an offer of admission is extended. Students will not be enrolled ahead of other eligible students who were previously placed on a waitlist during a prior enrollment process, except:

- In cases where enrollment preferences change (due to sibling status or residency)
- In cases where the enrollment of a student, who is not a sibling of another currently enrolled student, from the waitlist would exceed the district charter tuition cap, the student will be skipped but kept on the waitlist.
- In cases where the enrollment of a student who is a sibling of a student currently attending a charter school would exceed the district charter school tuition cap, the sibling may be enrolled and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will provide tuition for the sibling, subject appropriation.

Between lotteries, when a student stops attending the school for any reason, HCCS will attempt to fill vacant seats.

- Seats in kindergarten through grade four will be backfilled until February 15.
 - Vacant seats in kindergarten through grade 4 that are not backfilled after February 15 move into the subsequent grade, to be filled the following September.
- Seats in grade five and six will be backfilled until November 1. Waitlists for grades 5 and 6 will not be maintained after November 1.

- Vacant seats in grade 5 that are not backfilled after November 1, move into the sixth grade the following September.
- Seats in seventh and eighth grade will not be backfilled, as they are in the last half of grades offered and are not subject to backfilling.

If the waitlist is depleted during the school year, and spaces become available, the school will hold additional enrollment periods and lotteries as necessary, meeting the requirements set forth in the “Lottery Procedures” section above.

Waitlists are maintained only for the school year for which the students applied. Students remaining on the waitlist at the end of the year do not carryover. Any student remaining on the waitlist who wishes to enroll for a subsequent academic year must submit a new application to the lottery.

VII. Enrollment Process

Acceptance and enrollment are subject to satisfying all the relevant requirements contained in this policy and final notice of acceptance by the HCCS and satisfaction of all the criteria contained therein.

Parents/guardians will be notified in by telephone, by mail, and by email (if provided) that their child is being offered enrollment to HCCS. Parents/guardians will have two business days to respond to the school. If no contact is made after two business days it will be assumed the parent/guardian has declined the offer of enrollment. When contact is made, parents/guardians will have two business days to accept enrollment at HCCS or it will be assumed that the offer of enrollment has not been accepted. A student is considered enrolled in HCCS on the date when an acceptance is received, either oral or written. Grade level/placement is offered and will be determined by the director/designee in consultation with the parent/guardian according to diagnostic testing.

In the case that a waitlisted student has been offered and declines enrollment, either before or during a school year, the applicant will be removed from the waiting list. If the student later desires admission to HCCS, they must reapply during the next enrollment period. If a student who gained admission from the initial lottery declines the offer of enrollment and later desires admission to HCCS, they must reapply during the next enrollment period. If a student withdraws from HCCS in accordance with the school’s withdrawal policy or declines admission, the next available student on the waitlist will be offered admission until the vacant seat is filled.

Withdraw

A parent/guardian may opt for reassignment from the school by withdrawing at any time during the school year. A student will be considered withdrawn from the school, and a vacancy may be declared for the child’s position, if one of the following occurs:

- a student who has not attended the school in accordance with the school’s attendance policy within the first ten days of the student’s anticipated start date
- the student transfers to another school
- the school receives written notification from the parent/guardian of his/her intent to remove the student as of a given date

- the school receives written notification from a student (16 years of age or older) of his/her intent to withdraw

Any student who has withdrawn and wishes to re-enroll in the school must reapply for admission through the lottery process.

VIII. Student Information

HCCS will keep accurate records of its waitlist. Information for students who entered the lottery but did not gain admission must include, but is not limited to, names (first, middle, last); dates of birth; cities or towns of residence; grade levels; home addresses; and telephone numbers. In order to comply with Massachusetts General Law (M.G.L. c. 71, § 89(g) and (n)), Holyoke Community Charter School, upon the request of any school district, must release the names and addresses of students on the waitlist to a third party mailing house for mailings. If you do not want your student's information released, you must sign the Disclosure of Student Information form provided with the enrollment application.

IX. Regional Charter School Transportation Plan

HCCS will provide transportation to all residents of its charter region (Holyoke and Chicopee) in accordance with the Charter School Technical Advisory 16-1: Transportation. HCCS will continue to bus students within the 1 ½-mile recommendation. HCCS will seek for regional transportation aid reimbursement. Stops will be added in specific and safe areas of Chicopee in order to accommodate the needs of the families.