

# CONTROLLED CHOICE PLAN

(As Revised)  
November 2013

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# **I. Introduction**

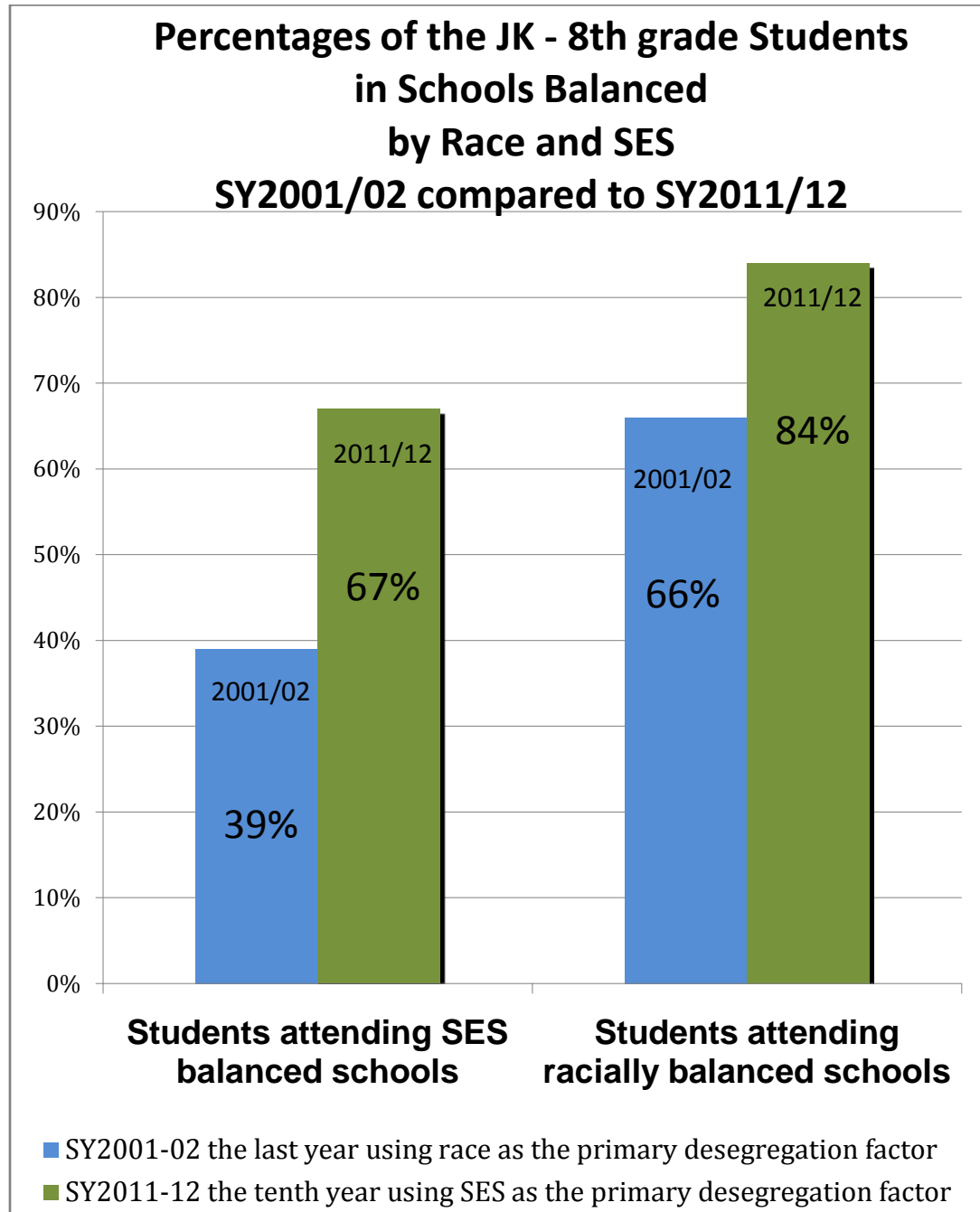
The goal of the Cambridge Public Schools' Controlled Choice Plan is to support the school district's core values of academic excellence and social justice for all students by providing equal access to an array of highly attractive, excellent quality schools, which offer students the benefits of learning alongside and engaged with a diverse group of students.

Cambridge first implemented Controlled Choice in 1980. The most significant revision to the Controlled Choice Plan was implemented in 2001 when the primary factor used to integrate the schools was changed from race to socioeconomic status (SES). This change was in response to a growing body of research showing that concentrating high numbers of students living in poverty within individual schools has a negative impact on student achievement.

Since that time there have been many changes, updates and additions to the Controlled Choice Plan with the most recent comprehensive review and revision to the plan being conducted during 2012 and 2013. The most striking finding of this most recent in-depth review was that the school district's diversity at both the district and school level has improved since 2001. Ten years after changing the primary factor used to integrate the schools, significantly more students were attending schools with student bodies that reflect the district's diversity (see chart on next page).

Cambridge's Controlled Choice Plan was found to be moving the school system steadily towards balanced student populations in most of its elementary schools. However, not all schools were equally well-balanced or sufficiently attractive to diverse families. The Controlled Choice Plan as presented in the following sections of this policy document maintains the strengths of the previous policy with modifications and additions designed to better address the current needs of the school system and the families it serves.

This document is a compilation of many policies relating to Controlled Choice, for additional clarity those individual policies, as voted, are in the Appendix of this document.



## II. Program Quality

### A. Program Improvement

Program improvement is, and always has been, a key component of the CPS' Controlled Choice Plan, as continual program improvement supports the school district's core values of academic

excellence and social justice for all students, by providing equal access to an array of highly attractive, excellent quality schools which offer students the benefits of learning alongside and engaged with a diverse group of students.

In further support of these goals, the Superintendent of Schools will, starting in October 2013 and continuing on an annual basis thereafter, work with administrators, teachers and school councils of schools and programs that are under chosen by either socio-economic (“SES”) category, or by both SES categories, to develop a comprehensive plan for increasing the choice rate by the under-represented group(s). This comprehensive plan may include educational/programmatic changes or other changes, designed to achieve socio-economic balance in those schools and programs by making those schools more attractive to a greater number of parents/guardians.

The process for addressing this issue will be presented to the School Committee by October 2013, and the plan for short-term changes designed to achieve socio-economic balance will be proposed by May 2013, along with a timetable for implementation. The timetable will include at least one initiative ready to enroll students for the 2015-2016 school year.

The Superintendent will monitor the implementation of this plan, including the effectiveness of the new programs in accomplishing the goals of this Plan and improving educational outcomes for students. Choice Patterns and issues of under-selection by one, or both assignment categories will be part of the annual Controlled Choice review, as detailed in section IX below. Should these programs not prove to be effective in accomplishing the goals of this plan, the Superintendent may implement additional strategies to improve the program at a school. Based upon the annual review of this plan as detailed in section VIII, the Superintendent will recommend programmatic or other changes in future years. Notwithstanding the process above, if a particular school shows a lack of progress in this area, the Superintendent has authority to recommend the elimination or modification of educational programs at schools, to recommend the implementation of new educational programs at schools or to recommend a merger or closure and to hold school leadership accountable for improved educational programs. If the Superintendent exercises this authority, the Superintendent will provide appropriate supports to schools to facilitate the process.

Additional strands will be added to existent schools West of Harvard Square. And further at least one strand will be opened for September 2014, so that additional seats in highly chosen schools are available to families as policies and plans to better balance schools are introduced. More strands will be added in future years as space allows, including potential additional space as buildings are renovated.

## **B. Outreach and Retention**

The Superintendent will develop administrative guidelines defining strategies to create and maintain strong family connections and involvement in the Cambridge Public Schools beginning with the process of choosing and registering for school.

An effective outreach plan will include recruitment strategies designed to increase the overall percentage of Cambridge families that chose the public schools, increase access for parents/guardians to information and knowledge about all schools in the district and at the same time to attract a diverse groups of students to each school.

Information must be available in a variety of ways that are accessible to all families, including but not limited to, language translations of materials designed to inform parents/guardians, and targeted outreach efforts to engage and inform underrepresented groups using strategies that go beyond traditional informational meetings.

The Superintendent's administrative guidelines also should include methods to measure and assess the success of the various outreach and recruitment strategies used so that, if necessary, strategies can be redesigned or new strategies implemented to maximize the effectiveness of outreach and recruitment efforts. The School Committee will receive a yearly report from the Superintendent on outreach and recruitment strategies and their impact upon enrollment as well as on measurements of student retention within the school district.

### **III. Student Assignment Methodology**

This section outlines the methodology that will be used to assign students to schools. As discussed more fully below, this includes choice by parents/guardians, diversity factors, assignment preferences, the process to be used to assign students to programs and/or schools.

#### **A. Choice**

Choice by parents/guardians will continue to be an important component of the Controlled Choice Plan. In addition, the CPS will continue to encourage parents/guardians to learn about all of the school district's programs and schools through a variety of methods, including visiting schools and reviewing information about the programs offered at each school, and to select, as further detailed below the programs and/or schools that they would like their children to attend. School/program choices will be processed according to how parents/guardians have ranked their choices.

#### **B. Diversity Factors and Assignment Preferences**

The CPS will use a variety of diversity factors and assignment preferences in assigning students to schools and programs. The diversity factors and assignment preferences that the CPS will use are discussed below, but are not necessarily discussed in the order that they will be considered in the assignment process. The diversity factors and assignment preferences include Socioeconomic Status, Siblings, Proximity, Special Education Status, English Language Learner Status, Gender and Language Dominance. The CPS believes that the use of a range of diversity factors and assignment preferences will result in a multi-faceted diversity in each school that will provide all students with equitable educational opportunities and with improved achievement. As discussed in Section VIII, the CPS annually will monitor the implementation of all of these diversity factors and assignment

preferences in the assignment process to assess whether changes or adjustments need to be made in the future.

1. Socioeconomic Status. One of the diversity factors that CPS will use in assigning students to schools is socioeconomic status (“SES”). The CPS has determined that there are significant educational reasons for using SES in the student assignment process. For example, many of the conditions accompanying poverty, particularly extreme poverty, present significant challenges for educators in developing high levels of achievement for students that are impacted by these conditions in comparison to children for whom these conditions are not present.

The CPS will determine the SES status of students by using the free and reduced price meals eligibility status of that student. The CPS has selected free and reduced price meals as the indicator of poverty to be used because it is the most readily available indicator.

At the time that parents/guardians complete their application form requesting the schools that they would like their children to attend, parents/guardians will be asked to indicate voluntarily their eligibility for free and reduced price meals by completing a free and reduced meals application form. There will be no obligation for any parent/guardian to release free and reduced price meals information for assignment purposes. In addition to requesting information about whether students are eligible for free and reduced price meals, the free and reduced meals application will contain the following information release authorization:

#### **VOLUNTARY INFORMATION RELEASE**

The Cambridge Public Schools’ free and reduced meals officials may give information concerning my child’s eligibility or non-eligibility for price meal benefits to the Cambridge Public Schools Family Resource Center. The Cambridge Public Schools’ Family Resource Center may use this information to help determine the placement for my child. I understand that the Cambridge Public Schools’ free and reduced price meals officials will be releasing eligibility information to the Family Resource Center from the Price Meal Benefit Form for my child. I give up my rights to confidentiality for this purpose only. I understand that I am not required to release this information. I understand that if I elect not to release this information, the Cambridge Public Schools Family Resource Center will consider my child as non-eligible for free and reduced meals when using this information to help determine the placement for my child. I have read this release and understand its terms and sign it voluntarily.

The goal starting for the 2015/16 school year will be for each grade in each elementary school or program (schools/programs including students up to 5th grade) to reflect the District wide junior kindergarten through grade 5 percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced price meals with no plus or minus range used in student placement and for each grade in each upper school to reflect the district wide grade 6 through grade 8 percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced price meals with no plus or minus range used in student placement.



The goal for the 2014-2015 school year only is for each grade in each elementary school or program to be within a range of plus or minus 5 percentage points of the District wide junior kindergarten through grade 5 percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced price meals, and the goal for the 2014-2015 school year only is for each grade in each upper school to be within a range of plus or minus 5 percentage points of the District wide grade 6 through grade 8 percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced price meals. Starting for the 2015/16 school year and for each school year thereafter, the Superintendent, after reviewing the composition of January applicants for kindergarten registration, will have flexibility to propose a plus or minus percentage point range to the School Committee that is sufficient to allow the assignment of applicants. This process will be done on an annual basis. Further, the district will continue to utilize a range of plus or minus 10 percentage points of the district wide junior kindergarten through grade 5 percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced price meals as a measurement and reporting standard for indicating the range of acceptable socio-economic balance for elementary schools, and the district will continue to utilize a range of plus or minus 10 percentage points of the district wide grade 6 through grade 8 percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced price meals as a measurement and reporting standard for indicating the range of acceptable socio-economic balance for upper schools.<sup>1</sup> As described more fully below, seats may be held in an individual school based on free and reduced meals in order to achieve socio-economic diversity.

This factor will be used in assignment to all elementary schools, all upper schools, Tobin Montessori School (which also admits 3-year-olds), and to the Special Start Integrated classrooms (for students without disabilities).

To determine available seats within each SES category capacity will be used for junior kindergarten and kindergarten assignment allocations. Assignment allocations for grade 1 through grade 8 will be by enrollment in order to maximize the beneficial effects of balanced grade level cohorts.

2. Siblings. The CPS will continue to assign siblings to the same school when requested by parents/guardians, to the extent that space is available and that the assignment does not negatively affect the diversity at the school being requested. The CPS will continue to use siblings as an assignment preference because many parents/guardians believe that assigning siblings to the same school allows them to be more involved in their children's education. Sibling preference is only applicable during the first round of the Kindergarten or 3Year Old Lottery. Sibling preference is

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<sup>1</sup> Balance at the school district's only jk-8 school (Amigos) will be calculated separately for junior kindergarten through grade 5 consistent with the district percentages for elementary schools and for grades 6 through 8 consistent with the district percentages for upper schools as detailed above. For further details on the assignment of students to the language immersion programs, See pages 15 through 16 of this Plan.

only applicable if the applicant's sibling will be enrolled in the school or program for the school year being applied for.

3. Proximity. The CPS will continue to assign students to one of the two schools closest to where students reside only when requested by parents/guardians, to the extent that space is available and that the assignment does not negatively affect the diversity at the school being requested. The only exceptions to the use of proximity as an assignment preference will be the Amigos School (k-8), the Ola program at the King Open School, the Chinese Immersion Program at the Martin Luther King School and the Tobin Montessori School, which starts with students entering at the age of three; the Fletcher/Maynard Scholar College Preschool Program will also not use proximity, however proximity will be a factor for entering the Fletcher/Maynard Academy for junior kindergarten or kindergarten. The CPS will continue to use proximity as an assignment preference because some parents/guardians believe that they are more likely to be involved at the school their child attends if the child attends a school near their home. Proximity preference is only applicable during the first round of the Kindergarten Lottery.

4. Special Education Status. The CPS has determined that there are educational reasons for considering special education status as a diversity factor. For example, CPS wants to make sure that special education students have equitable access to all schools in CPS, to the extent that the needs of special education students can be accommodated at a particular school. In addition, if there are large numbers of special education students in a school, the special education students will not have the same opportunity to be mainstreamed with students who have not been identified as in need of special education services. The goal is to have the percentage of special education students in each school approximate the percentage of special education students in the CPS. The CPS will not initially use Special Education Status as a diversity factor, but will monitor this diversity factor to determine whether it needs to be incorporated in the future into the student assignment process.

5. English Language Learner Status. The CPS has determined that there are educational reasons for considering English Language Learner (ELL) status as a diversity factor. For example, in addition to specific language acquisition strategies, ELL students benefit from, and need interaction with, students who are native speakers of English as part of the language acquisition process. The goal is to have the percentage of ELL students in each school approximate the percentage of ELL students in the CPS, except for those CPS schools with two-way immersion programs. It is anticipated that the schools with two-way immersion programs and/or Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) programs may exceed the District-wide percentages of ELL students. The CPS will not initially use ELL status as a diversity factor, but will monitor this diversity factor to determine whether it needs to be incorporated in the future into the student assignment process.

6. Gender. The CPS has determined that there are educational reasons for considering gender as a diversity factor. For example, students benefit from, and need interaction with, students of different genders as part of the educational process. The goal is to have the percentage of students in each school by gender approximate the percentage of students by gender in the CPS. After monitoring this diversity factor, the CPS has determined that gender is not a factor used in junior kindergarten or kindergarten placement. For grades one through eight gender will be considered within an acceptable balance when neither gender exceeds sixty percent (60%) of enrollment in that grade at that school. When a grade level is over sixty percent (60%) of one gender, and there are open seats, children from the underrepresented gender will be allowed to enter ahead of other applying or waitlisted students until neither gender exceeds sixty percent (60%). If there are not children of the underrepresented gender applying or waitlisted, children from the overrepresented gender will be admitted.

7. Language Dominance. For entrance into an immersion school or program CPS has determined that there are educational reasons to assign students that qualify as dominant in the school or program's language or as bilingual to the extent that space is available and that the assignment does not negatively affect the diversity at the school or program being requested.

## IV. Process for Student Assignment

The CPS Family Resource Center will continue to be responsible for coordinating, administering and monitoring all aspects of the assignment process.

Students are eligible to participate in CPS School Assignment Lotteries as follows:

- Children who will turn 3 years old on or before August 31 of the following year may apply during the October 3-Year-Old Programs Lottery for a seat in a CPS program serving 3 and 4 year olds under the eligibility age for junior kindergarten. These programs have a limited number of seats and placement is not guaranteed.
- Children who will turn 4 years old on or before March 31 will be placed in junior kindergarten and may register during the January Kindergarten Lottery. The children will then attend kindergarten the following year without reapplying.
- Children who will turn 5 years old on or before August 31 will be placed in kindergarten and may register during the January Kindergarten Lottery.
- If parents/guardians accept a lottery placement for a school or program that will continue through grade 5 or grade 8, they cannot re-enter a future Kindergarten Lottery for the same child.
- Lotteries for a very limited number of open seats will be held for students about to enter seventh or eighth grade, see section D below.

## **A. Procedure for Assignment to 3-Year-Old Programs**

A lottery will be held for the very limited number of seats available in the CPS programs serving students between the ages of 3 years old and eligibility for junior kindergarten (4 years and 5 months old). There is no guarantee of admission to a 3-year-old program. Enrollment for this lottery will be held during the month of October. Currently the district has three programs serving students this young: Fletcher Maynard Scholar College, Special Start Classrooms, and Tobin Montessori School. Parents/guardians will be allowed to rank order their choice of 1, 2, or all 3 programs. Each of these programs will allocate available seats in two categories (a) students eligible for free and reduced price meals based on federal eligibility standards; and (b) students not eligible for free and reduced price meals. Current students who will be continuing in one of the programs for the next year and students assigned to the Special Start Classrooms based upon placement through an individualized education plan will be subtracted from the available seats and the remaining seats will be assigned through a computer program. A waitlist will be maintained for all three programs, for one school year. Families of children who are not admitted at the age of 3 years old may apply for a 4-year-old seat as long as the child will not be eligible for Junior Kindergarten.

For the Tobin Montessori School the assignment methodology incorporates choice by parents/guardians and the same diversity factors and assignment preferences used for junior kindergarten and kindergarten as described in section III above.

For the Fletcher/Maynard Scholar College the assignment methodology incorporates choice by parents/guardians and the following assignment preferences: highest priority to alumni of the Full Circle Baby U Program offered at the FMA and then lower priority to both alumni of any other Cambridge Baby U cohort or to children with siblings enrolled at FMA. Having multiple priorities increases the child's assignment priority.

For Special Start Integrated Classrooms the assignment methodology incorporates choice by parents/guardians. The SES status, gender and age of typical learners will be used in creating the integrated classrooms.

## **B. Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten Assignment Process**

CPS will require families registering for junior kindergarten and kindergarten to select three schools that they would like their children to attend, and to classify their choices as "First Choice," "Second Choice" and "Third Choice." All parents/guardians entering the kindergarten registration process will be notified of the importance of selecting three choices and of the potential negative effects of not doing so. Further, all parents/guardians not making three choices as part of the kindergarten registration process will be requested to sign a form acknowledging that they understand that such a decision may have a negative impact on their waitlist position.

### **1. Registration Process**

Two lotteries will be held for junior kindergarten and kindergarten. One with registrations received during the month of January and the second for students registering between the

start of February and the announcement of the January lottery results. Families will be notified that they will have the greatest chance of receiving one of their choices if they register during the first registration cycle, held in January of each year. Families will also be notified that those registering during the second cycle or later will be less likely to receive placement in one of their school/program choices.

Following the second cycle, registering families will be notified of schools where there are remaining openings in their SES category and must choose an assignment where there is an open seat. Families may additionally request to be placed on up to three waitlists at that time.

## **2. Procedures for Assignment of Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten Students.**

CPS will determine the number of seats available for junior kindergarten and kindergarten students as follows:

The total number of junior kindergarten and kindergarten seats combined will be determined based on the number of budgeted classrooms and class size policies;

The total number of seats will be divided into two socio-economic categories based on the October district-wide percentages of JK-5<sup>th</sup> grade students as follows:

- a) students eligible for free and reduced price meals based on federal eligibility standards; and
- b) students not eligible for free and reduced price meals;

Current year junior kindergarten students and kindergarten appeals students, both of whom will be continuing in kindergarten in the next year, will be subtracted from the seats in each category. Students admitted to a school/program for either the kindergarten or junior kindergarten grade level cannot exceed the percentages as calculated above for each SES category.

As detailed above in section III, B (1), after reviewing the composition of the January applicants for kindergarten, the Superintendent will have the flexibility to propose to the School Committee a plus or minus percentage point range that is sufficient to allow the assignment of applicants.

## **3. Procedures for Assignment of Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten Students in First Registration Cycle**

- a. The CPS will determine the total number of seats available for junior kindergarten (JK) and kindergarten (K) students as follows:
  - i. The total number of available JK and K seats will be determined based on budgeted classrooms and class size policies;

- ii. The total available seats will be sub-divided into two socio-economic categories based on the October District-wide JK-5<sup>th</sup> grade percentages of:
    - a) students eligible for free and reduced price meals based on federal eligibility standards; and
    - b) students not eligible for free and reduced price meals;
  - iii. If approved by the School Committee, the plus or minus percentage point range, discussed in Section III.B(i) of the Plan, will be applied to each category (free and reduced price meals and non-free and reduced price meals); for the year 2014/15 only, this percentage point range has been set at 5%.
  - iv. Current year junior kindergarten students and kindergarten appeals students, both of whom will be continuing in kindergarten in the next year, will be subtracted from the available seats determined in subsection ii. above and the remaining seats are used for the process described in subsection b. below.
- b. The CPS will use a computer program to assign all students in the First Registration Cycle. The computer program will use the process described below:
- i The computer will assign each applicant a random number.
  - ii First choices for all schools will be processed first, followed by second choices and then third choices;
  - iii Preference points will be added to applicant's random numbers for students whose parents/guardians have indicated that they want such preferences and if the student qualifies for such preferences for their first choice school. Preference points are school/program specific. Applicants with preferences are placed in schools/programs provided that seats are available within the free and reduced and non-free and reduced range described in subsection 1.a. above. Section III. B. above defines assignment preferences.

- a. Sibling preference will add two million points to an applicant's random number.
  - b. Proximity preference will add one million points to an applicant's random number.
  - c. Language dominance preferences will be applied for immersion schools and programs. This preference will add one million points to an applicant's random number.
- iv. Assignment order is based on each applicant's randomly computer generated number plus applicable preference points. Students will then be assigned through an appropriate computer algorithm within the constraints of the existing socioeconomic diversity goals in place at the time of the lottery, provided that seats are available in the free and reduced price meals and non-free and reduced price meals categories. Seats will be held, if necessary, in the individual school or program based on free and reduced meals status in order to achieve socioeconomic diversity.
  - v. Students not assigned to their first choice school/program will be processed by the computer using the steps above for their second choice school/program; students not assigned to their first or second choice school/program will be processed by the computer using the steps above for their third choice.
  - vi. If students cannot be assigned through the above process without exceeding the diversity goals of SES in a school, then the students will be, after consultation with parent/guardians if possible, assigned to schools with seats available in the appropriate SES category.
  - vii. Students not placed in their first choice school will be put on waitlists for schools/programs that their families ranked higher than the school/program in which they are placed.
  - viii. Twins/qualifying siblings entering the JK/K lottery starting in the same school year are placed together, if requested by the parents. Qualifying siblings are defined as any sibling in the same grade requesting the same school.

#### **4. Procedure for Assignment of Students in the Second and All Subsequent Registration Cycles**

- a. Prior to processing applications received for the second registration cycle, the junior kindergarten/kindergarten wait list will be reviewed and, if a seat is available, an offer will be made in accordance with the procedures set forth in this Plan.
- b. Once any assignments have been made from the waiting list, the second lottery will be held for students that register between February 1<sup>st</sup> and the date of the assignment of applicants from the January lottery. The second lottery will use the computer program described above to assign all students in the second registration cycle in accordance with the process described for the first registration cycle, taking into account all students previously assigned and the remaining available seats. Preference points are only added for the first round lottery and will not be applied in this round, except for language dominance points which remain in use until a grade level reaches 50% program language or bilingual students.
- c. If parents/guardians accept a lottery placement, including three and four year olds at Tobin Montessori and the Fletcher Maynard Academy Wrap Around Zone Scholar College, they cannot re-enter a future kindergarten lottery registration cycle process. The one exception to this would be if the child withdraws from one of these above two preschool programs by October 1<sup>st</sup> of their first year in school.

#### **5. Registrations Received After the Second Cycle and Prior to the New School Year**

Following this process, new applicants will be assigned to a school their family chooses on a first come, first served basis, taking into account all students previously assigned and the remaining available seats. Families will be informed of seats available and be allowed to choose any seat available following established socioeconomic diversity goals in this Plan. Families can, if they wish, place their child's name on up to three waitlists.

#### **6. Maximum Assignment Capacity**

When enrolling students for kindergarten and/or junior kindergarten, each school or program will admit no more students per grade level than the number of seats that the school or program has in its first grade classrooms. Once the number of students admitted to kindergarten or junior kindergarten reaches the number of seats in that school's or that program's first grade, only children from the other grade level will be admitted. In other words, if there is a school or program with two first grades with a capacity of no more than a total of fifty (50) students, then assignment of students to junior kindergarten would not exceed 50 and the assignment of students to kindergarten would not exceed 50. In a situation where the maximum capacity of kindergarten or junior kindergarten students have been assigned to a school and a vacancy occurs the first student on the waitlist shall be



assigned unless his/her assignment brings the kindergarten or the junior kindergarten enrollment over the maximum capacity number of the school's first grade. If the assignment of the first child from the waitlist would result in a grade level enrollment number greater than the first grade capacity, the Family Resource Center shall move down the waitlist until a child in the other grade is reached or leave the seat open. The established socio-economic diversity goals of this Plan will be applied the kindergarten and to the junior kindergarten grade levels separately.

## **7. Junior Kindergarten/Kindergarten Waiting List**

- a. If the District is not able to accommodate any of the parents/guardians' three choices, then the Family Resource Center will assign the student to another school where seats are available, consistent with the diversity factors in this Plan and in consultation with the parents/guardians.

The Family Resource Center will facilitate parents/guardians contacting and/or visiting the schools with available seats, to support parents/guardians in making a decision. Parents/guardians will have the option of requesting assignment to any of the schools that the Family Resource Center has identified as having a seat available. If the parents/guardians do not state a preference among the schools identified by the Family Resource Center, then the Family Resource Center will assign the student to a school where seats are available, consistent with the diversity factors of this Plan.

- b. Children who apply in the first registration cycle for junior kindergarten or kindergarten, who do not receive any of their choices will be placed at the top of the waiting list for those schools or programs. This means that students who are not assigned to one of the parents/guardians' three choices will be given priority placement on such waiting lists over students who have been assigned to one of their three choices.
- c. Children who apply in the first registration cycle for junior kindergarten or kindergarten, who receive their parents/guardians' second or third choice will be placed automatically on the waiting list for any of the choices that are higher than the one to which the child was assigned.
- d. Children who apply in the second registration cycle for junior kindergarten or kindergarten, who receive their parents/guardians' second or third choice will be placed automatically on the waiting list for any of the choices that are higher than the one to which the child was assigned. Children receiving none of their three choices in the second registration cycle will be placed on the waitlist for all three choices, but not prioritized. Waitlisted children from the second registration cycle are on the waitlist behind waitlisted children from the first registration cycle and children renewing their waitlist position (see e. below).

- e. Students who remain on a kindergarten waitlist for a second year (junior kindergarteners who renew their waitlist position for their kindergarten year) will be placed after the new first round lottery applicants and before the new second round lottery applicants.
- f. If parents/guardians wish their child to be placed on a waiting list for a school other than their three choices, they may request to be placed on that waiting list and request to be removed from a wait list they designate. Their wait list position for the new wait list will be based on the date of this request. A student cannot be on more than three waitlists at any time.
- g. If parents/guardians are offered a seat for their child to attend the school for which their child is on the waiting list they may defer twice during the school year maintaining their waitlist position. If a seat is offered during the summer it cannot be deferred, and if the family does not accept the transfer their child's name will be removed from the waiting list for that school.
- h. Students will be allowed to transfer between schools/programs until the December school vacation. Transfers will then resume over the summer so students can start in their new school in September
- i. All waiting lists will expire by March 1 of each school year. If a parent/guardian wishes to have their child remain on the wait list and retain their place on the wait list, they must notify the Family Resource Center in writing by no later than March 1 of each school year. This may be done for up to three schools. Requests to continue on the wait lists received by the Family Resource Center after March 1 of each school year will be treated on a first come, first serve basis, and will be placed after those already on the wait list.

## **8. Special Education Placements**

Except as described below, the CPS shall assign special education students in accordance with the process and procedures described above for assigning non-special education students. To assist the Family Resource Center in making assignments for special education students, the Office of Student Services will provide the Family Resource Center with information on special education programs, levels of inclusion and specialized services that are available in each school.

If the Office of Student Services determines that a special education student's needs may not be addressed by using the process for assigning non-special education students, the Office for Student Services will convene an Individual Education Program ("IEP") "planning meeting" with the parents/guardians and appropriate School Department personnel. At this meeting, parents/guardians will have an opportunity to discuss their child's documented needs and to review the current programs, levels of inclusion and specialized services that are available at each school. The final determination of the services/support/program for the child will take place at the IEP "planning meeting," and the Family Resource Center will

assign the child to one of the schools requested by the parents/guardians if the IEP Team determines that one of the schools requested by parents/guardians has adequate existing resources to meet the student's identified IEP needs and/or additional resources can be provided at one of those schools to meet the student's IEP needs. In the event that the student requires a specialized program that is not available in one of the schools requested by parents/guardians, then the Office of Student Services will designate a school to which the student will be assigned that will meet the student's IEP.

## **9. Language Immersion Programs**

The CPS will assign students whose parents/guardians list any of the school districts language immersion programs as one of their choices according to the following guidelines:

- i. For the school year 2014-2015 and thereafter, the following policy will be applied across all junior kindergarten/kindergarten students as it is in other schools within the district.

Students whose parents/guardians choose an immersion program or school in accordance with this Plan will be assigned in the following manner:

Kindergarten/junior kindergarten assignments for the immersion school and programs will provide assignment priority to students who qualify as either program language dominant or bilingual while controlling for socio-economic status.

- a. Priority will be given to students who qualify as program language dominant or bilingual. This priority will be equal to the proximity preference offered to the other schools within the school district.
- b. The SES balance of the grade level must follow the Controlled Choice Policy of the Cambridge Public Schools as then in effect.
- c. The waitlist policy for junior kindergarten/kindergarten cohorts starting in school year 2013-2014 and continuing thereafter will reflect the assignment policy set forth above and provide assignment priority to students who speak the program language until 50% of the enrolled students are program language/bilingual students at which point the waitlist will return to the order followed by other district schools.

- d. Additionally, for language immersion programs within a school (Mandarin Immersion at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. School and Ola at the King Open School):
  - (1) Students who have a sibling within either the immersion or the regular program will have priority to both programs
  - (2) Junior kindergarten students will be offered the opportunity to move between the school's immersion and regular programs for their kindergarten year, prior to the Kindergarten lottery. Program to program transfers must follow the Controlled Choice Policy as then in effect.
- ii. For the grades levels in the immersion schools and programs that were admitted before the January 2013 lottery, open seats will be filled from the waitlists giving priority to program language dominant or bilingual students. Each grade's SES balance on October 1<sup>st</sup> of 2012 will be maintained as a baseline and each grade will admit students that do not cause that grade to vary further from the district's policy of SES balance. Further, for higher grade levels, each school/program may have requirements in language proficiency designed to facilitate success for students entering an immersion program.
- iii. Starting at the fourth grade level students that are tested as program language dominant or bilingual may be admitted to immersion programs without consideration of SES balance; if multiple such children apply those meeting SES balance criteria will be prioritized, and that this addition to the Controlled Choice Policy be reviewed again in October, 2015.

### **C. Registration & Assignment Process for Grades 1-5**

Students in grades one through five who are being enrolled in the District for the first time prior to the start of a new school year or for the first time during the school year will be assigned on a first come, first served basis to schools where there are seats available and there are no students on an existing wait list who meet the assignment criteria, provided the assignment does not negatively affect the diversity of the grade level of the school being requested.

Families may choose to identify and prioritize three choices on their school application. However, since seats may not be available at their chosen schools, the Family Resource Center will work with families to identify open seats, and families may choose which school assignment to accept from schools where there are seats available. Parents/guardians may accept a school assignment, and may also request that their child be placed on up to 3 waitlists for grades JK-5.

- i. Waitlists for grades 1- 5
  - a. Parents/guardians may request to be placed on up to 3 waitlists for grades 1-5
  - b. Parents/guardians may change the schools/program their child is waitlisted for by requesting a different choice and requesting to be removed from a waitlist they designate. Their wait list position(s) for the new wait list(s) will be based on the date of this request.
  - c. Students will be allowed to transfer between schools/programs until the December school vacation. Transfers will than resume over the summer so students can start in their new school in September.
  - d. If parents/guardians are offered a seat for their child to attend the school for which their child is on the waitlist they may defer twice during the school year and maintain their waitlist position. If a seat is offered during the summer it cannot be deferred, if the family does not accept the transfer they are removed from the waitlist.
  - e. All waiting lists will expire by March 1 of each school year. If a parent/guardian wishes to have their child remain on the wait list and retain their place on the wait list, they must notify the Family Resource Center in writing by no later than March 1 of each school year. This may be done for up to three schools. Requests to continue on the wait lists received by the Family Resource Center after March 1 of each school year will be treated on a first come, first serve basis, and will be placed after those already on the wait list.
  - f. Waitlists for schools ending at Grade 5 will expire on the date transfers end for the Grade 5 year.
  - g. Students who are ready to mainstream from Special Education Substantially Separate classrooms or English Language Learner classrooms will be offered available seats in the school where their program is located before seats will be offered to new students entering the school district or to transfer students, provided the assignment does not negatively affect the diversity of the grade level of the school.

#### **D. Registration & Assignment Process for Grades 6-8**

Each elementary school will send students together as a cohort to a designated upper school for Grade 6.

Students who are ready to mainstream from special education substantially separate classrooms or English Language Learner classrooms will be offered available seats at the dyad or triad

where their program is located before seats will be offered to new students entering the school district or to transfer students.

There is no 6<sup>th</sup> grade lottery, new to district 6<sup>th</sup> graders will be enrolled on a first-come, first-serve basis to schools where there are seats available, provided the assignment does not negatively affect the diversity of the grade level of the school being requested. If assignment of a student will result in the Upper School grade level limit of 88 students being exceeded, then the student will be placed in the requested grade at the Upper School with the lowest enrollment for that grade level, where there are seats available and the assignment does not negatively affect the diversity of the grade level of the school.

Students, new to the district, who are being enrolled for Grade 7 or Grade 8 during the school year will be assigned on a first come, first served basis to schools where there are seats available, provided the assignment does not negatively affect the diversity of the grade level of the school being requested. Students, new to the district, who are being enrolled for Grade 7 or Grade 8 registering prior to the end of May may participate in the Upper School Lottery.

### **Upper School Lottery for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**

The Superintendent will determine, on April 1<sup>st</sup> of each year, how many seats will be available within SES balance, with the target of 88 students<sup>2</sup> for each upcoming 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. If seats are available at that time, parents/guardians of current 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students will have the month of May to sign up for a lottery of those seats. Assignments will be made by early July, in order to assist parents/guardians and students to enroll in a timely manner, while providing sufficient time to enroll new students entering the district to the upper schools to a max capacity of 100 seats per grade. Families will be notified of the results of this lottery during the month of July.

Students in grades 6 through eight who are being enrolled in the District for the first time after the summer Upper School Lottery and those new to district students not placed in that lottery, will be assigned on a first-come, first-serve basis to schools where there are seats available, provided the assignment does not negatively affect the diversity of the grade level of the school being requested. If assignment of a student will result in the Upper School grade level limit of 88 students being exceeded, then the student will be placed in the requested grade at the Upper School with the lowest enrollment for that grade level, where there are seats available and the assignment does not negatively affect the diversity of the grade level of the school.

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<sup>2</sup> To enable upper school grade level cohorts to reach the Innovation Agenda target of 88 students per grade (in grades 6 through 8), with a cap of 100 students per grade for an upper school and 50 students per grade (in grades 6 through 8) for the Amigos School, enrollment will be controlled across the junior kindergarten through fifth grade of each of elementary schools feeding into an Upper School. The yearly Controlled Choice review will include five year enrollment projections for the Upper Schools.

## V. Transfer Process

### A. Process for Transfers and Waiting Lists for Grades JK-5

The Family Resource Center will maintain a wait list for students wishing to transfer schools for Grades JK-5, including Amigos and Ola's Grades JK-5.

1. Request for a mid-year transfer or to be placed on a waiting list for next school year. Parents/guardians of a child in junior kindergarten through grade five may request that their child transfer from his or her assigned school to another school in the Cambridge Public Schools.
2. There is one waitlist for each grade in each school or program. This waitlist includes students waiting for mid-year transfers (September – December), students requesting to transfer over the summer school vacation and for children entering the school system.
3. If a place is offered for the start of a new school year it may not be deferred. If not accepted the student's name is removed from the waitlist. If parents/guardians are offered a transfer to another school during the school year and reject that offer, they will remain at the top of the waitlist for that school. After the end of that school year, if the parents/guardians do not accept a second transfer offer to that school, then the child's name is placed on the bottom of the waitlist for that school unless the transfer is offered during the same school year as the first transfer offer.
4. The Parent /guardian, of a child residing in the City of Cambridge in junior kindergarten through grade 5 who does not currently attend Cambridge Public Schools, also may request that his or her child's name be placed on a waitlist for a school for the next school year by filing an application with the Family Resource Center. To make a request for a transfer for their child or for their child's name to be placed on the waiting list for a school for the next school year, parents/guardians must come to the Family Resource Center and file a request. The child's name will be placed on a waiting list for a school for the next school year. Parents/guardians may request that their child's name be placed on up to three wait lists at any one time.
5. All transferring between schools ends (with the exception of hardship transfers see VI below) on the last day of school before the December break of each school year.
6. Fifth grade waitlists expire on the last day of school before the December break of each school year.
7. Waitlists for JK – 4<sup>th</sup> grade expire on March 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. If a parent/

guardian wishes to have their child remain on the wait list and retain their position on that waitlist, they must notify the Family Resource Center in writing by no later than March 1 of each school year. This may be done for up to three schools. Requests to continue on the wait lists received by the Family Resource Center after March 1 of each school year will be treated on a first come, first serve basis, and will be placed after those already on the wait list.

8. If a transfer request is granted and accepted, parents/guardians may not request another transfer for their child for that school year.
9. **Timeline for Responding to a Transfer Request.** If a transfer request is granted, parents/guardians must notify the Family Resource Center within two business days if they are accepting the transfer for their child for that school year. Parents/guardians of twins/qualifying siblings have a period of ten calendar days to deny or accept a transfer when only one of the twins/qualifying siblings is offered a transfer opportunity. Qualifying siblings are defined as any sibling in the same grade at the same school.
11. **ELL and Special Education Students.** When ELL students are placed in a sheltered English immersion program or a special education student is placed in substantially separate classroom and there has been a recommendation that the student now enter a general education classroom, the student's name will automatically be placed at the top of the waitlist at the school in which he/she currently attends either the sheltered English immersion program or substantially separate classroom. If the student is ready to enter a general education classroom and a seat at the student's grade level is available and the Controlled Choice requirements are met, the child will be placed in that seat. If a seat is not available, the child will receive an assignment to a school where space is available but will remain on the waitlist in the same position for the school that they had attended for either the sheltered English immersion program or substantially separate program. This is not intended to replace a parent/guardian's ability to place their child's name on up to three waitlists of their own school choices.
12. To enable upper school grade level cohorts to reach the Innovation Agenda target of 88 students per grade in grades 6 through 8, with a cap of 100 students per grade, enrollment will be controlled across the junior kindergarten through fifth grade of each of elementary schools feeding into an Upper School. This means that when a student leaves a JK-5<sup>th</sup> grade classroom, program or school the seat they leave will not necessarily be considered available to be filled with another student from a waitlist or a student new to the district.



## **B. Upper Schools & Upper School Programs Transfer and New Student Enrollment Process**

### 1. Grade 6

Each Elementary School will send students together as a cohort to a designated Upper School for Grade 6. Students cannot transfer or choose a different Upper School for their Grade 6 Assignment.

### Grades 7-8

The Superintendent will determine, on April 1<sup>st</sup> of each year, how many seats will be available at each Upper School within SES balance, with the target of 88 students<sup>3</sup> for each upcoming 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade cohort. A seat will be considered open if a grade level is below 88 students. If seats are available at that time, parents/guardians of current 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students will have the month of May to sign up for a lottery for those seats. Assignments will be made by early July in order to assist parents/guardians and students to enroll in a timely manner, while providing sufficient time to enroll new Upper School students entering the district during the summer months, to a maximum capacity of 100 seats per grade per Upper School and 50 seats per grade in the Amigos School.

Students in the lottery who do not receive a school they choose will be notified that they are automatically enrolled in a second lottery that will take place in late September. The second lottery will be for any open seats including those held for the first 10 days of school when students have failed to notify CPS that they have moved out of the school district or enrolled in another school not within the school district. A seat will be considered open if a grade level is below 88 students. The entering students will be assigned to schools consistent with established socio-economic diversity goals of this Plan. Students not placed in the second lottery will be given priority in the lottery for the following year, if the parent/guardian renews the student's place in the lottery pool by February 1<sup>st</sup>.

Any student signing up after May 31<sup>st</sup> for a transfer will be placed in the pool for the second lottery in late September.

There are no waitlists for 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade.

### 2. Upper School Placement for Students new to the district.

New students enrolling for seventh or eighth grade that register before the end of May will be included in the first lottery, described above. Students new to CPS not assigned in the early summer lottery will be enrolled in the order in which they apply. New students may choose any Upper School if the enrollment for their grade level is under 88 and they will not adversely affect that grade's SES balance. If the student cannot be placed within SES balance, in an Upper School grade level of up to 88 students then the

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<sup>3</sup> To enable upper school grade level cohorts to reach the Innovation Agenda target of 88 students per grade (in grades 6 through 8), with a cap of 100 students per grade, enrollment will be controlled across the junior kindergarten through fifth grade of each of elementary schools feeding into an Upper School. The yearly Controlled Choice review will include five year enrollment projections for the Upper Schools.

student will be placed in the requested grade at the Upper School with the lowest enrollment for that grade level. All assignments will be by SES and may not exceed the contractual limit of 100 per grade for an upper school or 50 per grade for Amigos.

## VI. Hardship Appeals

### A. Filing a Hardship Appeal

Parents/guardians of a child who can show that the assignment to the school will cause a hardship may appeal the assignment. Parents/guardians additionally, may file a hardship appeal if, when enrolling multiple siblings, on the same date, for the same grade range (JK–5<sup>th</sup> grade or 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade) find the siblings-cannot be admitted together to any school in the district.

Hardships:

- are only granted when it is shown that:
    - (i) the transfer is necessary for the physical or emotional safety of the student; and
    - (ii) the transfer is
- for the direct benefit of the student.

The Superintendent will develop guidelines to be used to determine under what conditions a Hardship Appeal will be granted. These guidelines will include specific information about what types of documentation may be presented at a hardship hearing. The guidelines will be available in print and online.

Hardship appeal hearings will not be granted if the stated grounds of the appeal are one or more of the following:

- convenience of the parent/guardian
- attempt to gain admission to a specific school; and/or
- attempt to override the assignment process set forth in this Plan.

Parents/guardians who want to appeal an assignment or a denial of a transfer must complete the hardship appeal form. This form requires the parents/guardians to explain and provide documentation to show the hardship, as defined above. Guidelines for completing the form along with a copy of the form will be posted on the school district's website and available in print form at the Family Resource Center. The parents/guardians must submit the completed form, with appropriate documentation, to the Family Resource Center.

The Director of the Family Resource Center will review the form and the documentation for completeness and may consult with the parents/guardians or other individuals if further clarification is needed. The Family Resource Center shall submit the completed appeal form and other appropriate documentation to the Hardship Appeals Board, which consists of three hearing officers designated by the Superintendent of Schools to hear hardship appeals.

## **B. Hardship Appeals Board Process**

The Hardship Appeals Board will schedule the appeal hearing within six weeks of the date that the hardship appeal is initially received and will issue a written decision, consistent with hardship guidelines, to the family with respect to the outcome of the appeal.

The Hardship Appeals Board will review the information submitted to it by the Family Resource Center and will consider any other information provided during the course of the hardship appeal hearing. Using the definition of hardship defined above, the Hardship Appeals Board will determine whether the appeal should be denied or granted. The Hardship Appeals Board will make every effort to issue its written decision to the family within ten school days of hearing the appeal.

If the hardship appeal is granted, a designee of the Superintendent will work with the student's family to find an appropriate, safe school for the student involved. The timing of the hardship transfer will be chosen to maximize the educational benefit for the student. If the hardship appeal is not granted, the decision letter will include a brief explanation as to the reason for the decision and, wherever possible, a recommendation of other routes to meeting the student's needs will be addressed in the letter.

## **C. Review by the Superintendent**

If a family is not satisfied with the decision of the Hardship Appeals Board they may, within 10 calendar days of receipt of the decision file a written request for review with the Superintendent of Schools. The written request for review shall state the specific facts and reasons why the family believes that the decision of the Hardship Appeals Board should be overturned. The Superintendent or designee shall schedule a review meeting within ten school days of receipt of the request. The Superintendent or designee will notify the parents/guardians in writing regarding the decision as to whether the appeal was granted or denied within five school days of the review meeting. The decision of the Superintendent or designee is final.

## **D. Annual Report to School Committee on Hardship Appeal Statistics**

Records will be maintained of all hardship appeals requested and heard. On an annual basis, the Superintendent shall provide the School Committee with a report that contains, in the aggregate, the grade level, ethnicity, SES status, school attended when hardship appeal filed, reason for the hardship appeal, requested relief, and whether hardship appeal was granted or denied. The report will not contain disaggregated data and will not contain any data that even in the aggregate would reveal the identity of any student and/or their family and the report will be prepared in such a way that the student record information and privacy of families and students who have sought hardship appeals is preserved.

## VII. Sabbatical Leave for Families

The Cambridge Public Schools fully supports a family's desire to remain united during a sabbatical leave and recognizes the intrinsic educational value of the experiences provided by such a leave. For details see the Appendix.

## VIII. Enrollment Monitoring

Controlled Choice requires that enrollments at individual schools be monitored and managed. Students cannot be placed at schools where there are no available seats. In this way, enrollment monitoring and management is fundamental to Controlled Choice.

To enable upper school grade level cohorts to reach the Innovation Agenda target of 88 students per grade, with a cap of 100 students per grade, enrollment will be controlled in the feeding JK-5th grade schools and the Tobin Montessori School. The yearly Controlled Choice review will include 5-Year enrollment projections for the Upper Schools.

District seat capacity will be closely monitored and maintained in alignment with enrollment trends and classroom capacity will be adjusted, as needed, based upon available space and enrollment trends.

## IX. Annual Review

The Superintendent shall review annually the implementation of the Controlled Choice Plan. This review shall include:

- analyzing the applicant pools and enrollments for all schools with respect to each diversity factor and assignment preference;
- review of effectiveness of program improvement in attracting an SES balanced student body to each school or program
- assessing the impact of each of the diversity factors on student achievement;
- assessing the success of the Plan in ensuring equitable access to programs and schools for all students and providing all students the opportunity to attend school with students of diverse backgrounds;
- evaluating the effectiveness of recruitment strategies implemented to attract diverse applicant pools to all schools, and considering other diversity factors that may be used to support the goals of the Plan.; and

- five-year enrollment projections for the upper schools.

If based on this review, the Superintendent determines that administrative changes are necessary, the Superintendent will make appropriate administrative changes to the Controlled Choice Plan and will notify the Cambridge School Committee of the changes.

The Superintendent shall make a recommendation to the School Committee no later than the first regular School Committee meeting in November of the school year in question regarding the socioeconomic diversity goals and how to proceed on implementation of the Plan for the following school year. The School Committee will vote on the Superintendent's recommendation no later than the first regular school meeting in December.

## Appendix

1. November 19, 2013: Kindergarten Assignment Results and Exit Interviews
2. July 30, 2013: Gender Balancing Policy & Policy on Enrollment size of JK and K
3. June 18, 2013: New Controlled Choice Plan Rules
4. February 5, 2013: Approval for Full Circle Wraparound Zone Program – Student Assignment Guidelines
5. December 4, 2012: Upper School Transfer Policy
6. October 2012: Language Immersion Programs
7. October 23, 2012: Sibling Preference
8. October 23, 2012: Enrollment Management to Reach Upper School Target # of Students
9. October 23, 2012: Recommendation on Practices to Support Controlled Choice
10. December 7, 2010: No Proximity Preference for Tobin Montessori and Bilingual Immersion
11. April 14, 2009: Notification to Families Entering the Kindergarten Registration Process of the Importance of Selecting Three Choices
12. February 3, 2009: Mid-Year Transfers
13. February 3, 2009: Policy on Re-Entering the Lottery
14. May 2, 2006: School Committee Order On Transfer of Twins/Qualifying Siblings and Assignment on Gender Balance
15. October 13, 2011: Sabbatical Leave for Families

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

459 BROADWAY  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

TEL: 617-349-6620 • Fax: 617-349-6624  
pberry@cpsd.us

**C13-271a**

**CHAIR**

MAYOR HENRIETTA DAVIS

**VICE CHAIR**

ALFRED B. FANTINI

**MEMBERS**

RICHARD HARDING, JR.  
MARC C. McGOVERN  
PATRICIA M. NOLAN  
MERVAN F. OSBORNE  
ALICE L. TURKEL

--IN SCHOOL COMMITTEE--

November 19, 2013


**ORDERED:**

That the following amendment to #13-178 be added to the Appendix and referenced in the Controlled Choice Plan Policy document:

- That every effort possible be made to notify parents/guardians of the results of the kindergarten assignments by March 1<sup>st</sup>.
- That exit interviews, in the evaluation of school choice and controlled choice, be included in the annual review of the Controlled Choice Plan.

A true copy:

Attest:

  
Patricia A. Berry  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee

c: Ms. Nolan  
Ms. Turkel  
Mr. Fantini  
Superintendent  
Ms. MacFarlane  
Ms. O

**CHAIR**  
MAYOR HENRIETTA DAVIS

**VICE CHAIR**  
ALFRED B. FANTINI

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**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**  
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**MEMBERS**  
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MARC C. McGOVERN  
PATRICIA M. NOLAN  
MERVAN F. OSBORNE  
ALICE L. TURKEL

--IN SCHOOL COMMITTEE--

July 30, 2013

ORDERED:

That for grades one through eight gender will be considered in the student assignment process. A grade level of students in a school or program will be considered within acceptable gender balance when neither gender exceeds 60% of enrollment in that grade. When a grade level is over 60% one gender, and there are open seats, children from the underrepresented gender will be allowed to enter ahead of others applying or waitlisted students until neither gender exceeds 60%. If there are no children of the underrepresented gender applying or waitlisted, children from the overrepresented gender will be admitted.

A true copy:

Attest:

  
Patricia A. Berry

Executive Secretary to the School Committee

c: Ms. Turkel  
Mr. Fantini  
Ms. Nolan  
Superintendent



**C13-181**

**CHAIR**  
MAYOR HENRIETTA DAVIS

**VICE CHAIR**  
ALFRED B. FANTINI

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CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**  
TEL: 617-349-6620 • Fax: 617-349-6624  
pberry@cpsd.us

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MERVAN F. OSBORNE  
ALICE L. TURKEL

--IN SCHOOL COMMITTEE--

July 30, 2013

ORDERED:

That when enrolling students for kindergarten and/or junior kindergarten, each school or program will admit no more students per grade level than the number of seats that school or program has in its first grade classrooms. Once the number of students admitted to kindergarten or junior kindergarten reaches the number of seats in that school's or that program's first grade, only children from the other grade level will be admitted. SES balance will apply to each grade level.

A true copy:

Attest:

  
Patricia A. Berry

Executive Secretary to the School Committee

c: Ms. Turkel  
Mr. Fantini  
Superintendent

## SCHOOL COMMITTEE

459 BROADWAY  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

# C13-147

### CHAIR

MAYOR HENRIETTA DAVIS

### VICE CHAIR

ALFRED B. FANTINI

### OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

TEL: 617-349-6620 • Fax: 617-349-6624  
pberry@cpsd.us

### MEMBERS

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MERVAN F. OSBORNE  
ALICE L. TURKEL

--IN SCHOOL COMMITTEE--

June 18, 2013

### ORDERED:

That the following be removed from the Calendar and adopted as amended:

That Cambridge Public Schools' Controlled Choice Plan be revised to support the district's core values of academic excellence and social justice for all students, by providing equal access to an array of highly attractive, excellent quality schools, which offer students the benefits of learning alongside and engaged with a diverse group of fellow students. And further that the following recommendations put forward in the document Controlled Choice in Cambridge a Comprehensive Review and Recommendations be adopted:

1. Strengthen the Rules Governing Balance
2. Increase Access to Attractive Choices
3. Strengthen the Rules that Govern Access
4. Improve and Clarify Controlled Choice Practices
5. A Coherent Controlled Choice Policy will be Drafted by the Superintendent

Below is a description of the five recommendations above. Further information on each recommendation is on pages 8 – 23 of *Controlled Choice in Cambridge, A Comprehensive Review and Recommendations*, these pages follow this recommendation.

#### **1. Strengthen the Rules Governing Balance**

**1a.** The  $\pm 10\%$  band will no longer be used for assignment purposes. For only the school year 2014/15 a  $\pm 5\%$  band will be used as 'at least one strand will be opened for September 2014 (see 2b). Starting for the school year 2014/15 no band will be used as 2a is implemented. After reviewing the composition of the January applicants for kindergarten, the Superintendent will have the flexibility to propose to the School Committee a  $\pm$  percentage point band sufficient to allow the assignment of all applicants. This  $\pm$  percentage point band will require approval by the School Committee and will be used for that one year only.

And further the  $\pm 10\%$  band will continue to be used as a measurement and reporting standard for indicating the range of acceptable SES balance.

**1b.** Balance will be calculated separately for the lower schools and for the upper schools to best capture the most current enrollment trends and to better support the implementation of the Innovation Agenda (IA). And the remaining JK-8 school will also calculate balance separately for its upper school students.

**1c.** Assignments will be allocated by enrollment starting for the first grade to maximize the beneficial effects of balanced grade level cohorts. Capacity will continue to be used for JK/K assignments.

**2. Increase Access to Attractive Choices**

**2a.** The Superintendent will work with administrators, teachers and school councils of schools and programs throughout the district, that are under chosen by either or both SES categories, to develop a comprehensive plan, which may include programmatic change or other changes, designed to achieve socio-economic balance in those schools and programs. The process for addressing this issue will be presented to the School Committee by October 2013, and the plan for changes designed to achieve socio-economic balance will be proposed by May 2014 and will include a timetable for implementation. The timetable will include at least one initiative ready to enroll students for the 2015/16 school year.

**2b.** Additional strands will be added to existent schools West of Harvard Square. And further, at least one strand will be opened for September 2014, so that additional seats in a highly chosen school are available to families as policies to better balance schools are introduced. More strands will be added in future years as space allows, including potential additional space as buildings are renovated.

**2c.** District seat capacity will be closely monitored and maintained in alignment with enrollment trends.

**3. Strengthen the Rules that Govern Access**

**3a.** The current policy of Proximity Preference Points will be maintained at this time.

**3b.** Retain and Clarify Sibling Preference

**3c.** Prior to the joint School Committee and City Council Early Childhood and JK Roundtable, the school administration work with the city administration to develop a list of issues that need to be addressed with the goal of development and implementation of a universal four year old program or programs beginning in September 2014.

**3d.** Junior kindergarten and kindergarten will each be balanced for SES separately by grade level.

**3e.** It is recommended that when a Special Education or English Language Learner child is placed in a substantially separate classroom, and is likely to fully mainstream, that their name is automatically placed at the top of the waitlist to be mainstreamed. If the child is ready and a seat at their grade level becomes available and the Controlled Choice requirements are met, the child is mainstreamed. Otherwise, the child remains on the waitlist in the same position. This is not intended to replace a parent's/guardian's ability to place their child's name on up to three waitlists of their own school choices.

**3f.** The group of children applying in the first round for junior kindergarten or kindergarten will be placed at the top of appropriate waitlists for the schools they chose on their applications. And further, children on waitlists to transfer between schools will be placed behind the new 1<sup>st</sup> round applicants.

**4. Improve and Clarify Controlled Choice Practices**

**4a.** Lottery application will remain in January for JK/K.

**4b.** It is recommended that in addition to the January Lottery there be one more lottery for the students that register between February 1<sup>st</sup> and the assignment of January applicants. Following that second lottery, students will be assigned to a school their family chooses on a first come first served model. Each family will be informed about the seats available and be allowed to choose any seat available following SES balance criteria. Families can then, if they wish, place their child on up to three waitlists.

**4c.** It is recommended that a separate registration period for the programs available to students under the age of K eligibility be held by the FRC each fall.

**4d.** It is recommended that in-district transfers be accommodated until the December school vacation.

**4e.** Hardships:

- are only granted for the physical or emotional safety of the student.
- must be for the direct benefit of the student.
- are not granted for parent/guardian convenience.

- cannot be used to simply override the Controlled Choice Policy.
- shall not be used to gain admission to a specific school.
- may be used if siblings, upon entry, cannot be admitted to the same school.

Hardship Appeal Process for a Change of School Assignment

The Superintendent will develop guidelines to be used to determine under what conditions a Hardship Appeal will be granted. These guidelines will include specific information about what types of documentation may be presented at a hardship hearing. The guidelines will be available in print and online.

Requests for a Hardship Appeal Hearing will be made to the Family Resource Center using a Hardship Appeal Form. When the Hardship Appeal Process is appropriate a hearing will be held within six weeks of the date it is requested. If a Hardship Appeal Hearing is not appropriate the family will receive in writing a response explaining why and whenever possible a recommendation of other routes to meet their child's needs.

Three Hearing Officers that are designees of the Superintendent will hold hardship hearings and all decisions will be based on the guidelines. Families will receive written notification of the decision made by the Hearing Officers. When a hardship is granted the Superintendent's designee will work with the family to find an appropriate safe school for the student involved. The timing of a hardship transfer will be chosen to maximize benefit for the student.

If the response is not to grant the family's request then a brief explanation and whenever possible a recommendation of other routes to meeting their child's needs will be included in the letter.

Families that wish to appeal the decision of the Hardship Officers may appeal to the Superintendent or his/her designee.

Records will be kept of all requests for appeals and of all appeals heard. The records shall include but not be limited to: the child's grade level, ethnicity and SES status, the school they attend when applying, the reason for the hardship and the family's requested outcome, the Hearing Officers' response and the action taken. Once a year the School Committee will receive a report compiling this data in a way that maintains the privacy of families and students.

**5a.** A coherent Controlled Choice Policy will be drafted by the Superintendent for adoption by the School Committee by the 1st meeting in October 2013.

A true copy:

Attest:   
Patricia A. Berfy

Executive Secretary to the School Committee

c: Members  
Superintendent  
Ms. MacFarlane  
Ms. O

**CHAIR**  
MAYOR HENRIETTA DAVIS

**VICE CHAIR**  
ALFRED B. FANTINI

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
459 BROADWAY  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**  
TEL: 617-349-6620 • Fax: 617-349-6624  
pberry@cpsd.us

**MEMBERS**  
RICHARD HARDING, JR.  
MARC C. McGOVERN  
PATRICIA M. NOLAN  
MERVAN F. OSBORNE  
ALICE L. TURKEL

--IN SCHOOL COMMITTEE--

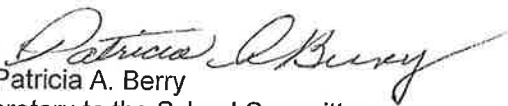
February 5, 2013

ORDERED:

That Superintendent's Recommendation #13-28, Approval for Full Circle Wraparound Zone Program be adopted as follows: that the School Committee approve the Full Circle Wraparound Zone Program as detailed in the document.

A true copy:

Attest:

  
Patricia A. Berry

Executive Secretary to the School Committee

c: Superintendent  
Ms. MacFarlane, Esq.

SCHOLAR COLLEGE

**Student Assignment Guidelines**

Student assignment for Scholar College will be modeled on the Montessori program. Like Montessori, this FMA preschool will be a citywide program with no proximity preference. The entry age for students will be 3 years by August 31<sup>st</sup>, like Montessori. Scholar College students will remain at FMA for their elementary education, similar to the Montessori program. Transportation will not be provided for Scholar College students, as it is not for Montessori.

In the student assignment process for Scholar College, preferences will be given to children who are:

- Siblings of current FMA students
- Baby U alumni of the Full Circle Baby U program offered at FMA
- Baby U alumni of any Cambridge Baby U cohort

Students attempting to enroll in Scholar College will be awarded school assignment bonus points for preferences as follows:

<i>Preference</i>	<i>Bonus Points</i>
FMA Sibling	1 million
Baby U Alumni (any cohort)	1 million
FMA Baby U Alumni	2 million


**SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

 159 BROADWAY  
 CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

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pberry@cpsd.us

**MEMBERS**
 RICHARD HARDING, JR.  
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**CHAIR**  
 MAYOR HENRIETTA DAVIS

**VICE CHAIR**  
 ALFRED B. FANTINI

--IN SCHOOL COMMITTEE--

December 4, 2012

**ORDERED:**

That the following be removed from the Calendar and adopted as follows:

**#12-201, Upper School Transfer Policy:**

Waitlists for schools ending at 5<sup>th</sup> grade will expire on the date transfers end for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade year. Each elementary school will send students together as a cohort to a designated Upper School for 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

Students who are ready to mainstream from Special Needs classrooms or English Language Learner classrooms will be offered available seats at the dyad or triad where their program is located before seats will be offered to new students entering the school system or to transfer students.

The Superintendent will determine, on April 1<sup>st</sup> of each year, how many seats will be available within SES balance, with the target of 88 students for each upcoming 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. If seats are available at that time, parents/guardians of current 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students will have the month of May to sign up for a lottery of those seats. Assignments will be made by early July, in order to assist parents/guardians and students to enroll in a timely manner, while providing sufficient time to enroll new students entering the district to the upper schools to a max capacity of 100 seats per grade.

Students new to CPS not assigned in the early summer lottery will be enrolled in the order in which they apply. New students may choose any Upper School if the enrollment for their grade level is under 88 and they will not adversely affect that grade's SES balance. If the student cannot be placed within SES balance, in an Upper School grade level of up to 88 students then the student will be placed in the requested grade at the Upper School with the lowest enrollment for that grade level. All assignments will be by SES and may not exceed the contractual limit of 100 per grade for an upper school or 50 for Amigos.

Students in the lottery not receiving a school they chose will receive a letter explaining that they are already enrolled in a second lottery that will take place in late September. The second lottery will be for the seats, which are held for the first 10 days of school for enrolled students who do not arrive at school. A seat will be considered open if a grade level is below 88 students. The entering students must maintain SES balance. Students not placed in the second lottery will be given priority in the lottery for the following year if the parent/guardian renews the student's place in the lottery pool by February 1<sup>st</sup>.

Any student signing up after May 31<sup>st</sup> for a transfer will be placed on the list in the order of date of the transfer request and eligible for the second lottery.

A true copy:

Attest:

  
 Patricia A. Berry

Executive Secretary to the School Committee

 c: Ms. Turkel  
 Mr. Fantini  
 Superintendent

Assignment Policy for Language Immersion Programs Oct. 2012

The Cambridge Public Schools will assign students whose parents/guardians choose an immersion program or school in accordance to the Controlled Choice Policy as follows:

1. Kindergarten/Junior Kindergarten assignments for the immersion school and programs will provide assignment priority to students who qualify as either program language dominant or bilingual while controlling for Socio-Economic Status (SES).
  - a. Priority will be given to students who qualify as program language dominant or bilingual. This priority will be equal to the proximity preference offered to the other schools within the school district.
  - b. The SES balance of the grade level must follow the Controlled Choice Policy of the Cambridge Public Schools as then in effect. Currently, as of the date of adoption of this policy, the SES balance of the grade level set forth in the Controlled Choice Policy is within +/- 10% of the district percentage of students qualifying for the federal free and reduced price meals program.
  - c. The waitlist policy for Junior Kindergarten/Kindergarten cohorts starting SY 2013-14 will reflect the above assignment policy and provide assignment priority to students who speak the program language until 50% of the enrolled students are program language/bilingual students at which point the waitlist will return to the order followed by other district schools.
  - d. Additionally for language immersion programs within a school (Mandarin Immersion at Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. School and Olà at King Open School):
    1. Students who have a sibling within either the immersion or the regular program will have priority to both programs.
    2. Junior Kindergarten students will be offered the opportunity to move between the school's immersion and regular programs for their Kindergarten year, prior to the Kindergarten Lottery. Program to program transfers must follow the Controlled Choice Policy as then in effect.



## **Policy for Transition to the Assignment Policy for Language Immersion Programs of October 2012**

Previous admission policies—based only on language—have created SES imbalance in some grades of the immersion school/programs far from the District's goals. To transition to the Assignment Policy for Language Immersion Programs of October 2012:

- a. Implementation will be phased in over two years for the Kindergarten/Junior Kindergarten grade-level.
  - i. For the school year starting in fall 2013 only incoming students will be considered when balancing the JK/K class. The number of pre-assigned<sup>1</sup> students will be subtracted from the total number of seats in for the Kindergarten/Junior Kindergarten grade level in each immersion school/program and the resulting number will be considered 100% of seats for the purposes of applying percentages as described in the policy.
  - ii. For SY 2014-15 and future years, the policy will be applied across all Kindergarten/Junior Kindergarten students as it is in other district schools.
- b. For the grades that were admitted to the immersion schools/programs under previous policies (grade levels admitted before the January lottery of 2013) open seats will be filled from the waitlists giving priority to program language dominant or bilingual students. Each grade's SES balance on October 1<sup>st</sup> of 2012 will be maintained as a baseline and each grade will admit students that do not cause that grade to vary further from the district's policy of SES balance. Further for higher-grade levels, each school/program may have requirements in language proficiency designed to facilitate success for students entering an immersion program.

<sup>1</sup> Pre-assigned students are returning Junior Kindergarten students that become Kindergarteners or Kindergarten students that are retained.

Controlled Choice Policy Amendments  
October 23, 2012

**Sibling Preference for Entering the Cambridge Public Schools**  
For Kindergarten, Junior Kindergarten or 3 year olds for Montessori

Affirming that when an older sibling will be attending a school that includes Kindergarten through 5th grade, their sibling entering the Kindergarten Lottery will have a sibling priority for that school. This means that at the time of the lottery the older sibling must be in Grades JK-4.

**Enrollment Management to Reach Upper School Target # of Students**

To enable upper school grade level cohorts to reach the Innovation Agenda target of 88 students per grade, with a cap of 100 students per grade, enrollment will be controlled in the feeding JK-5th grade schools and the Tobin Montessori School.

The yearly Controlled Choice review will include 5-Year enrollment projections for the Upper Schools.

**Recommendation on Practices to Support Controlled Choice**

To support the Controlled Choice Policy it is strongly recommend that when feasible the following practices be developed and/or maintained by the Superintendent and staff:

1. Broad and targeted out-reach to families with children who will be of age to enter the school system.
2. Materials explaining programmatic differences among schools and programs, including materials specifically designed to target groups that historically have not highly chosen certain schools or programs.
3. Information about how the Controlled Choice Policy works.
4. Information potentially affecting the number of seats available in each school or program
5. for kindergarten/junior kindergarten.
  - a. Number of kindergarten/junior kindergarten seats in each school or program
  - b. Current junior kindergarten enrollment numbers
  - c. Number of known siblings likely to apply
  - d. Proximity schools for each residential address
  - e. Previous years' number of students with proximity choosing a program/school 1st choice.
  - f. The above by S.E.S. status
  - g. Appropriately translated in print and online



**SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

16 FELTON STREET  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

TEL: 617-349-6620 • Fax: 617-349-6624  
mbradshaw@cpsd.us

**MEMBERS**

ALFRED B. FANTINI  
RICHARD HARDING, JR.  
PATRICIA M. NOLAN  
NANCY TAUBER  
ALICE L. TURKEL

**CHAIR**

MAYOR DAVID P. MAHER

**VICE CHAIR**

MARC C. McGOVERN

--IN SCHOOL COMMITTEE--


December 7, 2010

**ORDERED:**

That Superintendent's Recommendation #10-208, Approval of Amendment to the Controlled Choice Policy, be adopted as follows: that no proximity preference be given for the Tobin Montessori School which starts with students attending at age 3; and, for SY2011/2012, no proximity preference be given for bilingual immersion schools or programs which would currently apply to the Amigos School, the King Open School Olá program and the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. School Chinese Immersion Program.

A true copy:

Attest:

  
Marilyn Y. Bradshaw  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee

c: Superintendent  
M. MacFarlane, Esq.

**C09-115**

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

16 FELTON STREET  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Tel: 617-349-6620 • Fax: 617-349-6624

mbradshaw@cpsd.us

**CHAIR**  
MAYON E. DENISE SIMMONS

**VICE CHAIR**  
MARC McGOVERN

**MEMBERS**

ALFRED B. FANTINI

JOSEPH G. GRASSI

PATRICIA M. NOLAN

LUC D. SCHUSTER

NANCY TAUBER

**--IN SCHOOL COMMITTEE--**

April 14, 2009

**ORDERED:**

That the School Committee adopt a policy requiring that all families entering the kindergarten registration process be notified of the importance of selecting three choices and the potential negative effects of not doing so. Further, that all parents not making three choices be requested to sign a form acknowledging that they understand it may have a negative impact on their wait list status.

A true copy:

Attest:   
Marilyn Y. Bradshaw

Executive Secretary to the School Committee

cc: Mr. Grassi  
Superintendent

C09-037

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

16 BELLEVUE STREET  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
Tel: 617-349-6620 • Fax: 617-349-6624  
mbradshaw@cpsd.us

**CHAIR**  
MAYOR E DENISE SIMMONS

**VICE CHAIR**  
MARC McGOVERN

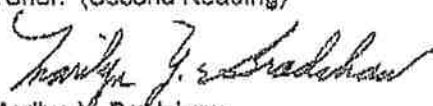
**MEMBERS**  
ALFRED B. FANTINI  
JOSEPH G. GRASSI  
PATRICIA M. NOLAN  
LUC D. SCHUSTER  
NANCY TAUBER

--IN SCHOOL COMMITTEE--

February 3, 2009

**ORDERED:**

That any family that is offered a transfer to another school during the school year may reject that offer and remain at the top of the waitlist for that school. If a family does not accept a second transfer offer to that school, the child then moves to the bottom of the waitlist for that school unless the transfer is offered during the same school year as the first offer. (Second Reading)

A true copy:  
Attest:   
Marilyn Y. Bradshaw  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee

c: Superintendent

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

16 FELTON STREET

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

Tel: 617-349-6620 • Fax: 617-349-6624

mbradshaw@cpsd.us

**MEMBERS**

ALFRED B. FANTINI

JOSEPH G. GRASSI

PATRICIA M. NOLAN

LUC D. SCHUSTER

NANCY TAUBER

**CHAIR**

MAYOR E. DENISE SIMMONS

**VICE CHAIR**

MARC McGOVERN

--IN SCHOOL COMMITTEE--

February 3, 2009

**ORDERED:**

That if a family accepts its first kindergarten lottery placement, including 3- and 4-year olds at Tobin Montessori, they cannot re-enter a future kindergarten lottery process. Such policy should be communicated, in writing, by the Family Resource Center to all applying families. (Second Reading)

A true copy:

Attest:



Marilyn Y. Bradshaw

Executive Secretary to the School Committee

c: Superintendent




**SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

16 FELTON STREET  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

**CHAIR**  
MAYOR KENNETH E. REEVES

**VICE CHAIR**  
ALFRED B. FANTINI

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

Tel: 617-349-6620 • Fax: 617-349-6624  
mbradshaw@cpsd.us

**MEMBERS**

JOSEPH G. GRASSI  
RICHARD HARDING, JR.  
PATRICIA M. NOLAN  
LUC D. SCHUSTER  
NANCY WALSER

--IN SCHOOL COMMITTEE--

May 2, 2006

**ORDERED:**

That Superintendent's Recommendation #06-47, Cambridge Public Schools Controlled Choice Plan Issue Report, be adopted as follows: that the School Committee approve the following changes in the Cambridge Public Schools Controlled Choice Plan:

**A. Transfer Policy on Twins/Qualifying Siblings**


That an extended time period of ten days be allowed for the parents/guardians of twins/qualifying siblings to deny or accept a transfer when only one of the twins/qualifying siblings is offered a transfer opportunity. Qualifying siblings are defined in the report of the Controlled Choice Committee. This recommendation follows the recommendation of the Controlled Choice Committee.

**B. Assignment Policy on Gender Balance**

For grades one through eight gender will be considered in the assignment process when enrollment exceeds 18 per section. Assignments would be restricted to the under-represented gender if balance exceeds 65%. This recommendation follows the recommendation of the Controlled Choice Committee.

A true copy:

Attest:

  
Marilyn Y. Bradshaw

Executive Secretary to the School Committee

c: Superintendent  
/M. MacFarlane

**Cambridge Public Schools  
Administrative Guidelines and Procedures**

**SABBATICAL LEAVE FOR FAMILIES**

The Cambridge Public Schools (“CPS”) fully supports a family’s desire to remain united during a sabbatical leave and recognizes the intrinsic educational value of the experiences provided by such a leave. Remaining as a family unit and maintaining the supportive environment it affords may enhance learning opportunities for a parent/guardian on leave by allowing him/her to remain unfettered by concerns about the well-being of a child from whom he/she has been separated.

While cognizant of and sensitive to the individual needs of parents/guardians of CPS students and while endorsing the concept of life-long learning, CPS feels it necessary to address a parent’s/guardian’s wish for his/her child to accompany him/her during an approved sabbatical leave and to establish guidelines for the related request that CPS reserve the child’s seat at his/her school. The underlying principle of these guidelines is that CPS will act in the best interest of a child who leaves its schools during a parent’s/guardian’s sabbatical leave.

For the purposes of these guidelines, a *sabbatical leave* is a leave of absence granted to a parent/guardian by an employer or institution of higher education during which time the parent/guardian is able to pursue educational, cultural, business, or other such interests that will benefit the parent/guardian in his/her career position upon return. Herein, the term “sabbatical leave” shall encompass any professional leave of absence consistent with this definition.

**Process to Request Reservation of Student’s Seat at School**

1. The parent/guardian must provide the principal with written assurances from the employer or institution of higher education stating:

- its approval of the sabbatical leave, with inclusive dates noted; and
- the intent of the parent/guardian to return to his/her present position or to a position within the structure from which he/she has been granted the leave.

The principal will then send a copy of these assurances to the Family Resource Center. If a parent/guardian is self-employed, he/she must provide the principal with comparable assurances.

2. The parent/guardian must provide documentation to the principal that the family will return to their current Cambridge residence upon expiration of the approved leave. The principal will then send a copy of the documentation to the Family Resource Center.

3. The parent/guardian will be informed in writing by the principal, after consultation with the Family Resource Center, of the decision as to whether a seat will be reserved for the child as requested. If so, the seat shall be reserved for not more than one (1) year from the start of the sabbatical leave. For schools with a waiting list, the child would, by virtue of his/her reserved seat, take priority over others on the school’s waiting list.

4. A parent/guardian unable to provide the required documentation, who removes his/her child from CPS during a sabbatical leave, must re-register the child at the Family Resource Center upon their return to Cambridge. Once proof of Cambridge residency has been provided, and if space guidelines allow, the child may re-enter the school he/she had attended prior to the leave. Should space guidelines not allow the child to re-enter at his/her previous school, the student's name would be placed on the school's waiting list with "priority," such that the child would be given the next available seat in the child's grade level for the remainder of that school year.

5. Because waiting lists expire at the end of each school year, if no seat becomes available to the child by such time, his/her parent/guardian would have to re-apply for the child's admission for the next school year and, for as long as no seat becomes available to the child, do so annually thereafter at the end of each school year. In such case, the child would retain priority placement on the waiting list each year.

### **Appeal of Decisions Rendered**

Decisions will be rendered by the school's principal, in concert with the Family Resource Center, to ensure that no violations of the teachers' collective bargaining agreement occur with regard to class size. While CPS hopes that any conflict arising from this decision will be resolved at the school level, should the parent/guardian choose to do so, he/she may appeal the decision by filing a written appeal with the Deputy Superintendent. An appeals committee will then hold a hearing affording due process and full consideration of all facts as presented by the parent/guardian and the principal.

*Policy references: GCCB*

*Last updated: October 13, 2011*