PIONEER CHARTER SCHOOL OF SCIENCE

Enrolment Policy & Procedures

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Enrollment Policy and Procedures

Admissions Criteria

Charter schools are public schools, and therefore, they are open to all Massachusetts students on a space available basis. This means that Pioneer Charter School of Science (PCSS) may not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in the English language or in a foreign language, or prior academic achievement when recruiting or admitting students. Moreover, PCSS may not set admissions criteria that are intended to discriminate or that have the effect of discriminating based upon any of these characteristics. M.G.L. c. 71, § 89(l); 603 CMR 1.06(1).

PCSS has an interest in making sure that all prospective students and their families understand the mission and focus of the school and are interested in being a part of the school community. PCSS has started in 2007-08 academic year with 96 students in 7th and 8th grades. PCSS will add a new grade each year, and when fully operational, PCSS will serve grades 7-12 with 360 students at maximum.

PCSS requires:

1. Candidates for admission to apply for the grade immediately following their current grade and to successfully complete that grade to be admitted.
2. Students to be resident of Massachusetts at the time that they submit an Application Form (attached) and at the time that they are offered admission.[1]
3. That primary preference for admission be given to siblings of students "currently attending" the school in accordance with Massachusetts Department of Education regulations.
4. That secondary preference for admission is given to students who are residents (as defined in 603 1.06(4)) at the time that they are offered admission to the school.
5. Parents/guardians and students sign compacts that demonstrate their agreement with and understanding of the school's mission and regulations, such as code of conduct.
6. Parents/guardians and students attend an informational session prior to application (this requirement is waived until 2009 application year).

PCSS will not:

1. Give preferences to children of the school’s staff or Board members;
2. Give preference to siblings of students accepted to the school, but not yet attending; or
3. Make statements in meetings intended to discourage, or that have the effect of discouraging, parents/guardians of students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, or any

[1] Students are offered admission if their names are drawn in the lottery or if another student declines an offer of admission/transfers out of the school and his/her name comes up on the waiting list

other protected group of students from submitting an application form to the school. [See M.G.L. c. 71 § 89(1)]

Outreach

Throughout the year, PCSS provides information about the school for families who are interested in sending their children to the school. The application forms are available to families at school and online application forms are also available throughout the year. The school provides application forms in English and Spanish languages. If a family is unable to attend an information session the school will mail an application form (see 6th requirement on previous page). The recruitment and enrollment process is an extensive, citywide outreach effort that includes advertisement in local newspapers, at local libraries, community centers and schools. Attendance of Information Sessions is strongly encouraged for students and their families. PCSS will strive to make accommodations for families with individual hardships.

Enrollment Process

1. For a given school year at the beginning of August, PCSS will publicize three information sessions and invite families to attend and fill out an application form. PCSS will publicize all the application deadlines at least one month in advance. Families who are unable to attend any of these sessions, for whatever reason, will be sent an application form by mail (see 6th requirement on the first page). Returning students or those students who are currently on a waiting list for grades DO NOT have to reapply. The school staff will contact all families whose children are on the waiting list.
2. PCSS will accept application forms until March 1 of the year in which the lottery will take place.
3. The proof of residency has to be submitted with the application form.
4. After this initial application period, the school will conduct a lottery before March 15, for which the date, time, and location will be publicized at least one week before the lottery date. 603 CMR 1.06(6). An incomplete application will not be considered for the lottery.
5. The school will set a final date for students to accept offers of enrollment and the actual date of enrollment.
6. Any form submitted after March 1 will enter a second lottery on August 1, and if there is a waitlist these students will go to the bottom of the waitlist in the order that they are chosen from the lottery.
7. PCSS will publicize all lottery enrollment deadlines and the fact that there will be a lottery if there are more eligible applicants than there are available spaces within a given lottery enrollment process, with reasonable public notice of at least one week.

After initial application deadline passes, PCSS will divide all application forms into three categories under 603 CMR 1.06(4)

- **Siblings:** Students who share a common parent (i.e. either biologic or legal parent) are defined siblings. Whether the children reside in the same household has no bearing on determining if the children are siblings for purposes of a sibling preference. Children who live in different households but share a common parent are siblings for purposes of the sibling preference. Children who may live in the same household but do not share a common parent are not considered to be siblings. If siblings are placed in foster homes

and one of them enrolls in the charter school, then the siblings of that student are entitled to admission preference. Foster children are not considered siblings of other children in the foster home unless they share a common parent.

- **Residents:** Students who live in the city of Chelsea, Everett, and/or Revere. Residents enrolled in district, charter, private or parochial schools or enrolling in schools in the district get equal preference.
- **Non-residents:** Students who live within Massachusetts but outside the city of Chelsea, Everett, and/or Revere are defined as non-residents.

Preference for admission is given first to applicants in the "Siblings" category followed by applicants in the “Residents” category, and then by applicants in the “Non-Residents” category, regardless of when their application form is submitted as long as it is prior to the application deadline. PCSS will either extend an offer of admission to all applicants within a group (Siblings, Residents, or Non-Residents) that meet the application deadline or select applicants randomly using a lottery. PCSS will not offer admission to applicants on a first come first serve basis.

Lottery

PCSS will determine the number of spaces available by grade level. If there are more eligible applicants in any of the categories (“Siblings”, "Residents" or “Non-Residents”) than there are spaces available, PCSS must hold a lottery to determine which applicants will receive an offer of admission. 603 CMR 1.06(3)(a). As previously mentioned, the school must give a public notice of the lottery at least one week before the lottery date. An individual who has no connection to the school will randomly draw the names of all students who submitted application forms before the deadline. After the available slots are filled, the individual shall keep drawing the names of the remaining applicants in each category and place them on a waiting list in the order they are drawn.

If the school does not reach capacity after admitting all eligible “Siblings” and "Residents," then it may admit non-resident applicants. In this case, the school must hold a lottery, under the same rules as outlined above to select non-resident students for the remaining spaces if there are more non-resident applicants than spaces available. 603 CMR 1.06(4)(b).

Waiting List

PCSS will maintain waiting lists for “Siblings”, “Residents”, and “Non-Residents.” These lists will be rolled over from year-to-year until 12th grade. All students in the waiting list will be contacted as openings will be available. School will not fill the openings occurring in the 10th grade after September 30; however, the board reserves the right to fill the openings from the waiting list. School will not accept applications for 11th and 12th grades; however, the board reserves the right to open admission if it is necessary.

PCSS must accept “Resident” students before accepting “Non-Resident” students unless the “Non-Resident” student is also a “Sibling.” There is one exception – if a space becomes available to a “non–resident” student from the waiting list, and whose expenses will cause his or her sending district exceeding the net school spending cap (9%), the charter school should

skip over that student but will keep the name on the waiting list. However, if such a student on the waiting list is a sibling of a student currently enrolled at the charter school, the school may enroll that student, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will pay the tuition to the charter school, but it is subject to state appropriations.

If a student declines an offer of admission, his/her name will not be placed in the waiting list. He/she must reapply again in the future.

Secondary Lottery

PCSS may hold a second lottery under the following conditions, however Board reserves the right to not to open a secondary lottery:

1. If the school has received fewer application forms by March 1 than it has spaces available; or
2. If the school receives additional application forms for the upcoming school year after March 1.

Enrollment Confirmation

Families of the students will be notified at the lottery and by mail of their admission status that is either accepted for admissions or placed on a waiting list. If a student declines an offer of admission, the school will immediately contact the family of the student who is on the top of the waiting list. All families will receive an enrollment package with all forms necessary to enroll in PCSS (such as Proof of Residency, Student Information, and Records Release Form). If a student is accepted in the lottery, that family must confirm by May first that the student will attend the school. To ensure that the student is able to enroll, the family must fill out and submit all required documents by June first. The school will hold an orientation session in August (before the first day of school) to prepare new families and students for the transition to the School and to assist families with any remaining paperwork. If a student is selected off of the waiting list and if the family is notified before August 1st, the family has 5 days to confirm enrollment. If the family is notified after August 1st, the family will have 3 days to confirm enrollment.

Other Limitations

While PCSS primarily accepts students in 7th - 10th grades, the school may accept students in upper grades when the Board of Trustees deems this is necessary for the growth of the school. For an upper grade student, he/she must have successfully completed (or is expected to complete) the grade preceding the grade to which the student seeks admission.

All commonwealth charter schools must ensure that they do not enroll a number of students from a sending district that would cause the district to exceed the 9% cap on net school spending. M.G.L. c. 71 (89)(i).

The Board reserves the right to close enrollment for an academic year after September 30th of that year.