

School Choice FAQs

The school choice program allows parents to send their children to schools in communities other than the city or town in which they reside. Tuition is paid by the sending district to the receiving district. Districts may elect not to enroll school choice students if no space is available.

Children cannot be enrolled in a school outside the city or town of residence unless they have gone through the school choice process. Check with the district you're interested in for information regarding their school choice application process.

****Please Note: For the 2011-12 school year, and until further notice, the District will NOT be accepting applications for grades 5, 6, 7 or 8.****

•Can anyone participate in school choice?

Any family can apply for school choice consideration as long as the school they wish to attend participates in the school choice program. To see the list of districts participating in school choice, visit www.ma.doe.edu.

•Can I apply for full-day kindergarten through the school choice program?

No. Full-day kindergarten is reserved for resident students only. School choice families interested in kindergarten are eligible for placement in half-day programs only. Placement in a morning or afternoon session is based on space available.

•How are school choice students selected?

The Wachusett Regional School District has an application and lottery process to select school choice students. Applications are accepted from January to April each year. A random, blind lottery is held to “pick” school choice students, and families will be notified prior to the close of school.

•How many school choice students are accepted?

The number varies each year, and depends upon the number of seats available in each grade in each building in the District. Principals estimate the number of students they would be able to accommodate for the following school year, and students are accepted based on that projection.

•How will I know if my child has been accepted?

Each family will receive a letter informing them of their school choice status (accepted, not accepted) immediately after the lottery has been run. If your child was accepted, you will also receive a “School Choice Family Acceptance Form.” On this form, you will indicate whether or not you accept the offer of school choice enrollment. Your acceptance letter will include instructions for enrolling your child in the school to which he/she has been assigned. If you decline the offer of school choice, please complete the form and return it to the District. *Declining an offer of school choice does **not** prohibit you from applying again in subsequent years.*

•What happens if my child is not accepted?

The District will maintain a waiting list of students who applied but were not accepted. The waiting list will be active until October 1st of the current year. If a seat becomes available, the District will contact the first child on the waiting list to offer him/her school choice. If a family declines an offer of school choice, the District will contact the next person on the list until the seat is filled or all families have been notified.

*Declining an offer of school choice does **not** prohibit you from applying again in subsequent years.*

•Can I put my child on a waiting list?

No. Only students who have applied for school choice for the upcoming school year will be included on the waiting list.

•Will mailing academic records, MCAS scores, letters of recommendation or student résumés help my child get picked?

No. The Wachusett Regional School District selects students via a blind, random lottery. However, any misleading information on the application could be cause for the District to withdraw its offer of school choice enrollment.

•I have a child already enrolled through the school choice program. Can my other children go ahead and enroll in the District?

No. Siblings of students already enrolled through school choice must also apply and go through the lottery process. However, siblings are given priority for enrollment.

•Does the district I leave pay the district I go to?

Not directly. School choice tuition charges are assessed against sending districts, and paid to receiving districts, in December, March, and June. Payments are handled automatically through adjustments to the quarterly local aid distributions. Tuition assessments are deducted from the distribution, and tuition revenues are added to the distribution.

Per pupil tuition rates are based on receiving districts' per pupil costs for the prior fiscal year, in the following categories: instruction, pupil services, administration, maintenance, and fixed charges. Separate tuition rates are calculated for regular, bilingual and occupational programs.

•Do families pay tuition for school choice?

No. Tuition charges are handled through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (see above). Families are responsible for paying any student activity, sports or extra-curricular fees.

•Is transportation provided for school choice students?

Transportation to and from school is the responsibility of the parents/guardians.

•Do I need to apply for school choice again, after my child has been accepted?

No. Once a child has been accepted to a district under the school choice program, he/she is enrolled until they graduate or transfer.

•Can my child participate in sports if they are a school choice student?

Yes. School choice students are eligible to participate in any school-sponsored activity.

•As a school choice parent, can I participate in volunteer activities at my child's school?

Yes! The District welcomes and encourages parent/guardian participation.

•Is the discipline process different for school choice students?

No. School choice students are held to the same standards, both personally and academically, as any other student in the District. District policies apply to all students enrolled in our schools.

•What if our family moves?

Prior to the move, speak with your child's principal to determine whether or not your child will continue their enrollment in the District. If your child withdraws from school for any reason, please notify your child's principal and the District's Supervisor of Pupil Personnel Services.

•Can my child transfer back to his/her previous school?

Yes. Your child can return to his/her previous school at any time. Please contact the principal and Supervisor of Pupil Personnel services once you have made your decision so that our reports to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education can be updated.