

Prospect Hill Academy Charter School Enrollment Policy

Introduction

In accordance with Massachusetts laws governing charter schools, our enrollment process is non-selective and non-discriminatory. Prospect Hill Academy Charter School is open to all Commonwealth of Massachusetts students with preference given to Somerville and Cambridge residents and those with siblings in the School. Admission is based on a lottery process and applications for grades K through 9 are accepted and backfilled annually. The School is chartered for 1,200 students in grades K through 12 and will not admit students in excess of that number or in excess of the pre-enrollment report in any given year.

Eligibility Criteria

Enrollment to the School is open to all Massachusetts residents at the time of application. It is required that all families, with the exception of homeless families, provide proof of residency by submitting one of the following documents at the time they complete the application:

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

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

Should a student fail to provide proof of residency or should it be determined that a family has provided false information of residency or otherwise, the application will be void and the offer of admission, if proffered, will be rescinded. Students who may be considered homeless are eligible to attend and to apply to the School regardless of their ability to provide proof of residency. For the purposes of receiving preferences for admission based on residency, however, the School will work with students who may be considered homeless on a case-by-case basis to determine where they may currently or temporarily reside.

In accordance with regulation Ch.79. 89 (i); 603 CMR 1.06 (4)(d), in cases where offering admission to a student, who is not a sibling of another student who is currently attending the charter school, from the waitlist would exceed the district charter tuition cap, the student should be skipped but kept on the waitlist. In cases where the enrollment of a student who is a sibling of a student already attending the School would exceed the district charter school tuition cap, and the school has not admitted other students prior to admitting the sibling, the sibling may be offered admission and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will provide tuition for the sibling, subject to appropriation.

Applicants to Kindergarten must be five years of age by August 31 of the year they plan to enter Kindergarten. No student will remain enrolled beyond the age of 22.

Prospect Hill Academy Charter School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed or religion, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age,

ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in the English language or a foreign language, or prior academic achievement. No testing is required for admission and/or acceptance.

To ensure the school can attract a diverse and representative student population, it develops and implements the DESE Recruitment and Retention Plan annually. In addition, to help applicants and their families understand Prospect Hill Academy's mission and educational approach, the school holds Open House events at the beginning of each application cycle. Attending an Open House is encouraged, but it is not a requirement in order to submit an application for admission.

The Application

The admissions application to Prospect Hill Academy is administered through an electronic admissions portal and can be accessed under the Admissions tab at www.phacs.org. Visitors to the portal can choose to complete the application in English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, or Portuguese. Applying to the school is free of charge and no financial incentive to recruit students are used. A paper application is available upon request. Applications require only one electronic parent/guardian signature and do not request a Social Security number. The electronic form asks for specific applicant information, including: Student name (first, middle, last), date of birth, city or town of residence, home address, phone number, and grade level.

The application further states the School's non-discrimination policy (outlined above) and informs applicants that none of the provided information will be used to discriminate against them. In addition, the application states that application records will be destroyed in accordance with regulation 603 CMR 23.06 and 23.07 and that applicants have a right to obtain a copy of the records prior to destruction. Lastly, the confirmation email families receive upon submitting the application states: "In accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Education of English Learners Regulations (603 CMR 14.00), Prospect Hill Academy provides a range of supports and services for eligible students with disabilities and English Learners. A detailed description of services can be found on the Student Services section of the School's website www.phacs.org."

Application Process

Prospect Hill Academy Charter School begins accepting applications each fall for the following school year through its online admissions portal, accessible through the school's web site www.phacs.org. Those who do not have online access can visit the school for assistance with the application or can request, complete, and submit a paper application at each of our campuses. All applications are coded as one of the following to assist with identifying preferences for admission during the lottery:

1. **Siblings***: Children who share a common biological or legal parent of a student enrolled at the School at the time an offer of admission is made.
2. **Somerville and Cambridge residents**: Any applicant whose residence is within the Somerville or Cambridge city limits at the time an offer of admission is made.
3. **Non-Somerville and Non-Cambridge residents**: Any applicant whose residence is outside the Somerville or Cambridge city limits at the time an offer of admission is made.

** Twins are considered separate and must submit individual applications. Sibling preference only applies if one child is already attending the School at the time an offer of admission is made.*

If there are more applicants than available spaces for any given grade, a lottery process will be held to determine acceptance into the School. If there are more spaces than applicants for any particular grade, then all applicants will be accepted.

When lotteries are held, each application deadline will be advertised a minimum of one month in advance through the School's web site and promotional materials. Prospect Hill Academy will determine the number of spaces available for each grade level at the time of the lottery. Applications received after the application deadline will be recorded and entered into a subsequent lottery, should one take place within the same application cycle.

In accordance with the Charter School Statute M.G.L.c.71; 89, the school will backfill vacated seats in grades K-9 up to February 15th. If a vacancy should occur, for any reason, the seat will be filled with the next person on the waitlist while taking into consideration preferences for admission, which may change over time. Should the waitlist for the vacated seats be exhausted, a subsequent lottery process will take place. Vacancies which occur after February 15th are filled the following September within the same student cohort. Students who have withdrawn and wish to return must reenter the School's application process outlined here.

The first and primary annual lottery is generally held in early March of every year and the first application deadline in any annual application cycle is set in late February, approximately 10 days prior to the first lottery. A subsequent lottery may be added up to February 15th of an application cycle, only if the waitlist for any given grade generated through the first lottery has been exhausted of eligible applicants. An electronic lottery will be conducted by a certified lottery software system, and a neutral party will confirm the process to be fair and the selection to be random. All applicants are included in a single lottery for each grade. The electronic lottery system will generate an initial random lottery rank order. After the initial random lottery rank order has been established, preferences for admission will be applied. Siblings, regardless of residency, will receive preference for admission over non-siblings. Residents of Somerville and Cambridge will receive preference for admission over non-residents. Lottery dates are posted on the PHA web site at least one week prior and the primary lottery date is published in student recruitment materials. Lotteries are held at the Early Childhood campus on 15 Webster Ave., Somerville and are open to the public.

Applicants are accepted to the campus at which their given grade level is served. Students accepted to the School, whether from the lottery or subsequently from the waitlist, are notified by email if the notification takes place prior to school begin and by email and phone if the notification takes place after school begins. Parents/guardians must accept enrollment via the online admissions portal through which they applied within 10 days of the notification date if notification takes place prior to August 15th and within 3 days of the notification date if notification takes place after August 15th of a given application cycle. Applicants who submitted a paper application will be notified by phone and must accept enrollment in the above-mentioned timeframes via phone or in person. Should a parent/guardian fail to accept enrollment within the permissible time frame, the school will make several attempts at contacting the family. Failure to accept enrollment by the response deadline will lead to the space being offered to the next applicant on the waitlist. Declining an offer of admission is final. Should applicants change their mind, they must reapply.

Please note that the School's application process is separate from and not integrated with that of our sending districts. Should the principal enrollment process fail to fill all available admission spaces or spaces which are vacated during the school year prior to February 15, the School may repeat the process

in a way that is fair and open with reasonable public notice at least one month prior to the application deadline.

Waitlist Policy

Applicants who do not receive an offer of admission via the lottery will be placed on a grade-level waitlist based on the initial random lottery rank order and taking into consideration preferences for admission. Families of waitlisted students must contact the school with any changes in residency as this may affect their position on the waitlist. Should a space become available, the first student on the corresponding grade-level waitlist will be accepted and informed thereof by email and phone. No students will be admitted ahead of other eligible students who were previously placed on a waitlist from a prior enrollment process, except in cases where enrollment preferences change or as described in regulation 603 CMR 1.05(10)(b).603 CMR 1.05(8). If a student declines an offer of admission, the School will remove that student's name from the admissions list and move to the next eligible student based on the lottery process.

The School will keep accurate records of the waitlist of any given application cycle, including names (first, middle, last), home addresses, phone numbers and grade levels. However, waitlists are not carried over to the next school year. After February 15th of a given application cycle, all applications on the waitlist are void. Students who wish consideration for the following year must reapply.

Students who are offered admission must begin attending the School, in accordance with the School's attendance policy, within ten days of their anticipated start date (e.g., the first day of school). PHA will consider students who fail to attend the school to have declined their offer of admission.

Returning Students

Students who are already enrolled in the School do not need to reapply. However, returning students must complete a re-registration process to provide updated documentation, including proof of residency, emergency contacts, and health forms as required. Should an enrolled student fail to attend school, policies and procedures pertaining to attendance will be applied.

Disclosure of Student Information

PHA respects the privacy of its students and families and will not release student information to third parties unless required by law to do so. In accordance with Statute M. G. L. Chapter 71, Section 89, the School will release its mailing list to a state-approved mailing house at the request of the School's host cities' school districts. Prior to release, each PHA family is notified in writing and given the option to opt out from the mailing list.