

P2012.5 - ENROLLMENT POLICY

1. General Policy Statements

a. Non-Discrimination & Regulatory Practices

Sizer School, A North Central Charter Essential School, complies with all state and federal regulations on safety and non-discrimination. Sizer School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in the English language or foreign language, or prior academic achievement (G.L. c. 71, § 89(f); 603 CMR 1.05(1)).

All applicants are provided with documentation of the rights of students with diverse learning needs, including the right to attend charter schools and the right to receive accommodations and support services. This includes students who may have disabilities, require special education, or are English language learners. This information is provided to applicants with initial inquiry paperwork, within their post-lottery documentation regarding enrollment and waitlist status, and is available in the enrollment section of the Sizer website (www.sizerschool.org).

Sizer School does not require potential applicants or their families to attend interviews or informational meetings as a condition of application, admission, and attendance (603 CMR 1.05(3)(a)). Sizer School does not administer any tests to potential applicants, nor is enrollment based on results of any test of ability or achievement (603 CMR 1.05(3)(a)).

b. Enrollment

Sizer School is chartered for up to 400 seats for grades 7 through 12. Based on student enrollment, Sizer determines the number of seats available and enrolls approximately 65-80 students in grade 7 each year. Sizer accepts applications for students entering grades 7, 8, and 9 and follows backfilling requirements as described below in sections 5 and 6.

Sizer School will only call for and accept applications for grades 10, 11, and 12 if determined necessary by factors such as size of current class, staff capacity, and overall enrollment needs. If Sizer School determines that it has openings in grades 10, 11, and/or 12, Sizer School will open an application process for the given grade(s), and will publish the number of seats available.

The total number of students attending Sizer School in a given school year cannot exceed the total number of students in the school's pre-enrollment report submitted to the Department in the previous spring in accordance with 603 CMR 1.08(5) nor will the school admit students in excess of the school's approved maximum enrollment.

c. Recruitment and Retention

Sizer School does not charge an application fee or use financial incentives to recruit students. Sizer develops and implements a student recruitment and retention plan each year as outlined in G.L. c. 71 § 89(f) and 603 CMR 1.05(1). The school's recruitment and retention plan can be found in their Annual Report. This plan includes advertising through various community agencies, public access television, and public libraries.

d. Disclosure of Student Information

Sizer School does not generally disclose student information to third parties, though it does comply with requests for information and other data requirements from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and applicant information may be released in compliance with these regulations (G.L. c. 71, § 89(g) and (n)). Upon request and in compliance with state regulations, the school may be required to provide names and addresses of students to a third party mail house (G.L. c. 71, § 89(g); 603 CMR 1.05(6)(e)).

If applicants would like to opt out of such information disclosures, it is the responsibility of the applicant to make this desire known by submitting a signed and dated letter to the Recruitment and Communications Coordinator at Sizer School (G.L. c. 71, § 89(g)).

Sizer School's application includes a notice with the approximate date of destruction and the right to receive a copy of the documents to be destroyed for applicants who are not admitted.

e. Transportation

It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to arrange for transportation to and from school for enrolled students. Students who reside in the city of Fitchburg are eligible for bus transportation to and from school if within the mileage guidelines established by the Fitchburg Public School District. All children are subject to transportation eligibility guidelines, as set by the Fitchburg Public Schools.

2. Eligibility Criteria

a. Residency

Applicants must be a resident of Massachusetts to apply for admission and to attend Sizer School. Reasonable proof of current residency is required at the time an offer of admission is made (G.L. c. 71, § 89(m); 603 CMR 1.05(6)(b)). Section 4b below defines requirements for reasonable proof of residency. Students who may be considered homeless under the definition of the McKinney-Vento Act are eligible to apply and to attend Sizer School.

Admitted students who do not meet this eligibility criterion will have their offer of admission rescinded and the student will be unenrolled from Sizer School, even if discovered during the school year.

If proof of residency is not received at the time an offer of admission is made, the offer may be rescinded and the student unenrolled.

b. Age and Grade Completion

Sizer School serves students who have not yet obtained a high school diploma until the age of 22 (603 CMR 1.05(12)).

All applicants must have successfully completed the grade preceding the grade for which s/he seeks admission based on the criteria from their sending school. For applicants seeking to move ahead of their designated grade level, the applicant must obtain proof from their sending school that they are eligible to be promoted (e.g. promotion from fifth to seventh grade). For

applicants that are repeating a grade level, the applicant must obtain proof from their sending school that they failed to complete the preceding grade level.

Examples of proof of grade completion include, but may not be limited to, a report card, summer school credits, transcript, signed and dated letter from a guidance counselor, etc. Students who are not enrolled in traditionally graded schools must provide documentation of equivalent educational experience.

Once admitted, if it is determined that a student should be or is in a grade level other than the one in which they've applied based on the above-mentioned eligibility criteria, Sizer School would rescind the offer of admission and unenroll the student, even if it is discovered during the school year.

3. Application Process

Sizer School's application process is not integrated with that of our chartered districts (603 CMR 1.05(11)).

Sizer School's principal application period is typically from November 1st until March 1st for the following school year. Applications for this principal lottery will not be accepted after March 1st at 11:59pm. Sizer School will re-open applications after March 1st at grades 7, 8, and/or 9 if the principal enrollment process fails to fill the available slots or the generated waitlist from the principal lottery at the respective grade level is exhausted. Note that in the instance in which Sizer School accepts additional applications for grades where a waitlist has already been established from the principal lottery, Sizer will exhaust the initial waitlist prior to holding another lottery for those additional applications.

Public notice of application deadlines is made at least one month in advance of the application deadline. Sizer School posts deadlines for accepting student applications in the enrollment section of the Sizer School website and on the Sizer School calendar (www.sizerschool.org).

To apply for the principal lottery to Sizer School for the upcoming school year, an application must be completed and submitted to the school prior to March 1st. Applications can be filled out in the enrollment section of the school's website (www.sizerschool.org). To request a paper application, it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to contact the Recruitment Office (info@sizerschool.org, (978) 345-2701 ext. 411), or request one in person at Sizer School (603 CMR 1.05(6)).

Sizer School will not set any principal application deadlines or hold any enrollment lotteries for student admission for the upcoming school year until after January 1st and shall conclude its principal enrollment process no later than March 15th of each year (603 CMR 1.05(3)(c)).

a. Information Sessions

Inquiries can be made at any time of year, however the official enrollment management window each year is typically from November 1st to March 1st. In order for students and parents/guardians to clearly understand Sizer School's program, it is strongly recommended that parents/guardians and students attend an Information Session. As noted above, however, attendance at an Information Session is not required to apply or be admitted.

Dates and details of each year's information sessions are posted on the school's website (www.sizerschool.org), posted in local community venues, and can be requested through the Recruitment Office (info@sizerschool.org or (978) 345-2701 ext. 411).

4. Enrollment Lottery

Sizer School will hold a lottery to determine which students to admit if there are more eligible applicants than seats available (603 CMR 1.05(6)(a) and (c)). Every time the admissions lottery takes place, the process will be fair and all rules will be consistently applied. Each lottery is conducted in public and will be held at Sizer School, 500 Rindge Rd., Fitchburg, MA 01420. An electronic lottery will be conducted wherein every applicant will receive an electronically generated random lottery number. These random lottery numbers will establish the initial rank order. After the initial rank order is created, sibling and residential preferences, as described below, will be applied. A neutral party shall certify that the process is fair and that the selection is random (603 CMR 1.05(9)).

Applicants who do not wish to have their name displayed at the public lottery must inform the the Recruitment Office (info@sizerschool.org or (978) 345-2701 ext. 411) directly of this preference, in which case, the applicant's initials will be displayed prior to receiving their electronically generated random lottery number.

If the principal enrollment process fails to fill available admission spaces, Sizer School may repeat the process more than once providing such process is fair and open. Additionally, as spaces become available during the school year prior to February 15th, Sizer School may repeat the enrollment process to fill these openings and to meet the requirements of (G.L. c. 70, § 89(n). 603 CMR 1.05(8)).

a. Sibling Preference

Siblings of enrolled Sizer students who attend the school at the time an offer of admission is made are given first preference, according to state law, and will be offered enrollment preference in the school ahead of all other students in the lottery (603 CMR 1.05(6)(b)). As defined by Massachusetts statutes, a sibling must share a common biological or legal parent with an actively enrolled student to receive the sibling preference. Proof of sibling status under this legal definition, such as birth certificates or adoption forms, may be required upon offer of admission.

Siblings who are concurrently applying (e.g. twins or siblings applying to multiple grades at the same time) do not receive preference for admission. An offer of admission does not give sibling preference to other siblings on the waitlist. The sibling preference is only activated for students whose sibling is currently attending the school, not students admitted via the lottery. Therefore, the sibling preference is activated for siblings on the waitlist on the first day the admitted student starts attending Sizer.

b. Residency Preference

Sizer School is a regional school, and second preference is given to applicants who reside in one of the Massachusetts school districts in the Sizer region [Ashburnham-Westminster, Clinton, Fitchburg, Gardner, Leominster, Lunenburg, Nashoba (Bolton, Stow, Lancaster), North

Middlesex (Pepperell, Ashby, Townsend), and Wachusett (Holden, Paxton, Princeton, Rutland, Sterling)].

Reasonable proof of current residency is required at the time an offer of admission is made (603 CMR 1.05(10)(a)). If proof of residency is not received at the time an offer of admission is made, the offer may be rescinded and the student unenrolled.

Acceptable forms include:

- 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

This residency policy does not apply to homeless students. For the purpose of establishing preference for admission based on residency, Sizer School will collect proof of temporary residence from students who may be considered homeless on a case-by-case basis.

c. Lottery Procedure

The lottery will be conducted within 7 days of March 1st, weather permitting. If postponed due to weather, the lottery will be held on the next available school day. Each year's lottery date and time will be posted on the school's website and calendar (www.sizerschool.org) and in each year's informational materials; at least one week's notice will be given of this date. All applicants who submit their application form before the principal application deadline will be included in the lottery. An electronic lottery will be conducted wherein every applicant will receive an electronically generated random lottery number. These random lottery numbers will establish the initial rank order.

After the initial rank order is created, sibling and residential preferences, as described above, will be electronically applied. Sizer School shall place the names of students not offered admission following a lottery on a waitlist in the order the names are selected (603 CMR 1.05(10)). Within two weeks of the lottery, all applicants will be notified of their enrollment status by email, mail, text message, and/or phone call from the Recruitment Office.

Students offered a seat from March 1st to June 30th have 2 weeks (14 days) from initial notification to accept or decline their seat. Students offered a seat after July 1st have one week (7 days) from initial notification to accept or decline their seat.

d. Accepting Offer of Admission

To accept an offer of admission, parents/guardians must do any of the following within the timeframes listed above in section 4c:

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

- Electronically click “Accept” in response to their offer of admission via email/text
- Email or mail a letter of acceptance to the Sizer School Recruitment Office (info@sizerschool.org; 500 Rindge Rd. Fitchburg, MA); this letter must specify the student’s name and grade level for which you’re accepting
- Verbally notify the Recruitment Office over the phone via (978) 345-2701 ext.411
- Meet directly with the Recruitment and Communication Coordinator in person at Sizer School with notification of the acceptance

Upon acceptance, parents/guardians will be guided via email on how to access enrollment forms including, but not limited to, school registration forms, home language survey, and a records release form for the sending school. If a family requires that these forms be provided in paper form, they must contact the Recruitment Office (info@sizerschool.org, (978) 345-2701 ext.411).

e. Declining Offer of Admission

To decline an offer of admission, parents/guardians must do any of the following:

- Electronically click “Decline” in response to their offer of admission via email/text
- Email or mail a letter to the Sizer School Recruitment Office (info@sizerschool.org; 500 Rindge Rd. Fitchburg, MA) with a statement that you’re declining the seat; this letter must specify the parent/guardian’s name, student’s name, and grade level for which you’re declining
- Meet directly with the Recruitment and Communication Coordinator in person at Sizer School with notification of the decline

An offer of admission will be presumed declined if:

- All reasonable attempts are made to contact the family but the family does not respond within the timeframes listed above in section 4c. Reasonable attempts include but are not limited to emailing, mailing letters, and calling the family with the contact information provided in their application.
- The student has accepted their seat but does not begin attending Sizer School within ten days of the agreed upon start date (for example, the first day of school). If the student is going to be absent, Sizer School must be directly notified of absences in advance through a phone call, email, or speaking with someone directly.

Students who decline their offer of admission or are presumed to have declined their offer given the parameters listed above have to reapply in a future application cycle in order to be considered again for admission.

5. Description of the Waitlist

a. Creation of Waitlist & Offer of Admission

Sizer School shall place the names of students not offered admission following a lottery on a waitlist in the order the names are selected (603 CMR 1.05(10)).

Sizer School follows backfill requirements for grades 7, 8, and 9 until February 15th of the school year enrollment is intended for. The next available student on the waitlist will be offered

admission if a student in grades 7, 8, or 9 stops attending, withdraws from, or declines admission to Sizer School. Subject to preferences at the time of admission, waitlisted students will be offered admission until the vacant seat is filled (G.L. Chapter 71, § 89(n))

Waitlisted students may be offered a seat any time between the principal lottery in March and February 15th of the school year enrollment is intended for. Students offered a seat from the waitlist between March 1st and June 30th have 2 weeks (14 days) to accept or decline their seat. Students offered a seat from the waitlist after July 1st have one week (7 days) to accept or decline their seat.

Families will be informed of an offer of admission via email, mail, text message, and/or phone call. For information on how to accept or decline an offer of admission, or to learn more about when an offer is presumed to be declined, refer to sections 4d and 4e above.

b. Changes in Waitlist Status

In order to accurately maintain waitlists, parents/guardians of waitlisted students should provide updated contact information to the Recruitment Office (info@sizerschool.org, (978) 345-2701 ext. 411) as soon as it is available. Any changes in residency or sibling status will precipitate a change in waitlist status. Examples include:

- Once a waitlisted student's sibling begins attending Sizer, the waitlisted student will be entitled to sibling preference, and will move to the appropriate position on the waitlist.
- If a family moves to a town/city within Sizer School's chartered districts while on the waitlist, the student will be entitled to residency preference.
- If a family moves away from a town/city within Sizer School's chartered districts, the student will lose their residency preference.

Reasonable proof of current residency is required at the time an offer of admission is made (603 CMR 1.05(10)(a)). If a reasonable proof of residency is not received by seven days after an accepted offer of admission, the offer may be rescinded and the student unenrolled. See sections 2a and 4b above for more information regarding residency.

No student may be admitted ahead of other eligible students who were previously placed on a waitlist during a prior enrollment process, except in cases where enrollment preferences change or as described in 603 CMR 1.05(10)(b) (603 CMR 1.05(8)).

In cases where offering admission to a student who is not a sibling of another student currently attending the charter school from the waitlist would exceed the district charter tuition cap, the student will be skipped but kept on the waitlist. In cases where the enrollment of a student who is a sibling of a student already attending a charter 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. G.L. c. 71, § 89(i); 603 CMR 1.05(10)(b).

c. Maintenance of Waitlist

Sizer School shall maintain waitlists only for the school year that the student(s) sought admission (603 CMR 1.05(10)(a)). It will expire February 16th of the current school year. Sizer School will keep accurate records of its waitlist; to inquire about a student's movement on the waitlist, it is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to contact the Recruitment Office

(info@sizerschool.org, (978) 345-2701 ext.411). Information for students who entered the lottery but did not gain admission must include, but is not limited to, names (first, middle, last); dates of birth; cities or towns of residence; grade levels; home addresses; and telephone numbers (G.L. c. 71, § 89(n); 603 CMR 1.05(10)(a)).

Sizer School will not roll over waitlists from year to year and students on the waitlist who do not receive an offer of admission before the waitlist expires will have to reapply in order to be considered for enrollment the following year.

6. Backfilling

In accordance with G.L. c.71, §89 and 603 CMR 1.05 (10)(c), when an enrolled student stops attending or withdraws from Sizer during the school year, the next available student on the waitlist for that grade will be offered a spot in grades 7, 8 or 9. In these grades, the school is required to attempt to fill that vacant seat through February 15th.

A vacancy not filled after February 15th moves into the subsequent grade, to be filled the following school year provided such grade is not in grades 10, 11, or 12. Seats for students who have accepted an offer of admission at Sizer but have never attended are exempt (603 CMR 1.05(10)(c)).

7. Withdrawals and Transfers

Students withdrawing or transferring must follow the procedures articulated in the Sizer School Student Handbook. Enrolled students who withdraw will not be readmitted without going through the full application and lottery process described above.

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