

Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School

& Theodore R. Sizer Teachers Center

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www.theparkerschool.org

Introduction

As a public school, The Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School (Parker) complies with all state and federal regulations on safety and non-discrimination. The school's size is limited by its charter. The Parker 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.

Parker serves approximately 400 students in grades 7 through 12. Each school year, Parker determines the number of spaces available in each grade. In general, Parker expects to enroll approximately 65 new students entering 7th grade. Parker also accepts applications for students entering 8th and 9th grade and fills available seats in those grades based on attrition. Though Parker's attrition rate is quite low, if and when a seat becomes available in the 7th, 8th or 9th grades, new students are admitted from the waitlist (defined by the state as "backfilling") for those grades, as established through the lottery that happens in early February each year (following the procedures outlined below). Parker does not accept new students into grades ten, eleven, and twelve and therefore does not accept applications for those grades.

As a public school, there is no cost to apply to or enroll at The Parker School, and there are no admission requirements beyond completing and submitting an application by the February 1st deadline.

1) Eligibility

a) Residency:

- i) The application process is open to all residents of Massachusetts; enrolled students must be residents of Massachusetts.
- ii) The Parker School is a regional charter school, and students who reside within the school's declared district receive a residency preference in enrollment.
Towns/school districts in Parker's regional district are: Acton-Boxborough, Ashburnham-Westminster, Athol-Royalston, Ayer, Bedford, Berlin-Boylston, Carlisle, Chelmsford, Clinton, Concord, Concord-Carlisle, Fitchburg, Gardner, Grafton, Groton-Dunstable, Harvard, Hudson, Leominster, Lincoln, Lincoln-Sudbury, Littleton, Lowell, Lunenburg, Marlborough, Maynard, Narragansett, Nashoba, Newton, Northboro-Southboro, North Middlesex, Orange, Oxford, Princeton, Quabbin, Ralph C. Mahar, Shirley, Shrewsbury, Southborough, Sudbury, Tyngsborough, Wachusett, Wayland, Westborough, West Boylston, Westford, Westminster, Weston, Winchendon, and Worcester.

- iii) Homeless students are eligible to apply, and proof of residency requirements may be waived for students who are homeless. The school will work with applicants who may be homeless on a case-by-case basis to determine residency, and therefore, residency admission preferences.
- b) Applications accepted for grades 7, 8 and 9:
 - i) Students may apply for grades seven, eight or nine for the upcoming school year. Parker does not accept new students into grades ten, eleven, and twelve and therefore does not accept applications for those grades.
 - ii) All applicants must have successfully completed (or be reasonably expected to complete) the grade preceding the grade for which s/he seeks admission. If a student does not successfully complete the prior grade, the offer of admission may be rescinded. Proof of completion can take the form of transcripts, report cards, and/or other official documentation from the sending school district indicating eligibility for the intended grade. This proof should be received by August 15 of the impending school year. The age ceiling for high school is 22; reasonable proof of age may be requested.
 - iii) If an applicant seeks to skip a grade or repeat a grade and therefore alter which grade they are applying for at Parker, confirmation of the student's eligibility to skip or repeat this same grade at their current school must be presented.
 - iv) Students who are not enrolled in traditionally graded schools must provide documentation of equivalent educational experience and/or grade completion.
- c) No other eligibility requirements:
 - i) The Parker School does not administer any tests to potential applicants, nor is enrollment based on results of any test of ability or achievement.
 - ii) Though Parker recommends that families attend an Information Session (see below), it is not required to apply to the school. The only requirement to apply is to submit a completed application by the February 1st deadline.

2) Application Process

- a) Applications due February 1:
 - i) To apply to The Parker School, an application must be completed and submitted to the school by each year's February 1 deadline.
 - ii) Applications cannot be accepted after February 1, except when February 1 falls on a weekend, in which case, applications are accepted on the Monday following February 1.
 - iii) The Parker School will make public notice of these dates each year between December 1 and February 1. At least one month's notice will be given. Each year, the number of available spots for each grade level in the coming year will be determined and announced as part of the enrollment process. If the school receives more applicants than it has openings, a lottery will be conducted from the pool of all completed applications received by February 1.
 - iv) It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that an application has been received by the school; applicants may contact the front office of The Parker School to confirm that an application is on file for the lottery.

- v) The application itself requires only one parent/guardian signature.
- vi) Applications from students who do not meet eligibility criteria as stated above will be returned to the parent/guardian who filed the application, along with an explanation for the return.
- b) How to get an application:
 - i) Applications can be obtained from the school website (www.theparkerschool.org) or by contacting the front office of The Parker School. There is also an online application form available at the school website. Inquiries about enrollment can be made at any time of year, however the official enrollment management window each year is from December 1 to February 1.
- c) Information Sessions/Visiting the School:
 - i) In order for students and parents/guardians to clearly understand The Parker School program, it is strongly recommended that parents/guardians and students attend an Information Session. Note that attendance at an Information Session is not required to apply or be admitted to The Parker School. Several types of information sessions are held each year: school visit mornings, evening information sessions, and community information sessions. Dates and details of each year's information sessions are posted on the school website, posted in local community venues, and advertised in community papers. Public notice of these sessions and application deadlines is made at least one month in advance of the application deadline. All sessions are intended for students and families and are designed for participants to better understand the Parker program and determine if it is a good fit for their student(s).
- d) No Waitlist Roll-Over:
 - i) Applications from students with a "waitlist spot" from a current or prior year do NOT roll over from year to year. Students on one year's waitlist are NOT automatically reentered in the next year's lottery. All students on a waitlist must re-submit an application each year and go through the lottery process each year, yielding a new waitlist number each year. "Repeat" applications and "first-time" applications to The Parker School have equal status in the lottery and no preference is given to students who have previously been on a waitlist. On or around the beginning of each year's enrollment window (December 1), Parker will send a letter to all previous applicants who are on the current year's waitlist to prompt them to submit a new application for the following year's lottery. It is the responsibility of the applicant to submit a new application for each school year for which they wish to be considered an applicant.

3) The Lottery

- a) Lottery Procedures and Timing:
 - i) If there are more applicants than seats available, Parker will hold a single lottery in which every application is randomly drawn and assigned a lottery number.
 - ii) The lottery will be conducted on the Thursday of the first full week of February, unless that is more than seven days after February 1st, in which case the lottery will be held on the Tuesday of the first full week of February. Each year's lottery date

- and time will be posted on the school website and in each year's informational materials; at least one week's notice will be given of this date. If the lottery needs to be moved because of a weather event (e.g., snow day), that information and the postponed lottery date will be posted on the school website as soon as possible.
- iii) The lottery itself is held at the Parker School (49 Antietam Street, Devens, MA) and is open to the public. A neutral person will draw the lottery. All applicants for the enrollment window will be drawn by name in the lottery and assigned a lottery number in the order that they are selected in the lottery process.
 - iv) Applicants who do not want their name read aloud at the public lottery must inform the school directly of this preference, in which case, the applicant's initials will be read aloud.
- b) Post-Lottery Procedures and Timing:
- i) After each applicant is assigned a randomly-drawn lottery number through the lottery process described above, admission preferences based on state regulations are then applied in the following state-mandated order: 1) siblings of actively enrolled students; 2) residents of the school's region (listed above); 3) non-sibling, non-residents of the region.
 - ii) Offers of admission are made to students in the order determined through the above process, based on number of openings in each grade each year. Students who are not offered admission after the initial lottery draw are placed on a waitlist in accordance with the preferences identified above and the order their names were drawn.
 - iii) All applicants are notified by email of their enrollment status not later than February 15. Students either receive an offer of admission or a waitlist number for their grade.
- c) Offers of Admission:
- i) When a student is offered a spot at Parker, they become admitted students; the offer of admission is extended via email. If email is not available or no response is obtained via email, an offer is made via phone call and/or US mail. It is the responsibility of the applicant/applicant's guardian to make sure that The Parker School is made aware of any changes to email, phone, or address so that the applicant can be contacted.
 - ii) Admitted students must accept or decline the spot they have been offered in writing. While return of the formal accept/decline form is preferred, email correspondence indicating decline status is also accepted (no proof of residency is required with a decline).
 - iii) Admitted students are required to provide proof of residency. Valid proof of residency can be presented in the form of:
 - o a utility bill (dated within the last 60 days)
 - o a deed or mortgage payment (dated within the past 60 days)
 - o a property tax bill (dated within the last year)
 - o a current signed lease, Section 8 agreement, or residency affidavit
 - o a W-2 form (dated within the year) or a payroll stub (dated within the last 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)
- iv) An accept/decline form and an explanation of proof of residency requirements are sent to each admitted student. The completed accept/decline form (along with proof of residency for students who wish to accept) should be returned to the school within the window of time indicated below, depending on when in the school year the offer is made:
- *Initial Offers (approx. February 15):*
 - Applicants who are offered admission for the *following* school year through the initial lottery must accept or decline the offer no later than March 10, though earlier notification is appreciated.
 - *Offers made March 15-August 15*
 - Applicants who are offered admission for the *following* school year between March 15 and August 15 must accept or decline the offer within two weeks from the date the offer was made.
 - *Offers made August 15-February 15*
 - Applicants who are offered admission for the *current* school year (after August 15 or once the school year is in session) must accept or decline the offer within one week from the date the offer is made. A one-week extension of the deadline will be granted to any family who requests more time to consider the offer (request should be made in writing, via email).
- v) Admitted students who accept the offer of a spot at Parker become accepted students (they do not become enrolled students until they attend their first day of school). Upon receipt of acceptance of an offer and proof of residency paperwork, accepted students will be sent further enrollment paperwork, including but not limited to school registration paperwork and a records release form for the sending school.
- vi) All reasonable attempts will be made to reach the family of an admitted student, but if no response is received from a student for whom an offer of admission is made by the response date stated in the original offer letter, then that student will be considered to have declined the spot. When an admitted student accepts an offered spot, that student must begin attending school within ten (10) days of the agreed upon start date (generally the first day of school in the following school year); if an admitted student does not do so, then that student will be considered to have declined the spot.
- d) Notes and Definitions:
- i) *Sibling/sibling preference:* As defined by Massachusetts statutes, siblings must share a common biological or legal parent. Proof of sibling status under this legal definition will be required upon the offer of admission. To receive sibling preference, a student must be a sibling of a student who is actively enrolled at The Parker School at the time an offer of admission is made. Siblings who are concurrently applying to the school do not receive preference, and an offer of admission does not give sibling preference to other siblings on the waitlist. The

sibling preference is activated for enrolled students, not for admitted students. Therefore, the sibling preference is activated on the first day of attendance at Parker by an admitted student. Legal documents (e.g., birth certificates, court papers) must be submitted upon acceptance of a seat made available via sibling preference.

- ii) *Applicant*: An eligible student who submits a completed application and is then assigned a number through the lottery draw process.
- iii) *Admitted student*: A student who receives an offer of admission to the school.
- iv) *Accepted student*: A student who accepts the offer of admission and indicates the intention to enroll at Parker.
- v) *Enrolled student*: A student who matriculates at Parker and actively attends a first day of school.

4) The Waitlist and Backfilling

a) The Waitlist:

- i) Students who have gone through the application and lottery process, but who have not received an offer of admission are placed on a grade-level waitlist for the upcoming school year in the order their names were drawn in the lottery and subject to legal preferences in the following order: sibling; regional residency; non-regional, non-sibling.
- ii) If and when openings arise at the school, enrollment will continue from the waitlist of the grade in which the vacancy was created, subject to legal preferences at the time of admission. Parker maintains this waitlist only for the school year for which the student has applied. Each year, applicants must reapply and go through the lottery to be considered for a future year's waitlist. There is NO rollover from year to year on the waitlist. The school is required to maintain and report accurate records of its waitlist, including students' names (first, middle, last), dates of birth, cities or towns of residence, and grade levels.
- iii) Admitted students who decline the spot they are offered are removed from the waitlist for the school year. Students who decline an offer of admission but who wish to be considered again for future years must reapply for admission each year and go through the full application and lottery process described above.

b) Offers Made from the Waitlist:

- i) Seats may become available for two reasons: a student offered a seat for the following school year may decline it or a currently enrolled student may withdraw from Parker. As seats become available, students on the appropriate grade-level waitlist will be offered a seat following the waitlist order.
- ii) When a seat becomes available, students/families will be sent an acceptance letter by email. If no response is received, phone and US mail will be used. If the student/family who has been offered a seat does not respond to the school's attempts to make contact (within the time frame outlined in the 'Offers of Admission' section above), the seat will be considered declined and the next student on the waitlist will be offered a spot.
- iii) In accordance with G.L. c.71, §89 and 603 CMR 1.05 (10)(c), when an enrolled student withdraws from Parker during the school year, the next available student on

- the waitlist for that grade will be offered a seat in grades 7, 8 or 9. In these grades, the school is required to attempt to fill that vacant seat through February 15. A vacancy in grades 7 or 8 that continues or is created after February 15 and is not filled by the end of the school year will be filled for the following school year in the subsequent grade. Enrolled students who withdraw may not be readmitted without going through the full application and lottery process described above.
- iv) When a student with an offer of acceptance declines the offered spot, the waitlist process will continue until the vacant seat is filled. 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 and in accordance with 603 CMR 1.05(10)(b).
- c) **Additional State Regulations:**
- i) Per Massachusetts statute and regulations, in cases where the enrollment of a student from the waitlist (who is not a sibling of another currently enrolled student) 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 currently attending a charter school would exceed the district charter school tuition cap, the sibling may be enrolled and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will provide tuition for the sibling, subject to appropriation. See G.L. c. 71, § 89(i); 603 CMR 1.05(10)(b).
 - ii) The Parker School may hold additional lotteries if the waitlist (established from the principal lottery) for a grade is exhausted in any given year. Applications are not accepted past the initial February 1 deadline each year for the initial lottery. However, if the enrollment process described above does not fill available admission spaces, Parker may repeat the process more than once, in the same fair and open process used above, and the school will give reasonable public notice of at least one month prior to any subsequent deadlines. If at any point in the year the waitlist is depleted and the school determines that it has enrollment openings, then a new application and enrollment period will be declared. The Parker School will adhere to all public notification deadlines, as stated above, for application deadlines. In this case, a new lottery would be conducted one week after the close of the application period, and at least one week's notice would be given about when and where this lottery would occur.

5) Additional Information:

- a) **Transportation:**
 - i) The Parker School does not provide transportation to students; it is the responsibility of parents/guardians to arrange for transportation to the school for enrolled students.
 - ii) Note that there is public transportation available to the Parker School from the Fitchburg/Leominster area.
 - iii) Additionally, the parent/guardian community facilitates a robust carpooling system for enrolled students; specific information about this carpool system is provided to families who accept an offer of admission.

6) Regulations and Compliance Information:

a) Disclosure of Student Information

- i) The Parker 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. Furthermore, 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. If applicants would like to opt out of such information disclosures, it is the responsibility of the applicant to make this desire known, in writing, directly to the school.

b) Additional State Regulations:

- i) Parker does not charge an application fee or use financial incentives to recruit students.
- ii) Parker develops and implements a student recruitment and retention plan each year as outline in G.L. c. 71 § 89(f) and 603 CMR 1.05(1).
- iii) The school will not set any principal application deadlines or hold any enrollment lotteries for student admission for the upcoming school year until after January 1, and shall conclude its principal enrollment process no later than March 15 of each year. 603 CMR 1.05(3)(c).
- iv) Parker's enrollment process is independent of the enrollment process of any other school or district and adheres to all regulations governing charter schools and Massachusetts public schools.
- v) The total number of students attending Parker 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.
- vi) 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 documentation is provided to applicants with the initial inquiry letter and with the post-lottery package about offer of admission or waitlist status. It is also posted on the enrollment section of the Parker website. Information about the availability of services, enrollment materials, and the student handbook are all posted on the school's website.

Approved by Parker Board of Trustees: November 8, 2017

Approved by DESE: November 9, 2017