



# Magnets & Lotteries Resources

## ***What does the Department of Education say about school lotteries?***

DOE Guidance on the voluntary use of race to achieve diversity and avoid racial isolation in elementary and secondary schools:

*“A school district could identify race-neutral criteria for admission to a school and then conduct a lottery for all qualified applicants rather than selecting only those students with the highest scores under the admission criteria, if doing so would help to achieve racial diversity or avoid racial isolation.”*

## ***Which schools already use successful school lotteries?***

### **The Gwinnett School of Mathematics, Science, and Technology**

Gwinnett School of Mathematics, Science and Technology, another top-performing STEM school in Georgia, admits its student body entirely by lottery. Thomas Jefferson is currently ranked No. 1 among the nation’s high schools

by U.S. News and World Report; Gwinnett’s STEM school is ranked **No. 12**.

Gwinnett’s program is more ethnically and racially diverse than Thomas Jefferson: 48 percent of students are Asian, 22 percent Black, 15 percent white, and 10 percent Hispanic. However, its demographics do not perfectly mirror the Georgia district, which is 33 percent Hispanic, 32 percent Black, 20 percent white, and 11 percent Asian.

One of the few requirements for the Gwinnett school is that students must have a B average in Algebra I in order to apply. That means that freshmen do enter with varying levels of math skill, but there are summer programs and support programs meant to give students a foundation for later coursework, said Steve Flynt, the district’s associate superintendent for school improvement and operations.

*“We have students of all ranges when they get in,” Flynt said. “But students that are interested in participating in the program and participate in all of the activities are almost always extremely successful with it.”*

### Jefferson County Public Schools: Louisville, Kentucky

Jefferson County Public Schools is centralizing its lottery system and reforming magnet school admissions process by integrating diversity targets. Currently, residency is main requirement for lottery.

### Suncoast Community High School

"#106 in USN&WR rank /35% disadvantaged Students apply to Suncoast via the Palm Beach County School District's Magnet and Choice School Application Form. Applicants apply for a specific program or programs and are admitted into the school by **a selective lottery after the top 10 percent of applicants** (based upon Florida Standards Assessments (FSA) scores, teacher recommendations, and grades) are admitted. Additionally, **students who complete the IB Middle Years Programme** at an area middle school, such as John F. Kennedy Middle School, are automatically admitted."

### Magnet preference for Kids from Elementary/Middle Magnet Schools

"CCSD reserves 25% of the available seats in middle and high school programs for qualifying incoming students who attend a Magnet/CTA at the lower level. If the qualified feeder preference students who apply comprise more than 25% of the available seats, the District will randomly select students to fill the seats. The names of those students who are not selected will be placed in the general lottery."

### Chicago Public Schools

Chicago Public Schools use "...admission bands for socioeconomic tiers. For example, in 2010, Chicago scrapped an admissions program for its selective high schools that explicitly took race into account. Now, the city chooses 30 percent of students from a citywide pool, and the remaining 70 percent are drawn

evenly from the top students at each of four 'socioeconomic tiers' in the city. The tiers are ranked on factors such as median family income, neighborhood school performance, percentage of homeownership, and adult educational attainment. The result is a group of students that is more diverse than is typically seen in selective school populations."

"In allocating their seats, each [Selective Enrollment School] designates 30 percent to top-scoring applicants, regardless of their SES tier. The remaining seats are divided equally among the four SES tiers by allocating 17.5 percent of seats to the highest scorers within each tier. This means a student in the poorest tier can get into an SEHS with a lower score than one from the richest. Effectively, the competition is between students within each socioeconomic tier, rather than between them."

"In terms of race, the result is a student body at selective schools that, while not perfectly representative...is certainly more so than other selective admission high schools around the country."

### Berkeley School District: Student plan for weighted lottery

"...to integrate schools by utilizing (i) parent education level, (ii) parent income level and (iii) race and ethnicity. To accomplish this goal, we created a composite diversity map that takes into consideration these three diversity factors. The parent education and parent income diversity factors were developed from data available from the 2000 US Census. The race and ethnicity factor was developed from multi-year data drawn from the K-5 student population in Berkeley Public Schools. Our student assignment lottery will no longer rely upon the actual personal attributes of students. Rather, each student will receive priority based on a composite of attributed diversity characteristics derived from the planning area in which the student lives."

### **Integration Defended: Berkeley Unified's Strategy to Maintain School Diversity**

"Berkeley High School is a large school with more than 3,300 students in 2008-09 that is the only districtwide comprehensive high school. The diversity plan pertains to its four small schools and two programs, where the goal is for each to be representative of school-wide diversity. Similar to the elementary school lottery, students are assigned to the smaller units within the high school by taking into account students' preferences, sibling attendance, and the diversity code of students.<sup>56</sup> There is also a small alternative high school, Berkeley Technology Academy. More than 85% of the students in 2008-09 were African-American or Latino, which is considerably higher than Berkeley High School, and there was also a higher percentage of low income students."

### **Ann Arbor, Michigan Community High School Lottery**

1. Selection is by a validated, double blind, random drawing, and is only for incoming 9th graders. Selection is not influenced by application responses. In grades 10-12, enrollment is based on available openings, determined no more than two weeks before each semester, from each grade level waiting list. CHS does not offer rolling enrollment.
2. Families moving into the district may place their 8th grade student's name in the lottery. Proof of future residency is required (see AAPS District residency requirements).
3. In the lottery for incoming 9th graders, the first 132 numbers will be offered seats. The remaining numbers establish a waitlist for that grade. This waitlist is used to maintain enrollment levels as follows:
  - 9th grade – 132 seats
  - 10th grade – 132 seats
  - 11th grade – 135 seats
  - 12th grade – 135 seats

4. Before submitting an application, the parent/guardian AND student must attend an orientation meeting to be entered in the lottery. Both the completed application and orientation are required.

### **Boston Metco Lottery**

The purpose of the state-funded METCO program is to expand educational opportunities, increase diversity, and reduce racial isolation by permitting students from Boston to attend public schools in other communities that have agreed to participate. Since its founding, the METCO program has enrolled tens of thousands of Boston students of color in participating school districts and has provided the opportunity for students in those districts to experience the advantages of learning and working in a racially and ethnically diverse setting. METCO is the largest volunteer school desegregation program in the country and places approximately 3150 students in 33 suburban communities.

"Beginning in 2019, acceptance into the METCO program will be determined by multiple lotteries in the Winter and Spring. Now, a lottery application process ensures equal odds for families in a wider range of communities, including recent Boston residents. At the end of the application period, every eligible, verified student has an equal chance to be referred to a METCO partner district through a random lottery."

### **Tennessee Magnet Lottery Requirements**

- "The testing requirement was altered in 2017-2018 to allow students multiple opportunities to meet testing requirements. This change was made due to significant changes in the Tennessee academic standards and the introduction of new district

assessments that provide national normative data. Parents will be given a report indicating whether their child met the testing requirement. This report will include all relevant test scores.

- For entrance into academic magnets during the 2019–2020 school year, a student can meet the assessment requirements in either of the following two ways:
  1. A student who took the TNReady assessment under the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) during the 2017–2018 school year will qualify if the student’s 2018 TCAP scores were On Track or Mastered for both English/Language Arts and Math.
  2. A student currently enrolled in an MNPS school will qualify with recent test results from a nationally normed achievement test that meets a minimum score. The minimum score is set at a sum of 14 national stanine for Reading and Math combined. [14 out of 18, 9 is highest stanine]
- English learners who are currently enrolled in MNPS can meet the standardized test requirement with just one subject instead of two: either Reading/English/Language Arts or Math.”

### ***Why do lotteries work? How do they increase diversity and eliminate bias?***

US Dept of Ed, 2017: [Improving Outcomes for All Students: Strategies and Considerations to Increase Student Diversity](#)

Magnet schools as tools to diversify: “the Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP), reauthorized by the ESSA, defines a “magnet school” to mean a school “that offers a special curriculum capable of attracting substantial

numbers of students of different racial backgrounds.” MSAP funded magnet schools are “part of an approved desegregation plan” and are designed to ‘bring students from different social, economic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds together.’”

“The MSAP includes a priority for applicants that “propose to select students to attend magnet school programs by methods such as lottery, rather than through academic examination.” Weighted lotteries that give additional weight to individual students who are identified as part of a specified set of students, such as based on individual demographic characteristics or the characteristics of the students’ residential neighborhoods or assigned school, may also be considered as part of student admissions policies. If a magnet school chooses to utilize competitive admission criteria, such as grade point averages (GPAs) or test scores, these may have segregating effects that could be mitigated through interviews, essays, and the consideration of diversity-focused factors.”

### **Choices Worth Making: Creating, Sustaining and Expanding Diverse Magnet Schools**

Pg 13: **Lotteries:**

- When demand for magnet schools exceeds the number of available seats, some form of selection process must occur. Rather than using competitive admissions criteria, such as tests or grade point averages, almost all of the federally funded magnet schools from the last two cycles (again, just a small subset of magnets nationwide), used a lottery.
- This is likely related to a competitive funding priority for magnets that use lotteries. The use of competitive admissions criteria creates serious concerns about access and equity as these criteria often serve as barriers to students of color, low-income students, and English learners.



- Thus, the use of a lottery as opposed to competitive admissions criteria is preferable for creating desegregation and equity. A weighted lottery, on the other hand, can be used to encourage the likelihood of a diverse outcome.  
**The use of weighted lotteries is legally permissible.**
- However, in other cases, the district might assign weights to students who are low-income, students who come from a geographic area of the district in which there is a large share of students of color, or students who are currently enrolled in low performing schools. If the school needs to attract more highly resourced students, the weights might work in the opposite direction. Each of these types of weights would encourage desegregation by considering demographic features of students, their neighborhoods, or their schools in the admissions process.

Pg 14-15: **Competitive Admissions**

- We suggested that students' grades be weighted with twice as much importance as students' test scores based on evidence from higher education that grades are a better predictor for academic success than are test scores.
- 52 seats in each competitive admissions school be set aside for the holistic consideration of students who are deserving of special consideration. That consideration should extend to factors such as obstacles overcome, exceptional dedication, unusual success in a school isolated by race and poverty, or coming from a section of the city that is rarely represented in the competitive schools of choice

- Recently released research finds that teacher biases influence gifted and talented recommendations from teachers; in particular, black students are referred to gifted programs at significantly lower rates when they are taught by non-black teachers. Therefore, we suggest that competitive admissions magnet schools de-emphasize the weight given to recommendations provided by teachers.

**Boosting Achievement by Pursuing Diversity**

"Some charter schools pursuing socioeconomic integration have shown how systems of school choice can be used to foster diversity as an alternative to redrawing attendance zones. A weighted lottery is the simplest way for schools to ensure that they enroll a diverse student body while still relying on choice-based enrollment. For example, DSST Public Schools, a network of charter middle and high schools in Denver, Colorado, reserves a minimum of 40 percent of seats at the flagship campus for low-income students; Blackstone Valley Prep in Rhode Island reserves 60 percent of seats. High Tech High weights admissions lotteries in its elementary, middle, and high schools by students' home zip codes, which creates socioeconomically, racially, and ethnically diverse student bodies because of housing patterns."

**Why Pandemic Problems Should Get Colleges Like Harvard To Admit Students By Lottery Next Year**

"...public charter schools and magnet schools—including some of the best K-12 schools in the nation—already use lottery admissions. And, keep in mind that we have zero evidence that "elite" students benefit the most from the offerings at selective campuses. Indeed, research raises the

possibility that the students who end up going to school elsewhere may especially benefit from attending prestigious colleges.”

Context of this particular year: “Other admissions factors colleges typically lean on will likely be unreliable. Admissions staff could look to letters of recommendation, but truncated spring semesters and potential disruptions this fall may hinder the ability of many students to develop relationships or get knowledgeable, compelling letters. A student’s participation in sports, extracurricular activities, and the community would normally be an important factor, but participation is impossible for many students amid ‘shelter-in-place’ orders.”

### **Lottery Preferences 101 - Factors for Your School System**

An application or lottery preference (sometimes called a *priority*) is basically an advantage to an eligible applicant who meets certain criteria. An applicant with a preference is more likely to be admitted to a school than one without a preference. Consequently, preferences are an important tool for schools to ensure equitable access for students who want to enter their school.

### **Lotteries used to Defeat Bias in Science**

“In addition, there have been increasing calls for funders to move away from prestige- or innovation-based approaches in favour of lotteries. We investigated whether such changes are likely to **improve the reproducibility of science** even in the presence of persistent incentives for publication quantity through computational modelling. We found that modified lotteries, which allocate funding randomly among proposals that pass a threshold for methodological rigour, effectively reduce the rate of false discoveries, particularly when paired with open science improvements that increase the publication of negative results and improve the quality of peer review. “

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