

August 22, 2022 - sent via email

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

With the start of the school year on the horizon, we are reaching out to share an update with you about our Community Schools Afterschool Lottery process. While our lottery system prioritizes children from lower-income families, in line with the Department and City goals of increasing equity and access, we care deeply about all families in Cambridge. We recognize how crucial quality afterschool programming is to all families and the burden placed on parents and caregivers when there is not enough capacity in Cambridge's afterschool system to serve all families who need a spot.

During this year's application process:

- 1295 applications were received
 - 900 children were offered seats in a Community Schools program
- All priority applicants who applied by the June 3 deadline were offered a seat
- 725 applicants accepted their seat offers and 175 applicants declined their seats
 - All but 24 families who accepted seats were offered the number of days per week requested in their application
- 395 children are currently in the waiting pool

We are proud that 36% of children who accepted seats at a Community Schools program are priority applicants from families with a household income of 65% or less of HUD Area Median Income (for example, the priority income cutoff for a 4-person household according to these guidelines is \$91,130). In designing our lottery to be income-based, we have also significantly diversified the racial representation in our programs: 82% of the families who identified as Black or African American were priority applicants versus 18% in the general lottery. By contrast, 16% of the families who identified as white were priority applicants versus 84% in the General lottery. [You can view more data in this presentation \(PDF\)](#).

We are working to increase capacity and modest expansion in our programs, but staffing remains a major challenge to reaching this goal ([open positions are posted here](#)). We launched a robust recruitment campaign earlier this summer that includes increased pay rates for open positions, retention and referral bonuses, and expanded outreach through print and digital channels. We are working with a temporary employment agency to recruit for our open positions. Superintendent Greer and our colleagues at Cambridge Public Schools are also supporting our recruitment and partnering with us to explore staffing and space options.

We look forward to welcoming children who have accepted seats in our Community Schools programs on September 6. We also understand the frustrating position that families in the waiting pool are in. We value the feedback that parents and caregivers are sharing with us and we are continuing to work with our partners to expand our capacity and address parent / caregiver concerns.

Sincerely,

Michelle Farnum