

July 25, 2018

Dave Machado, Director

Office of Charter Schools

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Dear Mr. Machado,

Enclosed please find requisite materials for our proposal to amend our charter and lottery policy to institute a priority lottery to improve socioeconomic diversity at The Exploris School. With over 20 years of experience and history, we feel confident that Exploris’s legacy, strong financial footing, award-winning curricula and educators, and clear mission and vision will enable us to integrate this new approach effectively.

Research demonstrates that charter schools can contribute to school segregation if they do not take active steps to address diversity and reduce barriers to access for students of all backgrounds. A diverse student body positively impacts all students, increasing their cognitive, social, and emotional skills while preparing them to be engaged citizens in our increasingly diverse society. Local and statewide comparison data reveal that (while we do manifest religious and cultural diversity to an extent) Exploris has significant gaps in both socioeconomic and racial diversity relative to traditional and charter schools across the state and in Wake. Beginning in 2014, the Exploris Board’s Educational Excellence Committee has worked in partnership with Exploris staff and administration to study and address the lack of diversity at the school. While some progress has been made, the data reveal that that there is still critical work to be done to achieve the goal of making Exploris a more diverse school. A priority lottery will enable us to more intentionally do this work.

We are including in this proposal to you:

1. Revision to Charter language
2. Proposed revision to lottery policy
3. Copy of the board minutes recording the board's adoption of the new policy and charter revision (6/19/18) – in draft form because they will not be formally approved until our July Board meeting.

Sincerely,

Ellie Schollmeyer, Executive Director

Tom Miller, Board Chair

**FEEDBACK FROM DPI 7/13**

* G.S. 115C-29F(g)(6) has new coding and is now G.S. 115C-218.45(h)
* Regarding the statement, “if offered the seat prior to the first day of school, must be present beginning the first day of school” – does the school make reasonable effort (phone, email, etc) to contact a student that does not attend the first day? Please clarify what happens if a student that is offered a seat doesn’t attend on day one.
* You may consider adding a section “Lottery Procedure” – this provides a little more transparency for stakeholders and may prevent questions down the road for you. I’m not sure how you conduct the lottery - a lot of schools use the RAND function in Excel and just explain that process and how spots are filled.
* In terms of asking for FRL eligibility on the application, upon consultation with the legal team here at DPI, we have the following guidance:  FRL eligibility should not be on the enrollment application itself. Instead, you should have a supplemental form that is completely optional, for families to fill out during the application process. This supplemental form must specifically give consent to verify status as FRL eligible AND to use this information for priority lottery purposes. You would put the disclosure “No specific information from the FRL application will be obtained beyond eligibility status, and the information will not be retained” on that supplemental form. The information regarding current FRL qualifications could be on this form also. Then, families would need to go through the FRL eligibility verification process.

**REVISION TO CHARTER Enrollment section HIGHLIGHTED (page 4):**

**7. Enrollment**

**7.1** Admission and enrollment of students shall be as prescribed by the Charter School Act. Failure to adhere to the lottery requirements set forth in G.S. 115C- 218.45 is grounds for termination of this Charter.

* + - 1. 7.1 A - Lottery policy shall follow the Priority Lottery Guidelines as outlined *on our website under ENROLLMENT and LOTTERY POLICY.* ~~in Parent and Student Handbook policies~~. Lottery priorities will include priority for children of full time employees, siblings of current students, board members, and economically disadvantaged students (in this order).

**The Exploris School
Student and Parent Handbook Lottery Policy**

**Priority Lottery Revisions HIGHLIGHTED.**

**(Policy Code: STUDENTS 3010)**

**Lottery Selection**
~~As required by G.S. 115C-29F(g)(6):~~ G.S. 115C-218.45(h): During each period of enrollment, the charter school shall enroll an eligible student who submits a timely application, unless the number of applications exceeds the capacity of a program, class, grade level, or building. If there are more applications than spaces, the available spaces will be awarded by public lottery. Once enrolled, students are not required to reapply in subsequent enrollment periods; however, students who are placed on the waiting list must reapply for the lottery in subsequent school years.

Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, a charter school may refuse admission to any student who has been expelled or suspended from a public school under G.S. 115C‑390.5 through G.S.115C‑390.11 until the period of suspension or expulsion has expired.

**Enrollment Application Time Period**Requested applications for the upcoming school are available on the school’s website, and can be mailed or electronically sent upon request, beginning in November through the time the lottery enrollment closes the first Friday of February of the proceeding school year. Any applications received after the close of business on the first Friday in February will be placed on the waiting list in order of receipt.

**Lottery Process**
Applications for enrollment will be made available from November through February. All
applications must be received by the first Friday in February in order to be considered for the school’s lottery. The Lottery is conducted on the first Friday of March. The date and location are made public so that anyone may attend. ~~The lottery is conducted by the organization’s Director and certified by an outside, unbiased volunteer.~~ *The lottery is conducted by an impartial third party firm in accordance with state standards and school priorities.* Following the lottery, parents are notified of their acceptance. Upon filling all the available positions, the lottery continues through the entire pool of applicants to establish a waiting list.

Any student receiving a seat either through the initial lottery or through the wait list will have a limited time to accept or decline the seat and, if offered the seat prior to the first day of school, must be present beginning the first day of school. *The school will make reasonable efforts to contact students’ families who do not attend on day one via phone and email. If after the third school day the family does not respond or attend, then the seat may be offered to the next student on the waitlist.*

Should a parent decline a spot, the open position will be offered to the next chronological applicant on the waiting list and these guidelines will apply.

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Outlined below are the time limitations to accept or decline a seat:

* From date of posting lottery results until June 1: 1 week to accept or decline a seat for the next school year
* From June 2 - to the first day of the new school year: 48 hours to accept or decline a seat for the upcoming school year
* After the first day of a current school year: 48 hours to accept or decline a seat for the current school year

**Lottery Preference**
The charter school shall not discriminate against any student on the basis of race, ethnicity,
religion, sexual identity, gender, gender identity or expression, or disability. Except as otherwise provided by law or the mission of the school as set out in the charter, the school shall not limit admission to students on the basis of intellectual ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, or athletic ability.

Siblings of already enrolled students, children of all full-time employees, children of the school’s Board of Directors, and applicants who are Economically Disadvantaged will receive priority enrollment in the following manner:

**Lottery Priorities**

Children of current staff and siblings are given priority over children of board members and students who are considered Economically Disadvantaged. Should a full-time staff member be hired after the annual lottery has occurred, space will be made available for said staff member’s children for the upcoming school year. Children of Board members are given the next preference followed by students whose families qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch. If there more applicants than spaces, the available spaces will be awarded by public lottery with prioirity in the following order:

1. Children of current eligible staff
2. Siblings of currently enrolled students
3. Children of current Board members
4. Children whose families are considered Economically Disadvantaged
5. All other applicants.

Siblings:​ It is the intent of Exploris to support whole families and create school community.
All families with siblings of currently enrolled students must submit an application. Siblings
of enrolled students will receive priority for admission during the lottery process if their
applications are received by the designated deadline.

* If siblings apply for admission to a charter school for the upcoming school year and a lottery is needed under G.S. 115C-238.29F(g)(6), the charter school will enter one
surname into the lottery to represent all of the siblings applying at the same time. If
the surname of the siblings is selected, then all of the siblings shall be admitted to the extent that space is available and does not exceed the grade level capacity. Should the sibling’s requested grade level be full, the sibling’s name will receive priority status on the waiting list.
* If multiple birth siblings apply for admission to a charter school and a lottery is
needed under G.S. 115C-238.29F(g)(6), the charter school shall may enter one
surname into the lottery to represent all of the multiple birth siblings. If the surname of the multiple birth siblings is selected, then all of the multiple birth siblings shall be admitted.

Employees and Board of Directors:​ Exploris will limit to no more than 15% of the school’s
total enrollment priority admission to children of full-time employees and the charter
school’s Board of Directors.

Economically Disadvantaged Students: Exploris will institute a priority lottery for remaining available seats in order to achieve 25% of our students meeting the “Economically Disadvantaged” (ED) criteria, defined by meeting national Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) criteria, by the school year 2023-2024.

* We will achieve this by meeting the following interim goals:

ACADEMIC YEAR Target ED %

2018-2019 0%

2019-2020 up to 10%

2020-2021 up to 15%

2022-2023 up to 25%

2023-2024 up to 25%

* With each lottery, the Executive Director will work to identify number of FRL seats to make available per grade level in order to balance students admitted across grade levels, total seats available, school resources, and planned annual target.
* ~~Student families will be asked to self identify as FRL eligible at the top of their lottery application. There will be a note on the lottery application stating that applicant will consent to verify status as FRL eligible by Exploris staff. No specific information from FRL application will be obtained beyond eligibility status, and the information will not be retained. Applicants will be provided with information on current federal FRL qualifications based on family size and income, and if they can then opt to complete a financial statement to verify FRL eligibility (which is a separate process and page from the lottery application page).~~
* Families will have the opportunity to complete an optional form, separate from their lottery application, where they can offer family income information in order to determine if they are FRL eligible for the purposes of the lottery. This supplemental form will ask applicant to consent to verify status as FRL by Exploris staff, and will state that no specific information will be obtained beyond eligibility status and the information will not be retained.

**Transportation**
Board and school administration will work annually to identify transportation opportunities for children.

Legal Reference: Article 14A of Chapter 115C, G.S. 115C-218
Adopted: 11/19/13
Revised: 6/23/15