

# Mystic Valley Regional Charter School

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## Enrollment Policy and Procedures

### Admissions Criteria

Charter schools are public schools and are therefore open to all Massachusetts students on a space available basis. This means that the Mystic Valley Regional Charter School may not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in the English language or in a foreign language, or prior academic achievement when recruiting or admitting students. Moreover, the Mystic Valley Regional Charter School may not set admissions criteria that are intended to discriminate or that have the effect of discriminating based upon any of these characteristics. [M.G.L.c. 71, § 89\(1\)](#) ; [603 CMR 1.06\(1\)](#).

The Mystic Valley Regional Charter School has an interest in making sure that all prospective students and their families understand the mission and focus of the school and are interested in being a part of the school community.

The Mystic Valley Regional Charter School **requires**:

1. Candidates for admission to apply for the grade immediately following their current grade and to successfully complete that grade to be admitted.
2. Students to be residents of Massachusetts at the time that they submit a Request To Attend (attached) and at the time that they are offered admission. <sup>1</sup>
3. That primary preference for admission be given to siblings of students "currently attending" the school in accordance with Massachusetts Department of Education regulations.
4. That secondary preference for admission is given to student s who are residents of the charter community (as defined in 603 1.06(4)) at the time that they are offered admission to the school.

and **strongly advises and requests**:

5. Parents/ guardians and students attend an informational session and orientation session prior to enrollment.
6. Parents/guardians and students sign compacts that demonstrate their agreement with and understanding of the school's mission and parent handbook.

<sup>1</sup> Students are offered admission if their names are drawn in the lottery or if another student declines an offer of admission/transfers out of the school and their name comes up on the waitlist

The Mystic Valley Regional Charter School **will not**:

1. Give preferences to children of staff members or Board members;
2. Give preference to siblings of students accepted to the school but not yet attending; or
3. Make statements in meetings intended to discourage, or that have the effect of discouraging, parents/guardians of students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, or any other protected group of students from submitting a Request To Attend to the school. See M.G.L. c. 71 § 89(1).

### **Outreach**

The Mystic Valley Regional Charter School provides information about the school to those who are interested throughout the year. The School provides many informational sessions at Open Houses held throughout the year, but begin in early October. If a family is unable to attend an information session the school will mail an enrollment form upon receiving a request from that family.

The recruitment and enrollment process is an extensive, regional outreach effort that includes advertisement in local newspapers, open houses at the school, parent meetings at local pre-school centers and announcements on the school's website. The Mystic Valley Regional Charter School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, creed, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in English language or foreign language, or prior academic achievement. Attendance at Open Houses is strongly encouraged for students and their families. The Mystic Valley Regional Charter School will strive to make accommodations for families with individual hardships.

### **Enrollment Process**

1. For a given school year beginning in August, the Mystic Valley Regional Charter School will publicize its open house schedule in local papers and on its website and invite families to attend and fill out a Request To Attend. Families who are unable to attend any of these sessions, for whatever reason, will be sent a Request To Attend by mail upon request.
2. The Mystic Valley Regional Charter School will accept Request To Attends until The first Friday in November for the first Enrollment Lottery to be held the second Wednesday in November.
3. Prior to or during each lottery enrollment period, the school will publicize the date, time and location with reasonable notice of at least one week before the lottery date. 603 CMR 1.06(6).
4. The school will set a final date for students to accept offers of enrollment (the last Tuesday of November) for the following school year. Parents will be able attend a parent orientation on this date to complete the enrollment package.

5. Any forms submitted between November 1<sup>st</sup> and April 15<sup>th</sup> will enter a second lottery, to be held on the last Thursday in April, and if there is a waitlist these students will go to the bottom of the waitlist in the order that they are chosen from the lottery.

6. Any forms submitted between April 16<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup> will enter a third and final lottery, to be held on the third Thursday in July, and if there is a waitlist these students will go to the bottom of the waitlist in the order that they are chosen from the lottery.

7. The Mystic Valley Regional Charter School will publicize all lottery enrollment deadlines and the fact that there will be a lottery if there are more eligible applicants than there are available spaces within a given lottery enrollment process, with reasonable public notice of at least one week.

After the lottery enrollment deadline passes, The Mystic Valley Regional Charter School will divide all Request To Attends into two categories under [603 CMR 1.06\(4\)](#) Regional and Non-Regional applicants.

· **Regional** - Applicants who live in the city or town that is part of the charter community (Everett, Malden, Medford, Melrose, Stoneham or Wakefield). Residents enrolled in district, charter, private or parochial schools or enrolling in schools in the charter community get equal preference.

· **Non-regional** - Applicants who live in the city or town that is not part of the charter community (Everett, Malden, Medford, Melrose, Stoneham or Wakefield). Residents enrolled in district, charter, private or parochial schools or enrolling in schools outside of the charter community get equal preference.

Preference for admission is given first to applicants in the **siblings** category (defined below) followed by applicants in the regional category and then by applicants in the non-regional category without regard to when their Request To Attend was submitted as long as it was prior to the lottery enrollment deadline. MVRCS will either extend an offer of admission to all applicants within a group that meet the lottery enrollment deadline or select applicants randomly using a lottery, if there are more applicants than openings. The Mystic Valley Regional Charter School will not offer admission to applicants on a first come first serve basis.

Siblings are defined as students who share a common parent, either biologically or legally through adoption. Whether the children reside in the same household has no bearing on determining if the children are siblings for purposes of a sibling preference. Children who live in separate households may be siblings and those that live in the same household may not be. If siblings are placed in foster homes and one of them enrolls in the charter school, then the siblings of that student are entitled to admission preference. Foster children are not considered siblings of other children in the foster home unless they share a common parent.

## **Lottery**

If there are more eligible applicants than are spaces available, the Mystic Valley Regional Charter School must hold a lottery to determine which applicants will receive an offer of admission. [603 CMR 1.06\(3\)\(a\)](#). As previously mentioned, the school must give reasonable public notice of the lottery at least one week before the lottery date.

Charter schools must have an individual, without any connection to the school, randomly draw the names of all students who submitted Request To Attends before the deadline. After the available slots are filled, the individual shall keep drawing the names of the remaining applicants in each category and place them on a waiting list in the order they are drawn.

If the school does not reach capacity after admitting all eligible siblings and regional applicants, then it may admit non-regional applicants. In this case, the school must hold a lottery, under the same rules as outlined above, to select non-regional students for the remaining spaces if there are more non-regional applicants than spaces available. [603 CMR 1.06\(4\)\(b\)](#).

## **Waiting List**

Applicants who are placed on the waitlist remain on the list and are offered positions in the respective grades if and when they become available. All waitlists are maintained with results of subsequent lotteries being placed at the rear of the lists.

All students selected out of the lottery are sent registration forms, and all students placed on the wait list are sent letters with an explanation of the process and their waitlist number. Selected families have three days to notify the school of their decision or to schedule a tour of the facility. If the family of a selected student does not contact the school within three days, their name is removed from the waitlist and the next eligible candidate is offered the position. Waitlists are maintained through the fifth grade after which they are discarded in keeping with the school's enrollment policy.

## **How Does the Waitlist Work?**

Note: Because of the cap limiting the number of students who can attend a charter school from one town (which currently could affect applicants from Malden), there may be students on the waitlist for grades that are not completely full.

Example: If the Malden cap has been reached, and a Malden student in an under-enrolled grade is chosen, we would not be allowed by the state to admit that student even though the student's grade may not yet be completely full. We would then offer the spot to the first non-Malden, regional candidate. If there were no non-Malden regional candidates on the waitlist, we would extend the offer to the first non-regional candidate on the list. If students who have been admitted choose not to attend or withdraw from the school, students will be admitted from the waitlist. When a seat becomes available, we will admit the next student on the list that is in the same grade as the student who has chosen not to attend *and* who is eligible for admission under state law. In the event that a student from Malden cannot be removed from the waitlist because of the statutory cap, he or she will maintain his or her place on the waitlist.

There is also a possibility that the departure of a Malden student will allow a Malden student in a different grade to be admitted. If, for example, a Malden student leaves, and the student who fills his or her seat in the same grade is a non-Malden resident, there would then be room for another Malden student in another grade. In such a case, we would admit the first student on the list that is from Malden and who is in a grade that is not yet full

In summary, the rule is, when a seat becomes available the first student on the waitlist who satisfies all controlling criteria will be admitted. The Mystic Valley Regional Charter School must always accept a regional applicant before accepting a non-regional applicant unless the non-regional applicant is also a sibling. There is one exception – if a space became available and the enrollment of a student from the waiting list would cause his or her sending district to exceed the net school spending cap, the charter school should skip over that student but keep them on the waiting list. If that student on the waiting list is a sibling of a student currently enrolled at the charter school, the school may enroll that student and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will pay the tuition to the charter school, subject to state appropriations.

### **Enrollment Confirmation**

Families will be notified at the lottery and by mail of their admission status (accepted or placement on waiting list). If a student declines an offer of admission, the school will immediately contact the family of the student first on the waitlist that meets all eligibility requirements, as mentioned before. All families will receive an enrollment packet with all of the forms necessary to enroll in the Mystic Valley Regional Charter School (such as Proof of Residency, Student Information, and Records Release Form). The school will hold an Orientation session in August (before the start of school) to prepare new families and students for the transition to the school and to assist families with any remaining paperwork. If a student is selected off of the waiting list the family has 3 days after the school makes contact (talks to a parent or guardian or leaves a message on the home machine) to confirm enrollment. If the family fails to respond in those 3 days, the offer is rescinded and they are taken off the waitlist.

### **Other Limitations**

All commonwealth charter schools must ensure that they do not enroll a number of students from a sending district that would cause the district to exceed the 9% cap on net school spending. [M.G.L. c. 71 \(89\)\(i\)](#);

The school does not admit applicants after the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, except for siblings of current students, per the states sibling preference policy;

The school reserves the right to close enrollment for an academic year after February 15<sup>th</sup> of any school year.