

December 2019

Dear School Leaders,

There are a few new items to know about for SchoolChoice Round 1 this year. Please see below for details.

Please contact me with any questions or concerns you have.

Changes to How the Free and Reduced Price Lunch Priority is Calculated

Background: Some schools choose to prioritize students who are eligible for free and reduced price lunch (FRL) over other Denver residents. The Choice office has attempted a variety of different ways to calculate the free and reduced price lunch (FRL) priority over the years, including asking applicants whether their student is eligible, asking applicants for a household size and income to calculate eligibility ourselves, and asking applicants for permission for us to use their student's FRL application data to calculate the priority. Data indicate that we've missed about 40% of the total number of eligible students each year. Additionally, individual FRL data are intended to be used solely to identify eligible students for nutrition services. Student identity is intended to be confidential under the FRL program. There are questions about the use of FRL data for SchoolChoice, as well as the identification of those students in SchoolMint.

Changes for SchoolChoice 2020-2021: In order to largely eliminate the undercount, DPS is moving to an address-based system for assigning the priority to students. All addresses are part of a census block group. We will use district FRL data overlaid on DPS census block groups and assign each group to a tier indicating the percentage of students in that group that are eligible for FRL: 0%-25%, 25%-50%, 50%-75%, or 75%-100%. These tiers will replace FRL in the priority structure, with the 75%-100% tier getting highest priority, the 50%-75% tier getting second highest, and so on.

By moving to FRL by block group now, we'll lay the foundation for incorporating other indicators in the future that impact students' ability to access opportunities and establish a more holistic look at barriers faced by our students.

Household Building in IC for Round 1

Background: When SchoolChoice applications were paper-based, families would submit applications with the required documents directly to schools, and schools would be responsible for creating any needed households in IC before submitting the applications to the Choice office. When the district adopted an online application system, students were not required to be in IC in order to participate in Round 1. A number of ways to automatically import data from the online application system, SchoolMint, into IC were attempted and none were successful. However, an IC ID needed to be created for every applicant before the algorithm could be run! Last year, the Choice office created 8,000 households.

Changes for SchoolChoice 2020-2021: We worked with the application vendor to tweak their system so that new students do not need to be in IC before the algorithm is run. Results will be released to schools and families, and then schools will need to enter any of their accepted students who are not in or not active in IC. This will allow us to return results to schools and families more quickly, and schools will have more control over their student's households and documents. Please ask front office staff to create households and pre-enrollments as soon as possible after results are released to schools in March. The Choice office will send detailed instructions in our weekly newsletter.

Based on our best estimates your school could receive between 100 to 150 households to build. Each school may vary in numbers. Please plan accordingly to meet the five day turnaround for Front Office Staff to complete your accepted students' households.

***New* Requiring Documents ECE4 SchoolChoice Application**

Background: ECE4 is a tuition-based grade. Families pay tuition based on a sliding scale—tuition levels are determined by the family's household size and income. DPS ECE4 programming is partially funded by the Denver Preschool Program (DPP); in order to reimburse DPS for a particular student's tuition, they require a proof of age, a recent proof of address, and proof of income, all of which DPS collects via the SchoolChoice application. When SchoolChoice applications were paper-based, families would submit applications with the required documents directly to schools, and Choice staff was able to quickly verify adequacy of the documents and submit the applications to DPP. There are document upload fields

within the online SchoolChoice application, but while the messaging on the screen has stated that the documents were required, the system would not stop families from submitting their applications without documents. A significantly higher number of families were not uploading documents than expected, and more applications were incomplete throughout the spring and into the school year as a result.

Changes for SchoolChoice 2020-2021: In order to capture the required documents and allow DPS to submit completed applications to DPP as quickly as possible, the system will not let families submit applications without documents this year. Please plan to assist families with their applications if they are having difficulty with this step. Families may also call the Choice and Enrollment hotline ((720) 423-3493) for help.

Reminder: Important Dates

Upcoming Key Choice and Enrollment Dates	
SchoolChoice letters are mailed to all families who reside within DPS and have students in ECE4, fifth grade, eighth grade, and any other final grades at their school	First week of Jan. 2020
Round 1 of SchoolChoice for the 2020-2021 school year opens	8:30 a.m. Jan. 15, 2020
Round 1 SchoolChoice Trainings for front office professionals, registrars, and anyone who wants to attend—Various locations; Contact your Choice and Enrollment Representative for more information	Jan. 7, 2020 Jan. 8, 2020 Jan. 9, 2020
Schools set seat offers (<i>number of seats offered in the lottery per grade and program</i>) with the Choice office	Jan. 15 – Feb. 18, 2020
DPS Great Schools Expo Week—Various locations; Contact Communications for more information http://schoolchoice.dpsk12.org/greatschoolsexpo/	Northwest Expo - 6 to 8 p.m. Jan. 21, 2020
	Southeast Expo - 6 to 8 p.m. Jan. 21, 2020
	Far Northeast Expo - 6 to 8 p.m. Jan. 22, 2020
	Southwest Expo - 6 to 8 p.m. Jan. 22, 2020
	Near Northeast Expo - 6 to 8 p.m. Jan. 23, 2020
Round 1 of SchoolChoice for the 2020-2021 school year closes	4 p.m. Feb. 18, 2020
Check your Round 1 of SchoolChoice Preliminary Results before final results are released	Mar. 2020 Principals will be notified via email
Round 1 of SchoolChoice results released to families and schools	No later than Mar. 27, 2020
Other Related Key Dates	
Preliminary Planning Projections released	Dec. 13, 2019
Final Planning Projections released	Jan. 10, 2020

SchoolChoice in DPS can be complex for schools and families—please let me know if you would like to connect with me about any and all questions you or your community members have!

Thank you!

Laurie Premer

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