

Weighted Lottery and Diverse Student Body

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Gregg Stevens
Rennie Laryea
Matt
Underwood



Why is it important for Charter Schools to have diverse student bodies?

- SCSC Mission - To improve public education throughout the state by providing better educational opportunities for students. This means:
 1. Promoting better access to the high quality educational models found in charter schools
 2. Finding ways to serve systemically marginalized ethnic & socioeconomic groups with community involvement

Academic Benefits of A Diverse Student Body

- Research repeatedly illustrates that a diverse study body increases both individual and overall student achievement.
- Students who attend racially and socioeconomically diverse schools:
 - Achieve higher test scores and better grades;
 - Are more likely to graduate from high school; and
 - Are more likely to attend and graduate from college;

Academic Benefits of A Diverse Student Body

- Schools with diverse student bodies:
 - Display academic benefit in all grades – with more pronounced effect in middle and high schools;
 - Promote greater academic achievement in mathematics, science, language and reading; and
 - Lead to increased performance for all racial and socioeconomic subgroups (including non-economically disadvantaged white students).

Additional Advantages of A Diverse Student Body

Other benefits of a diverse student body include:

- Increased access to Title 1 funding
- Higher levels of critical thinking and cognitive skills for all students
- Students from minority groups can challenge teachers and enrich your academic program
- Civic benefits for students

Diversity By Design

- Schools may model their educational program to leverage the benefit of student diversity:
 - Inclusive merit programs (e.g. embedded honors)
 - Leadership programs
 - Empowerment programs
- Schools with diverse faculty and governing boards promote a more diverse student population
- Transportation

SCSC Expectations

- State charter schools should endeavor to ensure that their governing boards, faculty and staff, and student populations are reflective of the communities they serve.
- State charter schools should actively eliminate barriers to enrollment.
- State charter schools must utilize reasonable outreach and marketing measures to promote enrollment opportunities to seek a cross section of the school-age population throughout its attendance zone.

Strategies to Increase Diversity

- Marketing enrollment opportunities;
- Outreach to the community – particularly populations unlikely to be reached by traditional marketing efforts;
- Strategic attendance zones;
- Consider addition or deletion of enrollment priorities

Student Enrollment Lotteries

- Traditionally, “all applicants have an equal chance of being admitted in the event that the number of applications to enroll in the school exceeds the capacity of the program, grade, or school.”
- In other words, if the number of students applying for the school exceeds available seats, the school must randomly select from the pool of applicants with each applicant having an equal opportunity.

Weighted Student Lotteries

- In 2014, federal guidance changed to allow states to permit weighted enrollment lotteries for “educationally disadvantaged students.”
- In 2015, Georgia law was amended to allow weighted lotteries as permitted by federal guidance.
- Weighted lotteries allow charter schools to promote diversity by increasing the probability that an educationally disadvantaged student is selected for admission.

Weighted Lottery Parameters

- It is important to remember that a weighted lottery is NOT an enrollment priority.
- The use of a weighted lottery must be only one aspect of a “broader strategy that includes fulfillment of existing responsibilities related to outreach, recruitment, and retention of all students...”
- The use of a weighted lottery must be included in the school’s charter contract.

For Whom is the Lottery Weighted

- “Educationally Disadvantaged Students” may be given a better chance for admission by providing additional chances to be selected in a random lottery.
- Educationally Disadvantaged Students are those who are:
 - Economically Disadvantaged
 - Students with Disabilities
 - ~~Migrant Students~~
 - Limited English Proficient Students;
 - Neglected or Delinquent Students; or
 - Homeless Students

For Whom is the Lottery Weighted

- **Economically Disadvantaged** –
 - Qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch, federal benefits, or are below the poverty line.
- **Students with Disabilities** –
 - Eligible for and receives services under IDEA
- **Limited English Proficient Students** –
 - Eligible for services English Language assistance;
- **Neglected or Delinquent Students** –
 - Adjudicated delinquent or determined to be neglected by a juvenile court; or
- **Homeless Students** –
 - Lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence as defined by McKinney-Vento.
- May be all categories or a subset thereof.

Determining Weight

- No legal guidance or standards for additional weight – though federal guidance refers to “slightly better chances” for admissions.
- Specific weights should be determined based on the individual needs and goals of the charter school (and must be included in the charter contract).
- May be a static weight – i.e. 3 entries per educationally disadvantaged student.
- May “float” depending on the demographics of the school in a given year – but the formula must be specified.

Considering a Weighted Lottery?

- If your school is interested in utilizing a weighted lottery – contact SCSC staff.
- Be prepared to discuss:
 - Current student body demographics;
 - Goals for a more diverse student body – including whether the school wishes to weight the lottery for all educationally disadvantaged students or a subset;
 - Methods the schools used and is currently implementing to increase diversity without a weighted lottery;
 - How the proposed weighted lottery will be utilized as part of a broader plan for increasing diversity; and
 - The proposed weight the school would like to utilize and why.

Challenges in Increasing Diversity

- Affinity Grouping
- Program Cost
- Enrollment Limitations
- Student Retention and Enrollment Preferences
- Location
- Transportation

Questions

