PreK FAQs
2020-2021 School Year

GENERAL

What kind of schools can I apply to for preschool through GoCPS?

Through the GoCPS application process, you can apply to the three magnet preschools: Drummond, Inter-American (four-year-olds only), and Suder.

The application process for all other preschools takes place in the spring and is managed by the city of Chicago (visit chicagoearlylearning.org or call 312-229-1690 for information).

How do I apply?

You can apply via the online application site or via the paper Choice Elementary Schools application. Identify the schools to which you want to apply and submit your application between September 30, 2019, and December 6, 2019. Students are selected via computerized lottery.

If I mail a paper application, how will I know that it was received?

If you mail your application, we strongly recommend that you:

1. Send the applications via certified mail so that you will have a receipt;
2. Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope or postcard, which will be mailed back to you as a receipt once your applications are received; and
3. Mail the envelope in plenty of time to ensure that it is received by the Office of Access and Enrollment by December 6, 2019.

If you do not have a receipt and your applications do not reach our office, your child will not be considered for any of the schools to which you applied.

Do I have to live in Chicago to attend these schools?

Yes, you have to live in Chicago in order for your child to enroll and attend. You don't have to live in Chicago for your child to apply, participate in the computerized lottery selection process, or even be selected, but you have to provide proof of city of Chicago residency by July 1, 2020, in order to enroll for the 2020-2021 school year.

What does “primary address” mean?

When you fill out your child's application -- whether online or paper -- you must indicate your child's "primary address." The primary address is defined as your child’s regular, fixed nighttime residence. Note that you must use the address that is your primary address at the time that you apply. You cannot apply using an address where you plan to live in the future.
I share joint custody with my child's mother/father. Whose address should I use?

If you share joint custody and your child sleeps at night at only one residence the majority of the time, that is the child’s primary address, and that is the address that must be entered on the application. In cases of joint custody where a child’s residence is equally divided between two addresses, either address may be used. Note that the address of only ONE parent can be used; your child cannot be considered for schools by using more than one address, and your child cannot submit applications with different addresses. The address that is used for the application and selection process must be the same, single address. If your child submits applications with more than one address, he/she will be considered for the selection process using the address on the first application that is processed by the Office of Access and Enrollment.

Is transportation provided?

No. Transportation is not provided for preschool students.

How old does my child have to be to start preschool next year?

For the 2020-2021 school year, your child must be three years old by September 1, 2020 in order to apply for preschool for three-year-olds, and four years old by September 1, 2020, in order to apply for preschool for four-year-olds.

What should I do if I move after I submit my application?

If you apply online, you can make updates via the online application site to your address and telephone number. If you apply via paper application, contact the Office of Access and Enrollment at 773-553-2060 or gocps@cps.edu to request a paper Contact Information Modification Form. For the purposes of determining tiers, attendance/overlay boundaries, and proximity boundaries, address changes must be received by the Office of Access and Enrollment no later than December 6, 2019. NOTE: If you change your address and you accept an offer from a school, you will be required to provide proof of both the address on the application, and the new address, at the time of your child’s registration.

How can I correct other information on my child’s application?

To correct your child’s CPS ID number, IEP/504 Plan status, current grade, or other student-related information, you will need to submit a paper Student Information Modification Form, whether you apply online or via paper application. To request the Student Information Modification Form, contact the Office of Access and Enrollment at 773-553-2060 or gocps@cps.edu. Corrections must be received by the Office of Access and Enrollment no later than December 6, 2019.

How can I change my school choices?

We encourage you to attend Open Houses and conduct any other school-related research BEFORE submitting your application, to decrease the need for changing school choices. If you wish to make changes to your school choices, you will need to do so by the December 6, 2019, deadline. If you apply online, you can make changes by deleting your application and submitting a new one. If you apply via paper application, contact the Office of Access and Enrollment at 773-553-2060 or oae@cps.edu to request a paper Application Modification Form.
CUSTODY AND GoCPS ACCOUNT QUESTIONS

Can two GoCPS accounts be created for one student?

No, only one GoCPS account will be authorized for a student. Students cannot be attached to multiple GoCPS accounts. The only way for both parents to have access to make application and results decisions, and view notification letters, which includes student scores, is to share the login information.

Can both parents be the primary parent/guardian on a GoCPS account?

No. The GoCPS application system only allows for one parent/guardian to be listed as “primary,” but does allow for additional parents/guardians to be added to the account.

What does it mean to add another parent or guardian to a GoCPS account?

Contacts who are added to the GoCPS account after the account is opened by the primary parent/guardian will receive automated messages of application submission and admissions screening. At this time, the GoCPS system does not have the capacity to share the results decisions or notification letters with the contacts who added to the account.

I am separated from my child’s other parent. Can either one of us open a GoCPS account?

No. Only one parent can open a GoCPS account. We recommend that the GoCPS applications be opened by the student’s primary parent/guardian. If a student’s parents are separated and there is a dispute over which parent is the primary parent/guardian, or who should have primary access to the GoCPS application file, CPS must receive a parental agreement which indicates the parent who has educational decision-making authority, or the parents must go to court to obtain this documentation. If the court document indicates that parents have joint educational decision-making, parents must share the GoCPS login.

What happens when parents disagree about how to use the GoCPS account?

In the case of a student’s parents not agreeing about how to use the GoCPS account, the parents will need to provide us with a court order that states which parent has the educational decision making authority so that we can determine who should have primary access to the GoCPS application file.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

To how many schools can I apply?

You can apply to a total of three schools through the GoCPS process, depending on your child’s age. You can apply to the three- or four-year-old programs at Drummond and Suder, and to the four-year-old program at Inter-American.

Can I list the schools in order of preference?

No. The schools are considered equally in separate computerized lotteries. They are not ranked in any kind of order. As a result, it is possible for your child to receive an offer from more than one school.

Do I have to apply for the maximum number of schools?

No. You should apply only to those schools where you would accept an offer.
What is a computerized lottery?

Computerized lotteries are conducted to ensure that all children have an equal chance to be accepted at schools that do not require testing. Your child will be included in the computerized lottery in a specific category (also known as a queue): sibling, proximity, tier, or general. Based on your child's category and the number of seats allocated for that category at the school to which you are applying, the computerized lottery will randomly select students to fill the available seats. The remaining students are randomly assigned a waitlist number in that category, starting with number 1.

There are four types of lotteries:

- **Sibling lottery**: conducted only for students who have a brother or sister in the same household, who already attends the school to which the student is applying, and who will still be enrolled in that school in the 2020-2021 school year.

- **Staff preference lottery**: conducted only for students applying to the entry-grade level at a school where their parent or guardian is a member of the staff. Note that these seats are based on space availability after siblings are accommodated. (More on this process can be found in the following question.)

- **Proximity lottery**: conducted only for students applying to the entry-grade level who live within a 1.5-mile radius of the school.

- **General lottery**: conducted for all students not included in the sibling lottery.

Students who are not selected for a seat through the computerized lottery are randomly assigned a number on a waitlist.

I am employed at a CPS school and would like my child to attend my school. Does my child have preference in the selection process?

For Choice Elementary Schools and all district high schools that select students through a computerized lottery, two seats will be allocated at the entry-grade level for children of teachers or staff members currently employed at that school. If there are more than two children who qualify and apply for these seats, a lottery will be held and seats will be filled by computerized lottery. (The availability of these seats is based on space.) For the purposes of this policy, the term "children" means natural children, stepchildren, foster children and adopted children, as evidenced by documentation required by the CEO or designee. If there are minimum criteria for a school, the student must meet eligibility requirements in order to qualify.

Can my child be selected for more than one Choice school?

The selections for each type of school on the Choice Elementary School Application are conducted independently from each other. Therefore, your child can be selected for any number of schools, depending on the number of schools to which you apply. He could be selected for no schools and placed on the waitlist for all of your choices; he could be selected for some schools and on the waitlist for the others; or he could be selected for all of the schools to which you apply.

How does the waitlist work?

After the available spaces in each grade are filled through the computerized lottery, waitlist numbers are randomly assigned, beginning with number 1, to the remaining students in each category. Parents of students who are selected in the lottery are given approximately three weeks to accept an offered space. After the deadline for accepting an offer, principals must fill any remaining spaces through the waiting list, beginning with number 1 and selecting students based on their category. For example, if a
student was selected in the proximity lottery and the parent does not accept the space, the principal will contact the parent of the first student on the proximity waiting list for that grade to offer him/her the available space. If this student declines the offer, the principal will contact the second student on the proximity waiting list for that grade, and so on. Principals are not allowed to contact students outside of the waiting list order, and offers must be made to replace students in the same category. For instance, a principal cannot offer a space to the student who is number 1 on a waiting list and then skip the next five students to offer a space to the student who is number 6 on the list. As another example, a principal cannot attempt to fill a space declined by a student from the sibling category by offering the space to a student on the general waiting list, unless the sibling waitlist has been exhausted. (Note that when parents of waitlisted students are contacted, they will be given 48 business hours to accept or decline a seat. Be sure to include at least one telephone number on your application where you can be reached at all times.)

NOTE: If your child is currently on a waitlist from last year’s application process, and has not received an offer for the current school year, you will need to reapply for the 2020-2021 school year if you want to be considered for that year. Waitlists expire in February and are not maintained from year to year.

When will I find out if my child has been accepted?

Results will be released in April 2020. If you apply using the online application site, your results can be accessed via your online application account. If you apply using a paper application, your notification letter will be sent to your home address via U.S. mail. In addition, your results will be accessible via an online GoCPS account that will be opened on your behalf by the Office of Access and Enrollment.

If my child receives an offer from School A, and is on the waitlist for other schools, will she be removed from the waitlists if I accept the offer from School A?

No. Accepting an offer from a school where your child is selected does not affect your child’s placement on the waitlists at any other schools. You can accept an offer that you received and, if you later receive an offer from a school where your child was waitlisted, you may accept that offer instead, if you wish. Should you choose to accept a later offer, you will be responsible for notifying the first school of your child’s change in status.

My child is currently enrolled in a preschool program at a Chicago public school. Do I have to submit an application for kindergarten, or will my child be automatically accepted for the kindergarten class?

If your child is enrolled in the PreK for four-year-olds at Drummond, Inter-American, or Suder, you do not have to apply for kindergarten if you want your child to remain in that school. HOWEVER, if your child is in a preschool program at any other Chicago public school, that school is not your neighborhood school, and you want your child to remain at that school for kindergarten, you will need to submit an application. If you do not apply, your child will not be included in the kindergarten selection process.

Can students with disabilities apply to magnet schools and programs?

All students with disabilities are eligible to apply to magnet schools and programs. Appropriate services within these programs will be provided to meet the student’s individual needs as delineated on the Individualized Education Program (IEP). If a student with a mobility impairment is selected by lottery for a magnet school or program that is not accessible, transportation will be provided to a comparable magnet program at an accessible school.

Can English Learners (ELs) apply to magnet schools and programs?

Yes. All ELs are eligible to apply to magnet schools and programs.
Does my child have to take a test to get into these schools?

No. Preschool programs are designed for all students, and students are randomly selected through a computerized lottery. No testing is required.

SELECTION QUESTIONS

I am applying for my son to a magnet school where his sister is enrolled. Will my son automatically be selected?

Sibling applicants to magnet schools will be offered seats to the extent that space is available. If a school receives more applications from siblings than there are seats available, a computerized lottery will be conducted to fill the seats. In order to be eligible, the enrolled sibling and the sibling applicant must live in the same household and must be attending the same school for the 2020-2021 school year. (The term “sibling” means natural siblings, step siblings, foster siblings and adopted siblings.) Your child cannot be enrolled as a sibling if the enrolled sibling is currently in a Chicago Early Learning or tuition-based prekindergarten, or if the enrolled sibling graduates or transfers to another school. If the enrolled sibling graduates or transfers to another school, your child’s offer will be rescinded and your child will be placed in the general applicant queue. If you do not submit an application, or if you do not provide identifying sibling information on your child’s application (currently enrolled student's name, current school name, and CPS ID number), your child will not be given sibling preference in the selection process.

I have twins. Can they be selected to attend school together?

For applications to magnet, magnet cluster, or open enrollment schools, parents of twins, triplets and other higher order multiple births have the option of linking their applications together so that the students are either admitted together or placed next to each other on the waitlist. If you choose not to indicate on the application that your children are multiples, their applications will be independently processed in the lottery and their applications will not be linked. (The admission policy adopts the traditional meaning of twins and multiples, meaning siblings produced in the same pregnancy. Under this policy, the terms twins and multiples do not include siblings adopted during the same year, adopted siblings born during the same 12-month period, biological siblings born during the same 12-month period, or any other circumstance in which siblings are close in age.) Twins, triplets, and other multiples do not have preference or consideration when applying to Selective Enrollment Elementary Schools.

I am employed at a CPS school and would like my child to attend my school. Does my child have preference in the selection process?

For Choice Elementary Schools and all district high schools that select students through a computerized lottery, two seats will be allocated at the entry level grade for children of teachers or staff members currently employed at that school. If there are more than two children who qualify and apply for these seats, a lottery will be held and seats will be filled by computerized lottery. (The availability of these seats is based on space.) For the purposes of this policy, the term "children" means natural children, stepchildren, foster children and adopted children, as evidenced by documentation required by the CEO or designee. If there are minimum criteria for a school, the student must meet eligibility requirements in order to qualify.