Frequently Asked Questions
Principal Discretion Process – 2019-2020

1. **What is Principal Discretion?**
   Principal Discretion allows the principals of Selective Enrollment High Schools to fill up to five percent of the total seats through a process outside of the regular selection process, based on information provided in application packages submitted by students.

2. **How many Principal Discretion seats does each school have?**
   Below is the number of Principal Discretion seats that each Selective Enrollment High School will be able to fill for the 2019-2020 school year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brooks</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hancock</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lane</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindblom</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northside</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payton</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Shore</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westinghouse</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. **When can I apply?**
   The Principal Discretion Handbook is posted on the GoCPS website, [go.cps.edu](http://go.cps.edu) (under ‘High School’ and ‘Principal Discretion’) as well as on the Office of Access and Enrollment website, [cps.edu/oae](http://cps.edu/oae) (under ‘News and Announcements’). The application will be posted at 9 a.m. on April 8th, and application packages will be accepted by the Office of Access and Enrollment between April 8th and April 19th. Your application package must be received by the Office of Access and Enrollment no later than 6 p.m. on April 19th. Application packages will not be accepted after that date and time.

4. **Where can I get the application?**
   Starting April 8th at 9 a.m., the application will be accessible on the GoCPS website, [go.cps.edu](http://go.cps.edu) (under ‘High School’ and ‘Principal Discretion’).

5. **What else do I need in order to apply?**
   You will need the Principal Discretion Handbook, which can be obtained on the GoCPS website, [go.cps.edu](http://go.cps.edu) (under ‘High School’ and ‘Principal Discretion’). The Handbook provides guidelines and step-by-step instructions for applying to schools.

6. **Can I apply to more than one school?**
   No. You can only apply to ONE Selective Enrollment High School through Principal Discretion.

7. **Can I apply to a Selective Enrollment school that wasn’t on my original application?**
   No. In order to apply to a school, you must have applied to it during the regular process.

8. **I applied to Selective Enrollment High Schools, but I didn’t take the test. Can I apply for Principal Discretion?**
   No. In order to apply for Principal Discretion, you must have applied and tested for a Selective Enrollment High School.

9. **Can I apply for Principal Discretion to other kinds of schools, like magnet schools or Academic Centers?**
   No. Principal Discretion is a process that is used for the 11 Selective Enrollment High Schools for ninth grade applicants only.
10. My parent works for CPS. Can I apply for Principal Discretion?
   Yes. However, if either of your parents is a CPS employee, Board member, or officer, or if either of your parents is a Local School Council member of the school where you are applying for Principal Discretion, your application package must include a completed Statement of Non-Interference form, even if the parent/guardian is on leave of absence from his/her position. This form can be found in the Principal Discretion Handbook. If either of your parents is a CPS employee, Board member, or officer, or if either of your parents is a Local School Council member of the school where you are applying for Principal Discretion, and you do NOT submit a Statement of Non-Interference form with your application package, you will NOT be eligible for the Principal Discretion process. There are no exceptions to this rule.

11. What do I have to submit in order to be considered for Principal Discretion?
    The only requirement is that you submit a Principal Discretion application (and the Statement of Non-Interference, if applicable). HOWEVER, it is highly recommended that you also submit the following:
    - A personal statement, written by the applicant, no more than 1,000 words
    - Letters of recommendation (you can submit more, but the recommendation is no more than three)
    - Photocopies OR a list of recent awards, achievements and honors

12. Is there a limit to the number of pages I can submit?
    Yes. Your application package must consist of no more than 10 single-sided pages. Do not submit more than 10 single-sided pages. (Note that this number does NOT include the Statement of Non-Interference, if applicable.) Pages cannot be stapled or bound.

13. Can I submit more than three letters of recommendation?
    It is highly recommended that you submit no more than three letters of recommendation. You may submit more, if you wish.

14. Should letters of recommendation be submitted in sealed envelopes?
    No. Do NOT submit letters of recommendation in sealed envelopes. If you are given your letters in sealed envelopes, please remove the letters from the envelopes before you assemble and submit your application package.

15. Should I submit copies of my grades and NWEA MAP scores?
    No. Your seventh grade grades and the NWEA MAP scores used for selections are already on file. DO NOT submit copies of your seventh grade grades or the NWEA MAP scores that were used for selections.

16. Can I submit pictures?
    Each page of the Principal Discretion package must be on 8 ½ x 11 copy paper. DO NOT submit photo paper. If you have photos, they must be copied onto 8 ½ x 11 copy paper.

17. Will my application package be returned to me?
    No. Therefore, we do not recommend that you include original items that are of importance to you. You can take pictures of items and copy them onto 8 ½ x 11 copy paper, or you can provide a list of these items.

18. Do I have to have a certain score in order to apply for Principal Discretion?
    No. Any student who submitted a Selective Enrollment High Schools application and took the Selective Enrollment exam can apply for Principal Discretion, as long as the school to which they are applying was included on their Selective Enrollment application.

19. How do principals make their decisions? Do they only select the highest-scoring students?
    Principals have the ability to use whatever criteria they choose in order to make their Principal Discretion decisions. They can take into account any or all of the student's information including, but
not limited to, the student’s total point score, the criteria under which the student applied on the Principal Discretion application, the personal statement, the letters of recommendation, honors and awards, the student’s racial/ethnic background, and/or the order in which the student ranked the school on his/her application. Some principals may give more weight to the personal statement, others may feel that the total point score is most important, and so on. **There is no guarantee that you will receive a Principal Discretion offer.**

20. **Where should I submit my application package?**
   Mail or hand-deliver your application package to the Office of Access and Enrollment, 42 W. Madison St., Garden Level, Chicago, IL 60602. If you mail your application package, it is HIGHLY recommended that you: (1) mail it in plenty of time to ensure that it is RECEIVED by the Office of Access and Enrollment no later than April 19th, (2) mail it by certified mail so that you will have a receipt, and (3) include a self-addressed, stamped envelope, which will be returned to you as a receipt. If you hand-deliver your application package, you will be given a receipt at the time of delivery. **Application packages received after 6 p.m. on April 19th will not be considered.**

21. **Can I fax or email my application package?**
   No. The application package can ONLY be mailed or hand-delivered.

22. **Can I submit my application package to the school I am applying to?**
   No. Applications and related materials should not be submitted directly to the school to which a student is applying for Principal Discretion. Application packages submitted to schools or offices other than the Office of Access and Enrollment are void.

23. **Do I have to decline an offer I received in order to apply for Principal Discretion?**
   No. You do **NOT** have to decline an offer you receive from any type of school in order to apply for Principal Discretion. A student can accept an offer from any type of high school (i.e., Choice, Selective Enrollment, continuing school or designated neighborhood school) and still apply for Principal Discretion. In addition, applying for Principal Discretion does not have any impact on a student’s status on any Choice Program waitlists, or their ability to apply for, receive an offer in a second-round selection process for any type of school. These processes are all separate.

24. **When will students be notified about the outcome of their applications?**
   Principal Discretion notification letters will be mailed to parents’ homes via U.S. mail the week of June 3, 2019. If a student receives a Principal Discretion offer, this offer will also appear in their GoCPS online account.

25. **What will happen if I receive an offer through Principal Discretion and I already accepted an offer from another school?**
   If you receive a Principal Discretion offer and you want to accept it, you will need to decline the offer that you previously accepted.

26. **If I receive an offer to a school through Principal Discretion, do I have to accept it?**
   No. You can either accept a Principal Discretion offer, or you can decline it.

27. **What happens to the seat if a student receives a Principal Discretion offer but does not accept it?**
   Each school can identify up to five alternates, ranked in order from one to five. Students identified as alternates will be notified of this status in the notification letter that is sent the week of June 3rd. If a student declines a school’s Principal Discretion offer, the Office of Access and Enrollment will offer the seat to the school’s alternates, beginning with the alternate who is number 1 on the list, and continuing in numerical order as necessary until the seat is filled or the list is exhausted.