

# Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School

## Enrollment Policy

Revised 12/17/2020

### Introduction

Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School (Hilltown) is a K-8 public school governed by the applicable charter school and education laws and regulations of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Hilltown enrolls a new kindergarten class annually, along with an additional section (8-12 students) at the 6<sup>th</sup> grade level and backfills positions in other grade levels as openings become available. Hilltown does not enroll students in grades 9-12 or pre-K.

Hilltown maintains a student recruitment and retention plan, in accordance with G.L. c. 71, § 89(f) and CMR 603 1.05(f). This plan is included in our Annual Report, which is available on the school website.

The school's enrollment is currently capped at 218 students. The total number of students attending Hilltown in a given school year cannot exceed the total number of students in the school's pre-enrollment report submitted to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in the previous spring in accordance with 603 CMR 1.08(5). In cases where there are fewer spaces than eligible applicants, students shall be accepted for admission by a lottery process in accordance with Hilltown Cooperative Charter's Lottery Policy, described below.

The Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed or religion, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in English language or a foreign language, or prior academic achievement when recruiting or admitting students in its enrollment activities. Hilltown provides accommodations and support services for diverse learners, including students who may have disabilities, require special education, or are English Language learners. These statements shall be provided to all applicants in writing as part of the admissions application, the family handbook and other admissions and enrollment materials and shall be available on the school website.

Spanish versions of the application and other admissions and enrollment materials shall be available through the school website. Translation to other languages may be requested by calling the school or emailing [info@hilltowncharter.org](mailto:info@hilltowncharter.org).

## Eligibility for Enrollment

Students must reside in Massachusetts at the time of application, at the time of offer of admission, and while attending Hilltown, as per MA Charter School regulations. Hilltown must request proof of residency at the time of application or enrollment (if residency changed after application).

Acceptable forms of proof of residency include a parent's/guardian's

- valid Massachusetts driver's license
  - utility bill (not water or cell phone) dated within the past 60 day
  - current lease, Section 8 Agreement or Landlord Affidavit dated within a year
  - deed or mortgage payment dated within the past 60 days
  - Property Tax bill dated within the last year
  - voter registration card
  - W2 form dated within the year
  - payroll stub dated within the past 60 days
  - bank or credit card statement dated within the past 60 days
  - letter from an approved Government Agency\* dated within the past 60 days.
- \* Approved government agencies: Departments of Revenue (DOR), Children and Family Services (DCF), Transitional Assistance (DTA), Youth Services (DYS), Social Security, any communications on Commonwealth of Massachusetts letterhead.

In order for students who may be considered homeless to receive a preference of admission based on their current or temporary residence, a proof of residence must be provided. The school's homeless liaison will work with the applicant on a case-by-case basis in order to determine the family's current or temporary residence. Preference for admission will not be provided based on the applicant's prior permanent residence.

For Kindergarten students, the student must have turned 5 years old by September 1 of the academic year they are applying for. First grade applicants who have never attended Kindergarten or preschool must have turned 6 years old by September 1 of the academic year they are applying for. All students who enroll in Kindergarten shall be assessed through our first-year screening process before the start of the school year.

Hilltown does not require applicants or their families to attend interviews or informational meetings as a condition of enrollment. However, families and students are encouraged to attend an open house and/or take a tour before making a decision about an offer of admission. Likewise, Hilltown does not administer entrance examinations or placement tests, or predicate enrollment on results from any test of ability or achievement or prior academic results. After enrollment, Hilltown may review prior school records and conduct a diagnostic

assessment for incoming students entering grades 2-8 that may affect their final grade placement.

Hilltown reserves the right to terminate a student's enrollment, to retract or rescind any offers of admission, or to unenroll a student if false or inaccurate statements or documents were submitted during the application process or during any portion of the student's enrollment at Hilltown. The student and/or parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be notified in writing of the school's intent to take such action and shall have the opportunity to be heard prior to any withdrawal of the student.

### **Transportation**

For students who reside in Easthampton, the Easthampton Public Schools shall be responsible for providing transportation to all eligible students in accordance with the District's transportation policies. Eligibility for transportation shall be determined by the Easthampton Public School District.

However, with respect to transportation of students with disabilities who reside outside of Easthampton, each student's IEP Team shall make a determination as to whether the student requires transportation because of their disability. If the IEP team has determined that the student requires transportation because of their disability, The Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public shall provide and be responsible for transportation services, subject to statutory and regulatory reimbursement provisions.

Students who require special transportation as part of their IEP shall receive special transportation to all school-related programs and events in which the student participates.

### **Application Process**

Hilltown implements a separate application process and does not integrate its application process with any other districts.

The information requested in the application is not intended to and will not be used to discriminate. Hilltown's non-discrimination statement and a notice concerning the rights of students with diverse learning needs to attend the school and to receive accommodations and support services, including students who may have disabilities, require special education, or who are English Language Learners shall be included on the admissions application and all enrollment materials.

Admissions application forms are to be submitted electronically through the school's online application system which can be accessed through the school website, [www.hilltowncharter.org](http://www.hilltowncharter.org). If a parent or guardian does not have access to an electronic device, the application may be

completed with the assistance of school personnel. Applicants who do not have access to an electronic device may contact the school at 413-529-7178 to request assistance in completing an application.

At least one parent/guardian must sign the application in order for the student to be eligible for enrollment. Hilltown does not require dual parental signatures, unless otherwise indicated by court order.

Applications are accepted throughout the year. Applications for the upcoming school year must be submitted prior to the application deadline in order to be considered for the principal lottery process. The school will provide at least one month's notification of the principal application deadline. Applications received following the deadline are included in the next scheduled enrollment lottery, which will not occur until the waitlist created by the principal lottery has been exhausted.

Hilltown shall not charge an application fee to any applicant seeking enrollment at the school. Hilltown conducts one principal application deadline and enrollment lottery each year after January 1, but before March 15, for the upcoming school year. Hilltown shall publicize the date, time, and location with reasonable notice at least one week before the lottery date.

### **Lottery and Waitlist Policy**

Each year, the school will determine the number of spaces available each year, by grade level. In situations where there are more eligible applicants than there are spaces available, Hilltown will hold a lottery at the school, located at 1 Industrial Parkway, Easthampton, MA. Hilltown shall not hold a lottery when it is capable of admitting every student who seeks admission in accordance with its charter. The lottery shall be open to the public and information concerning the lottery shall be published on Hilltown's website and local newspaper(s) at least one week prior to the lottery.

The purpose of the lottery is for Hilltown to determine the applicants who will receive an offer of admission. A neutral party shall certify that Hilltown's lottery process is fair and that the selection is random.

A lottery for all grades will be drawn electronically by an independent software vendor contracted by Hilltown. The software will randomly assign a lottery number to all students who submitted applications before the application deadline. After the initial lottery rank order has been established for each grade, then the preferences for admission shall be applied in the following order:

- Siblings of students already attending Hilltown at the time of the lottery regardless of district of residence; and

- Students who reside in the following districts: Amherst-Pelham, Belchertown, Central Berkshire Regional, Easthampton, Gateway Regional, Granby, Hadley, Hampshire Regional, Hatfield, Mohawk Regional, Northampton, South Hadley, Ware, Erving, Frontier Regional, Gill Montague Regional, Greenfield, Hawlemont Regional, Leverett, Mohawk Regional, New Salem-Wendell, Orange (Mahar Regional), Pioneer Valley Regional.

Following a lottery, Hilltown shall place the names of students not offered admission on a waitlist in the order the names are selected, taking into account sibling and resident preference. 603 CMR 1.05(10). Hilltown shall maintain waiting lists for each grade and shall keep accurate records of the waitlists containing the names (first, middle, last), dates of birth, cities or towns of residence, telephone numbers, and grade levels of students who entered the lottery but did not gain admission. Hilltown recognizes that the order of a student's placement on the waitlist may change depending on the preferences that exist at the time an offer of admission is extended (e.g., a student may move up on the waitlist if a waitlisted student's sibling begins to attend Hilltown or if the wait listed student became a "resident applicant" between the date of the lottery and the offer of admission). Hilltown shall rely upon family members of wait listed students to notify the school of any changes in residence that may impact their student's position on the waitlist.

Hilltown shall retain its waitlist only for the school year for which the students applied. The waitlists **will not** roll over from one year to the next. Students who are not admitted or who have declined an admissions offer during an enrollment period must reapply if they wish to be considered for admission for the next year. Students who withdraw from the school, in accordance with the school's withdrawal process, must reapply if they wish to be considered for admission.

When a spot becomes available, for any reason, the school will attempt to fill the vacant seat. If the principal enrollment process fails to fill available admission spaces, Hilltown will repeat the process and give reasonable public notice at least one month prior to the application deadline. Vacated seats will continue to be filled until February 15. If a vacancy is not filled after February 15, that vacancy moves to the subsequent grade, to be filled the following September.

No student shall be admitted ahead of other eligible students who were previously placed on a waitlist during a prior enrollment process, except in cases where there has been a change in the factors that determine the student's enrollment preference, as described above.

If a space becomes available and the enrollment of a student would cause their sending district to exceed the net school spending cap, Hilltown shall skip that student but place them on the waitlist. If that student on the waitlist is a sibling of a student currently enrolled at Hilltown, and the school has not admitted another student prior to admitting the sibling, the school may enroll

that student and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will pay the tuition at Hilltown, subject to state appropriations.

### **Siblings Policy**

In compliance G.L. c. 71, §89 and 603 CMR 1.05(6), Hilltown shall provide an enrollment preference to siblings of students who are attending the school when an offer of admission is made to the applying student. The enrollment preference **shall also apply** to siblings of students who are scheduled to exit Hilltown at the end of the school year in which the lottery is held. However, the enrollment preference **shall not** apply to siblings of students who have applied, but not yet enrolled at Hilltown. If a student is placed on the waitlist with sibling preference and the waitlisted student does not receive an offer of admission prior to the date the attending sibling exits the school, then the waitlisted student no longer has sibling status.

For the purpose of this policy “siblings” are defined as children having a common parent, either biologically or legally through adoption. The following receive the “sibling” preference:

- Children who live in different households but share a common biological parent;
- Siblings of students who will graduate at the end of the school year in which the lottery is held;
- Situations where if a student moves out of the local city or town but continues to attend Hilltown, that student’s “siblings” have preference in admission even though they are non-residents at the time of application.

The following **do not** receive the “sibling” preference, or any enrollment preference:

- Children who live in the same household but who do not share a common biological or legal parent;
- Foster children;
- Siblings and children of alumni/ae; and
- Siblings of applicants who have been accepted for admission but who are not yet attending (including twins).

### **Offers of Admission**

Waitlisted students may be informed of an offer of admission via mail, e-mail, or phone. It is the parent/guardian’s responsibility to inform the school of any changes in address or contact information. Failure to respond to an offer of admission by the response deadline will result in forfeit of the offer.

All students who are initially extended enrollment offers must confirm their acceptance within the following time frame: offers made during and between the principal lottery and the end of the

school year have 2 weeks to respond; offers made during the summer have 1 week to respond; offers made during the school year will have 3 business days to respond.

Hilltown may request proof of age, school records and/or address at the time of application, offer of admissions and/or enrollment.

Students who have accepted a spot must begin attending school, in accordance with the school's attendance policy, within ten (10) days of their anticipated start date (e.g., the first day of school). Students who fail to attend will be considered to have declined their offer of enrollment and must reapply for admission if they wish to be considered again for enrollment.

### **Management of Admissions Records and Confidentiality**

Hilltown's Admissions Application form shall include all student information required by the charter school statute for the waitlist: policy.

- Students' legal names (first, middle, last);
- Dates of birth;
- Cities or towns of residence;
- Grades levels;
- Home addresses; and
- Telephone numbers.

The Admissions Application shall *not* require submission of the student's social security number.

Hilltown shall disclose applicant information to the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, as per their requirements. Hilltown must provide names and addresses of students to a third party mail house if requested, unless the parent notifies the school that they want their child's name withheld. Hilltown does not permit staff, students, parents, or consultants to use student or parent directory information for purposes other than communications regarding school programs and policies.

If an applicant is not admitted or elects not to enroll at Hilltown, the school shall maintain that child's application as a temporary student record for 7 years after the student's name is no longer on the waitlist. However, applicants must submit a new application to participate in the lottery for each academic year for which they would like to be considered for admission.

Families have the right to request a copy of their child's temporary record prior to its destruction. Families may contact the school office to request that their information be removed from our Admissions database.

If an applicant is admitted to and enrolls at Hilltown, his/her application becomes part of the student's record and shall be maintained in accordance with governing laws and regulations concerning education records. (603 CMR 23.00)

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This Enrollment Policy was developed in accordance with Massachusetts Education Laws and Regulations, particularly G.L. 71 (<https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/ch71s89.html> ) and 603 CMR 1.00 (<https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr1.html?section=all>) and was reviewed by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, along with the Admissions Application, in fall 2020.