

Revised February 16, 2016

### **503.3 ENROLLMENT**

#### **I. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for enrollment of students at Northern Lights Community School, a charter school located in Warba, Minnesota.

#### **II. General Statement of Policy**

The following factors related to enrollment are established in Minnesota charter school legislation and guide Northern Lights Community School enrollment practices:

- A. Charter schools are public schools.
- B. Charter schools are tuition free.
- C. Charter schools may not require entrance exams or requirements.
- D. Charter Schools may not limit the admission of pupils on the basis of intellectual ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, or athletic ability.
- E. Charter schools must accept all students up to capacity. If there are more students than spaces available, the school must conduct a lottery.

#### **III. Definitions**

- A. The term *parent* as used in this policy refers to the legal guardian of a student as defined by state statute.
- B. *Northern Lights Community School* may also be known as NLCS or as “the school” throughout this document.
- C. A student will be considered *enrolled* at NLCS after completion of the enrollment paperwork during the May enrollment event, or, if enrolling midyear, after completion of the first day as an enrolled student at NLCS.

- D. *Middle school* includes grades six through eight and may also be referred to as “MS.”
- E. *High school* includes grades nine through 12 and may also be referred to as “HS.”
- F. The *enrollment team* is a small group of NLCS staff members. Membership is determined at the start of each school year.
- G. In situations where siblings of currently enrolled students have enrollment preference, *siblings* include the following:
  - 1. Any child of a family unit related biologically, by marriage, or by adoption to one or both parents.
  - 2. Any child in long-term placement within a foster care situation with the family of a current student. Parents must provide the school with documentation from a case manager, a judge, or the court.
  - 3. If the family of a current NLCS student hosts a foreign exchange student, the exchange student will be considered a sibling.

#### IV. Applications and Admissions

- A. NLCS has an admissions deadline of May 1 of each school year for current students and new applicants. If NLCS is over capacity at the time of the application deadline, a lottery will be held for all new applicants who applied by the deadline. If NLCS has not reached capacity, students will continue to be admitted on a first come/first serve basis until we are full.

The application deadline is at 4:00 PM CST on May 1. All applications to be included in the lottery for the upcoming school year must be received by the school no later than 4:00 p.m. CST on May 1.

The lottery will be held on the first Wednesday after May 1.

- B. The NLCS application is valid for only one lottery. If a parent would like to include the student in subsequent lotteries (upon being wait listed), that parent must submit a new application.

## V. Enrollment Eligibility

To be eligible for enrollment in NLCS's sixth grade, a student must have successfully completed the fifth grade or be at least 11 years old by Aug. 31 of the year for which they are applying. To be eligible for seventh grade, a student must have successfully completed sixth grade. To be eligible for eighth grade, a student must have successfully completed seventh grade. To be eligible for the high school program, students must have successfully completed eighth grade.

## VI. Enrollment Preferences

- A. Prospective students who are children of NLCS employees will receive enrollment preference provided there is an opening in the grade to which they are applying. If staff members are hired after the lottery, those staff members' children will be placed first on the waiting list, in the order in which the parents were hired.
- B. Siblings will be given second priority (after children of employees) provided there is an opening in the grade to which they are applying. Siblings who submit applications after the lottery will be placed at the top of the wait list (after children of employees).

## VII. Enrollment Caps

The staff of NLCS will propose and the NLCS board of directors will determine the number of openings in each grade six through eight and in the high school program for the subsequent school year by the February board meeting of the application year. This number will take into account the need to over-enroll grade levels and programs depending on the projected number of students who will either not return or who will not accept the enrollment offer. This will be based on past data as well as current trends in enrollment.

## VIII. Enrollment Process

- A. Applications are available on the NLCS web site and in the school office and are due May 1 each year.
- B. Names of all new applicants will be entered in to a spreadsheet with information from their applications using a different spreadsheet for each grade in the MS, and one for the whole program in the HS.

- C. Highlight in yellow the names of children who are staff members in each middle school grade and in the high school program.
- D. Follow the same procedure for students who have a sibling currently enrolled at NLCS, highlighting names on the spreadsheet in yellow.
- E. If there are more children of staff members than there are openings in a particular grade (MS) or program (HS), a lottery must be held amongst the children of employees.
- F. After the children of staff members are admitted, if there are still spaces, move on to siblings. If there are more siblings than there are openings in a particular grade or program, then a lottery must be held amongst the siblings. If there are multiple applications from the same family and one of the family members is drawn, all the other members of that family member will be immediately accepted should space be available. If space is not available, the other member of the family member drawn will be at the top of the waiting list.
- G. For each grade (MS) or program (HS), the number of siblings and children of staff members in the prospective student pool will be subtracted from the number of total students to be accepted. This is the number of openings that will be filled through the lottery process. The appropriate number of applicants from each grade (MS) or program (HS) will then be randomly drawn until the enrollment goals are reached.

#### IX. Lottery Process

When the number of applications exceeds the number of openings in a particular grade or program, the school will conduct a lottery to determine those students who will be admitted or put on the waiting list. The school will follow the steps outlined below to ensure this procedure is equitable to all applicants. A completed enrollment application is required in order to be included in the annual lottery and/or to be placed on the waiting list. The NLCS lottery is held within 10 business days of the close of the enrollment period, is open to observation by the public, and will be posted in the school calendar and on the website.

- A. Each remaining applicant will be assigned a number
- B. Lottery sticks marked with legible numbers equal to the number of applicants will be placed into the lottery box.
- C. Starting with the middle school, draw one numbered stick out of the lottery box and call out the number on that stick. Once all middle school number sticks are drawn start with this high school number sticks. All sticks will be drawn in both middle school and high

school.

- D. Match that number on the enrollment spreadsheet to the stick. Pull all numbers so each applicant receives a number. Highlight the students accepted in yellow.
- E. After the total number of applicants to be accepted has been reached, write down the order of the applicants on the waiting list according to the order in which their number was drawn.
- F. Repeat this process for all grades (MS) and the HS program, using the number of current NLCS students moving from one grade to the next to ensure that the desired number of students is reached through the combination of reenrollment and adding new students.
- G. Send “acceptance” letters to all prospective applicants; send “waiting list” letters to the remaining applicants. Include enrollment agreements or waiting list forms as appropriate. Families will have one month from the mailing date to return the enclosed enrollment agreement accepting their enrollment.
- H. Once the process is completed, the spreadsheets will be printed (and saved as a PDF) and an affidavit certifying compliance with this policy and applicable state law will be signed by the two staff members conducting the lottery. All other witnesses will be asked to sign a form indicating they witnessed the lottery. A copy of this policy will be attached to the spreadsheets, signed affidavit, and witness form to complete documentation which will be filed at the school.

#### X. Waiting List

Following the lottery, students who have not been admitted will be placed on a waiting list and will be admitted as space permits. The steps outlined below will be followed to ensure the procedure is equitable to all applicants.

- A. The goal of the waiting list is to have a list of students from which to pull to maintain maximum class sizes for the next academic year. All students on the waiting list will know their waiting list number and the school will post online which number has been enrolled at NLCS.
- B. Waiting List Procedures
  - 1. All students will be assigned a waiting list number during the lottery procedures.
  - 2. Letters to those students on the waiting list will be sent at the same time as acceptance letters.

3. The waiting list is maintained by the enrollment coordinator and updated throughout the year as students are enrolled off of the list. The waiting list will be posted on the web site (with no identifying information) and updated monthly. Families may request to be removed from the waiting list at any point.
4. If a sibling of a currently enrolled student, or the student of a new staff member, submits an application after the lottery, that student will move to the top of the waiting list (behind any other siblings or staff children currently on the waiting list).

XI. Enrollment of New Students Following the Lottery

Openings for the Middle School and High School will be filled on a program wide (grades 6-12) basis.

A. Confirmation of Opening

The enrollment team will be notified when a position is open once the school receives one of the following: confirmation that a family is turning down an enrollment offer, a withdrawal form, or confirmed enrollment from another school.

B. Contact Next on Waiting List

As a space becomes available, the enrollment team will contact via phone and email the next student on that grade's (MS) or program's (HS) waiting list who has not already been contacted for the current school year. Once a parent has been contacted, he or she must respond within 72 hours in order to accept the position or the enrollment team may offer the position to the next student on the list.

C. Accepting a Position Mid Year

When accepting a position midyear, the following must be discussed with the parent: The student's start date (not to exceed ten school days from the offering date, unless otherwise noted by the school, such as the beginning of a semester), grade level, transportation needs, and siblings who may be on the waiting list, or want to be added to it. Once the decision has been made to enroll, the parent/guardian(s) must provide the student's birth date and the name of the student's current school so that NLCS staff can enter the student into the student information system and request student records. Families accepting a position mid year will be asked to complete a mid year enrollment form to provide the school with all required information.

XII. Re-enrollment after Long-term Leave

The purpose of this subsection is to define the actions of NLCS in the case of students taking a long-term leave from the school (which under Minnesota

state statutes constitutes de-enrollment from NLCS) and the process for those students to be reenrolled at NLCS. This policy is to support families in situations such as an educational sabbatical, family travel, mental health treatment or hospitalization, or a short term relocation for work. Families who request long-term leave and follow the process laid out in this policy may reenroll their child at NLCS without going through the enrollment process, and the child will be immediately enrolled upon returning.

#### A. Long-term leave and re-enrollment procedures

All students are de-enrolled from NLCS after not attending NLCS for 15 consecutive days. To qualify for re-enrollment eligibility, parents or guardians must request long-term leave from the Enrollment Team at least 30 days before the start of the long-term leave, giving the beginning and end dates of the student's leave from NLCS as well as the reason and documentation for the long-term leave. Students whose families follow this procedure will be immediately enrolled upon return.

In the case of hospitalization, treatment, or a court order program, the 30-day notification may be waived, and the end date remain flexible.

#### C. Conditions and Limits on Long-term Leave

1. Students may not miss more than the equivalent of one year, and the days on leave must be consecutive.
2. No more than two students at any grade level or advisory will be granted a long-term leave at any one time. Only the first students to request long-term leave and meet all conditions listed in the policy will be granted long-term leave. This may not include students needing to take a long-term leave to enter a treatment facility, receive medical care, or participate in a court ordered program.

### XIII. Open Enrollment Spots

When a student is de-enrolled at NLCS for any reason, his or her spot will be offered to the next student on the waiting list IF the student is going to be out for longer than 15 days. This may result in the over-enrollment of a class or grade when the student on long-term leave returns. No further offers of enrollment will be made until that grade or program is once again under-enrolled.

### XIV. Student Withdrawal

When a student withdraws from NLCS a withdrawal form should be completed and returned by a parent to the enrollment team.

XV. Enrollment Documentation

- A. Before students begin at NLCS, parents/guardians will complete an enrollment packet.
- B. If transfer records from a previous district do not have a verified birth date, parents/guardians will also provide proof of student's age in the form of a passport, state ID, or birth certificate upon enrollment.

XVI. Non-Discrimination

It is the policy of the board of directors of NLCS District No. 4146 to comply with federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination to the end that no person protected by such law shall, on the grounds of race, color, nationality, ethnic origin, religion, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, status with regard to public assistance, age, or disability be excluded from participation in, be denied of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any educational program, in employment, or recruitment, consideration, or selection, whether full time or part time under any educational program, employment or activity operated by the district.