

TO: School Committee

FROM: Tim Piwowar, Superintendent

DATE: February 2, 2024

RE: Extended Day Registration Process

As part of my entry plan findings this fall, I noted the challenges associated with the availability of after-school care for students at the elementary level in Westwood. We also committed to improving the registration process for Extended Day, with the goal of creating a more transparent and equitable system for families.

Given the constraints we have with capacity in our Extended Day program due to both physical space and staffing, our demand for available spots in the program continues to exceed the supply. As such, there is no registration process that will be able to accommodate the needs of every family in the district. We believe, however, that our approach for 2024-2025 provides a significant improvement over previous iterations of our registration process.

Below, please see a draft memo to families that outlines the proposed process for 2024-2025. I welcome the opportunity for feedback from the School Committee at our February 8 meeting prior to finalizing this process. (Please note that details about dates are left blank at this time until the process is finalized, with the goal of releasing information as soon as possible.)

Please also note that the draft memo below references a rate increase for Extended Day of approximately 5% for 2024-2025. The specific details of the rates are included in a separate document, linked below.

Draft Memo:

Dear Families:

I am writing to you about the enrollment process for the 2024-2025 school year. We are making some changes this spring in order to provide a clearer, fairer process for families. The overall process and the changes we've made are based on the following guidelines:

- For the sake of continuity for children, a portion of available slots will be set aside for the enrollment of families currently enrolled in the program, particularly for students entering grades 1 - 5.
- In order to promote fair access to the program, a portion of slots will be set aside in all grades, but particularly in kindergarten, for families new to extended day.

- Enrollment of students from each of these groups (returning families and new families) will be completed based on an impartial lottery method that is clear and transparent.
- In order to make the Extended Day program most usable for families with multiple children, lottery numbers will be assigned by family, and not by individual child.
- During the lottery process, there may be times when there is space in one grade level but not another. For families with children in multiple grades in this scenario, they will be given the option to enroll some children and place others on the waitlist if they choose.
- At each school site, there will be a cap on enrollment to ensure a safe and healthy environment.
- Any families not enrolled in the spring will be placed on a waitlist. If program staffing allows it, students from the waitlist will be invited to enroll, in an order based on initial lottery results, in the summer and early fall. Additional slots will be made available if students exit the program.

Enrollment overview

The enrollment forms for families will be emailed out and posted on the website on _____. The initial lottery will include all registrations received by [date; one week later]. Any registrations received after this date will be considered in order based upon the time the registration is received.

For students currently in Grades K-4, please have the student ID number for each of your children available as you will be asked for it when completing the enrollment application. Student ID numbers can be found in Aspen on your child's report card or progress report.

Once you complete the enrollment form, you will receive an email confirmation.

The assignment of returning families will take place first and based on the lottery order. Once that has been completed, assignment of new families based on lottery order will begin.

Remember that enrollment is based on the number of spaces available in a particular grade level at a particular site on a particular day. (A seemingly low lottery number might not guarantee a spot on Wednesday, if many of the families with lower lottery numbers need care in the same grade level on Wednesdays.)

Our plan is to let all families the status of their registration request by _____.

Once notified of acceptance into the program, payment of a non-refundable deposit by June 1 is required to hold your child's slot. If the deposit is not received by that date, the spot will be forfeited and will be offered to the next family on the waitlist at that grade level and day(s).

Tuition Rates 2024-2025

On February 8 the Westwood School Committee voted to raise the rates for Extended Day & Before School by approximately 5%. The goal of this modest tuition increase is to keep pace with escalating costs and avoid a more substantial and disruptive rate hike down the road.

Please see our rates here: [EXTENDED DAY & BEFORE SCHOOL 2024-2025 TUITION SCHEDULE](#).

Financial aid is available and based on free/reduced lunch eligibility. If you have not yet applied for the free/reduced lunch program, you may find [the forms on our website](#).

While we wish that we could accommodate all families, our capacity is limited by space and staff. The spaces we use are primarily cafeterias, gyms, libraries, and art rooms, since these spaces are more suitable given the size of our groups and the types of activities we offer and are in high demand for professional development and community recreation. We also need to be mindful of the need for WPS custodial and maintenance staff to have access to classrooms so that these spaces can be cleaned regularly and repairs can be scheduled outside of the regular school day.

As we do not know what our staffing situation will be until mid-late summer, **we will enroll this spring at 75% of our current enrollment** which is standard practice in the industry. As our staffing becomes solidified over the summer, we will open up more spaces. Hiring and retaining quality staff remains a challenge throughout the Commonwealth for after-school programs.

As there is a limit to the capacity of enrollment in the Extended Day program, we want to ensure that spaces in the program are used by students that attend on a consistent basis. For any student whose cumulative attendance in Extended Day programming is below 75% at the end of the month, that spot may be forfeited and offered to the next family on the waitlist. The potential forfeiture of spots under this provision will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

While we understand that the waitlists can be frustrating and challenging for families, we need to ensure appropriate and safe staff to student ratios.

Please feel free to reach out with any questions regarding the enrollment process.

Sincerely,