

Elementary Immersion Programs
In Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS)
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and Lottery Process
www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/specialprograms/
Board of Education Policy JEE, *Student Transfers*

1. Does MCPS offer elementary immersion programs?

Yes, MCPS offers three Spanish, two French, and two Chinese elementary immersion programs at seven sites in the county. The French and Spanish programs are full immersion. The Chinese programs are partial immersion. In full immersion, all core subjects, including reading/language arts, are taught in the target language. In partial immersion, some core subjects are taught in the target language. Some immersion programs are based on geographic location and/or give preference to students for whom that school is their home school. For more information, please visit the special programs website above, or call the Division of Consortia Choice and Application Program Services (DCCAPS) at 240-740-2540.

2. Who can participate in the immersion lottery process? Can students entering Grades 1–5 participate in the lottery?

Any Montgomery County resident scheduled to enter Grades K–5 in the following school year may participate in the elementary immersion lottery. For students entering kindergarten, approximately 26 or 52 seats are available depending on the program. For students entering Grade 1, seat availability varies year to year. Admission for Grades 2–5 is determined by both language proficiency and available space.

3. Are younger siblings of students currently in the immersion program guaranteed a seat in that program?

Any child who has an older sibling who is currently enrolled in a language immersion program, and will continue to be enrolled in that language immersion program the year the younger sibling seeks to enroll, may participate in a lottery established by the superintendent of schools for admission into the language immersion program. Such lottery shall include a weighting process that takes into consideration factors to include: (a) students who have an older sibling who is currently enrolled in a language immersion program and will continue to be enrolled in that language immersion program in the year the younger sibling seeks to enroll; (b) socio-economic status and poverty; and (c) other factors as identified by the superintendent of schools, such as, in specific circumstances, a catchment area.

An exception to this includes any child who has an older sibling who was enrolled in a language immersion program during the 2017–2018 school year and has an older sibling who will continue to be enrolled in the language immersion program the year the younger sibling seeks to enroll, may enroll in the language immersion program without the necessity of participating in the lottery conducted for admission into that program. An interest form must still be submitted for each student.

4. How can I participate in the lottery? Where and when can I get a form?

Interested Montgomery County parents/guardians whose child(ren) will be entering kindergarten through Grade 5 for the upcoming school year must complete Elementary Immersion Interest Form online via Google, using the student's MCPS ID number, and submit it to DCCAPS for processing. Immersion interest forms will be available February 1, 2020, in the MCPS Kindergarten Handbook, as well as on the website noted above. The deadline for submitting the form is April 24, 2020. Completed forms must be submitted online by the deadline.

Parents/guardians may indicate their interest in multiple immersion programs on one entry.

Kindergarten students, as well as anyone who will be new to MCPS, must be pre-enrolled for the 2020–2021 school year at their home elementary school prior to submitting the form as the MCPS ID number is required.

The language proficiency assessment is administered after the student has been invited to the program. Admittance to an immersion program for Grades 2-5 is contingent on the student passing the language assessment.

5. When are the immersion interest meetings for each of the programs?

Interested parents/guardians and students may attend immersion interest meetings hosted by the local school program from November–April 2020. Please contact the school or visit the individual school website for dates.

6. Is transportation to these programs provided?

Immersion programs have central stop transportation from the areas that the program serves (with the exception of Potomac Elementary School). Stops may be several miles from the student's home. Parents/guardians are responsible for arranging transportation to and from central stops. Bus trips are usually significantly longer than local school transportation and vary by program or location. It is important to consider transportation options and responsibilities. The continuation of transportation for the 2020–2021 school year for regional and countywide immersion programs is pending budget approval.

7. What factors are considered in the lottery?

Depending on the program, there are approximately 26 or 52 seats available in the lottery for students entering kindergarten. The available seats in the lottery for students entering Grades 1–5 are those seats vacated by students who withdraw from the program. Factors that may be considered when running each school's lottery include—

- the student's high school cluster (eligibility);
- seats available for Grades 1–5;
- the student's older siblings who are currently enrolled in the language immersion program (see # 3 above);
- socio-economic status and poverty; and
- other factors as identified by the superintendent of schools, such as, in specific circumstances, a catchment area.

All other assignments are made by a random lottery process.

8. When will I be notified of lottery results for the 2020–2021 school year?

All students who participate in the lottery process will receive notification in mid–May 2020. For those not selected for the program, a wait list is maintained. Students are assigned in a random order to the waitlist and are invited to the program when a vacancy occurs. In order to be selected from the waitlist, the student must be enrolled in MCPS. If a student is invited and accepts the invitation, the student's name will be removed from the other wait lists. The lottery is conducted in May, and the wait list is valid through the following January.

9. What are the options for immersion students in middle school?

Students may continue in the feeder middle school immersion program, return to their home school, and/or be considered for a regional program. A Notice of Intent will be sent to parents of Grade 5 students to indicate their intentions for middle school.

10. Is my child eligible to participate in the lottery and enter kindergarten if born after the September 1 entrance date, but on or before October 15, 2020 known as Early Entrance to Kindergarten (EEK)?

Students applying for EEK may participate in the immersion lottery. If invited to any immersion program, the MCPS ID number will be assigned after the student qualifies for EEK. The assessment for EEK is held at the child's home school during kindergarten orientation. Contact the student's home school for specific details.

11. What if my child has special needs?

Students with special needs that can only be addressed through an Individual Education Program (IEP), best interest meeting, alternative placement or English for Speakers of Other Languages program, the school assignment via the immersion process may be superseded.

12. What does immersion instruction look like if we continue to have distance learning in the fall?

During the emergency closing of MCPS school buildings this spring, the immersion programs continue to provide instruction in the target language (Chinese, French, Spanish). Instruction takes place through a distance learning model by way of a device (computer, chromebook, tablet) and asynchronous/synchronous instruction. Teachers continue to build relationships with students while supporting their instructional and social-emotional needs. As we plan for the summer and next school year, MCPS is committed to the safety of its students and staff. As information is available, it will be posted on the MCPS website.

13. How often are students pulled from the waitlist?

Inviting students off the waitlist varies each year by grade, by program and by language. For students entering Kindergarten, invitations can range anywhere from 1 – 20 students being invited from the waitlist into the first semester of the school year. In rare cases students have been invited from the waitlist beyond #20. Parents and students on the waitlist are encouraged to connect with their home school counselor and administrator, learn about their home school's instructional program and consider joining their PTA list-serv (if available). Students (Kindergarten and 1st Grade) invited off the waitlist will have five days to accept or decline the option. Rising Grade 2-5 students will be invited from the waitlist to be assessed in the language which is scheduled for mid-August during the summer. Passing the language assessment is a condition of being placed in the immersion program.