

RFI #001: Questions

1. Do the district and choice (e.g., magnet or other school type) options need to be differentiated in some way to parents in the application?

Three school choice options (3 technical high schools, the Open Choice program, and magnet schools) are included on the uniform application provided by the Regional School Choice Office (RSCO). These options are currently differentiated, but contained within a single application. CT technical high schools (CTECS) are presented first to the applicant (if the applicant is applying to Grade 9), Open Choice is presented second, and magnet schools are presented third.

2. At what stage in the application process should parents be able to see the number of applicants by school and grade?

We have not determined the precise point in time such data should be made available to applicants, if at all, but seek the flexibility to provide such information at various times throughout the application period as needed.

3. How/By whom is census data entered into the system?

Currently, census data are attached to each applicant's record based on residence (i.e., address, city, zip code). Applicants enter their residence data in response to application questions. SDE staff geocode the data and attach census data from the public census databases using residence information.

4. What is an example of how a census element would impact the lottery system?

Census elements in a block group could be used as part of a student assignment system to ensure socioeconomic diversity.

5. How many lottery placement rounds are there?

As many as are necessary. As of 8/30/2019, twenty one magnet rounds (includes mini-rounds), seven Open Choice outbound, eight Open Choice inbound, and seven CTECS rounds have been run.

6. What are the lottery configurations/designs?

Please be more specific regarding your request for information.

7. Do current magnet students need to reapply, or do they automatically keep their seat the following school year?

Current magnet students are not required to reapply each year through the maximum grade in the respective school. Enrolled students generally must reapply for an opportunity in a new school choice option once they enter a terminal grade. Generally, PK4, 5 and 8 are the terminal grades triggering students to apply to a

new magnet opportunity. In some instances, a pathway preference is available from the current school to another specified school(s) in the portfolio of magnet options.

8. From one lottery placement round to the next, does the round 1 waitlist rollover to round 2, or must all students (including round 1 waitlist students) reapply to be considered in round 2?

Students apply once in each application year. Applicants who do not receive an offer during the initial placement round remain on the waitlist. Applicants are continuously pulled from this waitlist until the lottery cycle ends (typically in September). Waitlists expire on October 1 of each school year.

9. Is there a particular lottery algorithm that must be used?

The lottery assigns applicants to seats based on protocols provided by the schools' operators and the Regional School Choice Office that take into account various factors, such as siblings, staff associations, residence location, town of residence, block group, neighborhood, distance from the school, etc. Those protocols vary by operator, program and school.

10. What school districts will this initiative encompass and will districts be required to use the proposed solution for their choice applications?

Any Connecticut resident may apply to RSCO, which uses a centralized application. Magnet schools, Open Choice schools and participating technical schools in the Greater Hartford Region will participate in the revised application system.

11. What are the gaps in functionality in the current CSDE online application and lottery system that CSDE is looking to improve upon with this project?

The current application is based on a wizard, and is best completed on a PC. Using the browser's back button disrupts the application. The application is not mobile-friendly. CSDE seeks to provide a multi-platform application system that will facilitate application by families and afford increased flexibility and efficiency for student assignment.

12. Do applications for various school/program types need to be broken out into separate workflows, or should a parent be able to view all of their options for a student entering 3rd grade in a single place?

See the response to question 1.

13. Do students need to register before accessing choice?

Applicants who are not in school may apply to RSCO. Applicants must create a RSCO account before completing a RSCO application. Thereafter, applicants who receive an offer are required to register with the particular operator/school district.

14. When surfacing the number of available seats to parents, does this number need to be precise, or can it be indicated by a range (e.g., showing something like "very few seats" OR "0-5 seats" v. showing an exact number such as "4 seats")?

To be determined.

15. What type of geocoding is required for applicants based on residential address? Should geocoding be done by zip code? By boundary files?

CSDE developers complete geocoding based on block group using residential address.

16. Are the ongoing waitlist and the applicant pool different in any way? How are waitlists managed?

No. See the response to question 8.

17. What kinds of unique identifiers should ideally be assigned to students in the system?

Currently, a RSCO computer generated random number is assigned to each applicant. This number is unique for only one year because the numbers are recycled from year to year. In addition to the random number, each applicant is matched to the state-wide student data management system where the student has a unique state assigned student ID (SASID). Certain members of the applicant pool will not have SASIDs (typically PK applicants) because they are not in school.