

Chances slim at Lawrence charter school enrollment lotteries; few slots are open for new students

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LAWRENCE — It was a lottery day with few chances of success.

Community Day Charter Public School and Lawrence Family Development Charter School had lotteries yesterday in which hundreds of parents hoped to win spots in classes for their children for the next academic year.

But parents like Maria Munoz, who was trying to get her 4-year-old daughter Danna into Community Day, ended up disappointed.

Danna is number 59 on the kindergarten waiting list.

"It's much better, more education," Munoz said of her desire to get Danna into the school over the traditional public schools in Lawrence.

At Community Day, parents of 191 children wanted to get into the kindergarten classes, and parents of 741 children wanted to get into grades one through eight. All they could hope for was a good waiting list number.

Community Day, which opened in 1995, was one of the first charter schools in the state. Since then, demand for it has grown every year.

There are 331 spots at Community Day, which is for children in kindergarten through eighth grade. Last year, there were 836 students on the waiting list. This year, there's 932.

Community Day has a 98 percent retention rate. Last year, only three students left the school because their parents moved out of Lawrence.

It's not hard to see why there are waiting lists.

According to MCAS data from the school, more students at Community Day scored at the proficient or advanced levels on the 2006 MCAS test than in the traditional Lawrence public schools. Most grades at Community Day also scored higher than the state average for students who scored at proficient and advanced levels on the MCAS test.

And students who attend Community Day — which includes kindergarten through eighth grade — are more likely to graduate from high school on time. On average, 91 percent of Community Day students graduated on time, compared with 41 percent for students who attended other public schools in Lawrence.

Yudelka Geronimo was trying to get her three children into Community Day — Sujeniry Hernandez, 11, Suleykia Geronimo, 8, and Angel Delgado, 4. All are on the waiting list. She liked the longer school day — which runs from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

"It's better," Geronimo said.



Yudelka Geronimo of Lawrence shows frustration while waiting at Community Day Charter Public School during a lottery to determine the waiting list for children to enter the school. Geronimo has three children, ages 4, 8 and 11, that she wishes to enroll in the school, but with no open spots, her children are placed on a long waiting list. Staff photo

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