



**NEW
SCHOOL
SAN FRANCISCO**

The New School of San Francisco Charter School Wins Fight to Guarantee Enrollment for Students from Low-Income Families

New School becomes only public school in San Francisco to establish a minimum enrollment - 50% - of students who qualify for free or reduced price lunch

San Francisco, CA - For more than three years, The New School of San Francisco - a high-quality charter public school serving nearly 300 K-5 students in San Francisco - sought permission to give an admission preference to students who qualify for Free or Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) only to be repeatedly denied this request by the California Department of Education (CDE). Finally, at a January 2020 hearing of the State Board of Education (SBE), this request was granted, making New School San Francisco the only public school in the city with an explicit preference in its lottery and a minimum number of seats guaranteed for FRPL-qualified students.

The New School of San Francisco was unanimously approved to open by the SBE in 2015 and has earned a reputation as one of the best public education options in San Francisco with each of its California School Dashboard indicators in the blue - highest - category.

Due, in part, to San Francisco's unique public school lottery system, New School's high student retention rate and growing number of applications, the school discovered early on that systemic changes in its lottery process would be necessary to increase the number of FRPL-qualifying students the school served. A year after opening their doors, school leaders asked the CDE for permission to revise its own lottery process to give preference to FRPL-qualifying students and guarantee a minimum of 33% of spots would be reserved for them but was denied three times. The New School of San Francisco made this request for a fourth time as part of its current renewal process and was finally approved.

The New School of San Francisco spends 100% of its recruitment and outreach budget in underserved communities. As a result, it has had considerable demand and support from families who struggle financially. Over 100 students on the school's waiting list are FRPL-qualified and 90% of FRPL-qualified students who are offered a spot at the school accept.

"I spend 100% of my time with families and community organizations in the southeast parts of our city," said Christina Cañaveral, The New School of San Francisco's Director of Community. "The city's public school lottery system can be a daunting process for families and we do everything we can to ensure they have the information they need to identify and apply to attend schools that will serve their children well, including New School. Last year alone, we had over 700 applications from families all over the city. A random selection from that huge number of applications will never give our most underserved families the shot they need to attend our school, resulting in our huge waiting list of FRPL-qualified students. This change in our lottery process will give those families the leg up they need to have equitable access to a high-quality school."

“We started New School San Francisco with the intention of providing a high quality education to a diverse community of students,” said Ryan Chapman, one of the school’s founders. “We are extremely proud of the community we have created and the quality of the education we offer to San Francisco families but have long recognized the fight for educational equity requires more than good intentions and hard work, it requires systemic changes. That is why we fought since 2016 to build an admissions preference for students who qualify for free or reduced price meals into our lottery system. We currently have more than 100 such students - enough to fill four classrooms - on our waiting list. We are happy that we were finally able to get approval for this change going forward and will be able to move at least some of those students off the waiting list and into classrooms next year.”

Also part of the school’s renewal was approval of New School’s plans to add grades 6-8 during its next five-year term. Both the renewal of the K-5 school and the addition of the middle school grades were unanimously approved by the SBE. Sixth grade will begin next year and will have 12 more seats than the current fifth grade classrooms. All sixth grade seats not filled by returning fifth graders will be filled with students who qualify for free or reduced price meals. In addition, a minimum of 50% of incoming kindergarten seats will be reserved for students from low-income families and every open seat in grades 1-5 will be filled with students who are FRPL-qualified until they comprise 50% of the student population. Even after that threshold is met, FRPL-qualified students will still be included in other preferences - for example, sibling preferences - as well as the overall lottery process.

“There was criticism at our SBE hearing, and in subsequent statements by some opposed to our renewal, that the students enrolled at our school do not resemble the overall demographic makeup of students who attend San Francisco public schools,” said Emily Bobel Kilduff, New School’s co-founder. “The hard truth is, there are no public schools in San Francisco whose demographic makeup come meaningfully close to resembling that of the broader system. The reality is that the district’s public school lottery system has long advantaged well-resourced families and systemic change, like the one we sought for more than three years, is absolutely necessary to improve equity of opportunity for San Francisco families. However, we can’t do it alone and we invite other schools to join us in this effort.”

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About The New School of San Francisco

The New School of San Francisco is a tuition-free, public charter school open to all students in San Francisco Unified School District. It currently serves nearly 300 students in K-5 and will be adding middle and high school grades over the next several years. It was unanimously authorized by the California State Board of Education in March 2015 and renewed in January 2020. The New School of San Francisco believes all children benefit from an intentionally diverse learning environment and demonstrates a holistic, 21st century education that instills a love of learning now, and prepares students and families for success in the future. The New School of San Francisco believes each child enters the classroom with a unique set of strengths and needs. To address these, we design Individualized Learning Plans with differentiated goals and strategies, enabling each student to learn at the right pace with the right group to meet the learning objective. To help students become the best version of themselves, they will explore their own identities, practice empathy and learn from others.