

180 NEATT lottery held for next year's new student admissions May 2017

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Andrew Harris, CEO for the Northeast Academy of Aerospace and Advance Technologies, certifies the numbers after Saturday's charter school lottery.

By Jon Hawley Staff Writer

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The Northeast Academy for Aerospace and Advanced Technologies handed out both excitement and disappointment Saturday morning as it held its student lottery for next school year.

The academy held the lottery after receiving nearly 400 student applications to fill about 120 open slots, according to academy CEO Andrew Harris. That led to parents and kids packing the auditorium of the Jenkins Science Center at Elizabeth City State University to see if their number would be drawn. Every student's application was assigned a number, and all numbers were read off. Those not admitted were placed on a waiting list. Harris said the academy has gone deep into its waiting list before as it admits students as capacity allows.

That gave Keith Beale and his son Parker, age 11, some optimism they'd be selected. The Pasquotank County residents are number 36 on the waiting list for seventh grade, Keith said.

Parker said he wanted to enter the academy because he's interested in aviation engineering. His dad said he supported the move because he

felt the academy would offer a more career-based education than his son would get from Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools.

Gaby Sutherland, almost 12 years old, won a spot in seventh grade. She and her mom, Curreta Sutherland, explained they wanted more hands-on learning than they'd get at Elizabeth City Middle School. Though the academy is focused on aerospace and aviation technology, Gaby added she hopes to one day be an actor or a veterinarian.

Carolyn Searle was pleased to report that not only did her son, Ryan, get into the academy, but so too did his friend, Luke Edwards. It's always good to have a friend at a new school, she said.

As to why she wanted Ryan to go to the academy, she said it "seems like a more progressive approach to education" than Ryan would get at River Road Middle School, though she added they've had an okay experience at River Road, where Ryan has been taking academically gifted courses.

As to Ryan's future plans, she said he hopes to go to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, though it could be challenging to attend the prestigious university.

During the lottery, current academy students demonstrated some of the work they do there. Samuel Kleinschuster explained he and several fellow students were showing off robots they assembled from kits.

Inspired by the Mars rover Curiosity, the robots have sensors that allow it to follow a simple track. They'll work up to helping it navigate more challenging courses similar to Mars' rocky terrain, he explained.

Prior to the lottery, Harris provided details on the students who applied and how the school's lottery works.

The lottery is broken down into separate drawings by grade level. Eighty slots were available for seventh grade, he said. Because some students aren't returning and the N.C. State Board of Education approved increased enrollment, he said the academy projects 15 open slots for eighth grade, 15 slots for ninth grade, five slots for 10th grade and five for 11th grade.

In total, 388 students applied before the lottery cutoff date; nine applications also came in after the cutoff date, Harris said.

Of applications submitted before the cutoff date, more than half, 214, were from Pasquotank County, Harris reported. Eighty seven came from Chowan, 35 from Perquimans, 24 from Camden, and 18 from Currituck, with 10 total coming from Gates, Bertie and Washington counties.

Asked for a racial breakdown of applications, Harris said the academy doesn't collect that information.

The lottery's procedures also reflect community feedback, Harris explained. Charter schools do not have to hold local lotteries. They could be selected by computer or by an external agency. However, local

residents expressed misgivings about those approaches, he said. That led to a process Saturday where students' numbers were put on slips of paper and, in front of parents, drawn and presented to a volunteer for certification. Elizabeth City City Councilor Tony Stimatz filled that role on Saturday, announcing numbers as they were handed to him.

If parents wish to contest lottery results, Harris said they should contact him first, and then, if they remain unsatisfied, the academy's board of directors and finally the N.C. State Office of Charter Schools. No parent has ever contested the academy's results, he noted.

For students accepted into the academy, Harris wrote parents have 14 days to accept the enrollment offer and submit documentation. New student orientation, which the academy refers to as "Summer Bridge," will be June 13, 14 and 15, he wrote.

The academy is currently located at ECSU, but plans to relocate students into the former TCOM building near campus and just off Weeksville Road. The academy earlier this year announced plans to buy and renovate the building, with a hope of moving students there midway through next school year.

<http://www.dailyadvance.com/News/2017/05/07/NEATT-lottery-held-for-next-year-s-new-student-admissions.html>