



New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Charter Schools

Guidelines for Access and Equity in New Jersey Charter Schools

Updated August 2015

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Overview

The Department is committed to working with charter schools to ensure that they are serving and meeting the needs of all students, especially the highest need students requiring special education services, students who are English Language Learners, students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch and other underserved or at-risk populations. Charter schools must demonstrate that their recruitment, application, admissions, lottery and enrollment policies and practices are fair and equitable, as required by law. Additionally, charter schools must demonstrate that they comply with state and federal laws relating to special education students and students who are English Language Learners. The [Organizational Performance Framework](#) outlines the clear standards and expectations for charters schools in New Jersey. Specifically, Performance Area 4 highlights the expectations for schools regarding access and equity.

Resources:

- A. New Jersey Charter School Initial Application Form vs. Enrollment Form:** Please note that there is a distinction between a school’s initial application form and its enrollment form(s). The initial application is the form that students/parents complete in order to apply to the school and enter its lottery. The initial application form may only require minimal information as demonstrated in this template:

<http://www.nj.gov/education/chartsch/equity/NJCommonCharterSchoolApplication.pdf>

After students have been accepted, schools distribute enrollment forms to gather additional information/documentation to officially enroll students at the school.

B. New Jersey Charter School Guidance: Application, Admissions, Lottery and Enrollment

Initial Application Form	
<p>Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Application may request only the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Student name, gender, age and/or DOB, grade applying for, current school, current grade, address -Parent/guardian name, relationship to student, contact Information (phone/email) -Sibling(s) name, school, grade -Signature of parent 	<p>Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Application form is only 1 to 2 pages long. • Initial Application includes a non-discrimination clause such as: <i>Charter schools are free, open-enrollment public schools that are required by law to serve all students. Charter schools shall be open to all students on a space available basis and shall not discriminate in their admission policies or practices on the basis of intellectual or athletic ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, special needs, proficiency in the English language, or any other basis that would be illegal if used by a school district.</i>
Initial Application Access	

<p>Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial Application is available to all individuals and organizations Initial Application is provided to the Charter Office on August 1st (through submission of the annual report) 	<p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial Application is available in English and Spanish or other language(s) commonly spoken in the community Initial Application (all languages) can be picked up from the charter school and completed off-site, or with the aid of a school employee if necessary Initial Applications (all languages) can be accessed and downloaded on school's website.
Initial Application Process	
<p>Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application process only involves submitting the initial application form by deadline (no proof of residency, immunizations, interview or school tour required) 	<p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applications are accepted for at least 2 consecutive months Application availability and deadline are announced through 3+ public avenues (e.g. local newspapers, community flyers, bulletins, school website) in all applicable languages Application can be submitted online, mailed to school, or brought to school
Lottery	
<p>Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A charter school first establishes an initial recruitment period and an application deadline. If at the end of this period, the total applicants exceed the spaces available, a lottery is conducted. Enrollment is not on a first-come, first-served basis. A waiting list is valid for one school year only Schools arrange their wait list by lottery results and maintain a current wait list in the main office 	<p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lottery date is announced publicly 2+ months in advance Lottery date is announced through 3+ public avenues (e.g. local newspapers, community flyers, bulletins, school website) in all applicable languages Lottery is held publicly soon after application deadline Lottery is conducted for every space available in any grade during the enrollment period Parents/guardians who have applied are notified of lottery date via email and/or phone 2+ weeks in advance
Enrollment	
<p>Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once a student is enrolled, he or she can continue to attend the charter school without re-applying each year Spots opening during the year are filled based on the current waiting list or on a first-come, first-served basis if no wait list exists 	<p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All students selected in lottery are enrolled contingent upon submission of proof of age, residency, immunization, guardianship, and enrollment in local school district only. Limited additional information may be requested, but not as a condition of enrollment (e.g. picture ID, former school information, academic and special education records) Enrollment packet is available at time of lottery, on website and/or sent to parents/guardians of accepted students directly, either via mail or email Parents/guardians are provided a reasonable amount of time to submit entire enrollment packet