

# How Do Charter School Lotteries Work?

2013  
2014

## WHAT is a charter school admissions lottery?

The demand for seats in charter schools is so great that almost all charter schools must admit students by random lottery. For the 2013-14 school year an estimated 69,000 students applied for about 18,600 open seats in NYC charter schools, creating an estimated citywide waiting list of 50,400 students.

## WHO is eligible to enter the lottery?

Any New York City student can enter a charter school lottery if the school has open seats in the grade level the student will be entering. *Charter schools do not admit students based on test scores, essays, interviews, auditions or other measures of ability.*

The law does require charter schools to give preference to returning students, siblings of enrolled students and students who reside in the local Community School District. Charter schools may also offer preferences to certain at-risk groups, such as English Language Learners or students who are eligible for free or reduced price lunch, if the law allows and the school's authorizer approves. Single-sex charter schools are also allowed.

## HOW does the lottery work?

There are three basic steps to enrollment at a charter school.

**First**, a parent or guardian fills out a short form with the student's name, grade level, and basic contact information. (The school may also ask if the student is eligible for any approved lottery preferences.)

**Second**, the school holds a random drawing, either manually or using a computer program. The lottery procedure must follow the school's approved admissions policy.

**Third**, students who were selected in the lottery may choose to enroll in the school, or decline the offer. Students who were not selected go on a randomly-ordered waiting list.

## WHEN and WHERE are lotteries held?

Each charter school runs its own lottery following its own application deadline, no earlier than April 1. The lottery must be held in an accessible place and open to the public, with an impartial observer present and detailed records kept. Applicants do not need to be present to be selected.

