



# Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

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## Applying to Middle School

Applying to middle school is an important part of every student's education. Choosing the right school can help set students up for success and prepare students for high school and beyond. Families can apply to as many middle school programs as they wish, although 12 is considered a "complete" application. Families can also apply to charter schools, which have their own application processes.

### ***When should families start thinking about middle school?***

Families should begin to think about middle school applications the summer before their child begins their final year of elementary school. This gives families time to research schools and develop a list of middle school programs that their child would like to attend. Applications are due in early December. For a helpful breakdown, check out pages 51-59 of the [NYC Public Schools Admissions Guide](#).

### ***Where can I find out about middle schools?***

Families should create a [MySchools](#) account if they haven't already. MySchools is a personalized online platform where families can learn about schools and submit school applications. MySchools is available for all students in grades 3-K through high school.

Families can do outside research by visiting websites like [InsideSchools](#), which offers detailed information about a school's culture, student population, academic programs, and staff. Families can also [sign up for the DOE's admissions email list](#) to get updates and learn about school fairs or other citywide admissions events.

#### **SCHOOL SEARCH TIP:**

When searching for a school, look at:

- Admission methods & priorities
  - Activities & Sports
  - Safety ratings and reviews
  - Course offerings
- Student academic performance
- The commute! Most students won't qualify for busing after 6th grade.

### ***What is the difference between a school and a program?***

In New York City, when you apply to schools, you're really applying to school programs. Some schools have more than one program, and each program can have its own admission requirements. If you're interested in applying to more than one program at the same school, each program counts as a separate choice on your application. Choosing more than one program at the school may increase your chances of getting into that school.

### ***What do schools look at when considering a student's application?***

Some schools give admissions priority to groups of students that meet certain criteria. Examples may include prioritizing students who are low-income, live or attend school in the zone, district, or borough, or are proficient in a certain language. Students will also get priority at schools if they have an

older sibling who will also go there. Students who are a part of the priority group will be considered first in the application process. Families can learn more about admission priorities in MySchools.

### **ADVOCACY TIP:**

Each program will have a limited number of seats. The higher the demand for a specific program, the harder it will be to get in. Families can learn more about the demand and availability of a specific program using MySchools.

## ***What admissions methods are used in middle school applications?***

Each program will use a specific admission method, which can include random selection or assessments based on different criteria. Common examples include:

- **OPEN ADMISSION:** These schools and programs randomly select students for admission.
- **AUDITION:** Performing or visual arts programs often use this selection method to determine talent in music, dance, drama, art, or design.
- **SCREENED:** These schools admit students based on their grades and may consider other factors, like a school-based test or interview.
- **SCREENED LANGUAGE:** These schools and programs admit students based on native language, English language proficiency, and time in the U.S.
- **ZONED:** These schools prioritize students that live within the school's geographic area. Schools that use this method may still accept students from outside the zone.

## ***What about English Language Learners (ELLs)?***

Students whose native language is not English or who need support learning English can search for dual language/bilingual programs using MySchools. Use the “language criteria” filter to explore schools with specialized ELL programming.

## ***What about students who need special education services?***

Special education students who might attend a District 1-32 school should complete school applications like other students. Students With Disabilities (SWD) may apply to any school and will be considered for SWD seats. For information about how well a certain school serves students with disabilities, families can use [InsideSchools](#) to learn more.

Students in District 75 or nonpublic school settings who may be leaving those settings should speak to their guidance counselor about doing a middle school application. For more information about students with disabilities, see AFC's guide to [Applying to Middle School and High School for Students with IEPs and 504 Plans](#).

## ***What should families do if they are waitlisted?***

A student is automatically waitlisted for any program listed higher on their application than the one where they received an offer. Families also can use MySchools to add a student to additional waitlist programs, check their place on a specific waitlist, and accept and decline waitlist offers. Schools will get in touch directly if a seat opens, and families have one week to respond. Waitlist offers are made based on program availability and admissions priorities. It is very important for families to check MySchools every morning to make sure they don't miss any waitlist offers.

## **What about charter schools?**

Charter schools operate using a separate process that varies depending on the specific school. Most charter school applications are due April 1st, but a charter school may use a different school calendar, so it is important to visit the charter school's website to check.

Although each charter school has its own application, many use the NYC [Charter School Center's Common Application](#). For more information, visit the [Charter School Enrollment](#) page or contact the school directly.

### **TIP:**

Many charter middle schools serve students in grades 5-8, so interested students should apply in 4th grade, not 5th grade, to maximize their chances of getting in.

## **Where should students go if they don't do an application or are new to the city?**

Students who move to New York City in 5<sup>th</sup> grade after applications are due can use the tips described above to develop a list of schools and add themselves to school waitlists in MySchools. Students who move to the city later can enroll in their zoned school, if they have one, or [visit a Family Welcome Center](#) to get a middle school placement. To find out if you have a zoned school, enter your address in the DOE's [Find a School search tool](#).

### **Still have more questions?**

#### **Please call the Jill Chaifetz Education Helpline:**

Monday through Thursday • 10 am to 4 pm • 1-866-427-6033 (toll free)

[www.advocatesforchildren.org](http://www.advocatesforchildren.org)

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