



# Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

## Applying to High School

Students in New York City can apply to any one of the Department of Education's (DOE's) over 400 high schools. Choosing the right school can help students along the path to college or a successful career. Students can select up to 12 high school programs to increase their chances of getting into the school that is the best fit for them.

### ***When should students start thinking about high school?***

Parents should start talking to students about high school in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. High schools look at a student's 7<sup>th</sup> grade grades, so if a student waits until 8<sup>th</sup> grade to think about high school, it may be too late. Students should begin researching schools in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and will get access to their online application in the fall of their 8<sup>th</sup> grade year. Applications are due in early December. First-time 9<sup>th</sup> graders who are unhappy with their high school match can also participate in the process and apply for limited 10<sup>th</sup> grade seats. For a helpful breakdown, check out pages 60-71 of the [NYC Public Schools Admissions Guide](#).

### ***Where can I find out about high 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 researching schools, check their:



**Graduation rates**



**Parent, student, and teacher reviews**



**Student safety ratings**



**Course offerings**  
(vocational, service learning, college prep, or AP courses)



**Afterschool activities**

And always make sure you're comfortable with the commute!

## ***What are the different types of high schools?***

NYC has many traditional comprehensive high schools and smaller high schools centered around a school theme. There are also different types of public high schools like:

- [\*\*Career and Technical Education \(CTE\) Schools\*\*](#) combine traditional high school classes with professional training in a trade.
- [\*\*Consortium Schools, or Performance Based Assessment Tasks \(PBAT\) Schools\*\*](#) are small schools that focus on project-based learning. Students complete PBATs rather than taking Regents exams to graduate.
- [\*\*Early College Schools\*\*](#) combine a high school curriculum with the opportunity to earn college credits for free.
- [\*\*International Schools\*\*](#) are designed for new immigrant students who are learning English. International schools offer language support and help students acclimate to a new culture while recognizing the traditions and cultures of their home countries.
- [\*\*Specialized High Schools\*\*](#) consist of nine academically rigorous, highly selective programs.
- [\*\*Transfer Schools\*\*](#) are designed for students who are over-age for their grade or behind in credits.

## ***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 does the high school application process look like?***

In NYC there are two pathways to a DOE public high school, and students can do both. In the fall of 8th grade, students can complete a regular high school application, and, if they choose, participate in the specialized high school admissions process.

## ***What is the specialized high school admissions process?***

Eight of the specialized high schools require students to take the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test (SHSAT), which is given in the fall. Students register online to take the test through their MySchools account. The other school, LaGuardia High School, is the only specialized high school that does not require the SHSAT. Instead, admission is based on performing arts auditions and a student's academic record.

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

Some schools look at a student's 7<sup>th</sup> grade grades, but schools may also consider other factors like a portfolio or audition, essay, school-administered test, or group interview. Some schools give

admissions priority to groups of students that meet certain criteria. Examples may include prioritizing students who are low-income, live in a particular zone or district, or are proficient in a certain language. 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.

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

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

- **EDUCATIONAL OPTION (Ed. Opt):** This method brings in students from top, middle, and lower academic levels. Students are selected randomly, based on 7<sup>th</sup> grade academics and other criteria the school may use. Students with lower grades should consider Ed. Opt. schools.
- **OPEN ADMISSION:** These schools and programs randomly select students for admission.
- **AUDITION:** Performing or visual arts high schools and 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 their native language, English language proficiency, and time in the U.S.
- **ZONED:** These schools prioritize students that live within the school's district or geographic area. Schools that use this method may still accept students from outside the zone.

## ***What if my child is learning English?***

Students whose native language is not English or who need support learning English can search for dual language/bilingual programs using MySchools. Use the "screened language" or "screened language and academics" filters to explore schools with specialized ELL programming.

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

Special education students who might attend a District I-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. SWD applying to screened high schools may qualify with slightly lower grades than general education students. 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 for high school should speak to their guidance counselor about doing an application. For more information about students with disabilities, see *Applying to Middle School and High School for Students with IEPs and 504 Plans*: [https://advocatesforchildren.org/get\\_help/guides\\_and\\_resources/disability](https://advocatesforchildren.org/get_help/guides_and_resources/disability).

## ***What about charter schools?***

Charter schools are independently run public schools. Most charter school applications are due April 1<sup>st</sup>, but a charter school may use a different school calendar, so it is important to visit the charter school's website to check.

### **TIP:**

To learn more about charter schools, check out [AFC's fact sheet](#)

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.

### ***What should students do if they don't get into any of the schools on their list?***

In March, all students will get an offer letter for a high school, which will include a list of programs where they've been put on a waitlist. Students will receive only one offer unless they get into one of the specialized high schools, in which case they can choose between the two. Students will automatically be waitlisted for any programs ranked higher than the program where they received an offer. Schools will get in touch directly if a seat opens, and families have one week to respond.

### ***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 8<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 [visit a Family Welcome Center](#) to get a high school placement.

Incoming 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> graders who are new to the city may take the [specialized high school exam](#) or audition for LaGuardia HS in August.

#### **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)

*This tip sheet does not constitute legal advice. It attempts to summarize existing policies or laws without stating the opinion of Advocates for Children. If you have a legal problem, please contact an attorney or advocate.*

Copyright © September 2023 by Advocates for Children of New York, Inc.