



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

Applying to Middle School and High School for Students with IEPs and 504 Plans

While all students, with and without special education needs, may apply to any NYC public school, there are some things students with special needs and their families should think about when applying to middle schools and high schools. Below are some pointers to help you through the process.

For more information on both the middle school and high school admissions processes, we urge you to look at the DOE's website at <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enrollment-help/meeting-student-needs/students-with-disabilities> for information about enrollment and students with disabilities.

THE GENERAL PROCESS

Unless students require District 75 placements, all students with disabilities in the NYC public schools should participate in the admissions processes for middle and high school. **Students with IEPs can apply to any and all public middle and high school programs.**

To prepare your choices, attend open houses and fairs and read up on the schools that seem like a good match. Look carefully at the DOE's middle and high school directories, available at <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enroll-grade-by-grade/middle-school> and <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enroll-grade-by-grade/high-school>. You can get hard copies at your district and enrollment offices. Both middle school and high school applications will be due in December and interviews, school-based assessments, and auditions will occur in January and February.

Academics

If your child's IEP or 504 plans requires your child get any testing accommodations, he or she must receive those accommodations for all admissions-related tests and evaluations. Schools should be checking to see if your child needs accommodations on assessments. You can also let the schools know about those accommodations ahead of any assessments to be sure they are in place when your child gets there. Make sure your child also knows what accommodations he or she should receive and request during the assessment.

Charter Schools

If your child is interested in applying to one of NYC's charter schools, know that charters are required to provide special education services and must implement your child's IEP unless the recommended program is changed at an IEP meeting.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER

In making choices for both middle and high school, think carefully about factors that make each school unique and may make some a better fit than others. Many of your questions can be answered by reading school directories and asking questions on school tours. You can reach out to schools' admissions teams and Parent Coordinators for more information. Things we would urge you to consider include:

Accessibility.

Only some of NYC's public schools are fully accessible, meaning a student with physical accessibility needs can enter the building and access everything in the building. Others are partially accessible, meaning that some, but not all relevant programs and services are accessible. Some schools are not accessible at all. You can find information on school accessibility for the schools you are considering at <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enrollment-help/meeting-student-needs/students-with-accessibility-needs>.

- Families may ask for reasonable accommodations at a school that is not fully accessible. They should reach out to accessibility@school.nyc.gov to do so.
- Families can also seek help in applying to and touring accessible schools by reaching out to accessibleadmissions@schools.nyc.gov.

Experience and track record meeting the needs of students with disabilities.

While all District 1-32 schools are required to create special education programs to meet the needs of their students, some schools may have more experience delivering special education services than others. When filling out middle and high school applications, you may want to think about what special education services are currently offered at the school, and how skillfully school staff modify the curriculum to accommodate students with disabilities. Finding this out may be difficult, but we have some suggestions:

- Speak to staff at the schools you're interested in.
- Search a website with school reviews such as www.insideschools.org for feedback from current students and parents.

Extra-curricular activities offered at the school.

Location and travel time.

School accountability data.

This can be found on the DOE's website by going to Find a School at <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/find-a-school>, selecting the school, then selecting "Data and Reports." Information can also be found on a number of independent sites such as www.insideschools.org and www.schoolbook.org.

School philosophy and culture.

School size.

Selection criteria and admissions methods.

Schools are required to have seats available for students whose IEP program is over 60% special class (typically an IEP for an ICT or small class), and these seats may have lower cutoffs for grade and test scores. Schools will look at the 4th grade IEP for middle school and the 7th grade IEP for high school to determine a student's program recommends 60% or more time in special education settings.

SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS

District 75

If your child has an IEP that recommends a specialized District 75 program, you will not need to participate in the middle school or high school admissions process. However, if you or your child is interested in exploring other public school programs, go ahead. Typically, students who need District 75 programs will receive placement offers from the DOE in the spring. If there is a chance your child will be moving from a District 75 program to a community school, we strongly suggest that that your child apply now for middle school and high school programs in District 1-32 schools too.

Other Specialized Programs

If you think your child might be a good fit for one of the DOE's programs that provide targeted supports and services for students with autism spectrum disorders or intellectual disabilities, or if your child needs bilingual special education services, your current IEP team should help you with the process. For more information, visit the DOE's page on Specialized Programs, <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/special-education/school-settings/specialized-programs>, or contact specializedprograms@schools.nyc.gov. As above, if your child is in one of these specialized programs this year, and there is a chance he or she will attend a District 1-32 school program for middle or high school, speak to your guidance counselor now and complete a middle school or high school application. If your child does apply through both processes, your child may get both a specialized program offer and a community high school offer. If that happens, you can decide about what's in his or her best interests then.

Still have more questions?

Call the Jill Chaifetz Education Helpline:

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

www.advocatesforchildren.org

This factsheet does not constitute legal advice. This factsheet attempts to summarize existing policies or laws without stating the opinion of AFC. If you think you have a legal problem, please contact an attorney or advocate.

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