



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

Know Your Options: Alternatives for Middle & High School Students

If you haven't graduated yet, you have the right to stay in school through the June after your 21st birthday. This is called "aging out." If you have an IEP, you will not age out until you turn 22. If you are struggling in school and need a fresh start, there are options, including alternative middle schools, transfer schools, YABCs, and high school equivalency programs.

FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

ReStart Academy

ReStart Academy is an alternative education program with 27 sites across the five boroughs. Different sites offer different supports, including behavioral health or substance abuse treatment, juvenile justice services, and a program for overage 7th and 8th graders located in eight DOE high schools. The middle school program serves students ages 13-17 and offers small classes, counseling services, and targeted academic supports. Each site has its own application process. For more information, visit their website at <https://www.restartacademy.org/>.

Other Options

In addition to ReStart Academy, there are several other schools that serve overage middle school students. Learn more on the [DOE's website](#).

[New Directions Secondary School](#) in the Bronx is for over-age students in grades 6-12. Students must be at least one year over-age to apply, and applications are accepted throughout the year.

[New Visions AIM Charter High School I](#) in Brooklyn and [New Visions AIM Charter High School II](#) in the Bronx are transfer high schools that also accept 16-year-olds in or entering 8th grade. Apply online at <https://aimcharterhighschools.schoolmint.net/welcomeback> or call 646-470-0375 for more information.

FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: TRANSFER SCHOOLS

Transfer schools are small high schools with smaller classes and support services, including counseling. Many have credit recovery programs where students can earn credits faster than in a regular high school. Transfer school students have the same diploma options as students at regular high schools.

To find a transfer school that is a good fit for you, check out the [DOE's Transfer School Guide](#).

Who can attend transfer schools?

Most transfer schools are for students who have been in high school for at least one year and are

behind in credits. Each school has its own admissions policy, and all offer *some* special education services. Contact transfer schools directly to see if they can provide the services in your IEP.

How do I get into a transfer school?

Every school's application process is different, and students may apply to transfer schools throughout the school year. A typical application process has 4 steps:

- STEP 1:** Contact the school(s) directly and ask about its application process.
- STEP 2:** Send the school a copy of your transcript and other records, along with a cover letter or completed application form.
- STEP 3:** If the school feels you may be a good match, they will schedule an interview with you.
- STEP 4:** The school will tell you their decision. If accepted, students usually start at the beginning of the next grading period or semester.

What if I can't get into a transfer school?

Transfer schools are each in charge of their own enrollment, but they do have to follow rules. Transfer schools cannot turn you away because you have a disability or need special education services. Transfer schools are not allowed to ask for your attendance or suspension records. They are also not allowed to make you come for a trial or probationary period before you can officially start.

If you run into any of these problems or are struggling to find a transfer school, call (646) 654-1261 ext. 9, email transferhighschools@schools.nyc.gov, or visit a Referral Center for help. You can find a [list of Referral Centers](#) under the "Speak to Someone" heading on the DOE's website. You can also call AFC's Helpline.

CHARTER TRANSFER SCHOOLS

New York City has a handful of charter schools for students who have left school or fallen behind in their current high school. Many of these schools accept new students even after the school year has started. Most also have small classes, pair students with an advocate counselor, and offer internship programs. Check out the websites below for more information.

- [John V. Lindsay Wildcat Academy](#) (Bronx & Lower Manhattan)
- [New Dawn Charter School](#) (Downtown Brooklyn & Jamaica, Queens)
- [New Visions AIM Charter High School](#) (South Bronx and East New York, Brooklyn)
- [New Ventures Charter School](#) (Staten Island)
- [Urban Dove Team Charter](#) (South Bronx and Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn)

YABCs

Young Adult Borough Centers (YABCs) are evening programs for high school students who are behind in credits. Most YABCs offer classes Monday through Thursday from about 3pm until 7pm. YABC students have the same diploma options as students at regular high schools and receive a diploma from their sending high school, not from the YABC. You can find a [list of YABC sites](#) on the DOE's website,

<https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/other-ways-to-graduate/young-adult-borough-centers> or by visiting <https://schools.nyc.gov> and searching “YABC.”

Who can attend YABCs?

Older students who only want to go to school in the evening can attend a YABC program full-time. To attend a YABC full-time, you must currently be enrolled in a DOE high school and be at least 18 years old by July 1. YABCs cannot turn you away because you have a disability or need special education services. If you have a disability, talk to your guidance counselor or YABC staff to make sure a YABC can provide all the special education services you need.

Students in grades 10-12 who have fallen behind in credits may go to YABC programs part-time at the end of their regular school day. These students attend regular high school during the day and take extra classes at a nearby YABC in the evening. This “dual enrollment” option allows students to earn credits more quickly and catch up to their classmates. Speak with your guidance counselor to learn more and enroll.

How do you get into a YABC?

There are 3 steps to enrolling in a YABC.

- STEP 1:** Set up an appointment with your school’s guidance counselor to get the necessary forms. If you are not currently enrolled in a high school, go to a [Family Welcome Center](#) to get a high school placement first.
- STEP 2:** To enroll at the YABC, ask your guidance counselor to:
- Fill out the necessary forms. Students interested in attending a YABC full-time need Y-1 and Y-2 forms; students applying for dual enrollment will need S-1 and S-2 forms
 - Give you a copy of your transcript
 - Give you a copy of your immunization record
- STEP 3:** Contact YABCs near you to find out if they have space. Bring or send all the documents above to the YABC you want to attend. Most YABCs accept these documents between the hours of 4 and 7 pm, Monday through Thursday. Call the YABC program ahead of time to confirm.

When can I apply to YABCs?

YABCs usually take new students at the beginning of each semester. You may apply to YABCs throughout the school year; however, spots tend to fill up quickly, so register early if possible.

HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY PROGRAMS

High School Equivalency (HSE) programs, also called Pathways to Graduation (P2G), prepare students to take the GED. To earn your HSE diploma, you generally must pass all 4 GED sub-tests (Math, Science, Social Studies, and Reasoning Through Language Arts). You do not need to take or pass all the sections at one time. The GED is a difficult exam and not a ‘quick fix’ for students who are struggling to complete high school.

Who can participate in HSE programs?

Generally, in NYC, you must be 18 or older to participate in HSE programs. In some cases, 17-year-olds can enroll with parent or guardian permission. If you are having trouble keeping up with the work, consider getting tutoring or literacy services from the DOE or a community-based program.

How do I register for a HSE program?

Go to the nearest Referral Center. There, you will take a pre-test and meet with a guidance counselor to match you with the right program. For a list of Referral Centers, visit www.p2g.nyc/enroll.

I passed Regents exams. Can I use those to earn my HSE Diploma?

You can combine passing Regents exam scores, Regents exam exemptions, and TASC sub-tests with passing sub-tests of the GED exam to earn a high school equivalency diploma (HSE). You will still need to pass at least one sub-test of the GED, regardless of the number of Regents exams and TASC sub-tests you have passed. Note, if you passed either the TASC Writing or TASC Reading subtest, but not both, you cannot count the subtest towards a HSE diploma. For more information see this [NYSED FAQ](#) or AFC's [Rocking the GED](#).

NOTE:

If you planned to take or re-take a Regents exam in 2020, 2021, or 2022, you may be eligible for COVID-19 exemptions. These exemptions may also exempt you from some GED subtests.

To learn more, see [AFC's Changes to Graduation Requirements due to COVID-19](#)

VOCATIONAL AND CAREER TRAINING

Learning to Work (LTW) is a program in transfer high schools and YABCs. LTW offers paid internships, job skills training, resume help, job coaching, and more. To participate, you must be enrolled in a YABC or transfer school.

Cooperative Technology High School (Co-op Tech) is a unique Career and Technical Education school with courses in more than 20 trades, such as plumbing, culinary arts, graphic design, and nursing. The main program is in Manhattan, with smaller programs in the other boroughs. Students attend a DOE high school or HSE program for part of the day and go to Co-op Tech to learn a trade for the rest of the day. To apply, you must be 17 or older. For details, visit www.co-optech.org.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

These programs should never turn you away because you have a disability. Students with disabilities in transfer schools, YABCs and P2G programs have the same special education rights as in any other DOE school. This includes the rights to request evaluations, have IEP meetings, and get your IEP supports, including “related services.” For example, if your IEP recommends speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, or counseling, and your transfer school, YABC, or P2G does not have the service, you can get a voucher to receive these services outside of school. The voucher is

called a Related Services Authorization (RSA). For more information, see AFC's [Guide to Special Education](#).

You should not be asked to give up the supports on your IEP or 504 Plan when you enroll in a transfer school, YABC, or P2G program. Because these programs are smaller than most high schools, after you enroll, you may want to request an IEP or 504 meeting to talk about the supports you will need in the new program.

LEARN MORE

For more information about any of these options:

- Talk to your guidance counselor.
- Learn more about other ways to graduate on the [DOE's website](#).
- Go to a Referral Center. Staff can talk to you about transfer schools or YABCs, help you enroll in a High School Equivalency program, or help you get back into a community high school. There is a Referral Center in each borough. Find a list of Referral Centers at www.p2g.nyc/enroll.
- If you can't get through to a Referral Center, call their main number at (646)481-8227 or email referralcenters@schools.nyc.gov.

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 tip sheet does not constitute legal advice. If you have a legal problem, please contact an attorney or advocate.

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