

LABORATORY CHARTER SCHOOL

Enrollment of Students Policy

Resolution #: 0320202413

Revised and Reviewed: March 25, 2026

1. Purpose and Applicability

This Policy governs student admission, application, lottery administration, waitlist management, enrollment confirmation, immediate-enrollment rights, and related enrollment protections at Laboratory Charter School ("LAB Charter"). The Policy is intended to ensure that LAB Charter's enrollment practices are fair, transparent, family-accessible, and aligned with Pennsylvania charter school law, current Pennsylvania Department of Education ("PDE") guidance, current School District of Philadelphia / Charter Schools Office guidance, and current Apply Philly Charter ("APC") procedures.

This Policy applies to the 2025-26 application and lottery cycle for enrollment in the 2026-27 school year. The dates in this Policy reflect the 2026-27 APC cycle currently in effect. If APC or applicable law changes a cycle-specific operational date after adoption of this Policy, LAB Charter may issue consistent administrative guidance, but no such guidance may contradict a Board-adopted deadline in this Policy unless the Policy is formally amended by the Board.

2. Equal Access, Non-Discrimination, and No Barriers to Application

LAB Charter shall not discriminate in admission or enrollment on any unlawful basis, including race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, disability, age, religion, housing status, immigration status, English-language proficiency, or any other characteristic protected by law.

LAB Charter shall not create or maintain barriers that discourage, screen out, burden, or deter eligible applicants from applying. LAB Charter shall not require interviews, admissions tests, auditions except where expressly authorized by law for a school with lawful skills-based entrance criteria, school tours, information sessions, essays, family meetings, prior disciplinary clearance, recommendations, fees, or any other selective or unnecessary pre-application step as a condition of applying or admission.

LAB Charter shall provide the enrollment process in a manner that is accessible to families, including families with limited English proficiency, families with disabilities, families without reliable internet access, families in temporary housing, and families needing translation or interpretation support to understand and complete enrollment.

3. Application Process Through Apply Philly Charter

LAB Charter participates in Apply Philly Charter ("APC") for the unified charter application, lottery, offer, and waitlist process. Families seeking admission to LAB Charter for the 2026-27 school year shall apply through APC and may review APC's family materials, instructions, and next-step information at www.applyphillycharter.org.

Families may submit an application through APC online and may use APC's family resources to review the process, timeline, offers, waitlist information, and family account instructions. LAB Charter may provide in-person application support and access to a device, when available, to help families complete the APC

application, but the school shall not impose any additional application requirement beyond what is permitted by law and APC procedures.

For the 2026-27 cycle, the APC pre-deadline application deadline is January 20, 2026; the APC lottery date is February 4, 2026; APC will release results on February 6, 2026; a family receiving a seat offer on February 6, 2026 must accept that offer through APC no later than February 20, 2026; and post-deadline applications for September 2026 may be submitted beginning February 23, 2026.

Applications submitted by the APC pre-deadline application deadline shall be entered into the lottery. Applications submitted after that date shall be processed in accordance with APC procedures and this Policy and will generally be considered for waitlist placement or later seat offers rather than inclusion in the initial lottery.

4. Lottery Administration

If the number of eligible applicants exceeds the number of available seats in any grade, LAB Charter shall fill available seats through a random lottery administered through APC, subject only to lawful preferences set forth in this Policy and any other preference expressly authorized by Pennsylvania charter school law and LAB Charter's charter.

LAB Charter shall not use academic records, disability status, English-language proficiency, disciplinary history, family participation, or any unlawful screening factor to decide who enters the lottery or who receives a seat offer.

Selection in the lottery, placement on a waitlist, or receipt of a seat offer does not by itself constitute enrollment at LAB Charter. Enrollment is completed only after the family timely accepts the seat offer through APC, when required, and timely submits the required enrollment items directly to LAB Charter.

5. Enrollment Preferences

LAB Charter shall apply only those enrollment preferences permitted by law, stated in the school's charter, and expressly set forth in this Policy.

(a) Sibling Preference. Sibling preference shall apply to applicants who share legal guardianship or custody or who are biological, half-, or step-siblings of a current LAB Charter student, to the extent permitted by law.

(b) Staff Preference. Staff preference shall apply to the children of current LAB Charter employees, to the extent permitted by law.

(c) Philadelphia Residency Preference. Philadelphia residency preference shall be applied only to the extent permitted by Pennsylvania charter school law and any governing local requirement. Nonresident applicants may be considered only in the manner permitted by law.

(d) Displaced Student Preference. If the Board lawfully adopts or continues a preference for students displaced by the abrupt closure of a public charter school, that preference shall be administered only in the manner approved by the Board and consistent with applicable law.

No other preference shall be applied unless expressly authorized by law and incorporated into this Policy through formal Board action.

6. Required Enrollment Items and Allowable Enrollment Materials

Selection in the lottery or receipt of a seat offer from the waitlist does not by itself complete enrollment. To complete enrollment, the parent, guardian, unaccompanied youth, or other person with legal authority to enroll the student must provide or complete the following five required enrollment items:

1. Proof of the student's age. Acceptable examples include a birth certificate, notarized copy of a birth certificate, passport, baptismal certificate, notarized statement of date of birth, or prior school record.
2. Immunization record. The family must provide the student's immunization record, other legally acceptable proof that required immunizations have been administered or are in progress, or legally recognized exemption documentation, consistent with Pennsylvania law.
3. Proof of residency. Acceptable examples include a deed, lease, utility bill, property tax bill, driver's license, vehicle registration, shelter or motel documentation when permitted by law, or other reasonable documentation showing residency. LAB Charter shall apply residency verification flexibly and consistently with law.
4. Parent Registration Statement. The enrolling adult must provide the sworn statement required by Pennsylvania law regarding the student's prior disciplinary history.
5. Home Language Survey. The enrolling adult must complete the Home Language Survey required for first-time enrollment in school. Enrollment shall not be delayed solely to administer the Home Language Survey when the family is otherwise ready to enroll and the survey can be completed as part of intake.

LAB Charter may request additional records for administrative, health, scheduling, educational, or transportation purposes, but no additional item shall be treated as a condition of enrollment unless permitted by law.

LAB Charter shall not require, as a condition of enrollment, a social security number or card, immigration documents, a visa, or any other item prohibited by law.

7. Offer Response Deadlines and Submission of Enrollment Materials

(a) Initial Lottery Offers for the 2026-27 Cycle. Families offered a seat through APC on February 6, 2026 must accept that seat through the family's APC account no later than February 20, 2026. Families should review their email and APC account on February 6, 2026 for results and next-step instructions.

(b) Initial Lottery Offer Enrollment Materials Due Date. A family that accepts an initial lottery offer on or before February 20, 2026 must submit all required enrollment items directly to LAB Charter no later than February 25, 2026, unless Pennsylvania law requires immediate enrollment without those items or prohibits delay for a particular student category.

(c) Methods for Returning Enrollment Materials. Families may return enrollment materials by at least two of the following methods: in person at the school, by email to the school-designated enrollment address, or by another secure method designated by LAB Charter for that cycle. LAB Charter shall communicate the available submission methods clearly in its enrollment instructions.

(d) Waitlist Offer Acceptance. If a seat becomes available after initial lottery results are released, APC and/or LAB Charter shall notify the family using the communication method in use for that cycle. The family must accept the waitlist offer through the family's APC account by the deadline stated in the offer notice and displayed in the APC account. Because APC uses offer-specific deadlines for later waitlist offers, LAB Charter does not publish one universal waitlist acceptance date for all such offers.

(e) Enrollment Materials Following Waitlist Acceptance. A family that accepts a waitlist offer must submit all required enrollment items directly to LAB Charter within three (3) business days after accepting the seat through APC, unless the written seat-offer instructions issued for that student provide a later date consistent with law.

(f) Failure to Timely Accept or Submit Required Enrollment Items. If a family does not timely accept the seat offer through APC, does not submit the required enrollment items by the applicable LAB Charter deadline, or otherwise does not complete the enrollment process within the time permitted by law and this Policy, LAB Charter may treat the seat as declined or forfeited and may offer the seat to the next eligible student, consistent with applicable law and APC procedures.

8. Waitlist Administration

When more students apply than the number of available attendance slots, students not selected for an initial offer shall remain on the waitlist in the order established through APC and any lawful preferences applied through the lottery.

If a seat later becomes available, the next eligible student shall be selected from the waitlist in the order established through APC, subject to any lawful preference that continues to apply. Families shall be notified through APC and, where applicable, by LAB Charter using the communication method in use for that cycle.

A family receiving a waitlist offer while the waitlist remains active must comply with the APC acceptance deadline shown in the offer notice and APC account and must then submit required enrollment items within the timeframe stated in this Policy.

Unless exhausted earlier or superseded by later Board action consistent with law, the waitlist for the 2026-27 school year shall remain active through June 30, 2027.

9. Enrollment Timeline for the 2026-27 Cycle

For the 2026-27 cycle, the family-facing enrollment timeline is as follows:

- January 20, 2026 - APC pre-deadline application deadline
- February 4, 2026 - APC lottery date
- February 6, 2026 - APC results released; initial offers visible in the APC account and by email
- February 20, 2026 - deadline to accept any seat offered on February 6, 2026
- February 23, 2026 - APC post-deadline applications for September 2026 begin
- February 25, 2026 - LAB Charter deadline for submission of required enrollment items for families accepting an initial February 6 offer on or before February 20
- June 30, 2027 - LAB Charter waitlist closes for the 2026-27 school year unless exhausted earlier or changed by later Board action consistent with law

Families accepting later waitlist offers must also comply with the offer-specific APC acceptance deadline shown in the offer notice and APC account and the LAB Charter paperwork deadline stated in this Policy.

10. Immediate Enrollment and Protected Student Categories

Nothing in this Policy shall be interpreted or applied in a manner that delays enrollment when immediate enrollment is required by law.

(a) Home Language Survey. A student's enrollment shall not be delayed solely to administer the Home Language Survey.

(b) Missing Prior Records. LAB Charter shall not delay enrollment pending receipt of education records, disciplinary records, special education records, or other records from the student's previous school when the law requires enrollment to proceed.

(c) Foster Care. Students in foster care shall be enrolled in accordance with applicable law and shall not be denied or delayed enrollment for lack of documents when immediate enrollment is required.

(d) Children Living With a Resident Adult Other Than a Parent. When a child is living with a district resident adult who is supporting the child without personal compensation or gain, LAB Charter shall accept only the documentation permitted by law for enrollment under that arrangement.

(e) Children of Active-Duty Military Personnel. Children of active-duty military personnel shall be enrolled in accordance with the rights and timelines provided by applicable law, including the acceptance of unofficial educational records when legally required and later submission of residency documentation within the period allowed by law.

(f) Address Confidentiality Program. Families enrolling through the Address Confidentiality Program may use the ACP address and shall not be required to disclose additional residence information beyond what is permitted by law.

11. Students With Disabilities and Timely Provision of FAPE

LAB Charter shall not deny, discourage, or delay enrollment because a student has or may have a disability.

For a student with an Individualized Education Program ("IEP") transferring from another local education agency within Pennsylvania or from another state, LAB Charter shall comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504, Chapter 14, and any other applicable law governing transfer students and the timely provision of a free appropriate public education ("FAPE").

Upon enrollment of a student with a disability, LAB Charter shall promptly review available records, coordinate with the prior school or agency as needed, and provide services consistent with applicable transfer-student requirements while any necessary reevaluation, record review, or administrative steps are completed.

12. Student Records and Disciplinary Records

Upon enrollment, LAB Charter shall request the student's education records from the prior school in accordance with applicable law.

If the prior school is a Pennsylvania school district or charter school, records shall be requested and transferred within the timeframe required by law. Failure to receive records from the prior school shall not be used to deny or delay enrollment or school attendance when the student is otherwise entitled to enroll.

LAB Charter may request and receive disciplinary records in accordance with law, but failure to receive a disciplinary record or the contents of that record shall not be used to deny or delay enrollment or attendance, except as otherwise specifically permitted by law.

If a student is serving an expulsion for a weapons offense and applicable law authorizes alternative education during the expulsion period, LAB Charter may act consistently with that law.

13. Data Management, Translation, Interpretation, and Accessibility

Applicant and enrollment data managed through APC or maintained by LAB Charter shall be handled in accordance with applicable student privacy laws, including FERPA and any other applicable state or federal law.

LAB Charter shall use applicant and student information only for lawful school purposes and shall protect the confidentiality of education records consistent with law.

LAB Charter shall provide reasonable language-access support and communicate enrollment requirements, deadlines, and next steps in a manner designed to help families understand and complete enrollment promptly. Where needed, LAB Charter shall provide interpretation, translation, disability-related communication support, or other accessibility assistance consistent with applicable civil-rights requirements.

14. Policy Administration

The Chief Executive Officer, Principal, or designee is authorized to implement this Policy, develop administrative procedures consistent with it, and issue cycle-specific family instructions that do not conflict with this Policy or applicable law.

If APC updates a cycle-specific operational instruction after adoption of this Policy, LAB Charter may issue corresponding administrative guidance so long as that guidance remains consistent with law and does not contradict any fixed Board-adopted deadline contained in this Policy unless the Policy is formally amended.

15. Authority and Construction

This Policy shall be interpreted consistently with applicable Pennsylvania charter school law, PDE enrollment guidance, School District of Philadelphia / Charter Schools Office enrollment guidance, Apply Philly Charter procedures, IDEA, Section 504, McKinney-Vento, and all other applicable state and federal law.

If any provision of this Policy is found inconsistent with a controlling legal requirement, the controlling legal requirement shall govern, and the remainder of the Policy shall remain in effect to the fullest extent permitted by law.

16. McKinney-Vento Act

LAB Charter shall comply with the McKinney-Vento Act, PDE's Education for Homeless Youth guidance, PDE's ECYEH procedures, and all related state and federal requirements applicable to students experiencing homelessness, including unaccompanied youth.

(a) Immediate Enrollment. A student experiencing homelessness shall be immediately enrolled, even if the student lacks records ordinarily requested for enrollment, including proof of residency, school records, birth records, immunization records, or other documentation that is not immediately available. LAB Charter shall not delay attendance while such records are being obtained.

(b) Proof of Residence and Contact Information. Families and youth experiencing homelessness are not required to prove residency as a condition of enrollment. LAB Charter may request contact information or another reliable means of communication, including a telephone number, email address, shelter contact, caseworker contact, liaison contact, or other practical point of contact, but lack of a fixed address shall not be treated as a barrier to enrollment.

(c) Charter School Access for Students Experiencing Homelessness. LAB Charter shall enroll a homeless student as long as other students living in the same area would be eligible to attend the school if space is available. If LAB Charter lawfully operates a program with specific entrance requirements permitted by law, those criteria shall be applied in the same manner to a student experiencing homelessness; however, homelessness itself shall not be treated as a barrier, and enrollment deadlines that would otherwise prevent access shall be waived for students experiencing homelessness.

(d) Waiver of Deadline Barriers. Application, acceptance, residency-document, and paperwork deadlines shall be waived or flexibly administered to the extent required by McKinney-Vento, PDE guidance, and ECYEH procedures so that timing rules do not operate as barriers to enrollment or continued attendance for students experiencing homelessness.

(e) Liaisons and Assistance in Obtaining Records. LAB Charter shall designate and maintain a homeless liaison or otherwise fulfill all liaison duties required of charter schools under McKinney-Vento and PDE guidance. The liaison or designee shall assist families and unaccompanied youth with enrollment, school access, school selection questions, record retrieval, immunization and health-record follow-up, transportation coordination when required by law, and referral to the applicable ECYEH regional office or coordinator.

(f) School Selection, Written Notice, and Dispute Resolution. If a dispute arises regarding homeless status, immediate enrollment, school selection, or any other right under McKinney-Vento, LAB Charter shall provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth with prompt written notice of the school's decision and the right to appeal through the applicable dispute-resolution process. The family or youth shall be referred without delay to the school's homeless liaison and the appropriate ECYEH contact to pursue dispute resolution.

(g) Pendency During Disputes. Pending final resolution of a dispute concerning enrollment or school selection, the student shall be immediately enrolled in the school sought by the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth, to the extent required by applicable law and PDE dispute-resolution procedures, and shall receive services for which the student is eligible while the dispute is pending.

(h) Non-Stigmatization and Confidentiality. LAB Charter shall implement this section in a manner that protects student dignity, avoids stigma, and preserves confidentiality consistent with law.

References

- Pennsylvania Department of Education, Enrollment of Students BEC and Student Enrollment FAQ.
- Pennsylvania Department of Education, Homeless Education / Education for Homeless Youth guidance and dispute-resolution procedures.
- School District of Philadelphia / Charter Schools Office family enrollment guidance.
- Apply Philly Charter 2026-27 family timeline and FAQ.