

Explore Academy

ADMISSIONS AND ENROLLMENT POLICY

I. Introduction

The goal of the admissions policy of Explore Academy (hereinafter “School”) is to attract, enroll and retain at the School the broadest spectrum of students and families representative of the rich diversity existing in Orange County. The School will be nonsectarian in its programs, admissions policies, employment practices and all other operations. The School will not charge tuition and the School will not discriminate in admissions or outreach against any pupil on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability or any other legally protected category.

II. Admission and Requirements for Admission

The School is open to any student in the State of California who meets the admissions requirements described herein. If the number of pupils who wish to attend the School exceeds the school’s capacity, attendance (except for existing pupils of the charter school) shall be determined by a public random drawing, the process for which is described below.

A. Admission Eligibility and Requirements

In order to be eligible for enrollment in the School, students must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- All students must have been fully immunized and present the appropriate health examination record in accordance with the California Health and Safety Code.
- All kindergarten students must be age 5 on or before September 1 of the school year in which he/she seeks enrollment. If a student turns five years of age after September 1 during the school year, that student may be eligible for admission on a case by case basis in the discretion of the Board of Directors, in accordance with the Board’s age-admission policy and in accordance with law. Proof of age may be provided with birth records, statements by the local registrar, or a county recorder certifying the date of birth, baptism certificate duly attested or a passport.
- For those children who do not meet the minimum age for admission into kindergarten, the School offers a voluntary transitional kindergarten (“TK”) program for eligible children. The School’s TK program is the first of a two-year kindergarten program and students shall not attend more than two years of a combination of TK and kindergarten. The School’s TK program will admit children whose fifth birthday falls after December 2 but during that same school year, with the approval of the parent or guardian; provided the governing board of the School determines that the admittance is in the best interests of the child and that the parent or guardian is given information regarding the advantages and disadvantages and any other explanatory information about the effect of this early admittance. The curriculum offered in the TK program shall be age and developmentally appropriate. TK students may be placed in

the same classroom as other kindergarten students, provided that the instruction given is that designed for TK students.

- No student admitted early shall generate average daily attendance until the student has attained his or her fifth birthday, regardless of when the student was admitted during the school year.
- All students must be at least age 6 by September 1 of the school year in which he/she seeks enrollment in first grade, (with some exceptions in accordance with the Board's age-admission policy and in accordance with law), and not exceeding age 19, unless the student was continuously enrolled in public school prior to age 19, the student is being served under the term of an Individualized Education Program, and/or the school or program qualifies for an exemption from the general prohibition on serving students over age 19 and in accordance with the California Education Code.
- No student may concurrently attend a private school that charges the student's family for tuition.
- All students shall be documented as residents of the State of California. Documentation of verification of residency will might include parent or guardian's drivers' license, a copy of a lease, utility bill or similar showing the address of the residence, etc.
- No student will be admitted if he/she has been previously expelled from another educational institution. However, a student that has been otherwise expelled may be admitted to the school in the discretion of the governing board on a case-by-case basis.

In order to ensure that all students will be placed appropriately and benefit fully from the education program, the following pre-admission procedures will be enforced. Failure to comply with any of these procedures will result in denial of admission. An admitted student will be removed from the School if failure to comply with these procedures is discovered after admission has been granted. All eligible students must meet the following requirements:

- Complete applications for admission must be timely submitted to the School no later than the deadline published for that school year.
- The application for admission shall include, but is not limited to, the following:
 - Authorization for the School to request and receive student records from all schools the student has previously attended or is currently attending;
 - Proof of full immunization or exception from the requirement;
 - Proof of health examinations required by the Health and Safety Code;
 - Proof of age with the application for admission through documents such as the following: birth records, statements by the local registrar or a county recorder certifying the date of birth, baptism certificate duly attested, a declaration from the parent/guardian or a passport.

- Proof of residency through documents such as the following: parent or guardian’s drivers’ license, ID card or DMV printout, a copy of a lease, utility bill or similar showing the address of the residence, etc., California tax returns giving California as the home address (within acceptable dates); car registration and/or car insurance; California health insurance or Medi-Cal ID;
 - If any information provided to by the parents/guardians could indicate immigration status, citizenship status or national origin information, the School shall not use the acquired information to discriminate against any students or families or bar children from enrolling in or attending the School. If parents or guardians choose not to provide information that could indicate their children’s immigration status, citizenship status, or national origin information, the School shall not sue such actions as a basis to discriminate against any students or families or bar children from enrolling or attending school;
- Parents/guardians/caregivers should attend a pre-admission Information Open House Meeting or its equivalent.
 - Parents/guardians/caregivers are strongly encouraged to attend a School Tour.
 - Parents/guardians/caregivers and students shall sign and return to the School an acknowledgement of receipt and review of the Student Handbook with the application for admission.

The School shall follow any required procedures for the transfer of a program between SELPAs. Additionally, each application will be reviewed by staff to ensure it is complete before the student will be considered for admission. Each application will include a description of the School’s dispute resolution process. Any student that has been denied admission for failure to meet the School’s Admission Requirements and Process may avail him/herself to this process for reconsideration.

The School’s personnel shall not inquire specifically about a student’s citizenship or immigration status or the citizenship or immigration status of a student’s parents or guardians; nor shall personnel seek or require, to the exclusion of other permissible documentation or information, documentation or information that may indicate a student’s immigration status, such as a green card, voter registration, a passport or citizenship papers. Where any law contemplates submission of national origin related information to satisfy the requirements of a special program, School personnel shall solicit that documentation or information separately from the school enrollment process.

Pursuant to this policy and where permitted by law, the Principal of the School shall enumerate alternative means to establish residency, age or other eligibility criteria for enrollment or programs, and those alternative means shall include among them documentation or information that are available to persons regardless of immigration status, citizenship status or national origin, and that do not reveal information related to citizenship status or immigration status.

If the School solicits the last four digits of an adult household member’s Social Security number to establish eligibility for a federal benefit program, the School shall explain the limited purpose for which the information is collected. It is the School’s policy that a failure to provide this information

will not bar the student from enrolling in or attending the School, and such policy will be explained at the time the School asks for this information.

III. Preferences

In the event that there are more students applying for admission than available space, preferences shall be extended in the following order of priority:

- Siblings of students admitted to or attending the School
- Scholars who reside in Orange County

IV. Enrollment Process and Guidelines

The enrollment process will begin immediately upon obtaining Charter Status. There will be an open enrollment period each year, which will be advertised within the school community so that all interested students may have an equal opportunity to apply for admission. The deadline for accepting applications will be clearly stated.

The process for enrollment proceeds as follows, (not necessarily in the exact order provided):

- The School will determine class size/configuration for the school year;
- The School will solicit from current students their intention to return the following year;
- The school will solicit from parents/guardians of current students their intention to apply for admission for siblings of current students;
- The School will design program informational materials;
- The School will plan one or more Information Open House Meetings (attendance at which is strongly encouraged for admission);
- The School shall implement a very aggressive outreach and recruitment plan to ensure that a broad cross section of the community is aware of the opportunity to attend the School and ensure that the School's racial and ethnic balance among its scholars is reflective of the general population residing within the territorial jurisdiction of the District. The School will actively recruit students throughout the community. Following are examples of the types of outreach activities conducted:
 - Internet - The Academy will have an Academy website that describes the academic program of the Academy and its admissions procedures. In addition to the Academy's website, we include information on social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter.
 - Chamber of Commerce - Academy will contact and attempt to get word out to community members through the membership of the local Chambers of Commerce, and Orange County Chamber of Commerce. We also have requested permission to make a presentation to their leadership training programs.

- Local Newspapers - The Academy will send press releases to the Orange County Register, Orange County Weekly, Orange County Business Journal, and other relevant local news publications.
 - General Public Outreach - The Academy will advertise at the public library and local museums: information booths and participation at community events
 - Big Box Stores - We will request permission to table in front of big box stores such as Walmart, Target, etc.
 - Fireside Chants - Members of the Board of Directors and Academy leadership invite interested neighbors and friends to attend a “fireside chat” about the program.
 - Local Youth Athletic Leagues - We conduct outreach to parents of school-aged children through local athletic leagues.
- The School will host Information Open House Meeting(s) and record attendance;
 - The School will schedule School Tours beginning the second year of the program (attendance at which is strongly encouraged for admission);
 - The School will establish and hold an open enrollment period so that all interested student may have an equal opportunity to apply for admission;
 - The School will determine the number of returning students at each level;
 - The School will determine the number of new students at each level;
 - After the students in the preferred categories are placed, the remaining students will be placed pursuant to a random public drawing;
 - The School will hold a random public drawing, if necessary;
 - The School will notify the families of the applicants who are accepted and rejected;
 - Non-accepted families will be placed on the waitlist in the order in which the students are drawn from the random public drawing. Children who complete the application process after the published deadline will be added to the next lottery pool if a wait list already exists.

A wait list is maintained from year to year. Once on the wait list, a student would remain in that position until he/she is offered a spot in the school or expresses no further interest. During enrollment, volunteers and paid employees return calls and answer questions from prospective families. If families from the wait list are offered a position, they must accept that position within three business days or if they decline or fail to respond within three business days they may be removed from the wait list or placed at the bottom of the wait list of they desire.

Adopted: November 10, 2022

Amended: