

TACONY ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL
POLICY: ADMISSION OF STUDENTS

1. Purpose
 - 1.1 Tacony Academy Charter School adheres to the State law requiring admission to be open by lottery and/or established criteria, including the terms and conditions established by the School District of Philadelphia or its governing entity pertaining to the school's charter, pursuant to the Charter School Law, 24 Pa.C.S.A. Section 17-1701-A, et seq.

2. Delegation of Responsibility
 - 2.1 The Board of Trustees delegates the CEO to create and oversee the admissions and lottery process.

3. Guidelines
 - 3.1 Kindergarten students must be 5 years old on or before September 1st.

 - 3.2 Non-resident Philadelphia students applying to Tacony Academy Charter School may be admitted only if enrollment for a particular grade is not capped following the admission of Philadelphia resident students. The tuition of non-resident students must be paid by the districts in which such students reside.

 - 3.3 Criteria for Admission
 - (a) An application for admission to Tacony Academy Charter School through Apply Philly Charter must be completed by the stated deadline in order to be eligible for admission at <https://applyphillycharter.org>.
 - 3.4 Applicable Apply Philly Charter Deadlines for 2024-2025 School Year
 - (a) Application window: Friday, September 22, 2023 through Monday, January 22, 2024.
 - (b) Common Lottery Date: Wednesday February 7, 2024
 - (c) Common Notification Date: Friday, February 09, 2024
 - (d) Common Acceptance Date: Friday, February 23, 2024

4. Other Reasonable Criteria for Admission
 - 4.1 Authority

Act 22 of 1997 allows charter schools to establish “reasonable criteria” for admissions and to independently develop internal policies and procedures for admission.

4.2 All students who apply to Tacony Academy Charter School must meet the school's reasonable requirements for admission.

5. Application

5.1 The application through Apply Philly Charter requires only the following:

- (a) Student name, address, date of birth and/or age, gender, grade applying for, and current grade;
- (b) Parent or legal guardian name, relationship to student, relationship to Tacony Academy Charter School if applicable, and contact information;
- (c) Sibling name(s), school and grade; and
- (d) Specific admissions criteria questions, if outlined in the school's charter.

5.2 Application Access

- (a) The application for admission to Tacony Academy Charter School through Apply Philly Charter is available to all individuals and organizations.
- (b) The application through Apply Philly Charter is available in English and multiple languages (Albanian, Arabic, Chinese (Simplified), French, Khmer, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese).
- (c) The primary way to access and complete the application is online through the Apply Philly Charter website. However, application (all languages) also can be completed over the phone by calling (800) 891-3999.
 - (e) The Admission Policy for the following school year and deadline will be submitted to the Charter School Office via Epicenter annually.

5.3 Application Process

- (a) The application will be accepted for at least two (2) consecutive months.

- (b) The application process involves submitting the application by the deadline. No interview, school tour or attendance at an information session will be required.
- (c) The application through Apply Philly Charter can be submitted through at least two (2) methods including, at a minimum, completing the application online or over the phone.
- (d) Availability of the application through Apply Philly Charter and the deadline for its submission will be announced through at least three (3) public avenues (e.g. local newspapers, community flyers, bulletins, school websites) in all applicable languages.
- (e) Receipt of the completed application will be given to each parent or guardian who submits one.

6. The Lottery

6.1 Exempted from Lottery

- (a) All students currently enrolled in and attending Tacony Academy Charter School.
- (b) Siblings of students currently enrolled in and attending Tacony Academy Charter School ("Sibling Preference") who have applied for admission, provided that there is space available for their admission. A sibling is defined as a brother or sister, by blood, marriage or adoption, living in the same household. Sibling preference will not apply unless the sibling is a Philadelphia resident, and the currently enrolled student is in a grade lower than 12th grade with successful completion of one full year at Tacony Academy Charter School. Nieces, nephews, cousins or unrelated children, even if living in the same household as the applicant, are not considered to be siblings. The reason why sibling preference applies only to siblings living in the same household, so long as the currently enrolled student is not already a 12th grader who is expected to graduate, is twofold: enrichment of educational experiences of siblings living in the same household by attending the same school, and convenience for parents/guardians of such students to have their children at one school with the same school calendar and schedule. The criteria for sibling preference helps to ensure fairness in the admissions process by not giving

siblings undue advantage, while enabling achievement of reasonable objectives as stated.

- (i) A Sibling Lottery will be held in the event there are more siblings applying than seats available in any particular grade.
- (c) Students of "TACS Essential Staff Member," as adopted by resolution of the Board of Trustees on 8/19/2015. A "TACS Essential Staff Member" is an active participant in the development and operation of the Charter School, as determined by the Board in its sound discretion, and in furtherance of the Board's desire to recruit and retain highly qualified, enthusiastic and committed teaching and support staff, who often go above and beyond their prescribed responsibilities in performing their roles.
- (d) In accordance with TACS' Charter, Students in Grade 8 at General David B. Birney Charter School d/b/a Lindley Academy Charter School at Birney and Memphis Street Academy Charter School have lottery preference for available ninth grade seats at TACS in the next school year, after the admissions of rising eighth graders at TACS (returning students) and any siblings (of current TACS students) who are grade eligible for the ninth grade.
- (e) Non-Philadelphia residents of Pennsylvania, who are placed on a separate waitlist.

6.2 Included in Lottery

- (a) All applicants, other than those identified above in Paragraph 6.1.

6.3 Lottery Process

- (a) If, by the common application deadline stated on the Apply Philly Charter website, the total number of applicants to Tacony Academy Charter School exceeds the spaces available, a lottery will be held for those grades in which seats are available. A waitlist is generated in those grades without open seats. Enrollment is not on a first come, first serve basis.
- (b) The lottery date is subject to change based on the yearly admissions timeline and process, but will be held as soon as practicable after the application deadline.

- (c) The lottery will be held publicly, the date of which will be announced publicly at least two (2) months in advance.
- (d) The lottery date will be announced through at least three (3) public avenues (e.g. local newspapers, community flyers, bulletins and/or school website) in all applicable languages.
- (e) Tacony Academy Charter School will conduct the lottery for each grade to generate a randomized list of applicants. Certain applicants are accorded preference (i.e. siblings or students of essential staff) above the general population of applicants.

6.4 Notification of Applicants

- (a) Parents/guardians who have applied for their student to attend Tacony Academy Charter School will be notified of the lottery date via email and/or phone at least two (2) weeks in advance.
- (b) All applicants selected for admission through the lottery will be notified in writing of their status, via email or U.S. mail in the event that an applicant's family does not provide an email address.
- (c) All applicants who submitted applications and were not selected for admission through the lottery will be notified of their position on the school's waitlist in writing, via email or U.S. mail in the event that an applicant's family does not provide an email address.
- (d) To ensure that Tacony Academy Charter School can contact prospective parents/guardians, it is the responsibility of parents/guardians to update Tacony Academy Charter School with any changes in contact information.

6.5 Student Selection for Vacancies

- (a) Tacony Academy Charter School will arrange its waitlist of applicants from Philadelphia by lottery results and will maintain a current waitlist in the Admissions Office.
- (b) When space becomes available in a grade, the next eligible applicant on the waitlist will be contacted, offered admission and given a one week deadline to respond and/or submit enrollment documentation to confirm their seat for compliance with the enrollment process.

- (c) Any applications received after the lottery date will be placed at the bottom of the waitlist in the order received.
- (d) Once all Philadelphia residents have been seated not to exceed any enrollment cap of such students imposed by the School District of Philadelphia or its governing entity, should a vacancy arise in a particular grade to which Pennsylvania residents living outside of Philadelphia also have applied, then such students will be selected to fill vacancies that may exist above the cap for Philadelphia residents. Only after all attempts have been made to seat Philadelphia students, including second-phase marketing, will Tacony Academy Charter School seat a student from outside Philadelphia for any vacancy beneath the enrollment cap.
- (e) The waitlist is valid for one (1) school year only, and is based on the current year applications.
- (f) Once all registration is complete, any additional vacancies designated by School Administration will be filled from the particular waitlist corresponding to the reason for the vacancy: if the vacancy is occasioned by the departure of a Philadelphia resident, the waitlist of Philadelphia residents will be utilized; if the vacancy exists outside of the cap, then the waitlist of non-Philadelphia residents will be used. If no waitlist exists, the vacancy may be filled on a first come, first served basis. New waiting lists are generated every year. If an applicant is not notified of acceptance, he or she MUST reapply for the next school year.

7. Preferences for Seating Outside the Lottery Process

- 7.1 **First Priority:** After all currently enrolled students are seated, siblings of currently enrolled students are then given preference for available seats. To be given sibling preference, however, not only must the sibling be a Philadelphia resident, but also the currently enrolled student must be in a grade lower than 12th grade with successful completion of at least one full year at Tacony Academy Charter School.

Upon acceptance, in addition to meeting the definition of sibling in subsection 6.1(b), proof of sibling status is required for sibling preference such as, but is not limited to, a birth certificate or baptismal certificate showing the name of a parent of a sibling who is already currently enrolled at Tacony Academy Charter School, together with proof of residency as set forth in subsection 10.1(a)(ii), which must match the address on file for the already-enrolled sibling.

Step-siblings of seated Tacony Academy Charter School students must meet the same requirement and are given preference only if their primary legal residence is with the currently enrolled family. If a student was chosen in the current lottery process and enrolled, that student's sibling/s will be given preference for the following school year if a spot is available and if that student meets the required criteria as listed above. However, currently seated students still have priority over siblings and any new student to occupy a seat in any current grade.

7.2 **Second Priority: Students of "Tacony Academy Charter School Essential Staff Member"** as adopted by resolution of the Board of Trustees on 8/19/2015.

7.3 **Third Priority:** Those students for which Section 6.1(d) herein is applicable.

7.4 **All students**, including siblings and step-siblings, etc. who dis-enroll from Tacony Academy Charter School for any reason cannot request priority seating in subsequent years using sibling or other preference. Any student who dis-enrolls must come back through the regular lottery process. However, a formerly disenrolled student, sibling or step-sibling who meets all of the required admissions criteria for student eligibility may request an application for admission through the regular lottery process.

8. Classroom Caps

8.1 The Board and Administration have full discretion to establish the number of students admitted to each grade and the grades to which they are admitted. However, the Board and the Administration may not exceed the school's cap of Philadelphia residents pursuant to the school's charter, unless otherwise authorized by the School District of Philadelphia or its governing entity in writing. Tacony Academy Charter School also will not request payment for more Philadelphia students or to enroll students in different grades not otherwise specified in the school's charter without approval by resolution of the School District of Philadelphia or its governing entity.

9. Registration

9.1 Following notification to accepted applicants in subsection 6.4(b), a registration notice is issued to their Parents/Guardians containing all information on registration requirements and deadlines. Completion of the requirements for registration and enrollment by an applicant's Parent/Guardian signifies his or her

intent to accept Tacony Academy Charter School's offer of admission, and to have his or her student attend the Charter School.

- 9.2 A student must successfully complete the grade prior to the grade to which he or she had applied. If at anytime during the application, registration and/or enrollment processes, up to and including the start of the school year, the student, for whatever reason, is unable to be officially assigned to the grade to which he or she had applied, but instead requires a different grade (based on official school records), the student's registration in the grade applied for may be affected. Unless there is immediate space available in the student's eligible grade, should official school records show that he or she did not successfully complete the grade prior to the grade to which he or she had applied, the student will be placed on the waitlist for his or her eligible grade.

10. Enrollment of Students Selected for Admission

10.1 Submission of Documents Necessary to Complete Enrollment

- (a) All students selected from the lottery are enrolled upon submission of proof of age, Philadelphia residency, immunizations, Parent Registration Statement (Section 1304-A Sworn Statement) and home language survey. More information about these requirements are as follows:
- (i) Proof of the Student's Age - Acceptable documentation includes any one of the following: birth certificate; baptismal certificate or copy of the record of baptism -- notarized or duly certified and showing the date of birth; notarized statement from the parents or other relative indicating the date of birth; a valid passport; or a prior school record indicating the date of birth.
- (ii) Documents Establishing Residency in Philadelphia - Acceptable documentation includes a copy of one (1) of the following in the name of the parent or guardian:
- Deed of home ownership
 - Current lease to rent
 - Property tax bill or receipt
 - Vehicle registration
 - Driver's license
 - Department of Transportation identification card

- Current utility bill
- Current credit card bill
- IRS statement or other wage and tax statements e.g., W2, 1040, 1099
- Employer pay stub
- Bank statement
- Voter registration card
- Welfare card

Tacony Academy Charter School will rely on the information provided to determine the student's eligibility to enroll at the Charter School. Giving knowingly false, misleading, or inaccurate information is a crime. Tacony Academy Charter School may refer any cases it suspects are knowingly false, misleading, or inaccurate for criminal investigation and prosecution.

- (iii) Immunizations Required by Law - Acceptable documentation includes: student's immunization record, written statement from prior school district or a medical office that the required immunizations have been administered or that a required series is being administered (red card - Pennsylvania Department of Health Medical Certificate and Medical Plan), or verbal assurances from the former school district or a medical office that the required immunizations have been completed, with records to be sent. In order to be exempt from this requirement, a parent/guardian must submit a written statement objecting to one or more vaccines because of religious beliefs or moral or ethical conviction, or the student's physician must have signed a "Statement of Exemption to Immunization Law" form.
- (iv) Parent Registration Statement (Section 1304-A Sworn Statement) - As required by 24 P.S. Section 13-1304-A, during the enrollment process, but prior to admission to a charter school, a parent must provide the school with a sworn statement that his or her student has not been suspended or expelled for an Act 26 offense involving weapons, alcohol, drugs, infliction of injury, or violence on school property.
- (v) Home Language Survey - All students seeking first time enrollment in a school shall be given a Home Language Survey in

accordance with requirements of the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. Enrollment of the student may not be delayed in order to administer the Home Language Survey.

10.2 For students living outside of Philadelphia, submission of the same type of documents above is necessary to complete enrollment -- proof of age, immunizations, parent/guardian registration statement, and home language survey -- but proof of residency shall be that of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

11. Additional Documentation Requested But Not Required for Enrollment

11.1 Tacony Academy Charter School may request, but not require, additional documents during the enrollment process including, but not limited to:

- Picture identification
- Health or physical examination records other than immunization records required for school attendance
- Academic records (report cards or transcripts of grades)
- Standardized test records/achievement scores
- Attendance records
- Special education records (including but not limited to current IEP and most recent evaluation or reevaluation)
- Completed registration form

12. Parent/Guardian Responsibility for Documents for Incoming Students in Order to Complete Enrollment

12.1 Parents/guardians of incoming students must submit all required documentation by the required deadline to Tacony Academy Charter School in order to complete the enrollment process. All enrollment materials, required or requested, can be submitted to the school in the following manner:

- (a) E-mail: mochmanski@ap-schools.org
- (b) Mail:

ATTN: Melissa Ochmanski
1330 Rhawn Street
Philadelphia, PA 19111

- (c) In-Person:

ATTN: Melissa Ochmanski

1330 Rhawn Street
Philadelphia, PA 19111

(d) Fax: 215-742-5200, ATTN: Melissa Ochmanski

- 12.2 Enrollment packets will be checked for completion, including all required signatures and proof(s) of residency.
 - 12.3 Parents/guardians of incoming students will be provided six (6) weeks to submit their enrollment packets.
 - 12.4 Failure to submit documentation required to complete enrollment specified in Section 10 may jeopardize a student's seat, which may be offered to the next student on the waitlist, and the student's application will be moved from the seated list to the bottom of the waitlist. As long as all documents required for enrollment in Section 10 have been submitted, failure to submit other documents that were requested but not required, though included in the enrollment packet, will not affect a student's enrollment.
13. Current Students Automatically Enrolled
 - 13.1 TACS does not require school-wide re-enrollment paperwork for each school year. All students currently enrolled and attending TACS automatically re-enroll for the following school year.
14. Special Student Classifications for Education Entitlement
 - 14.1 Resident Students and Court Orders or Custody Agreements - Tacony Academy Charter School may require a parent/guardian to provide a custody or dependency order when the student is being enrolled at Tacony Academy Charter School pursuant to the parent or guardian's reliance on a court order or custody agreement as the basis for enrollment. Tacony Academy Charter School will not require a custody order or agreement as a condition of enrollment in any circumstances other than the circumstance specified above.
 - 14.2 Students Living with a Resident Adult other than a Parent - When a student is living with an adult other than a parent, who is supporting the student without personal compensation (gratis), the student may attend the public schools of that adult's school district, provided that the resident makes application and supplies the required enrollment information. In addition, before enrolling the applicant as a student, Tacony Academy Charter School requires the resident to file one (1) of the following:

- (a) A sworn and notarized statement from the resident of Philadelphia indicating that the signer is a resident of Philadelphia, that he/she is supporting the student without receiving personal compensation, that the student is living with the resident continuously and not just for the school year, and that the resident will accept all responsibilities relating to the student's schooling, or
- (b) Appropriate legal documentation to show dependency or guardianship, which may include a custody order. Tacony Academy Charter School may require other information to be submitted by the resident to substantiate the sworn statement. The natural parent(s) or former guardian(s) of the student may not be required to provide information. Once the requested information is provided, Tacony Academy Charter School will enroll the student and permit him or her to begin to attend school without delay, but in no case more than five (5) days, provided that space exists pursuant to the school's Admission Policy.

A resident's receipt of payments, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Transitional Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), pre-adoptive or adoptive support, maintenance on public or private health insurance, support from the military or military personnel or other payments for or on account of the student such as student support, will not be considered to be personal compensation or gain.

- 14.3 Foster Students - With respect to admissions, enrollment and provision of education and related services, Tacony Academy Charter School will follow the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act and the Every Student Succeeds Act. Tacony Academy Charter School will work collaboratively with the City of Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS) to promote educational stability for students in foster care, pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding and Educational Stability Protocol and Transportation Plan.
- 14.4 Nonresident Students Living in Facilities or Institutions - A student who is living in a district in which there is located a licensed shelter, group home, maternity home, residence, facility, orphanage or other institution for the care or training of students or adolescents, shall be admitted to that district's schools if living at or assigned to the facility or institution. If the school district or residence of a student living at or assigned to a facility or institution cannot be determined, but the student is determined to be a resident of the Commonwealth, the student shall be permitted to attend the public schools of the district. This includes a student

placed by the student's resident parents or guardians at a facility or institution and subsequently abandoned or deserted.

- 14.5 Emancipated Minors - An emancipated minor is a student under the age of 21 who has established a domicile apart from the continued control and support of parents or guardians or who is living with a spouse. The school district in which such student is living is his or her resident school district and the student may enroll at Tacony Academy Charter School without any additional assistance from an adult.
- 14.6 Homeless Students – Tacony Academy Charter School will ensure that each student of a homeless individual and each homeless youth have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other students and youth. Homeless students may reside in shelters, hotels, motels, cars, tents or be temporarily doubled-up with a resident family because of lack of housing. In the case of homeless students, traditional concepts of "residence" and "domicile" do not apply. Homeless students and homeless youth lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Included within the definition of homeless students and youth are those who are "awaiting foster care placement" and "unaccompanied homeless youth."

Unaccompanied homeless youth may enroll without documents and without the help of an adult. Unaccompanied homeless youth includes any student who is "not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian." Within this definition are students who have run away from home, been thrown out of their home, or been abandoned or separated from their parents or guardians. Youth awaiting foster care placement include those who are placed in emergency, interim or respite foster care; kinship care; evaluation or diagnostic centers or placements for the sole purpose of evaluation. When necessary, School Administration will consult with the respective county students and youth agencies to determine if a student meets the definition of "awaiting foster care placement", including, on a case-by-case basis, whether a student who does not clearly fall into one of these categories is nevertheless a student "awaiting foster care placement."

Homeless youth are entitled to immediate enrollments, if a space exists pursuant to the Admission Policy and their families are not required to prove residency regarding school enrollment. These students are considered residents of the district where they are presently residing, or continue their education in the district of prior attendance.

- 14.7 Pre-Adoptive and Adoptive Students - The Federal Adoption Assistance Program, among other things, provides for adoption assistance payments to encourage the

placement of certain hard-to-place students with adoptive parents. Pennsylvania has adopted companion legislation, known as the Adoption Opportunities Act. Students living with pre-adoptive parents who are receiving adoption assistance subsidies, pre-adoptive foster payments, or other payments such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Transitional Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), are entitled to attend school in the school district in which the pre-adoptive parents reside. Regardless of receipt of any of the above payments, students living in preadoptive situations are considered residents of the school district in which their pre-adoptive parents reside. Students living with adoptive parents are entitled to all free school privileges according to resident school students of the respective school district.

- 14.8 School-Age Students of Military Personnel - When Pennsylvania residents who are military personnel are deployed and their school age students are living with relatives or family friends in a school district for that period of time, the students are entitled to attend school in the school district in which they are residing.

15. Parent/Guardian Involvement and New Parent/Guardian Orientation

- 15.1 New Parent/Guardian Orientation – Tacony Academy Charter School will host an orientation for new parents/guardians of all enrollees.
- 15.2 Parent/Guardian Involvement – Tacony Academy Charter School recognizes the importance of parent/guardian and volunteer involvement in helping to improve the success of students. At the New Parent/Guardian Orientation, Tacony Academy Charter School will outline guidelines for parent/guardian involvement and volunteer responsibilities to Tacony Academy Charter School.

16. Accountability and Transparency

- 16.1 The Charter School's lottery and Admission and Enrollment policies and procedures will be submitted to the Charter School Office via Epicenter.
- 16.2 The Admissions policy and open house information are made available on the school's website and/or at the school's main office.

17. Affirmation of Commitment to Equal Opportunity in Education and Equal Access of All Eligible Applicants to Tacony Academy Charter School

- 17.1 Tacony Academy Charter School affirms its commitment to the principle of equal opportunity in education. No student applying for or enrolling in the Charter School will be denied opportunity for education or be subject to discrimination in any program or activity because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age or disability.
- 17.2 Tacony Academy Charter School thus will not deny enrollment or admission on any basis otherwise illegal for a school district. Accordingly, no student who has been admitted to Tacony Academy Charter School when not otherwise eligible will be allowed to remain on the rolls of the Charter School, in order to ensure equal access of all eligible applicants to Tacony Academy Charter School.
- 17.3 Tacony Academy Charter School will remove from its rolls any student whose residency information given to the school, for the purpose of enrollment, is determined to be false, in accordance with 24 P.S. Section 13-1302. Tacony Academy Charter School also will seek prosecution and remedies as provided by this statute.
- 17.4 Tacony Academy Charter School will remove from its rolls any student for whom, for the purpose of enrollment, false or misleading information has been provided pertaining to suspension or expulsion for an Act 26 violation. Such a student has no entitlement to continued enrollment or reinstatement at his or her prior school district, but may be legally excluded from its rolls. Accordingly, Tacony Academy Charter School also will remove the student from its rolls, consistent with student's legal exclusion from his or her prior school district. Moreover, Tacony Academy Charter School will seek prosecution as provided by 24 P.S. Section 13-1304-A(b) and 18 Pa.C.S.A. Section 4904.

NOTE: Knowing falsification of any legally required information that enabled a student to be successfully admitted through the lottery process and/or other documents required for enrollment including, but not limited to, proof of residency, will void the enrollment. It is the intent of Tacony Academy Charter School to pursue prosecution of person(s) providing such false information to the fullest extent of the law in accordance with the Public School Code, 24 P.S. Section 1302(a), as follows:

- **Immediate removal from school after notice and an opportunity to appeal;**
- **A criminal penalty of a fine of up to \$300 and/or up to 240 hours of community service; and**
- **Any individuals involved in filing the false statement will be liable for tuition during the period of enrollment.**