

Enrollment Policy

Purpose

The Rock Academy is a Tuition-free opportunity public charter school committed to providing equitable access to a high-quality education for all students. This policy establishes procedures and priorities for student enrollment in compliance with the Tennessee Public Charter Schools Act of 2002 (T.C.A. §49-13-101 et seq.), including specific requirements for Opportunity Public Charter Schools under T.C.A. §49-13-113(f). The policy also incorporates guidance from:

- Tennessee Public Charter School Commission (LEA 1006 Enrollment Procedures, 2025)
- Charter Enrollment Lottery Procedures (TDOE)
- TPCSC Pre-Opening Protocol (April 2025)

I. Open Enrollment and Eligibility

- A. Enrollment in The Rock Academy is voluntary and based on parental or guardian choice, consistent with T.C.A. §49-13-113(a).
- B. The school is open to all students residing within the geographic boundaries of the LEA in which it is located, Davidson County (§49-13-113(b)).
- C. If approved by the authorizer, out-of-district students may be admitted only when:
 1. All eligible in-district applicants have been enrolled;
 2. Space remains available; and
 3. Out-of-district enrollment does not exceed 25 percent of total enrollment (§49-13-113(c)).

II. Priority for Opportunity Youth

As an Tuition Free Opportunity Public Charter School, The Rock Academy shall prioritize enrollment for at-risk students, as defined in T.C.A. §49-13-104, meaning students who—because of economic, social, behavioral, or academic factors—are less likely to succeed in a regular educational setting without additional support. ***This includes, but is not limited to:***

- Students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch;
- Students who are homeless or in foster care;
- Students performing below proficiency on state assessments; and
- Students who are chronically absent or truant.

The Rock Academy will enroll students who submit a timely application unless the number of applications exceeds available seats. If applications exceed capacity, a random, transparent lottery will be conducted with enrollment preference for at-risk students (§49-13-113(f)(3)).

III. Eligibility & Special Restrictions

Rock Academy's Mission:

The Rock Academy aims to re-engage disconnected youth, ensuring they succeed in the post-secondary pathway of their choice.

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- A. Enrollment is open to all students including eligible at-risk students residing within the LEA, consistent with §49-13-113(f)(1)(A).
- B. The school may not deny admission based on race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, English-learner status, prior academic performance, or disciplinary record.
- C. Department of Children’s Services (DCS) students:
 1. May **not** be enrolled in a residential program, if one exists (**§49-13-113(f)(1)(B)**).
 2. May continue enrollment if already enrolled before entering DCS custody.

IV. Application Period & Capacity Notification

- A. The school shall hold an open application period of at least 30 calendar days annually starting in January.
- B. The school will publicly post its planned capacity and open-enrollment period at least 14 days before the application window opens (LEA 1006).
- C. The application window will close annually by the end of February.
- D. The lottery will be run annually by the end of March.
- E. By November 30 each year, The Rock Academy must:
 1. Notify the Commission of its upcoming application window and projected available seats;
 2. Submit its application form for Commission review to complete revisions by December 31.
- F. Applications received after the deadline will be placed on a waitlist in order of receipt.

V. Lottery Administration *(See Process Below)*

- A. If applications exceed available seats, a public, random lottery will be held within 30 days of the close of the application window.
- B. The lottery will comply with FERPA (20 U.S.C. § 1232g) — no student names will be publicly disclosed.
- C. The lottery will be certified by an independent accounting firm, law firm, or reviewed and approved by TDOE, per §49-13-113(d)(7).

Children of Employees or Board Members:

Up to 10 percent of total enrollment (or 25 students, whichever is less) may be reserved for children of staff or board members (§49-13-113(d)(6)).

VI. Equity & Accessibility Measures

To ensure equitable access, The Rock Academy shall:

1. Partner with agencies serving economically disadvantaged, foster, and justice-involved youth;

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2. Provide application materials in multiple languages and formats;
3. Offer translation and interpretation at all enrollment events;
4. Provide both in-person and online application options; and
5. Share transportation information with all applicants.

VII. Waitlist Management

Applicants not admitted through the lottery will be placed on a waitlist in the random selection order. The waitlist is valid only for the current school year.

Seats that become available will be offered in the original lottery order.

VIII. Special Populations & Protections

Consistent with LEA 1006:

- **Students with Disabilities:** Enrollment cannot be denied or delayed. IEP records may be requested only after acceptance.
- **Homeless Students:** Must be enrolled immediately, even without documentation (McKinney-Vento).
- **Foster Care Students:** Must be enrolled promptly and provided continuity of education.
- **English Learners:** Must complete a Home Language Survey; services provided accordingly.
- **Military-Connected Students:** Must be identified for reporting but enrollment may not be conditioned on status.

IX. Documentation & Reporting

The Rock Academy shall maintain:

- **Annual lottery certification documents;**
- **Outreach and recruitment records;**
- **Copies of public notices and translations;**
- **Waitlist and enrollment logs; and**
- **Audit and monitoring data required by the Commission.**

All records will be retained for at least five years and be available for review upon request.

X. Continuous Enrollment & Re-Enrollment

Students enrolled the previous year have an automatic right to re-enroll, per §49-13-113(f)(2).

Students transitioning out of DCS custody may re-enroll under the same terms.

XI. Oversight, Amendments & Review

- The Board of Directors will review this policy annually.
- The school will participate in all required compliance audits and enrollment monitoring.

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XII. Commitment to Equity and Mission Alignment

The Rock Academy’s enrollment and lottery process is intentionally designed to maximize access for at-risk students, ensuring that those most in need have a fair opportunity to enroll in a rigorous, supportive, and opportunity-rich learning environment. This process affirms our belief that equity requires intentionality, transparency, and fairness.

Lottery Process Policy

I. Purpose

To ensure all enrollment decisions at *The Rock Academy* are conducted in a fair, transparent, and legally compliant manner, consistent with Tennessee’s Public Charter Schools Act and the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission’s enrollment protocols. The Rock Academy uses a lottery to ensure equitable access and preference for opportunity students, as required under *T.C.A. §49-13-113(f)* and in compliance with *TN Charter Commission Guidance, & LEA-1006 Procedures*.

II. Key Definitions

Term	Definition
At-Risk Student	At-risk students, as defined in T.C.A. §49-13-104, includes, but is not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch; • Students who are homeless or in foster care; • Students performing below proficiency on state assessments; and • Students who are chronically absent or truant.
Eligible Applicant	A student who resides within the LEA (or outside if space allows) and whose parent/guardian submits a complete application during the open enrollment window.
Lottery	A random, transparent selection process used when the number of eligible applicants exceeds available capacity.

III. Timeline Overview

Milestone	Action	Deadline
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1	Announce open enrollment window	≥14 days before opening
2	Open application period	≥30 calendar days
3	Close application period	As posted
4	Verify applications & categorize (at-risk/non-at-risk)	Within 7 days of close
5	Conduct public lottery	Within 30 days of close
6	Notify families of results	Within 5 business days
7	Collect acceptances & update waitlist	Within 10 business days

IV. Lottery Preparation

- **Verify Enrollment Capacity**
 - Confirm available seats by grade level.
 - Deduct automatically re-enrolled returning students.
- **Audit Applications**
 - Remove duplicates or incomplete applications.
 - Verify “at-risk” eligibility only if families voluntarily provided documentation (never required).
- **Assign Student Identification Numbers**
 - Replace student names with randomized numbers to protect privacy (per FERPA).
- **Categorize Applicants**
 - **Group A:** *Returning Students* (not part of lottery)
 - **Group B:** *At-Risk Eligible Students*
 - **Group C:** *All Other Eligible Students*

V. Lottery Preference

Tennessee allows charter schools to implement permissible preferences, such as at-risk status under §49-13-113(f)(3) and §49-13-113(d)(5).

Before conducting a lottery, the following student groups receive enrollment preference and will be admitted prior to conducting the lottery:

1. Students who attended The Rock Academy the previous school year
2. Children of staff or board members (up to 10 percent of total enrollment or 25 students, whichever is less)
3. At-risk students, as defined in Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-13-104

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If an enrollment lottery is conducted, The Rock Academy shall give enrollment preferences in the following order:

- A. Siblings of students already enrolled in the public charter school;
- B. Students residing within the geographic boundaries of the LEA
- C. Students residing outside the geographic boundaries of the LEA

VI. Conducting the Lottery

Step 1. Public Notice

- Announce the date, time, and location of the lottery at least one week in advance.
- Post on website and social media accounts.
- Notify all applicants by email of the upcoming lottery.

Step 2. Setup

- Prepare randomized, numbered applicant lists by category.
- Use either:
 - (a) A certified randomization software (e.g., RandomPicker, Excel RAND function with documentation), or
 - (b) A manual draw system with identical numbered slips.

Step 3. Observers

- Invite an independent auditor (law firm or accounting firm) to oversee and certify the process.
- Allow public viewing (in-person or livestream).

Step 4. Drawing Order

- Conduct the lottery by category, in this order:
 1. Returning students (automatic re-enrollment; not part of lottery)
 2. At-risk applicants (preference)
 3. Sibling preference applied within drawn order
 4. Remaining eligible applicants (if seats remain)

Step 5. Documenting Results

- Record each student's assigned lottery ID, order drawn, and enrollment outcome.
- Generate a signed certification of the lottery results from the independent observer.

VII. Post-Lottery Actions

5. Family Notification

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- a. Send individualized notification (email + letter) within 5 business days.
- b. Include seat offer or waitlist position.
6. **Acceptance Deadline**
 - a. Families must accept within 10 business days.
7. **Waitlist Management**
 - a. When a seat opens, offer it to the next student in the same category/order.
 - b. Maintain logs for all offers and acceptances.
8. **Record Retention**
 - a. Keep documentation for at least 5 years:
 - i. Lottery methodology & preference design
 - ii. Randomization records
 - iii. Independent certification
 - iv. Final rosters and waitlists

VIII. Independent Certification

In compliance with §49-13-113(d)(7): The Rock Academy will provide certification by an independent accounting firm or law firm that the lottery was conducted in accordance with Tennessee law and this policy. Alternatively, the school shall submit its process for pre-approval by the Tennessee Department of Education.

IX. Transparency & Compliance Notes

- **FERPA:** No public release of student names or identifiers.
- **Equal Access:** Applications and notices available in all major community languages.
- **Audit Readiness:** Maintain a complete digital and paper file of every step.

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