

2.1 ADMISSIONS POLICY

Scholars Academy is a tuition-free K-8 public charter school for residents of the state of North Carolina. Any child who meets the admission criteria of Scholars Academy, as articulated below, is qualified for admission. Scholars Academy does not limit admission to students on the basis of disability, race, creed, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, or ancestry.

Admissions Criteria

To qualify for admission to Scholars Academy, a student must be 1) highly intellectually gifted, as objectively determined by Scholars Academy, and 2) qualified under the laws of North Carolina for admission to a public school, which includes satisfaction of the North Carolina residency requirement. See Enrollment & Residency Requirement policy.

Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, Scholars Academy may refuse admission to any student who has been expelled or suspended from a public school under G.S. 115C-390.5 through G.S. 115C-390.11 until the period of expulsion or suspension has expired.

Open Enrollment

Scholars Academy will establish an open enrollment period annually. The enrollment period will be long enough to provide reasonable opportunity to submit applications, and no less than three months. The enrollment period, along with any Open Houses, will be listed on the Scholars Academy website (www.scholarsacademy.org).

Application Process

To determine if a student meets the admissions criteria of Scholars Academy, Scholars Academy will annually establish an application process with strict adherence to deadlines. The application process, along with any applicable admission documents and forms, will be published on Scholars Academy's website at the commencement of Open Enrollment.

Scholars Academy will use a standard application form which may be downloaded from Scholars Academy's website. Applicants may contact Scholars Academy to verify receipt and completion status of their application. An application must have all required components to be considered complete. Scholars Academy will only accept one application per child. Applicants who have qualified in a previous year, but remained on the waiting list are required to complete a re-application form, but not required to complete other components of the application in order to continue to be eligible for admission in a consecutive year.

Scholars Academy relies upon accurate and truthful information on the application forms. If a parent/legal guardian provides false or incorrect information on the application, such as but not limited to providing an incorrect grade level in order to obtain a better chance of enrollment, the application will be considered invalid and the student will be deemed ineligible for admission. If it is found that the cognitive abilities test score submitted is not valid based on evidence presented by the parent/legal guardians, and/or test administrators, the application will be considered invalid and the student will be deemed ineligible for admission.

Application Review Process

A School Based Admissions Team (“Admissions Team”) composed of at least three (3) or five (5) members appointed by the Executive Director will be established on an annual basis to review completed applications to determine if a student is a “Qualified Applicant” as defined below.

In composing the Admissions Team, the Executive Director shall ensure that the Admissions Team has the following competencies: an individual qualified to review evaluation results, an expert in gifted education, and a teacher certified in gifted education. Board approval of the members of the Admissions Team is not required, unless the Executive Director deems that it is necessary to deviate from the composition competencies described above.

The Executive Director will provide the Admissions Team written admission procedures and training on the application review process. The Executive Director shall use the best available practices in identification of gifted children and the mission of Scholars Academy to develop the admissions procedures, which shall be annually reviewed by the Executive Director. The Admissions Team shall consider that the goal of Scholars Academy is to serve highly gifted students, including those who might not be identified if decisions were made strictly on the basis of test scores. Identification will not be based on a single measure. Admissions will be based on multiple indicators of giftedness. Personal nomination forms and teacher questionnaires will be used to elicit relevant behavioral information about the potential applicant and will be used by the School Based Admissions Team in making decisions about applicants whose scores on an acceptable cognitive abilities test lies between two and three standard deviations above the mean.

Applicants whose cognitive abilities test score lies at least three standard deviations above the mean on an acceptable cognitive abilities test are automatically deemed to meet the admissions criteria of Scholars Academy, and are Qualified Applicants.

Applicants whose cognitive abilities test score lies between two and three standard deviations above the mean on an acceptable cognitive abilities test will be deemed a Qualified Applicant, in the sole discretion of the Admissions Team.

For the avoidance of doubt, students with a cognitive abilities test score below two standard deviations above the mean on an acceptable cognitive abilities test are not qualified for admission into Scholars Academy.

A student seeking admission as a kindergartener but who will not be five (5) prior to August 31 of the relevant school year shall only be eligible for admission to the extent they satisfy the guidelines published by the State of North Carolina for early entrance into kindergarten. **See the kindergarten early admission process at the end of the admissions policy.**

An applicant should apply for the next grade level that their child would be in the following school year. All applicants who are enrolled in an accredited kindergarten program during their application year, must apply for the first grade in the application process. At the discretion of the Executive Director, any applicant who is found to have completed at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of an accredited kindergarten program, but applies as a kindergarten applicant may be found to have an invalid application.

While certain Qualified Applicants will be given enrollment priority in accordance with the Enrollment Priorities set forth below, the applications of all applicants will be evaluated without consideration of priority status and all names and other identifying information regarding any student shall be removed from the application file reviewed by the Admissions Team.

Scholars Academy will use reasonable efforts to notify applicants who submitted complete applications whether or not they are Qualified Applicants and are eligible for entry into the lottery (if applicable) at least seven (7) days prior to the lottery.

Admissions procedures, training materials and accurate records of all applications and admissions decisions will be maintained by Scholars Academy for one calendar year from the last day of open enrollment, or such other longer period as required by law.

Enrollment Priorities

Scholars Academy will give enrollment priorities in certain instances as provided by N.C.G.S. §115C-218.45(f) and (g1). Scholars Academy will grant the following enrollment priorities to Qualified Applicants, and will implement them in the manner and order provided below:

1. Children of Scholars Academy's full-time employees. Enrollment priority for the children of full-time employees shall be limited to no more than 15% of Scholars Academy's total enrollment.
2. Siblings (defined to include the following who reside in the same household: half siblings, step siblings, and children residing in a family foster home) of currently enrolled students who were admitted to Scholars Academy in a previous year (such siblings are referred to as "Qualified Siblings").
If the number of Qualified Siblings exceeds the number of open slots within a grade level, a sibling lottery shall be conducted for such grade level(s). Any Qualified Sibling who does not receive an enrollment slot will be placed at the top of the grade-level waiting list, in the order their names were selected in the sibling lottery.
3. Legacy Siblings (defined as siblings of students who completed the highest grade at Scholars Academy and who were enrolled in at least four grade levels at Scholars Academy). Any legacy sibling who does not receive an enrollment slot will be placed at the top of the grade-level waiting list and after any Qualified Siblings if any, in the order their names were selected in the lottery.
4. Economically Disadvantaged Students. An applicant qualifies for this priority if the total annual household income meets the Income Eligibility Guidelines established by the National School Lunch Program. Applicants interested in receiving this priority must indicate their desire at the time of application.
Each year, the Admissions Team will annually determine the free and reduced lunch percentage of current students in order to calculate the number of reserved enrollment slots ("Economically Disadvantaged Priority Slots") available for the Economically Disadvantaged Priority lottery which shall take place after the aforementioned priority slots have been filled or lotteries have taken place. Enrollment slots for this priority shall be limited to 15% of the total student population, subject to the phase-in period described in the paragraph below. If an applicant qualifies for the Economically Disadvantaged Priority lottery but is not chosen, the application will be placed in the general enrollment applicant pool.
During the initial phase-in period, the number of Economically Disadvantaged Priority Slots shall be 40% of the total available enrollment slots until the number of Economically Disadvantaged

Students as a proportion of the total student population reaches 15%. For purposes of illustration, in year 1 if the number of total enrollment slots is 36, then 40% of those slots or 14 slots will be reserved for the Economically Disadvantaged Priority lottery. Once the Economically Disadvantaged Student population reaches 15% of the total student population, then the calculation for Economically Disadvantaged Priority Slots shall be based on 15% of total student population.

If an applicant is selected for enrollment through the Economically Disadvantaged Student priority, the parent or guardian must provide supporting documentation and qualification. Failure to provide supporting documentation will result in the application being returned to the end of the general waiting list.

After the Economically Disadvantaged Priority Slots are offered to applicants, if all the slots are not accepted, Scholars Academy will fill the Economically Disadvantaged Priority Slots from the waitlist by applying the economically disadvantaged priority, in the order applicants qualifying for this priority were selected in the lottery. If the Economically Disadvantaged Priority Slots thereafter remain unfilled, Scholars Academy will release the Economically Disadvantaged Priority Slots and fill the slots from the waitlist.

5. Returning Student (defined as a student who was enrolled at Scholars Academy within the past two years but left for academic study abroad, competitive admission residential program or due to vocational opportunities of the parents).

Subject to the enrollment priorities articulated above, spaces at Scholars Academy will be awarded by public blind lottery, respecting the privacy and family circumstances of all applicants.

Lottery

Should the number of applications for any specific grade level fall below the number of open slots, all Qualified Applicants will be offered enrollment, and Scholars Academy will continue to accept applications on a rolling basis until all slots are filled. Should the number of Qualified Applicants for any specific grade level exceed the number of open slots, per North Carolina law, Scholars Academy will schedule a lottery. All Qualified Applicants be notified of the date, time and location of the lottery and have the right to be present.

Scholars Academy will utilize a random number generator designed to randomly assign the list of Qualified Applicants at each grade level to a selection order. For Qualified Applicants assigned a placement number within the number of openings at the applicable grade level, those Qualified Applicants will be designated as "Admitted." Qualified applicants assigned a placement number outside the number of openings at the applicable grade level will be designated as "Wait List" in the order of such assigned placement numbers (subject to any Enrollment Priorities).

Multiple birth siblings shall be entered into the lottery under a single surname representing the multiple birth siblings provided they are seeking admission to the same grade level. If they apply for admission for different grade levels, they must elect the grade level in which their single surname will be entered, or be entered into the lottery separately. The placement number assigned for that surname in the lottery will be assigned to all of the multiple birth siblings, and if that placement number is admitted, all of the multiple birth siblings with that number shall be admitted.

Other siblings (i.e. not multiple birth siblings) who register for admission in the same year shall not be given the option to elect to be placed in the lottery under a single surname. Instead, each sibling will be submitted in the lottery for its own grade level.

Upon completion of the lottery at each grade level at which a lottery is required, the Wait List order will be determined in accordance with the Enrollment Priorities. Thereafter, a student will be admitted from the Wait List in order of priority, upon an opening becoming available at the applicable grade level.

For the avoidance of doubt, each lottery's resulting Wait List will be used to fill openings that become available during the school year for which the applicant applied. An opening becomes available upon a student's official withdrawal from the school. So, for example, if a student withdraws the day after the end of the 2019-2020 term, that opening will be filled from the Wait List formed during the 2020-2021 lottery.

If any mistake is made by Scholars Academy in registering students and administering the lottery (or if any discrepancy occurs in the lottery process as a result of the actions of Scholars Academy that is not corrected during the lottery), such mistake or discrepancy will not invalidate the lottery and the lottery results will stand with respect to all Qualified Applicants who were registered at the appropriate grade level through the lottery. The mistake or discrepancy will be corrected (after recognition of the mistake) as set forth below. If a mistake is made by a Qualified Applicant resulting in the Qualified Applicant not being placed at the appropriate grade level in the lottery, the Qualified Applicant will not be registered and may submit a corrected registration, which will be subject to the post-deadline registration rule in the prior paragraph.

(a) If too many students were included in the lottery at a grade level or if a student name was duplicated in the lottery at a grade level, the student or students who should not have been included (or the duplicate with the lower priority placement number, as applicable) will be removed, and any Qualified Applicants with placement numbers behind the Qualified Applicant so removed will be advanced in order on the list. Notwithstanding the foregoing, if a student name is duplicated in the lottery and Scholars Academy administration determines that the student was intentionally registered more than one time, this will invalidate the student application and they will not be part of the admissions lottery.

(b) If a Qualified Applicant is left out of the lottery at a grade level by mistake, the number of students who were included in such lottery for such grade level will be determined (the "Number of Qualified Applicants"). For each Qualified Applicant not included by mistake, a random number generator will be used to select a random number between zero and the Number of Qualified Applicants, and the Qualified Applicant will be assigned that number as his placement number. If the student with the corresponding placement number (who was included in the original lottery) is admitted to Scholars Academy, the student excluded from the lottery and assigned that number will also be admitted.

(c) If a student receives a placement number through the lottery at a particular grade level and is offered admittance, and subsequent to the lottery it is determined by Scholars Academy that the student will not be advanced to that grade level (based on Scholars Academy assessment, which may consider the recommendation of his or her prior school), then the student will be assigned a placement number at the appropriate grade level on the same priority. The effective date of such priority shall be the date of the admission offer to the student at the incorrect grade level.

Accurate records of the lottery process and any resulting lottery decisions will be maintained by Scholars Academy for one calendar year from the date of the lottery, or such other longer period as required by law.

Upon conclusion of the lottery, Scholars Academy will notify Qualified Applicants of the results. Notice to Qualified Applicants who are admitted will be made utilizing any contact information provided on the application form, including voicemail message, email or letter.

Scholars Academy Early Entry to Kindergarten Process

The North Carolina General Assembly passed BH-1099, allowing early admission to Kindergarten of a child who has reached his/her fourth birthday by April 16th if the child demonstrates extraordinary academic ability and maturity. The state of North Carolina has created standards for the Executive Director to use in determining if a child is appropriate for early entrance to kindergarten. Once the Executive Director receives the minimum requirements the Executive Director shall confer with the admissions team to consider for each child various standards that will indicate readiness.

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