

A hallway with seven doors, one of which is yellow, set against a patterned wallpaper. The floor is made of dark wood planks. The text "School Choice Overview" is overlaid in the center of the image.

School Choice Overview

Updated 1/18/2023

Parent School Choice Handbook

The Houston Independent School District prides itself on its varied and vast school choice options for students. HISD also remains committed to providing equity and access to high-quality educational programs and instruction. School Choice options include neighborhood schools, Magnet programs, specialty schools such as career academies, early college high schools, and charter schools.

This resource was created to support parents with information about how to apply, different school eligibility criteria, timelines, transportation, and much more.

What to know about this resource

- It is:
 - Information for parents applying in grades K – 12
 - Information about the application process for school year 2024-25
- It is NOT:
 - Information for parents applying for Pre-K

Table of Contents

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- What is changing in school choice this year?
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- How do I know if a student is eligible at an HISD school?
- How do I know if my student will receive transportation?
- How does the process work?

What is the most critical information for parents to know?



High-Level Timeline

School Choice Application and Enrollment Key Dates 2024-2025 Academic Year	
Phase One Application Opens (Apply to Lottery)	1/18/2024
Phase One Application is Due*	2/23/2024
Lottery Notification Date (Student matched to a school)	3/26/2024
Phase Two Application Opens (Students who did not accept a position in the lottery and still want a different school assignment can apply to any school with space available.)	3/26/2024
Phase One School Acceptance Deadline (Students who wish to accept their school match must do so by this date.)	04/09/2023
Phase Two Application Closes	Coming Soon

*The list of NES schools for the SY24-25 will be communicated in February, before the Phase 1 application deadline closes.

Application Steps for Families

Learn about Schools

Explore two resources to learn about schools best aligned to your student's interests:

- **SchoolFinder:** Includes information for each campus in one place
<https://schoolfinder.houstonisd.org>
- **Specialty Program Guide:** Parents can look for the type of programming they want and see a list of schools with that offering on the school choice website.
houstonisd.org/schoolchoice

Build your rank list

- **Rank based on preference.**
You have the same chance to get into a school, regardless of rank order.
- **Rank up to 10 programs.**
If a school has multiple programs, each program counts as an application choice.
- **Don't miss deadline.**
You have the highest chance to get a seat if you participate in the lottery during Phase 1.
- **You can use all 10 options.**
You do NOT increase your chances of getting into one school by applying to fewer schools.

Submit your Application

- **Login/Create a Salesforce account and Apply by 2/23!**
*Parents of current HISD students need their student ID to apply
New to district students need report card and STAAR scores to apply
<https://choosehisd.my.site.com/Apply>*
- **Complete "Next Steps"**
If applying to performing arts, sign up for auditions.
- **View lottery results on 3/26 and accept seat by 4/9!**
Lottery results will be emailed and status of applications will be available in parent portal.

What is changing in school choice this year?



Family feedback has been a priority

11,000

Families provided input from surveys, focus groups and community events.

What we heard

1

Parents value choice. Keep options the same.

2

Lottery is stressful but works. Keep nuts and bolts of system the same.

3

Communication is biggest pain point. Need right info, from right source, at right time. Also want relevant information earlier.

Minimal changes from last year to this year

- **Earlier GT Testing Results:** Parents will receive GT results before lottery closes (2/23) so that they know which programs they are eligible for. *If you are waiting for results, don't finalize your preferences until 2/23.*
- **Earlier Lottery Results:** Parents will receive lottery results on March 26th, vs. last year's April 5th.
- **More Parent Support:** We will be providing more parent support and training, including enrollment hubs.

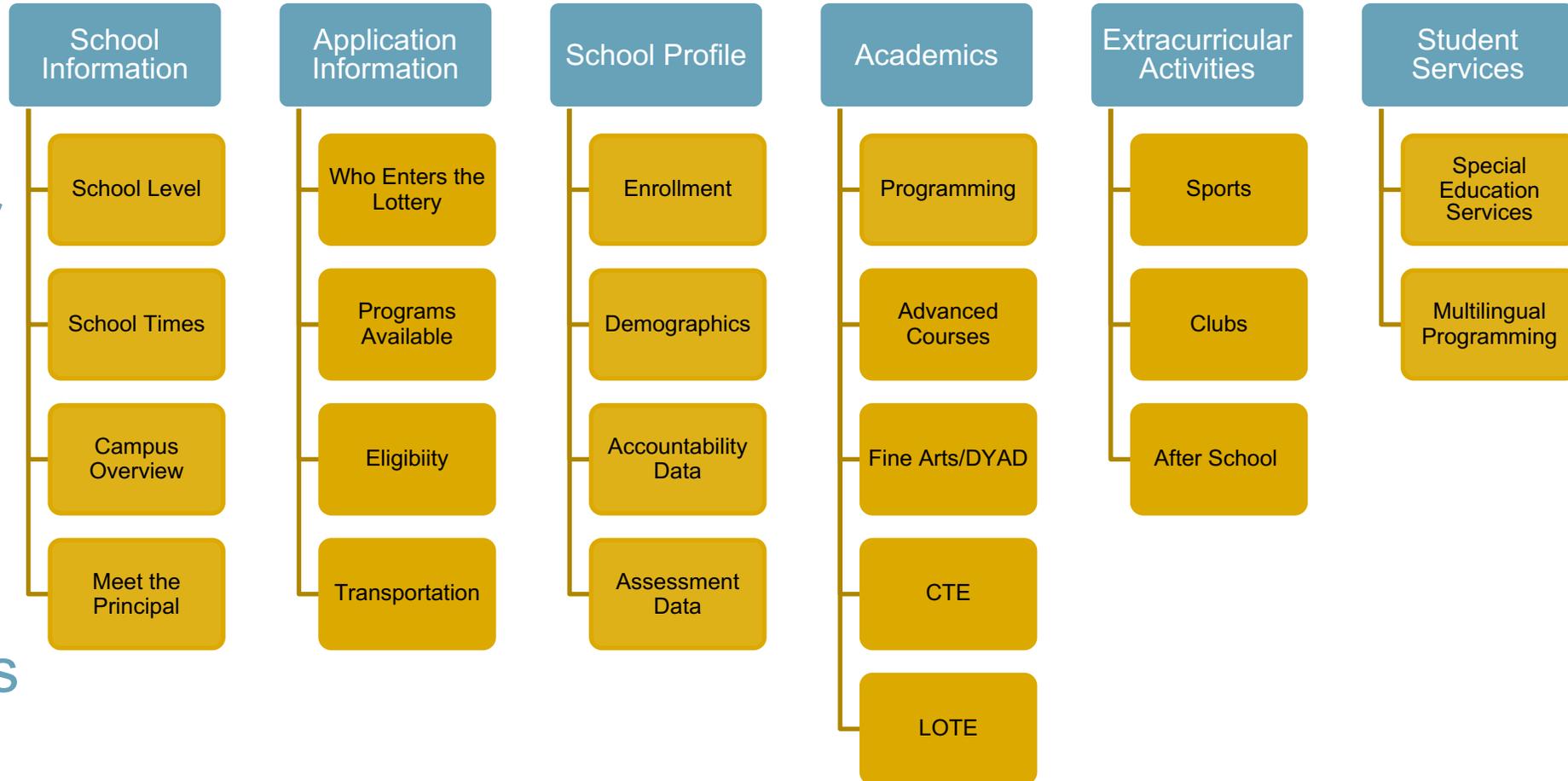
Where do I learn more?



Where do I learn more?

One Page for each Campus

School Finder Website is live. One stop shop for parents to access information about each school. Added new and updated information for this year.



Additional supports on the website!

There are many additional supports for families on the School Choice website:

Updated School Choice Handbook

Updated School Choice Website

Application Enrollment Events for SY24-25

Additional FAQs and resources

houstonisd.org/schoolchoice

How do I know if I my student should apply to the school choice application?



K-12 School Choice Process Enrolled Students

WHO SHOULD APPLY?

Students interested in attending a school that is not their zoned school for the first time should apply.

Exception: Students must apply to their zoned school to access a “school within a school” magnet program for the first time if applicable. All students must apply to Cullen Military Academy.

WHO DOES NOT NEED TO APPLY?

Students who want to attend their zoned school do NOT need to apply unless they are applying for the first time to a magnet within their school. Additionally, students who obtained a spot at their campus in previous years do not need to reapply; they will be automatically enrolled in the next grade.

Exception: Current PreK4 students who are currently attending their non-zoned school, and would like to stay at that non-zoned school for Kindergarten, must apply .

K-12 School Choice Process Enrolled Students

School Information:	Magnet Separate and Unique Schools (M – SUS)	Non-Magnet Separate and Unique Schools (NonM – SUS)	Magnet School Within a School (SWS)	School Wide Program (SWP)	Regular Schools (No magnet AND zoned students)	Referral only
# of Schools	26	17	40	46	134	11
Who must apply?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students must apply • No students zoned to school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students must apply • No students zoned to school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students must apply to magnet courses (incl. zoned kids) • Zoned students do not need to apply for non-magnet courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-zoned students must apply • Zoned students do not apply and can access programming; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-zoned students must apply • Zoned students do not apply and can access programming; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must be referred by an HISD administrator
Magnet school	Yes (school-wide)	No	Yes (some courses)	Yes (school-wide)	No	No

How do I know if my student is eligible for a school?



Most Important Points

- **There are many different types of entry requirements in place at different schools.**
- **Parents should make sure their student qualifies for the programs they are interested in before they apply.**
- **In many situations, HISD will be able to provide this information to parents ahead of time.**

Different Types of Entry Requirements

- **Entry Requirement** – Defined as any criteria a student would need to meet to be eligible to attend a school
- There are many different types of entry requirements in place at different schools.

**Gifted
&
Talented**

**Academic
Matrix Score**

**Language
Test**

**Montessori
Pre-requisite**

Auditions

Different Types of Entry Requirements

Gifted & Talented

Academic Matrix
Score

Language Test

Montessori Pre-
requisite

Auditions

- **Students are tested to determine if they have Gifted and Talented Abilities.**
- **All Vanguard schools require applicants to be qualified as GT to be eligible for the program.**
- **Parents will find out if their student is eligible before the school choice application closes.**

Different Types of Entry Requirements

Gifted & Talented

**Academic Matrix
Score**

Language Test

Montessori Pre-
requisite

Auditions

- **High schools with magnet programming, IB program and CTE programs may also include an entry requirement based on academic achievement.**
- **Students receive points based on their grades, STAAR scores, and GT test scores. If they achieve a minimum number of points required by that program, they are eligible to apply.**

Please contact schoolchoice@houstonisd.org for more information

Different Types of Entry Requirements

Gifted & Talented

Academic Matrix
Score

Language Test

Montessori Pre-
requisite

Auditions

- Depending on the type of Dual Language program, both Emergent Bilingual (EB) and native English students may be eligible to attend.
- Testing requirements for each group:
 - **Current/ Potential EB:** All EB students must have taken an eligibility test when they first enrolled in TX schools.
 - **Native English:** Placement test only required if no prior Dual Language experience.

Please contact Sonya Monreal, the Director of Multilingual for more information. Sonya.Monreal@houstonisd.org

Different Types of Entry Requirements

Gifted & Talented

Academic Matrix
Score

Language Test

Montessori Pre-
requisite

Auditions

- **PK-2 Montessori has no entry criteria.**
- **Grades 3 - 8 students must have prior Montessori experience.** Acceptable documents to confirm are prior year's report card and statement from prior school.

Please contact schoolchoice@houstonisd.org for more information

Different Types of Entry Requirements

Gifted & Talented

Academic Matrix
Score

Language Test

Montessori Pre-
requisite

Auditions

- **All applicants to secondary Fine Arts magnet programs must audition and qualify for the program.**
- Parents sign up for an audition slot in Salesforce when they apply.
- **Exception:** Kinder HSPVA is the only program that coordinates audition times outside of Salesforce. Kinder HSPVA applicants will need to schedule auditions outside of salesforce and contact jklein1@houstonisd.org for more information.

Please contact schoolchoice@houstonisd.org for more information

How do I know if my student gets transportation?



Most Important Point

- **Students may be approved to transfer to different schools, but they cannot always access free transportation.**
- **Parents should make sure they know if transportation is offered before they apply if that will impact their decision.**

Does my student receive transportation?

Most Common Transportation Questions



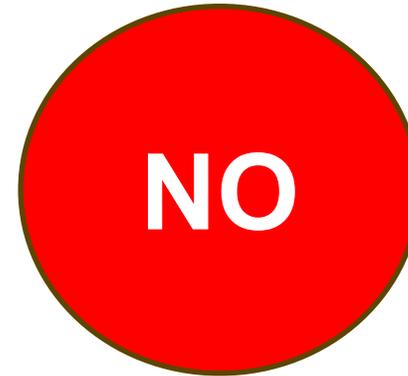
Students attend magnet school.



Students attend a Career & Technical Education Program. (that isn't offered at zoned campus)



Students attend their zoned school. (if more than 2 miles away)



Students attend their zoned school. (if less than 2 miles away)



Students attend a non-magnet school that is not their zoned school.

*Transportation only available to students living more than two miles from campus

Note: Homeless students and special education students receive transportation outside of zone

Does my student receive transportation?

Additional situations

Yes Transportation
(if outside of a 2 mile radius of the school)

- **NEW from last year:** All Boundary Options include transportation
- IB programs

No Transportation

- Grandparent in District
- Space Available (this gets students into the school, but does not get them guaranteed access into programs)
- Dual Language (if not Magnet)
- Hardship

How does the school choice process work?



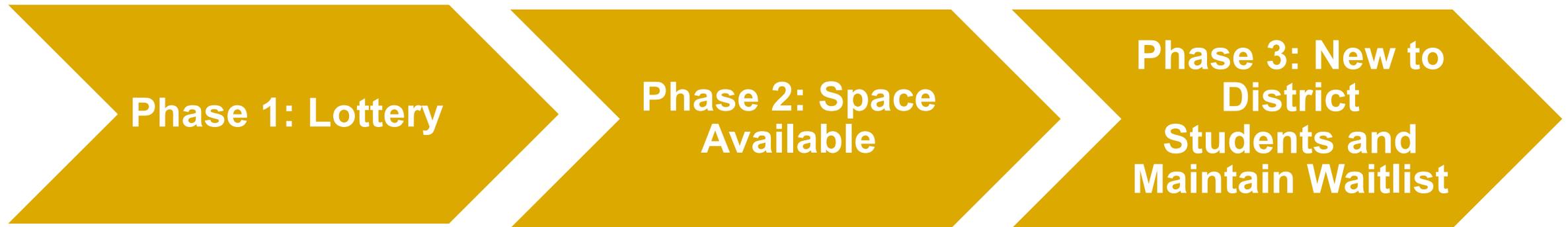
Most Important Point

- **We are sharing a lot of information about how the entire process works so it is okay if you leave with questions!**
- **Until February 23rd application deadline, parents should focus on understanding two main things:**

How to learn about schools

How to rank schools

K-12 School Choice Process Enrolled Students



K-12 School Choice Process Enrolled Students

Phase 1: Lottery

Phase 2: Space Available

Phase 3: New to District Students and Maintain Waitlist

- **Who should apply?**

- Any student that wants to enter a school that is not their zoned school for the first time
- Any student whose zoned school has a “school within a school” magnet program they want to participate in

- **Who does not need to apply?**

- Students who want to stay in their zoned school do not need to apply. (Exception: students applying to “school within a school” magnet)
- Students who obtained a spot at a campus in previous years do not need to reapply given they automatically roll over to the next grade.

K-12 School Choice Process Enrolled Students

Phase 1: Lottery

Phase 2: Space Available

Phase 3: New to District Students and Maintain Waitlist

- **Steps:**

- Parent ranks up to 10 choices in School Choice application.
- HISD runs lottery process to determine what families receive a seat.
- Families are offered ONE seat at a school.
- Families must accept that seat within 14 calendar days to be enrolled.

- **Key Dates:**

- 1/18: Application opens
- 2/23: Application closes (all rankings must be submitted)
- 3/26: Families notified
- 4/9: Deadline for families to accept seats offered on 3/26

Lottery Prioritization Levels

The following chart shows the order seats are filled based on the lottery algorithm.

Priority Level	Student Type
1	Zoned applicants: Applying to Magnet program within zoned school <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Only applicable in schools with an opt-in magnet program at their zoned campus• All zoned students who apply receive a seat first
2	Non-zoned applicants: Sibling Priority <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 25% of available seats at entry grades (K, 6, & 9) are reserved for applicants with siblings attending school in upcoming year• Any siblings who do not get a seat an available seat are moved to level 2 and have another chance; if they still do not get a seat, they are placed at top of waitlist.
3	Non-zoned applicants: Entering Kinder only <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seats offered to non-zoned students currently enrolled in the school in Pre-K
4	Non-zoned applicants: Remainder of HISD Students <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes all in-district students, children of HISD staff, any siblings who do not get a seat in priority 1 level
5	Non-zoned applicants: Out of district students currently attending HISD
6	Non-zoned applicants: Out of district students NOT currently attending HISD

K-12 School Choice Process Enrolled Students

Phase 1: Lottery

Phase 2: Space Available

Phase 3: New to District Students and Maintain Waitlist

Application Strategy

- **You have the same chance to get into a school, regardless of the order it is ranked.** Parents should truly rank in order of preference.
- You must apply in phase I for the highest chance at all schools
- You do NOT increase your chances at a school by applying to fewer schools. Using all 10 options does not hurt your chances.

K-12 School Choice Process Enrolled Students

Phase 1: Lottery

Phase 2: Space Available

Phase 3: New to District Students and Maintain Waitlist

Accepting a Seat

- **This is a three-step process. After Phase I notification, parents have 14 calendar days to complete all three steps.**
 - Upload proof of residence
 - Sign entrance agreement
 - Click accept seat.
- You only can hold one seat a time. If you go in and accept, you give up the seat at your current school

K-12 School Choice Process Enrolled Students

Phase 1: Lottery

Phase 2: Space Available

Phase 3: New to District Students and Maintain Waitlist

How does the waitlist work?

Students are automatically added to waitlist of schools ranked higher than schools in which they were offered a seat and remain there until:

- **Seat Opens** - Parents will have five calendar days to accept before that spot is offered to the next student on the waitlist.
- **Family Removes Themselves**
- **Phase III ends** (and all waitlists are closed)

K-12 School Choice Process Enrolled Students

Phase 1: Lottery

Phase 2: Space Available

Phase 3: New to District Students and Maintain Waitlist

How does the waitlist work?

- If a seat opens, the system will only allow that school to offer a spot to the top candidate on the waitlist.
- Families can see where they are on the waitlist, but they only move up on the waitlist when seats opens at schools. At times, a family can also move down on waitlist due to sibling priority rules.
- Sometimes waitlists move fast and sometimes they don't move at all.

K-12 School Choice Process Enrolled Students

Phase 1: Lottery

Phase 2: Space Available

Phase 3: New to District Students and Maintain Waitlist

How does the waitlist work? Let's look at example of a family that ranks five choices

School 1
(Waitlisted)

School 2
(Waitlisted)

School 3
(Offered Placement)

School 4
(Assigned Higher Ranked School)

School 5
(Assigned Higher Ranked School)

Parent **automatically added to waitlist** of schools ranked higher than school in which they were offered seat

Parent awarded seat in lottery at their 3rd choice school

Parents not added to waitlist given they received spot at a higher ranked school.

K-12 School Choice Process Enrolled Students

Phase 1: Lottery

Phase 2: Space Available

Phase 3: New to District Students and Maintain Waitlist

**Phase 2:
Space Available**

K-12 School Choice Process Enrolled Students

Phase 1: Lottery

Phase 2: Space Available

Phase 3: New to District Students and Maintain Waitlist

- **Who:** All students may participate in Phase 2, regardless of if they accepted a seat in phase 1. Students will remain on the waitlist at all schools they applied to in Phase 1 for which they were eligible.
- **Steps:**
 - Parent apply directly to any school in School Choice application
 - If space is available, they can be immediately enrolled
 - If space is not available, they are added to the end of the waitlist established in Phase I
 - Once this phase ends, HISD parents may **no longer apply to any schools**

K-12 School Choice Process Enrolled Students

Phase 1: Lottery

Phase 2: Space Available

Phase 3: New to District Students and Maintain Waitlist

- **Key Dates:**

- **Phase 2 Start Date:** 3/26: Phase 2 Opens the day families are notified of the lottery results at the end of Phase I
- **Phase 2 End Date:**
 - [For HISD students]: June '24, specific date to be announced in Spring
 - [For New to district students]: Phase 2 remains open as new students by law must have a way to enroll at HISD

K-12 School Choice Process Enrolled Students

Phase 1: Lottery

Phase 2: Space Available

Phase 3: New to District Students and Maintain Waitlist

How does the waitlist work in Phase II?

- The waitlists at the start of Phase 2 are generated with students who didn't receive a seat at their top choices during Phase 1 (e.g., any school they applied to with a rank higher than their ultimate Phase 1 result)
- Students should never remove themselves from a waitlist to apply to that same school in Phase II. This will cause them to lose their spot on the waitlist and move to the end of the line once they reapply.
- Regardless of number of transfers, students may always enroll back to their zoned school at anytime.

K-12 School Choice Process Enrolled Students

Phase 1: Lottery

Phase 2: Space Available

Phase 3: New to District Students and Maintain Waitlist

Phase 3:

New to District Students and Maintain Waitlist

K-12 School Choice Process Enrolled Students

Phase 1: Lottery

Phase 2: Space Available

Phase 3: New to District Students and Maintain Waitlist

- **Who:** HISD students on a waitlist OR new-to-HISD students
- **Steps:**
 - Schools continue to fill seats with students from waitlist if space becomes available.
- **Key Dates:**
 - **Phase Starts:** Immediately after Phase II closes. Date to be announced in Spring.
 - **Phase Ends:** Date to be announced in Spring after SY24-25 academic calendar is approved. Waitlists are retired for SY24-25.

How to use Salesforce platform to apply?



Salesforce process

<https://choosehisd.my.site.com/Apply>

1. Create an account
2. Update family profile for all students
3. Select and rank schools
4. Submit

Please see additional video on School Finder website for more info.

Thank you!

