

Board Policy #:
Adopted/Ratified: January 19, 2021
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Admissions & Enrollment Policy

The Cottonwood School (the “Charter School”) is committed to providing quality education to all students who wish to attend in accordance with applicable law. Based on available resources, it may be necessary to limit admissions, and in that event, a Public Random Drawing/Lottery will be held to determine admission.

The School will implement this policy in compliance with Education Code section 220. In addition, enrollment preferences will not limit enrollment access for pupils with disabilities, academically low-achieving pupils, English learners, neglected or delinquent pupils, homeless pupils, or pupils who are economically disadvantaged, as determined by eligibility for any free or reduced-price meal program, foster youth, or pupils based on nationality, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.

The purpose of The Cottonwood School Governing Board approving the Admissions and Enrollment Policy is to accomplish the following:

1. Establish the procedures for admissions and enrollment in The Cottonwood School (the “Charter School”) in accordance with School’s charter petition and applicable law.
2. Establish the procedures under which The Cottonwood School (the “Charter School”) will conduct the School’s public random drawing/lottery in the event that applications for enrollment exceed the School’s capacity.

Application and Enrollment: The School is a non-classroom-based charter school that operates solely as an independent study program. Admission to the School is open to any student who resides within the boundaries of El Dorado County or an adjacent county. The School will accept all students who wish to attend, so long as it has the capacity to serve them in accordance with Education Code section 47605(e).

1. **Determining Capacity:** The School’s Board or Executive Director will annually determine the maximum enrollment by “grade level” (by specific grade level or encompassing all grade levels served) for each school year based on, among other factors, the annual budget, staffing, applicable legal requirements, and available resources prior to the start of the Open Enrollment Period. The Executive Director may update the School’s capacity throughout the year as needed to meet the needs of the School.
2. **Open Enrollment Period and Application Deadline:** The Board or Executive Director will set an Open Enrollment Period each year. Applications will be accepted during the publicly advertised Open Enrollment Period each year for enrollment for the following school year.

Current Families Required to Confirm Intent to Return: Families with currently enrolled students must submit a form/application to confirm their intent to return to the school next year and/or continue with their current teacher by the end of the Open Enrollment Period to remain enrolled in the School for the following school year. If an enrolled student fails to provide this

form/application, they will not have guaranteed admission for the following school year as a currently enrolled student. This means the student loses their spot and will have to submit another application if they are interested in enrolling in the School for the following school year.

3. Determine if Lottery is Needed: Following the close of the Open Enrollment Period, applications shall be counted to determine whether the School has received more applications than enrollment capacity.
 - If there are more spots available than applicants, the School will not conduct a lottery. The School will enroll all applicants and inform them they are enrolled.
 - If the number of pupils who wish to attend the School exceeds the School's capacity, enrollment in the impacted grade level (or all grade levels) will be determined by a Lottery conducted in accordance with the procedures set forth in this Policy and applicable law. Admission preferences will only be extended consistent with this Policy, the School's charter, and applicable law.

Lottery Procedures: If a Lottery is necessary, the School will conduct a Lottery during the spring semester before the academic year for which enrollment is sought following these procedures:

1. Enrolling Current Students: The following students are exempt from the Lottery and are guaranteed enrollment in the School: (1) students currently enrolled in the School at the close of the Open Enrollment period; and (2) students residing within Buckeye Union School District ("District").

Admission preferences in the case of a public random drawing shall be given to students in the following order:

1. Siblings of students admitted to or attending the School ²;
2. Students who are the children of teachers and staff of the School

2. Notice about Lottery

Public notice of the Open Enrollment Period and public random drawing rules, deadlines, dates, and times will be communicated in the enrollment applications and on the School's website.

Public notice for the date and time of the public random drawing will also be posted once the application deadline has passed. The School will inform parents/guardians of all applicants and all interested parties of the rules to be followed during the public random drawing process via mail or email at least two weeks prior to the lottery date. The School will provide sufficient notice to applicants if the School finds it necessary to change the Lottery date.

3. Lottery Preferences

²"Sibling" is defined as an applicant (1) who has at least one biological or adoptive parent in common with an admitted pupil; or (2) who has been legally adopted by or placed under the legal guardianship of at least one biological or adoptive parent of an admitted pupil. Step-siblings are only considered siblings if they reside at the same address as the admitted pupil.

There is no weighted priority assigned to most preference categories; rather, students will be drawn from pools beginning with all applicants who qualify for the first preference category and shall continue with that preference category until all vacancies have been filled. If there are more students in a preference category than there are spaces available, a random drawing will be held from within that preference category until all available spaces are filled. If all students from the preference category have been selected and there are remaining spaces available, students from the second preference category will be drawn in the lottery, and the drawing shall continue until all spaces are filled, and preference categories are exhausted in the order provided above.

4. Lottery Procedures

Randomly Drawing Applicants: Admission spaces are pulled by the designated lottery official (appointed by the Executive Director). Unique identifiers will be assigned to each applicant. The conduct of the Lottery will be open to the public, and families are encouraged, but not required, to attend.

Creation of Lottery Waitlist: Once the enrollment cap has been reached, all students who were not granted admission due to capacity shall be given the option to put their name on a waitlist according to their draw in the lottery. This waitlist will allow students the option of enrollment in the case of an opening during the current school year. In no circumstance will a waitlist carry over to the following school year.

Supporting Siblings: The Board recognizes that schools that serve families are more effective because of the enhanced ability for parents and children to align around a single, unified set of learning and behavioral objectives. If multiple children from the same family apply, the family will be assigned one number total to ensure equity with other applicants. If the family number is pulled, all siblings will be admitted in furtherance of the School's mission to effectively serve families.

5. Notifying Applicants After Lottery

The School will notify applicants who were successfully drawn from the Lottery to offer admission.

Following the Lottery, students who are offered admission at the School at the time of the Lottery will have 10 calendar days, or another deadline as may be set by the Executive Director, to complete the registration process. If the Executive Director establishes a different deadline, this deadline will be communicated to families when admission is offered after the Lottery. If a student fails to timely complete the registration process, the spot will be filled from the waitlists, and student will be presumed to no longer have interest in enrolling with the School.

If a student is extended an offer of admission due to one of the preferences noted in this Policy and the School's charter, the School may request supporting documentation as part of the enrollment process. The School will conduct a verification of such documentation before finalizing the student's enrollment and may disqualify an applicant who submitted materially false information.

After the Lottery process, and once an offer has been accepted by the family, additional information may be requested as part of the registration process in accordance with applicable law. School shall not request a pupil's academic records or require the family to submit the pupil's academic records before enrollment in accordance with Education Code section 47605(e).

Enrollment offers are valid only for the academic year for which the Lottery is conducted. There is no option to defer an offer of enrollment. Students accepting enrollment must generally

complete required independent study agreements within seven (7) days of the beginning of the school year unless otherwise advised by the School.

Waitlist Management: If a spot becomes available because an accepted student declines enrollment or fails to timely complete the enrollment process, a student leaves the School after the start of the academic year, or as spots become available, the School may notify families on the waitlist in the order they appear on the waitlist.

Students drawn from a waitlist will have 10 calendar days, or another deadline as may be set by the Executive Director, to complete the registration process. Applicants must complete the registration process by the deadline given by the School to confirm enrollment. If a student is offered a spot in writing twice and does not respond or does not complete the application in full, the student shall be removed from the waitlist.

Students who are not offered a spot for the academic school year for which the Lottery was held may remain on the waitlist for that academic year unless the parent or guardian requests that the student be removed from the waitlist earlier.

If there is no waitlist and there is capacity during the school year, the School shall admit applicants in accordance with the School's charter petition and applicable law. If School did not conduct a Lottery because spots were available but gets oversubscribed during the school year, School should create a waitlist and add students to the waitlist on a first-come, first-served basis.

School waitlists shall not carry over from one year to the next. Students who have not been admitted will be required to submit a new enrollment application for the next school year and are required to participate in the Lottery if space is limited.

High School Academic Pathways

The School operates two academic pathways in grades 9-12:

- Homestudy Pathway
- High School Site-Based Pathway

High school applicants will be provided information about both pathways and will be asked to select a pathway in which to apply or can apply to both pathways. Admission into a pathway is subject to capacity, and for purposes of this policy and incoming new students, the lottery procedures for each pathway will be done separately according to the procedures described above. Existing Cottonwood students seeking to change academic pathways will be given priority for admission into the pathway pursuant to the Cottonwood Board Policy, "Policy for Changing High School Academic Pathways."

For those students who have selected both pathways in their enrollment application, when offered a pathway or pathways, students will be given a deadline by which to confirm their registration or forfeit the offered admission in order to open up a space in the pathway not selected for other applicants.

For currently enrolled students wishing to change High School Academic Pathways, please review our Policy for Changing High School Pathways.

This Policy serves as a technical amendment to Element 8 of the School's charter petition, effective for the 2022-23 school year.