

# **Georgia Fugees Academy Charter School, Inc.**

## **Student Enrollment and Lottery Policy**

As public schools, charter schools comply with state and federal regulations, and their admissions are open to students in accordance with the school's charter agreement. The procedures below outline the enrollment process at GFACS.

### **Attendance Zone**

1. GFACS will maintain a state-wide attendance zone for the school.
2. A state-wide attendance zone is intended to meet the needs of interested families, for whom the school's program and focus is a good fit, regardless of where they are settled.
3. The school seeks to provide a means of consistent support regardless of where families reside or has to move.
4. A state-wide attendance zone ensures these students will not be denied entry to the school if they move or are placed in communities that are not immediately adjacent to the school's proposed location within DCSD.
5. GFACS does not intend to provide transportation in its first five years of operation but may allocate resources to do so if transportation proves a barrier to student attendance. The proposed location for the school will make walking available and makes public transportation convenient. Because refugee families are provided with public transportation vouchers as part of their resettlement services, any refugee families interested in attending will have the resources to utilize the public transportation option.

### **Eligibility**

1. Any student eligible for admission to a public school in Georgia, in the grades served by the school (6-12 at capacity), is eligible for admission to GFACS. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066 (1)(A) GFACS is open to any student residing in the state of Georgia (including students with disabilities and EL students) who is eligible for grades 6-12 and submits a timely, completed application following the school's application process. GFACS total enrollment shall be at least 115 students but shall not exceed 350 students at any point during the charter term.
2. In accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066(a)(1)(A) and SCSC Rule 691-2-.05, the GFACS will give enrollment priority to the following categories of applicants and in the following priority:
  - (i) A student whose parent or guardian is a full-time teacher, professional, or other employee of GFACS, and
  - (ii) A sibling of a student enrolled in GFACS. A "sibling" is defined as: Children who share at least one common biological or legal parent whether through natural or adoptive means.
4. Outside of the sibling preference, the school will utilize a weighted lottery and targeted recruitment to ensure the population for which the school is designed will have first access. In

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order to prioritize enrollment of students from a low-income, English Language Learner designation, GFACS will leverage the weighted lottery option provided through HB474 to provide weight to any application which notes the applicant qualifies both for free meals and English Learner services. Applicants will have the option of marking their eligibility for this weighted lottery by responding that a student is eligible for English Learner services and the family is eligible for free and/or reduced meals. Families who mark they are eligible for both programs will be given a weight of twenty to every one application from families who are eligible for only one of the programs and/or are ineligible for both.

### Pre- and Re-Enrollment §

1. Starting in January of each school year, families will be asked to communicate their intention to re-enroll and/or enroll eligible siblings (who receive first enrollment preference) for the subsequent school year. All re-enrollment and pre-enrollment paperwork for the returning student and/or siblings/dependents of staff and board members must be completed by February 1.
2. GFACS may adopt policies setting forth parental volunteer or service expectations and may require parent to sign an acknowledgement of those expectations. GFACS will not withdraw, decline to re-enroll, or otherwise discipline a student for a parent's failure to meet such expectations. The Charter School may not communicate to a student or parent that it has the authority to withdraw, decline to re-enroll, or otherwise discipline a student for a parent's failure to meet volunteer or service expectations.

### Open Enrollment

1. Open Enrollment and Admissions. GFACS will comply with the open enrollment and admissions provisions set forth in O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066. Enrollment shall be open to any student in accordance with the following criteria:
  - a. Attendance Zone. Enrollment shall be open to any grade level eligible student who resides in the State of Georgia.
  - b. Application. To be eligible for enrollment at the GFACS, students residing in the attendance zone must submit a timely application to the GFACS in accordance with the deadline set by GFACS. GFACS will not use admissions criteria or applications that would not otherwise be used at a traditional public school, including requests for letters of recommendation, essays, resumes, or information regarding a student's school or community activities, grades, test scores, attendance record, or disciplinary history. GFACS may use applications for the purpose of verifying the student's residence within the school's attendance zone and grade level, provided the application is consistent with SCSC Rule 691-2-.05. GFACS may gather other relevant information from

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students after enrollment is determined.

c. Random Lottery. If the number of timely applicants received by GFACS exceeds the capacity of a program, class, grade level, or building, GFACS will ensure that such applicants have an equal chance of being admitted through a random selection process in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066(a)(1)(A) and SCSC Rule 691-2-.05. GFACS will not conduct more than one lottery per grade per admissions cycle.

2. GFACS will ensure open enrollment for each grade served for which space is available and will not adopt any policy or practice that restricts enrollment to specific grade levels within the grade span served by the school or to a particular class of students served by the school. GFACS will offer at least one annual enrollment opportunity for each grade served for which space is available.
3. Starting February 1, the school leader will determine the number of available seats that remain in each grade level served for the subsequent year. Open applications for remaining seats will begin February 1 and conclude March 30. These applications will be received at the school site and will be logged in an application receipt book. Applicants will receive a receipt for their application with their randomly assigned lottery number printed on the receipt for each application.
4. If, by April 1, the number of applications exceeds the number of available seats, applicants will be admitted through a random lottery process, which will be administered by an impartial party by the end of the first week of April. The weighted lottery will be used to provide students who are both low-income and Limited English proficient a weight of five to one in the lottery (parents will be asked to verify this eligibility with a free/reduced lunch form and home language questionnaire and/or LEP program documents when they complete enrollment paperwork. Any families who were not eligible for the weight but given it will be moved to the end of the waiting list).
5. The randomly assigned numbers will be chosen and recorded in the order selected. The school will then reach out to each family selected by phone and/or hard copy via mail to confirm the student's acceptance or position on the waitlist. Families will then have until June 1 to complete all enrollment paperwork. The school leader will notify families on the waitlist, in the order their number was selected, to fill any vacancies that arise. Should the waitlist be expended, applicants thereafter will receive access to available seats in the order their applications were received. Interpreter services will be used to support the application, lottery notification, and enrollment/waitlist communications to serve the diversity of the target population.

### Weighted Lottery

1. In accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066(a)(1)(A), the GFACS will implement a weighted lottery.

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- i. An increased chance of admission will be provided to the following subsets of educationally disadvantaged students with each subset as defined by the State Board in accordance with federal guidelines and regulations:
  - a. Students who are economically disadvantaged;
  - b. Limited English proficient students;
- ii. To facilitate the weighted lottery, applicants may indicate their educationally disadvantaged status on the admissions application and GFACS will verify this status as part of the registration process.
- iii. GFACS will make good faith efforts to confirm educationally disadvantaged status prior to the lottery, but shall not be required to re-administer the lottery or change a student's lottery status in the event any student's failure to provide appropriate documentation of such status results in a lower or higher percentage of educationally disadvantaged students being accepted into GFACS.
- iv. The weight shall be calculated annually with the formula  $W = (PA - PE)/(E - PE)$ ., provided however, the weight shall be no less than 5:1.
- v. The variables of the weighted lottery formula described above shall be defined as follows:
  - a. "P" shall be equal to the percentage of economically disadvantaged students in the local school system in which the Charter School is located as measured by the Governor's Office of Student Achievement for the previous school year. In the event the percentage of economically disadvantaged students in the local school system in which the Charter School is located is more than 50%, P shall not exceed 50%.
  - b. "A" shall be equal to the total number of 6th Grade applications from all students.
  - c. "E" shall be equal to the number of 6th Grade applications from students who qualify as educationally disadvantaged.

### **Outreach and Marketing**

1. GFACS will utilize reasonable outreach and marketing measures to make all potential applicants aware of opportunities for enrollment at GFACS, including, but not limited to, seeking the enrollment of a cross section of the school-age population throughout the attendance zone, consistent with the requirements of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066.
2. Due to the diverse nature of the target population, GFACS will leverage relationships with partner agencies and the local refugee community to market the school's application

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materials and window. The application will be available online and may be submitted online with an emailed receipt. Applications will also be made available in local churches, community gathering spots, refugee resettlement agencies, and related community hubs. Board members and volunteers will also post notification of the school and its application window in shopping centers and other businesses in the region frequented by new American families.

3. Families on the Fugees Academy waiting list and families with whom board members engage will be notified of the application process and invited to engage their neighbors.
4. The racial and socio-economic composition of the school is not intended to reflect that of the state but of the local LEP population. The outreach approach will include notifications in community hubs, partnerships with local service providers, and a word of mouth campaign enacted by the members of the community with whom board members have relationships.
5. GFACS will grow this outreach through a working relationship with DCSD and other immediate school districts serving large populations of new Americans and the leaders of local schools serving high numbers of refugee and English Learner students. Through the designation of a staff member committed to GFACS for development and community engagement, the school will be positioned to tailor its messaging and recruitment to ensure the more than 3,000 newly arrived English Learners annually, as well as the more than 40,000 English Learners in the region, are aware of the school, the model of education it provides, and the process by which interested families can apply. Given the context for the target population, information about the school will be communicated in multiple languages in print, through community events, verbally at service agencies, and through word of mouth campaigns as the primary strategies.