Vista Charter School: Enrollment Policy

DRAFT — For Board Review — Revised November 2026 (CSI feedback and comments incorporated)

Rewritten to align with the Colorado Charter School Institute's legal-policy resources on Admissions & Enrollment, C.R.S. § 22-30.5-507(3), C.R.S. § 22-33-106, and 1 CCR 301-88.

I. Purpose and Authority

Vista Charter School (the "School") is an institute charter school authorized by the Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI). This policy governs admission and enrollment at the School consistent with the Charter Schools Act (C.R.S. § 22-30.5-101 et seq.) and CSI's legal-policy guidance on admissions and enrollment.

II. Non-Discrimination

Vista Charter School welcomes all students and strives to create and maintain a diverse student population. Enrollment in the School is open to any child residing in the state of Colorado. Recruitment and enrollment decisions shall be made in a non-discriminatory manner, without regard to disability, race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, language, religion, ancestry, need for special education services, or any other protected class, as outlined in C.R.S. § 22-30.5-507(3). Non-discrimination extends to the School's recruiting and marketing practices.

III. Enrollment Eligibility

1. Grades served. The School serves students in grades 9–12.
2. Maximum enrollment. Total enrollment is projected at a maximum of 220 students under the School's charter contract with CSI (Exhibit B). The School may enroll students beyond this projection; the School shall notify CSI if enrollment exceeds, or is reasonably expected to exceed, 220 students.
3. Age and prior graduation. Students must meet applicable state age requirements. A student who has graduated from 12th grade is not eligible for enrollment.
4. Denial of admission. Consistent with C.R.S. § 22-33-106, admission may be denied to a student who was expelled from any school or district within the preceding twelve (12) months. Any denial of admission shall follow the due-process requirements of state law, including notice, an opportunity for a hearing, a written decision, and appeal rights. The Executive Director shall consult legal counsel before any denial of admission.
5. No undue barriers. The School shall not establish admissions or enrollment requirements that have the effect of excluding students based on socioeconomic, family, or language background, prior academic performance, special education status, or parental involvement

(1 CCR 301-88). Prohibited barriers include mandatory admissions testing and mandatory parent information nights as a condition of enrollment.

IV. Two-Stage Admissions and Enrollment Process

The School uses a two-stage process. Only the most basic information is collected before a seat is offered; detailed registration information is collected only after admission.

Stage 1 — Intent to Enroll Form (pre-admission)

The School accepts Intent to Enroll Forms on a rolling basis, beginning in January for the following school year; forms received by the deadline in the annual Enrollment Timeline are included in the lottery, if one is held. The Intent to Enroll Form shall request basic information only, such as student name, age/date of birth, address, current school, grade applying for, and family contact information. The Intent to Enroll Form shall not request disability status, IEP or 504 Plan status, citizenship or immigration status, Social Security numbers, or other protected-class information, unless directly tied to a Board-adopted weighted lottery under Section X.

Stage 2 — Registration (post-admission)

After a seat is offered and accepted, the family completes registration, which may include:

- Documentation generally: missing documentation shall not delay or prevent enrollment. Where a requested document is unavailable, the School shall accept the alternatives listed below and work with the family to obtain records after enrollment.
- Proof of age and identity: a birth certificate, hospital or physician certificate, adoption record, parent affidavit, or previously verified school records. A birth certificate may be reviewed temporarily, for age and identity verification only; a copy is not required, and place-of-birth information is not recorded or retained. Enrollment shall not be denied for lack of a birth certificate or for presentation of a foreign birth certificate (CDE guidance under SB 25-276).
- Proof of residency: a utility bill, lease agreement, mortgage statement, or the School's Proof of Residency Affidavit may be accepted. The School shall not ask about citizenship or immigration status and shall not require a parent's state ID or driver's license (Plyler v. Doe, 1982).
- Immunization records, home language survey, prior transcripts or school records as available, a completed Migrant Occupational Survey, and a signed Request for Student Records authorizing the School to obtain records from the student's previous school.
- Students experiencing homelessness shall be immediately enrolled even without typically required documentation, consistent with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act; the School's liaison will assist the family in obtaining records.
- Social Security numbers shall never be required of the student or parent. If requested, the family must be told that providing it is voluntary, that refusal does not bar enrollment, and why and how the number is used.

- No registration fee shall be charged.

V. Priority Enrollment

When a lottery is required, priority enrollment is granted in the following order before the general lottery:

1. Siblings of currently enrolled students: children whose primary guardian(s) are also the primary guardian(s) of a currently enrolled student (in joint-custody cases, the primary guardian must have custody at least 50% of the time). This includes half-siblings, step-siblings, adopted siblings, and other children in the same household or guardianship (e.g., cousins, nieces, or nephews cared for by grandparents).
2. Children of School employees: children of staff or faculty employed at least half-time, who have full or joint custody of the child, and who began employment on or before the first day of school of the enrollment year. Enrollment under this category shall not exceed 20% of total enrollment.

VI. Annual Enrollment Timeline

Each year the School shall establish and publish an "Enrollment Timeline" for the subsequent school year. The Timeline, Intent to Enroll Forms, and submission instructions shall be posted on the School website in advance of the enrollment window set in the Timeline and promoted through social media, community partnerships, parent newsletters, and other outreach. All communications and enrollment materials shall be available in English and Spanish (and other languages as needed). The Timeline shall include, at a minimum: the Intent to Enroll Form submission window and deadline; the re-enrollment deadline for current students; the lottery date (if needed); family notification and acceptance windows; and registration deadlines. Where practical, the Timeline should use weekday anchors (e.g., "the first Friday in March") rather than fixed calendar dates.

VII. Selection Process (Lottery)

1. When a lottery is used. If the number of timely Intent to Enroll Forms exceeds the available seats for any grade level, a lottery determines placement for that grade.
2. Public process. The lottery is a publicly verifiable random selection process, held in public at the School on the date set in the Enrollment Timeline (1 CCR 301-88).
3. How it is conducted. Eligible students who submitted timely Intent to Enroll Forms are assigned random numbers; a random number generator selects students to ensure equality. Draws proceed beginning with the highest grade level requiring a lottery.
4. Current students. Currently enrolled students who submit a re-enrollment Intent to Enroll Form by the deadline are automatically re-enrolled and do not enter the lottery.

VIII. Notification and Acceptance

1. The School will attempt to contact selected families on the day of the lottery, in the preferred language and by the preferred contact method indicated on the Intent to Enroll Form.
2. Families have four (4) business days from notification to accept the seat.
3. If a family cannot be reached within four (4) business days, the seat is forfeited and the student is placed at the bottom of the waitlist.

IX. Waitlist Management

1. Students not selected via lottery are placed on a waitlist in the order of their randomly generated lottery number.
2. As seats become available, they are offered from the top of the waitlist. A student who qualifies for a priority category (e.g., sibling priority) moves to the top of the waitlist.
3. The waitlist resets each enrollment year. A new Intent to Enroll Form is required annually; waitlist positions do not carry over year to year.
4. The School will continue to enroll students from the waitlist as positions become available throughout the school year, including after October Count Day.

X. Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities have equal access to apply and enroll. No pre-admission materials, including the Intent to Enroll Form, shall ask about disability status. After a student is admitted, the School may request prior IEPs or 504 Plans and convene a review team; failure to provide them is not a bar to enrollment. (See CSI's “Enrollment of Students with Disabilities.”)

XI. Weighted Lottery (Reserved)

The School does not currently operate a weighted lottery. The Board may adopt one in the future for educationally disadvantaged student subsets (such as economically disadvantaged students, English learners, students with disabilities, migratory students, neglected or delinquent students, or students experiencing homelessness), provided it states a clear goal, formula, and rationale consistent with CSI guidance. A weighted lottery shall never be used to exclusively serve any particular population.

XII. Annual Review

This policy and the annual Enrollment Timeline shall be reviewed by the Board each year. This policy should be reviewed by legal counsel and by CSI prior to adoption.