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Admissions

1 GENERAL ADMISSIONS POLICY

The Board of Trustees of the Renaissance Academy Charter School (the “Charter School”) recognizes that its enrollment policy must reflect current requirements of the Pennsylvania Public School Code and 22 Pa. Code, Chapter 11, the Pennsylvania Charter School Law at 24 P.S. §17-1723-A, Pennsylvania Public School Code, and Pennsylvania Department of Education’s (“PDE”) Basic Education Circulars on Enrollment of Students and Charter School Law. Every child of school age who is a resident of a Pennsylvania school district is entitled to a public school education. Resident students include those residing with their parent(s) and eligible non-resident students include those living with a Pennsylvania school district resident who is supporting the child gratis and nonresident children living in facilities or institutions and seeking enrollment. Once the required enrollment documentation described below is provided, the Charter School must enroll children and permit them to attend school. A child should be permitted to attend school on the next school day after the day on which the child is presented for enrollment, and in all cases within five (5) business days of the Charter School’s receipt of the required documents, if a space exists pursuant to the school’s Admission/Lottery Policy as described below.

The Charter School shall not discriminate in its admission policies or practices on the basis of intellectual ability, athletic ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, status as a person with a disability, proficiency in the English language or any other basis that would be illegal if used by a school district.

If more students apply to the Charter School than the number of attendance slots available in the school, then students must be selected on a random basis from a pool of qualified applicants meeting the established eligibility criteria and submitting an application by the deadline established by the Charter School. The Charter School shall give preference in enrollment to siblings of students presently enrolled in the Charter School, children of parents who have actively participated in the development of the charter school and students who reside in the Phoenixville Area School District (the "School District"). The procedures to implement this policy are provided below.

The Charter School will use an open enrollment plan to encourage all parents to consider enrolling their children. Any child who is qualified under the laws of Pennsylvania for admission to a public school is qualified for admission to the Charter School in a timely manner. The sending district will be afforded up to ten days to transfer records, establish transportation and expedite enrollment. The Charter School may enroll during this timeframe if it deems able based on space allocations.

ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES

Admission Lottery Process: Applications for student slots must be submitted by a deadline that will be established and made known by the Charter School. The information that must be provided in the enrollment application is described below.

If more students submit applications than can be accommodated by the Charter School's capacity, a lottery will be held to enroll students on a specified date that will be made known to all applicants and their families and the public.

All students whose enrollment forms were filed by the enrollment deadline will be separated by grade. A lottery will only be held for a particular grade level if more applications are received than can be accommodated for that grade level. Priority for available spaces shall be:

1. Students who reside in the School District and who have at least one sibling currently enrolled in the Charter School.⁽¹⁾
- ¹2. Students who do not reside in the School District but who have at least one sibling (defined as a child having at least one common parent) currently enrolled in the Charter School.²
3. Students who reside in the School District and whose parents actively participated in the development of the Charter School. (2)
4. Students who do not reside in the School District but whose parents actively participated in the development of the Charter School. (2)
5. Students who reside in the School District who do not fall into paragraphs 1 or 3.
6. Students who do not reside in the School District and who do not fall into paragraphs 2 or 4.

¹ Defined as a currently enrolled child having at least one common parent.

² Defined as members of the Board of Trustees, original founding members of the Charter School or professional staff and members of the administration of the Charter School having been employed at the Charter School continuously for at least three years prior to the date of the lottery.

Students will be enrolled based on the above list until a priority level is reached that cannot be fully enrolled. A drawing of names will then be held until all open slots in each grade level are filled.

For example, suppose there are forty (40) spaces available in a grade level after all students who desire to re-enroll are accommodated. If there are seven (7) students who reside in the School District who have siblings currently enrolled in the Charter School, then they would all be admitted. If there are two (2) students who do not reside in the School District but who have siblings currently enrolled in the Charter School, then they would all be admitted. If there are two (2) students who reside in the School District whose parents actively participated in the development of the Charter School, they would both be admitted. If there is one (1) student who does not reside in the School District but whose parents actively participated in the development of the Charter School, they would be admitted. If there are thirty (30) students who reside in the School District that are neither children of parents who actively participated in the development of the Charter School or siblings of students currently enrolled at the Charter School, then a lottery would be held among those students to determine who will receive the remaining twenty-eight (28) available spaces. No non-resident students would be admitted.

A waiting list will be maintained in order drawn by lottery, if needed, for the admission of students at a grade level should space become available during the school year. Students whose applications are received after the deadline will be placed on the waiting list in the order that their applications are received. Preference will be given first to students related to the priority for enrollment listed above.

Within one week after the lottery has been held, a mailing will be sent to all applicants regardless of their status. This status letter will indicate either that the student has been enrolled or that the student has been placed on the waiting list and the student's place on the waiting list.

The lottery will be conducted at a public meeting and will be presided over by a member of the Board of Trustees or another Board designee for that purpose.

Each year, an open enrollment period will occur and a new waiting list will be established, if necessary. Students who are currently enrolled will maintain their slot for the following year so long as they provide notice of their intent to return by the deadline established by the Board.

Students who are on the waiting list for one school year that do not gain admission will need to reapply to seek admission for the following school year.

ENROLLMENT DOCUMENTATION

The Charter School may require the following information be provided with a student's enrollment application:

Proof of the child's age: Acceptable documentation includes: any one of the following constitutes acceptable documentation: birth certificate, notarized copy of birth certificate, baptismal certificate, copy of the record of baptism – notarized or duly certified and showing the date of birth, notarized statement from the parents or another relative indicating the date of birth, a valid passport, a prior school record showing the date of birth.

Proof of immunizations required by law: Acceptable documentation includes: the child's immunization record, a written statement from the former school district or from a medical office that the immunizations have been administered or that a required series is in progress, or verbal assurances from the former school district or a medical office that the required immunizations have been completed, with records to follow or documentation of legal exemptions from immunizations.

Proof of residency: acceptable documentation includes: a deed, a lease, a current utility bill, a current credit card bill, a property tax bill, a vehicle registration, a driver's license, or a Department of Transportation identification card. The administration of the Charter School may require more than one of the above forms of documentation. Homeless youths may be entitled to immediate enrollment without being required to prove residency as provided in the McKinney Vento Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11431.

Parent Registration Statement – a sworn statement by the student's parent or legal guardian attesting to whether the student has been or is suspended or expelled for offenses involving drugs, alcohol, weapons, infliction of injury or violence on school property as required by 24 P.S. § 13- 1304-A.

During the enrollment process and prior to admission to a charter school, the parent, guardian, or person having control of a student shall provide a sworn statement stating whether the student was previously or is presently suspended or expelled from any public or private school for any offense involving weapons, alcohol or drugs, or for the willful infliction of injury to another person or for any act of violence committed on school property. The school from which the student was suspended or expelled and the dates of suspension or expulsion must be provided. Any willful false statement shall be a misdemeanor of the third degree.

Home Language Survey - All students seeking first time enrollment in a school shall be given a home language survey in accordance with requirements of the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. Enrollment of the student may not be delayed in order to administer the Home Language Survey.

If the above information is not required with the enrollment application, then it shall be obtained by the Charter School before the student is allowed to attend classes at the school.

Students and parents will not be asked to provide information as to whether the student receives or is thought to need special education services prior to enrollment in the Charter School. Once a student has been enrolled in the Charter School, the administration of the Charter School will request special education records, including any existing IEP, from both the student's parents and the previous school.

Act 110 Requirement

In Pennsylvania, K-12 public schools are required to remove, transfer or reassign students who are adjudicated delinquent or convicted of sexual assault when the offending student and the victim are enrolled in the same school. With regard to enrollment of students, this amended

section of the Public School Code requires:

Prior to admission to a public school entity, the parent, guardian or other person having control or charge of a student **shall**, upon registration, provide a sworn statement or affirmation stating whether the student was previously or is presently expelled under the provisions of this section. The registration shall include the name of the school from which the student was expelled with the dates of expulsion and shall be maintained as part of the student's disciplinary record. Any willful false statement made under this subsection shall be subject to 18 Pa.C.S. § 4904 (relating to unsworn falsification to authorities). See Act 110 Statement below.

Sexual assault includes any of the offenses specified under the following provisions of 18 Pa.C.S. (relating to crimes and offenses) relating to rape, statutory sexual assault, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, sexual assault, aggravated indecent assault, and indecent assault.

Documents Which May Be Requested but Not As a Condition of Enrollment

Although the Charter School may ask for any of the information below, the Charter School may not require it as a condition of enrolling or admitting a child and a child's enrollment or attendance may not be delayed until these documents are provided. Among the documents that the Charter School may request are: picture identification, health or physical examination records, academic records, attendance records, Individualized Education Program, and other special education records. In addition, a school district may not require that a physical examination be conducted as a condition of enrollment.

Registration Form

A registration form, filled out by families for student enrollment, may include the following: name, address, telephone number, name of parent(s) or guardian(s) or resident adult(s) with whom the student is living, emergency contact information, former school information, and other locally required information. Failure to complete this form will not be made a condition of the student's enrollment.

Documentation Required from Other Sources

The Charter School is also entitled by law to receive information on an enrolling student from the previous school, public, charter, nonpublic or private, which the student attended. However, the provision of this information rests with the educational entity and not the family, and so, the Charter School, as the receiving local educational agency, will not require this information as a precondition to enrollment and will not delay a student's admission for lack of this information.

Student Education Records

Upon enrollment, the Charter School contacts the student's former school for a copy of the student's education records. The former school district or charter school, if within this Commonwealth, is required to respond by forwarding the records within 10 business days of the date upon which a student's records are requested by the Charter School. School districts shall enroll students within 5 business days regardless of receipt of records from the previous districts.

Disciplinary Records

Whenever a pupil transfers to another Pennsylvania school entity or nonpublic school, a certified copy of the student's disciplinary record shall be transmitted to the school entity or nonpublic school to which the pupil has transferred. The school entity or nonpublic school to which the student has transferred should request the record. The sending school entity or nonpublic school shall have 10 days from receipt of the request to supply a certified copy of the student's disciplinary record. Failure to receive the student's discipline record cannot be used to deny or delay the student's enrollment or school attendance.

Prohibited Requests - Items Which May Not Be Requested

For both enrollment and also for residency determinations, the Charter School will not request or require any of the following: a social security number; the reason for a child's placement if not living with natural parents; a child's or parent's visa; agency records; or, except in the limited circumstances described in the next section, a court order or records relating to a dependency proceeding. A child's right to be admitted to school may not be conditioned on the child's immigration status. The Charter School will not inquire as to the immigration status of a student as part of the admissions or residency process.

Student Classifications for Education Entitlement

• Resident Students and Court Orders or Custody Agreements

The Charter School may require a parent/guardian to provide a custody or dependency order when the child is being enrolled at the Charter School pursuant to parent relying on court order or custody agreement as the basis for enrollment. The Charter School will not require a custody order or agreement as a condition of enrollment in any circumstances other than the circumstance specified above. (See attached Affidavit of Custody).

• Students Living With a Resident Adult other than a Parent

When a child is living with an adult other than a parent, who is supporting the child without personal compensation, (gratis) the child may attend the public schools of that adult's school district, provided that resident makes application and supplies the required enrollment information noted in the section entitled Required Enrollment Documentation. In addition, before accepting the child as a student, the Charter School shall require the resident to file **only one** of the following:

- 1. A sworn and notarized statement** from the resident of the school district indicating that the signer is a resident of the school district, is

supporting the child without receiving personal compensation, that the child is living with the resident continuously and not just for the school year, and that the resident will accept all responsibilities relating to the child's schooling (See Charter School Enrollment Forms on School website for section 1302 Statement., **or**

2. Appropriate legal documentation to show dependency or guardianship, which may include a custody order. The Charter School may require other information to be submitted by the resident to substantiate the sworn statement. The natural parent(s) or former guardian(s) of the student may not be required to provide information. Once the requested information is provided, the Charter School will enroll the child and permit him or her to begin to attend school without delay, but in no case more than 5 days. (See attached Affidavit of Support), if a space exists pursuant to the school's Admission/Lottery Policy.

A resident's receipt of payments, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Transitional Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), pre-adoptive or adoptive support, maintenance on public or private health insurance, support from the military or military personnel or other payments for or on account of the child such as child support, shall not be deemed to be personal compensation or gain.

• Foster Children

Students who are "awaiting foster care placement" are no longer considered homeless for purposes of the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth ("EHCY") program. The deletion of "awaiting foster care placement" went into effect on December 10, 2016. (Section 725(2)(B)(i)).

• Nonresident Children Living in Facilities or Institutions

A child living in a district in which there is located a licensed shelter, group home, maternity home, residence, facility, orphanage or other institution for the care or training of children or adolescents, shall be admitted to that district's schools if living at or assigned to the facility or institution. If the school district or residence of a child living at or assigned to a facility or institution cannot be determined, but the child is determined to be a resident of the Commonwealth, the child shall be permitted to attend the public schools of the district. This includes a child placed by the child's resident parents or guardians at a facility or institution and subsequently abandoned or deserted.

• Emancipated Minors

An emancipated minor is a student under the age of 21 who has established a domicile apart from the continued control and support of parents or guardians or who is living with a spouse. The school district in which this student is living is his or her resident school district and the student may enroll at Charter School without any additional assistance from an adult.

• **Homeless Students**

The Charter School will ensure that each child of a homeless individual and each homeless youth have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youth. Homeless students may reside in shelters, hotels, motels, cars, tents or be temporarily

doubled-up with a resident family because of lack of housing. In the case of homeless students, traditional concepts of "residence" and "domicile" do not apply. Homeless children and youth lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Included within the definition of homeless children and youth are those who meet the definition of "unaccompanied homeless youth" pursuant to the Mc-Kinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. § 11431 *et seq.*).

Unaccompanied homeless youth may enroll without documents and without the help of an adult. Unaccompanied homeless youth includes any child who is "not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian." Falling within this definition are students who have run away from home, been thrown out of their home, or been abandoned or separated from their parents or guardians. Youth awaiting foster care placement include those who are placed in emergency, interim or respite foster care; kinship care; evaluation or diagnostic centers or placements for the sole purpose of evaluation. When necessary, Charter School administration will consult with the respective county children and youth agencies to determine if a child meets the definition of "awaiting foster care placement", including, on a case-by-case basis, whether a child who does not clearly fall into one of these categories is nevertheless a child "awaiting foster care placement."

Homeless youth are entitled to immediate enrollments, if a space exists pursuant to the Admissions/Lottery Policy and their families are not required to prove residency regarding school enrollment. These students are considered residents of the district where they are presently residing, or continue their education in the district of prior attendance.

• **Pre-Adoptive and Adoptive Students**

The Federal Adoption Assistance Program, among other things, provides for adoption assistance payments to encourage the placement of certain hard-to-place children with adoptive parents. Pennsylvania has adopted companion legislation, known as the Adoption Opportunities Act. Children living with pre-adoptive parents who are receiving adoption assistance subsidies, pre-adoptive foster payments, or other payments such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Transitional Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), are entitled to attend school in the school district in which the pre-adoptive parents reside. Notwithstanding receipt of any of the above payments, children living in pre-adoptive situations are considered residents of the school district in which their pre-adoptive parents reside. Children living with adoptive parents are entitled to all free school privileges accorded to resident school children of the respective school district.

- **School-Age Children of Military Personnel**

When Pennsylvania residents who are military personnel are deployed and their school age children are living with relatives or family friends in a school district for that period of time, the students are entitled to attend school in the school district in which they are residing.

Other Issues Related to Enrollment

- **Address Confidentiality Program (ACP)**

Some families may enroll a student using an ACP card, which lists a post office box as their address. This is their legal address and the Charter School will not require additional information about their residence. School records from the student's former school will be forwarded through the ACP.

- **Age**

Children are considered school age from the time they are admitted to the public school educational program until graduation from high school or the age of 21 if identified pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004. The Charter School will not refuse admission to a child who meets the age requirement. Students who turn 21 during the school term are entitled to finish that school term. If a student is under age 21 and has a Graduation Equivalency Diploma ("GED"), the student can enroll in school and work towards a diploma. For subsidy purposes, students who reach age 21 after the school term begins are eligible to be counted for the entire school term. The Department of Education will accept requests to allow students to be counted in membership for subsidy purposes for an extended school program beyond age 21 if the request includes a hearing officer decision or court order.

- **Children and Families with Limited English Proficiency**

Children and families with limited English proficiency will be provided translation and interpretation services to the extent needed to help the family understand the enrollment process and enroll the student in school promptly per applicable federal law.

- **Twins and Multiple Siblings**

While the Public School Code provision governing twins and multiple siblings is not applicable to charter schools pursuant to the Pennsylvania Charter School Law, the Charter School will use the Public School Code provision for guidance in such situations in conjunction with consultation with the Charter School's legal counsel.

Submitting Enrollment Complaints to the Department Of Education When a dispute arises regarding enrollment of a student, the person attempting to enroll the child or the Charter School may bring the dispute to the attention of the Department's School Services Unit. A complaint may be filed by mail, email or by phone with written follow up. After receipt of a complaint, a Department representative will contact the Charter School, family or other involved parties to determine the facts, whether the child is entitled to enrollment at the Charter

School and to try to resolve the problem. These contacts, whenever possible, will occur within five (5) days of receipt of the complaint. If the complaint is not amicably resolved, a written determination will be made and sent to the Charter School and the individual who filed the complaint.

If the Charter School does not enroll the student within five (5) school days after receiving the written determination and space exists pursuant to the school's Admissions/Lottery Policy, the Department will issue a letter to the Charter School requesting its position on the situation. The Charter School will have five (5) school days to respond to the request. If the Charter School refuses to enroll the student or does not respond, the matter will be forwarded to the Department's Office of Chief Counsel (OCC). The OCC and the Deputy Secretary for Elementary/Secondary Education will determine if the Charter School's response is valid to deny enrollment. If not, the Deputy Secretary will determine what additional measures may be necessary to assure enrollment.

Written Policies

The Charter School's written policy on student admission is a public record and will be posted to the school's website.

TO THE EXTENT THAT ANYTHING IN THIS POLICY WOULD BE CONSTRUED TO CONFLICT WITH APPLICABLE STATE AND/OR FEDERAL LAWS, THE APPLICABLE STATE AND/OR FEDERAL LAWS CONTROL. THIS POLICY IS NOT INTENDED TO CONFLICT WITH CHARTER REQUIREMENTS.

24 P.S. §13- 1301 – §13- 1306