

A First Look: GoCPS Applications & Offers

Prospective high school students in Chicago have many options. Chicago Public Schools (CPS) offers more than 250 choice programs and 11 selective enrollment programs (SEHSs) in 132 high schools. Until 2018, programs had several application systems with various deadlines, and students could receive multiple offers. In April 2017, the Chicago Board of Education adopted a common application for all high school choice programs with a single best offer to streamline the application process. This common application, the SEHS application, and applications for many elementary school programs were all moved to an online platform known as GoCPS. Students entering ninth grade in fall 2018 were the first to use GoCPS.

GoCPS provides prospective ninth-grade students and families with:

- A common deadline for applications (December)
- Centralized information about programs and requirements
- The option to apply to 20 choice programs and 6 selective enrollment high schools
- A web-based dashboard for applicants to view their application status, offers, and waitlists

Research Findings

1 Almost all students used GoCPS to apply to and receive offers from high school programs

90%+ More than 90% of CPS eighth graders applied using GoCPS

- Students ranked about 7 choice programs on average

90%+ More than 90% of all students who applied through GoCPS received an offer at a high school choice program they ranked:

- More than half received an offer at their top-ranked program
- More than 80% received an offer at one of their top-three ranked programs
- All applicants may always choose to enroll in their neighborhood high school general education program

2 Students were offered seats as described on the GoCPS website¹

Lotteries admitted students at random. In cases where a lottery determined admissions, both the assigned lottery number and whether a student was offered a seat were random for students participating in the lottery (i.e., unrelated to students' gender, race/ethnicity, special education status, GPA, attendance rate, etc., or how highly a student ranked the program).

Points-based programs admitted the highest-scoring students. In cases where application points determined admissions, students were admitted in order of points. Some programs prioritize students who live near the school in their admission processes. In these cases, students who were admitted had higher scores than students who were not admitted, within their priority group.

1. See <https://go.cps.edu/apply/high-schools> to learn more.

Takeaways

Students, families, and counselors often have questions about how to use GoCPS. Important things to remember include:

The best strategy for students is to rank the programs in the order they most prefer.

- The GoCPS selection process considers students for programs in the order they rank them on their application. Whether or not a student gets an offer from a particular program depends on the number of seats; how many other applicants ranked that program; her priority group; and her lottery number (if the program admission is based on a lottery), or her points (if the program admission is based on points).

Students should rank as many programs as they are interested in attending.

- Students who ranked more programs were more likely to receive an offer than students who ranked fewer programs.

Only students who complete all program application requirements are eligible to receive an offer from that program.

- GoCPS provides students with information on program requirements, all of which must be completed for a student to be eligible for the program. For example, if a student applied to an IB program in GoCPS but did not attend a required information session, they were not eligible for the program.

Students must accept offers, or the offer is considered declined.

- Students had 15 days to accept offers made in round 1. If they did not accept the offer, GoCPS considered it declined. Students could then apply to open programs in round 2.

Students always have the option of enrolling in their neighborhood high school general education program.

What high school program options are available?

Seats available:

School type:

25% Charter
55% Neighborhood
20% Other citywide

Program type:

51% General education
18% CTE
10% IB
7% STEM
14% Arts/military/other

Selection Type:

57% Lottery without minimums
20% Points
13% Lottery with minimums
10% CTE lottery

School Accountability (SQRP) Rating:

22% Level 1+
19% Level 1
27% Level 2+
32% Level 2/3



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To read the research summary and full research paper, titled *GoCPS: A First Look at Applications and Offers*, visit: <https://consortium.uchicago.edu/publications/gocps-first-look-applications-and-offers>

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