

North Carolina School for the Deaf Admissions Criteria 2023-2024

On April 3, 2023, the General Assembly enacted Session Law 2023-10, which, among other matters, authorized the North Carolina State Board of Education to adopt rules for admissions criteria and standards for the Governor Morehead School (“GMS”), in consultation with the GMS School Director (“Director”) and the Superintendent of Public Instruction, for the 2023-2024 school year only. In accordance with that authority, the following admissions eligibility criteria and procedures shall be in effect for the 2023-2024 school year.¹

Admissions Criteria

All students admitted to or enrolled in GMS shall, at minimum, present evidence that they meet the following admissions criteria:

1. The student possesses the minimum level of functioning necessary to participate in the educational programs offered by GMS. Specifically, the student: demonstrates reasonably independent living skills and self-care in light of the student’s age and visual impairment.
 - ~~a. Can finger feed self, chew and swallow most food, indicate awareness of being soiled or wet, assist with dressing, and cooperate in bathing.~~
 - ~~b. Does not have a standard score of three (3) standard deviations below the mean on standardized intellectual and adaptive behavior assessments.~~
 - ~~c. Does not have a medical or mental health condition that prevents the student from attending school on a daily basis.~~
 - ~~d. Does not have a communication disorder that would interfere with the student’s ability to benefit from the educational program.~~
 - ~~e. Does not have medical or safety needs beyond the capacity of the school to reasonably accommodate.~~
2. The student does not pose a risk of harm to self or others, ~~or does not~~ pose a risk of substantial disruption to the learning environment at the school, and does not have medical or safety needs beyond the capacity of the school to reasonably accommodate.
3. The student presents with blindness or a vision impairment that, even with correction, adversely affects the student’s educational performance.² In addition, the application must demonstrate that the student’s primary educational needs are related to the student’s blindness or vision impairment and require the specialized support and programs offered by GMS.

Admissions Procedures

The admissions process for GMS shall be as follows:

¹ The criteria and procedures set forth in this document are used exclusively to decide whether a student will be admitted to the Governor Morehead School. Nothing in these criteria or procedures shall be construed as determining a student’s eligibility for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (“IDEA”).

² This requirement is consistent with the definition of “visual impairment including blindness” in the State Board of Education Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities.

<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/documents/publications/catalog/ec144-policies-governing-services/open>.

1. An application for admission may be made on behalf of a student by the student's parent or legal guardian or upon the recommendation of a local education agency or charter school (collectively, "public school unit" or "PSU"). If the student has not been evaluated by the student's current PSU to be a ~~child-student~~ with a disability, the Director or designee shall coordinate with the current PSU to determine if the student is a ~~child-student~~ with a disability.
2. The application for admission shall be reviewed by an admissions committee consisting of the following members:
 - a. A chair designated by the Director.
 - b. The applicant's parent or legal guardian.
 - c. Any professional whose expertise is necessary to interpret evaluation data regarding the student's educational needs or specific hearing impairment.
 - d. If the applicant is currently enrolled in a PSU, the chair shall extend an invitation to the PSU to appoint a representative.
3. When ~~evaluating-reviewing~~ the application, the admissions committee shall consider multiple sources of information, ~~as available~~, including at least the following:
 - a. Formal assessments of the student's specific educational needs or hearing impairment(s).
 - b. Recommendations of current and/or former teachers ~~of the student~~.
 - c. Evidence of the student's physical and emotional health.
 - d. Indications of the student's level of functioning, including adaptive behavior skills.
 - e. The student's current or proposed individualized education plan ("IEP").
4. The admissions committee shall issue a recommendation on the application to the Director or the Director's designee, who shall make the final decision regarding admission.

Admission Status

A student may be admitted in one of two ways:

1. *Temporary Assignment* – a student may receive a temporary assignment to GMS for no more than 90 school days to allow school staff to ~~evaluate-monitor~~ the student and gather additional information to inform the admission committee's final ~~determination~~decision. A student admitted on temporary assignment is not guaranteed admission to GMS.
2. *Educational Program Assignment* – a student may be admitted if the admissions committee ~~determines~~decides that the student meets the admissions criteria.

Disenrollment

Once a student is admitted, the student's continued enrollment at GMS shall be subject to ~~reevaluation-review~~ by the admissions committee when the school determines that it is necessary to assess the student's continued satisfaction of the admissions criteria. Any consideration of disenrolling a student shall follow the same procedures as initial admission, with a final ~~determination~~decision regarding the student's continued enrollment resting with the Director or designee.

Free Appropriate Public Education

The PSU in which the student is enrolled shall have the initial responsibility to evaluate and identify the special needs of the student and provide a special education program and related services in accordance with Chapter 115C, Article 9 of the North Carolina General Statutes. If a parent of a student applies to enroll the student at ENCSD and the admissions committee

determines that the student meets the admissions criteria, GMS shall be responsible for providing a free appropriate public education.

If, however, the admissions committee subsequently determines that the student no longer meets the admissions criteria, the responsibility for the provision of a free appropriate public education shall immediately revert to the PSU in which the student was previously enrolled or, if the student was enrolled in a home school, to the local education agency to which the student would be assigned under G.S. 115C-366.

Due Process Hearing and Mediation

A parent may seek an impartial due process hearing, in accordance with Chapter 115C, Article 9 of the North Carolina General Statutes, following a final decision by the Director regarding an application for admission. If the parent pursues a due process hearing to challenge the school's admission decision, the student shall remain at the PSU at which the student is currently or was previously enrolled.

Prior to seeking a due process hearing under Article 9, parents are encouraged to pursue mediation under Article 9 to resolve any dispute regarding a determination of a student's eligibility ~~determination for admission~~ or the student's IEP.