

One-stop shopping for more than 200 schools at 'Edfest' in D.C.

By **Michael Alison Chandler** December 3, 2015

The annual school enrollment lottery opens in less than two weeks, launching a feverish season of school research for many parents in the District.

To help jump-start the process, the city is hosting its third annual "Edfest" with representatives from more than 200 traditional and charter schools.

The event is scheduled for Dec 12 at the D.C. Armory, just two days before the enrollment application opens online. Families can apply for as many as 12 schools, ranked in order of preference.

"We want people to come and learn and start thinking about their lists," said Catherine Peretti, executive director of My School DC, which operates the common lottery.

The deadline for high school applicants is Feb. 1, and for preschool through eighth grade, it is March 1. Results will be released April 1.

Last year, more than 20,000 students applied in the first round of the citywide enrollment lottery, and 72 percent of applicants were matched with a school.

Families do not need to apply through the lottery if they want to enroll their children in their assigned neighborhood schools, or if they are planning to stay at their current schools. With [a few exceptions](#), preschool students are not guaranteed placement in their neighborhood schools, so parents must apply through the lottery.

Organizers expect more than 5,000 people to attend the school fair. For the second year, the fair will include all traditional schools and nearly all charter schools. Nine charter schools [do not participate](#), and conduct their own enrollment lotteries.

This is the third year that parents will apply through a common application. Last year, for the first time, wait lists were also centrally managed, so parents do not have to call schools to check the status of their applications. By centralizing these functions, officials have hoped to make the process less stressful and confusing for families.

Three new charter schools, scheduled to open in the fall, will also be accepting applications. Two of the schools — Breakthrough Montessori and Washington Leadership Academy — do not have locations confirmed. The third, Rocketship DC, is planning to open in Anacostia.

Michael Alison Chandler writes about schools and families in the Washington region.
