

PISOTA and Avela – Driving Equitable and Diverse Enrollment



Background

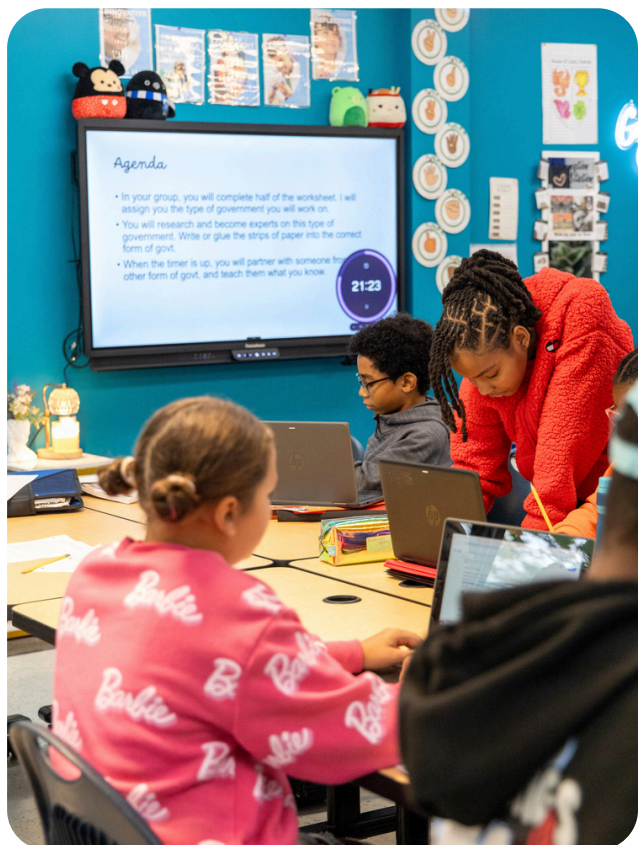
Phoenix International School of the Arts (PISOTA) is a middle school in Charles County, Maryland, dedicated to fostering a diverse, inclusive, and globally-minded student body. As the only school in Maryland implementing the Cambridge International curriculum, PISOTA emphasizes arts, international education, and intentional diversity. Despite Maryland's historically challenging charter school landscape, PISOTA has quickly gained traction in the community, attracting a broad applicant pool that reflected the region's racial, socioeconomic, and geographic diversity.

While PISOTA quickly gained interest in Charles County, their early success did not come without challenges.

The Challenge

Not only was PISOTA a new charter school in a state with stringent enrollment policies, it received over 800 applications for just 175 available seats in its first year. This high demand made PISOTA quickly realize the need to invest in an application and enrollment provider with best-in-class lottery tools.

- **Ensuring Accessibility in the Application Process:** PISOTA needed a way to ensure that families across different regions, including rural areas with limited digital access, and families from different backgrounds, had an easy way to apply.
- **Retaining Students Through Enrollment Completion:** Between application submission and official enrollment, PISOTA encountered drop-off – especially among underserved populations.



The Solution

To overcome these challenges, PISOTA partnered with Avela, leveraging its enrollment platform and Nobel Prize-winning lottery tools to streamline the application and enrollment process while maintaining an equitable and community-driven approach.

1. Accessible, User-Friendly Application Process

To provide families from different regions and backgrounds with an easy way to apply, PISOTA used Avela's digital enrollment platform, which ensured a mobile-friendly, multilingual, and easy-to-complete application process. In addition, Avela's platform simplified the application process, keeping it under five minutes to complete, while still capturing essential information. This empowered families to complete their applications quickly and easily.

2. Post-Lottery Engagement & Enrollment Completion

To limit the number of drop-offs between application submission and official enrollment, PISOTA uses Avela to maintain regular touchpoints with accepted families and keep them engaged leading up to the first day of attendance.



The simplicity of Avela's system meant that **more families from rural and underserved areas** could apply and enroll. We were able to successfully remove any unnecessary barriers.

Angelica Jackson,
CEO and Co-Founder, PISOTA

The Result

The collaboration between PISOTA and Avela yielded impressive outcomes:

- **Diverse Enrollment Achieved:** Despite operating in a racially and geographically segmented area, PISOTA successfully attracted a student population that included 65% African American students, a significant white and Latinx population, and families from both rural and urban settings.
- **Improved Enrollment Retention:** By proactively engaging families post-lottery, PISOTA minimized drop-off rates, ensuring that students who applied and received offers were more likely to enroll and attend.

Conclusion

PISOTA's success demonstrates how a strategic approach to technology-driven application processes and community engagement can drive equitable school enrollment. With Avela's enrollment platform supporting accessibility and efficiency, PISOTA was able to build a diverse and thriving student body, ensuring that all families—regardless of background—had a fair opportunity to access high-quality education.

Interested in streamlining your school's enrollment process?

Learn more about Avela's parent friendly, data-driven enrollment solutions at [avela.org](https://www.avela.org).

