

Washoe County School District

Signature Academy Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Signature Academy?

Signature Academies are four-year programs at WCSD high schools that provide students with rigorous and relevant curriculum that relates to different careers and industries, preparing students for success in both college and careers after graduation. All Academies provide opportunities for students to earn college credits (Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or dual credit) and some provide opportunities to earn industry-recognized certifications. Enrollment in a Signature Academy generally starts in the 9th grade. Some programs may accept students later if they have taken some lower level coursework in the technical area of focus prior to enrollment.

Can anyone attend a Signature Academy?

Signature Academies are specialty programs that have minimum recommended qualifications for enrollment and maintaining enrollment throughout high school. To enroll, students must complete an application during one of the application rounds (the first one starts on or around November 15th, annually) and meet the minimum recommended qualifications for enrollment. In those cases where the number of qualified applicants exceeds available space, applicants will be entered into a lottery process and selected at random to receive an invitation to attend. All acceptances are conditional from year-to-year, and are revocable by the principal if a student fails to maintain the minimum recommended qualifications for enrollment.

How do I apply to a Signature Academy?

If you are an 8th grader entering 9th grade, you will apply on-line during an open application round. The first round begins annually in November and ends January 1. This is the best time to be selected for a program before all the spaces fill. Students who apply in subsequent rounds will be considered only if vacant seats are still available in a program.

If you are a current high school student, you must contact the school / Signature Academy program in which you are interested and apply directly to that school. The minimum recommended qualifications still apply and most programs require lower level coursework that aligns to their course offerings so that incoming students may complete the Signature program successfully.

Note: Applications for non-freshman students will only be accepted if vacant spaces exist in a program.

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My high school is not listed as having a Signature Academy. Can I attend a different school's Signature Academy?

Yes. Up to 25 percent of the spaces in each Signature Academy across the district will be reserved for non-zoned students. Students may apply to any Signature Academy and attend under the Inter-WCSD Variance Policy. For these applicants, if there is not enough space to accommodate all those who apply, selection for available spaces is done through a lottery system.

I am not really interested in the Signature Academy offered at my high school. Do I have to participate in it?

No. Though we hope that you will find a WCSD Signature Academy that sparks your interest in exploring and/or preparing for a career pathway after graduation, participation in a Signature Academy is not required. Students can attend their zoned high school without participating in the Signature Academy program. We encourage you to communicate your interests and skills to your teachers, counselors and administration so that they can guide you to a program that will give you a jump-start on your life after graduation!

Can I attend a Signature Academy at a different high school for part of the day and stay at my zoned high school for the other part of the day?

No. Enrollment in a Signature Academy is full-time only and students are expected to attend that school for the entire day. You will be considered a student of the school with the Signature Academy.

Note: Signature Academy courses are not available to home school students attending their zoned school only part time.

What happens if I am accepted to a Signature Academy and fail to meet the minimum qualifications thereafter?

Students accepted for enrollment in the spring of their 8th grade year are done so conditionally with the expectation that they will continue to meet the recommended qualifications for grades, attendance, and self-management through the completion of middle school. All accepted applicants are screened again in July to ensure that this is the case. Students who do not maintain the minimum recommended qualifications through the end of their 8th grade year may be considered for removal from the Academy acceptance list and may be redirected to enroll at their zoned high school.

Students who struggle to maintain their qualifications at any time during their high school career may be placed on academic or behavioral intervention by their school for up to 2 semesters. During this time, schools are expected to provide students on intervention with regular monitoring and support. At the conclusion of the intervention period, students who continue to not meet the minimum recommended qualifications may be removed from their Signature Academy program at the discretion of their school principal.

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Can I attend a Signature Academy at a different high school but continue to play on a sports team at my zoned high school?

No. Students may not play on a sports team at their zoned school while attending a Signature Academy program at a different school. Students on a variance for this purpose will be considered a full-time student at the non-zoned school and any participation in sports or activities will be at the variance school. **Exception:** Students who participate in a Signature Academy program at Academy of Arts, Careers & Technology may play on a sports team at their zoned high school.

Other athletic eligibility issues to consider:

- If a student enters a Signature Academy program on a variance as a freshman or sophomore, he/she shall be eligible to participate in sports at the sub-varsity level.
 - **Exception:** Students in these cases who make a varsity team can request to be switched to a “Magnet Variance” by contacting the Signatures and CTE Department.
- If the student enters a Signature Academy program as a junior or a senior at a school other than their zoned high school, that student will be ineligible to participate in sports for 180 school days.
- If a student returns to his/her zoned school any time after attending a Signature Academy program at another school, the student will lose his/her athletic eligibility for the remainder of the current year, as well as an additional 180 days for any sport in which the student’s name appeared on an NIAA Varsity Roster.

Will transportation be provided to Signature Academies?

Signature Schools – AACT and Wooster High: YES for students accepted to Academy of Arts, Careers & Technology (AACT) or Wooster High School. Bussing is provided from pick up/drop off locations at the closest high school to students’ homes. Students must get to those locations to utilize bussing. Door to door service is NOT available for students in these Signature Schools.

Signature Academy in your Zoned School: IN SOME CASES – Students who decide to participate in the Signature Academy at their zoned high school and who are already eligible to receive transportation to that zoned school will continue to be transported to their zoned school’s Signature Academy (this includes Wooster High School).

Transportation is unavailable for students who are not currently eligible to receive transportation to their zoned high school.

Signature Academies outside of your School Zone: NO. Except for AACT and Wooster, District transportation is unavailable for students who elect to attend a Signature Academy outside of their zone through a variance as per the Inter-WCSD Variance Policy.

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How will I be supported as a student with disabilities?

Students enrolled in a Signature Academy program and who are receiving special education services or Section 504 supports will have their individual needs reviewed by the Signature Academy school's relevant staff to ensure that all accommodations and services in their educational plans (IEP or 504 Plan) are provided.

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