

Washoe County School District

Signature Academy Application, Admission and Enrollment

Overview

The Washoe County School District offers Signature Academy programs to provide students with rigorous and relevant curriculum that prepares them for success in high demand industries, college pathways, and careers. Participants must enroll in Signature Academies as full-time students at the school. All participants must meet and maintain the recommended minimum qualifications for acceptance and participation throughout their time in the program.

Acceptance by Application Only

All 8th grade students who wish to be considered for attendance in a Signature School or Academy program as 9th graders must submit an application to the Washoe County School District Signatures & CTE Department (WCSD SACTE Department) by the designated application deadline. Students currently in high school who wish to apply to a Signature School or Academy program must submit an application directly to the school/program they wish to be considered for by the designated application deadline. These deadlines vary, depending on the grade level of the student applying.

Mailed applications for incoming 9th graders are sent to the Signature Academy & CTE Department at 380 Edison Way Suite 101, Reno, 89502. All others should be sent directly to the school/program.

Students interested in applying for a Signature Academy are encouraged to attend a Passport family information night in November, speak with their school counselor, and attend individual events hosted by each school, such as field trips and open houses.

Applications are available on or around early to mid November, each year. Applications can be found on the Signatures & CTE website, www.washoecountyschools.net/sacte, obtained at a high school options parent event, found in the middle or high school counselor's office, and accessed on each of the participating high school websites.

Information received from the application process is entered into an electronic database that serves as the source for the computerized lottery selection (when a lottery is necessary).

Enrollment & Admission Qualifications

Eligibility for enrollment in a Signature Academy is based on qualifications recommended by WCSD that demonstrate a student's commitment to academic success, and these are determined by an average of performance in the 7th and 8th grade year. Information to determine eligibility will be taken from WCSD Infinite Campus records (for students not currently enrolled in WCSD, applicants must provide 7th and 8th grade transcripts, behavior records, attendance records, and most current state standardized test results in Math and Reading to the Signatures & CTE Department). While these qualifications are used to help determine student eligibility for enrollment, all students are encouraged to apply.

It is recommended that students are qualified in EACH of the following areas to be eligible for enrollment*:

- GPA: Recommended 2.0 overall GPA in core classes (English, Math, Science, and Social Studies); failing grades are not recommended
- Standardized Test Scores: Recommended "Meets Standard" on standardized tests taken in 7th and 8th grade
- Attendance: Regular school attendance (a minimum 90% is recommended)
- Self-Management: Demonstration of appropriate self-management abilities (no behavior incidents that resulted in injury to another person, distribution of drugs, and/or possession of weapons)

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- **Students who are found ineligible based on the qualifications above may request a review of the decision by contacting the WCSD SACTE Department within 45 calendar days of the ineligibility notification mailing date. The full process for requesting this review can be found on page 4 of this document.*

***Students are expected to maintain their qualifications through second semester of 8th grade (including 8th grade standardized testing) for entrance into a high school Signature program as a 9th grader or through the semester prior to entrance as a 10th, 11th, or 12th grader.*

Specific programs may have additional conditions for consideration such as an audition.

All Signature Academy students, through graduation, are monitored each semester to ensure maintenance of the recommended minimum qualifications. 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. 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.

Note: This can affect athletic eligibility.

Blind Review of Student Eligibility

It is the policy of the Washoe County School District to afford equal opportunity in education to all qualified students. Every Signature Academy program will utilize a blind review process for evaluating eligibility qualifications for incoming 9th graders. The WCSD SACTE Department will import review data (grades, attendance, behavior, standardized test scores, etc.) for all applicants and calculate scores in each area of consideration. Data will then be de-identified and forwarded to a review committee to determine qualification.

All student applications, including students with disabilities under section 504 of Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ("Section 504") and/or under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA"), are reviewed using the blind review process to determine initial qualification. Information regarding the student's disability and/or accommodation shall not be accessed or considered during the screening. All applicants, including those with disabilities, will receive full consideration.

Review Committee

Student applicants who meet all of the eligibility qualifications will be automatically placed in the qualified selection pool. Those student applicants who do not meet the recommended qualifications in one or more category, but score within 10% of the eligibility qualifications for attendance / grades / test scores, will have their data reviewed by a committee to further determine eligibility. The review committee will consist of representatives from high school counseling, academics, and administration, as well as a district departmental administrator and a representative from the WCSD SACTE Department.

The review committee will conduct a blind review of the application and compare with the minimum qualifications to determine if the applicant could still be successful in a Signature Program. If the review committee determines the applicant is likely to succeed in the Signature program of his/her choice, the student will be moved into the qualified selection pool.

Notification of Eligibility

Those who meet the recommended qualifications through the processes outlined above will be included in the qualified selection pool. Students who meet the recommended qualifications will be notified of their eligibility status and any additional consideration requirements based on their Signature Academy choices.

Student Selection Process

Annually, each high school determines the number of designated seats available in each Signature School or

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Academy program. Each school submits to the Department of Signature Academies and Career Technical Education the number of open seats (by program) for incoming freshmen for the next school year, as well as the number of students who will continue in the program in each of the 10th, 11th and 12th grades.

WCSD reserves 75% of the seats in each school's Signature Academy, by program, for students who live in the geographical zone of the school and who apply for admittance to the Signature program. WCSD also reserves 25% of the seats in each school's Signature Academy, by program, for students who live outside of the geographical zone of the school and who apply for admittance to the Signature program. If by Round 3 of applications a school is unable to fill the 25% of seats they had reserved for variance students, that school will have the ability to begin filling the remaining seats with students from within the geographical school zone.

Round 1 Application Window: November 15th– January 1st

Round 2 Application Window: February 15th – March 15th

Round 3 Application Window: April 1st – 2 weeks before start of new school year

Should a student choose not to attend after being selected for a Signature Academy program, the vacant seat will be assigned, in order, to the next student on the Wait List for that program (if there is one). This process will continue through the second week of the school year.

Note: From year to year, the Washoe County School District reserves the right to make changes to individual program acceptance numbers for non-zoned students based on factors such as overcrowding, teacher availability, and other circumstances.

Sibling Preference

It is the intent of WCSD to avoid separating siblings, when possible. If a sibling is already enrolled in and will be attending the Signature School or Academy to which his/her sibling applies, and the sibling will continue to be enrolled in the Signature School or Academy for the coming school year, WCSD will give a preference to the sibling to attend the Signature School or Academy. To be eligible for the sibling preference, the parent/guardian must submit a Signature Application for the incoming sibling by the annually specified deadline date AND the incoming sibling must meet all admission qualifications and/or requirements.

In the case of applicants who are twins/triplets/multiples, each applicant must submit a Signature Application and meet all admission qualifications and/or requirements to be considered qualified applicants. If one twin/triplet/multiple is accepted to a Signature School or Academy through the general lottery (when necessary), the other qualified twin/triplets/multiples will also be accepted into the Signature school or program.

For purposes of sibling preference, a sibling is defined as a brother, sister, stepbrother, or stepsister who is living in the same household. In the case of foster children, this sibling preference applies to related siblings within the household. In a group home situation, only those student chosen through lottery and their related siblings, if they have applied and determined to be qualified, will be included in the sibling preference.

Sibling and twin/triplet/multiple preference is only given to applicants who are determined to meet the minimum qualification for admission.

Students Receiving Specialized Support Services (After Selection for Acceptance)

Upon meeting the minimum qualifications through the blind review process, and upon acceptance to a Signature Academy, students who have a documented disability under section 504 of Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ("Section 504") and/or under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA"), identified as receiving multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) services or designated as an English Language Learner (ELL), will be scheduled for a placement/transition meeting before the end of their 8th grade year.

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This meeting is to be scheduled at the *middle school site* with the student's 504/IEP/MTSS/ESL team (to include the school principal or designee, counselor, special education/ESL teacher, a core academic teacher, parents and student) and at least an administrator and special education/ESL teacher or counselor from the student's intended Signature Academy school in attendance. At the placement/transition meeting all parties will examine the IEP or 504 Plan, or equivalent, to help determine which supplementary aids, supports and services are required for the student to be successful. Team decisions about placement and/or location will be made with the success of the student at the forefront. The following items will serve as the basis for considering the student's change of placement and/or location:

- Signature Academy application
- Special education/504/ESL accommodations, adaptations and modifications criteria
- Student's IEP/504/ESL goals
- Historical progress data
- Input from the team

Late Applicants

Late applications will not be accepted. If a student / family misses an application window (Round 1, 2, or 3), they can submit an application in the next available Round. After the first round of applications (November 1 – January 15), all applicants in Round 2 and 3 will be accepted into programs on a “first come, first served” basis provided they demonstrate the minimum qualifications of enrollment, and there is space available in the program they select.

Round 1 Application Window: November 15th– January 1st

Round 2 Application Window: February 15th – March 15th

Round 3 Application Window: April 1st – 2 weeks before start of new school year

Parent Appeal Procedure

The parents / guardians of a child who is found to not meet the minimum qualifications for consideration or is not admitted to a Signature Academy program may appeal according to the following guidelines and procedures:

- Parents/guardians must contact the WCSD SACTE Department in writing within 45 calendar days of the notification mailing date from the district requesting a review of the basis for which their child was not selected. ***This is a strict deadline.*** Written notification can be sent, **Attn: SACTE Director**, by:
 - Email to: sacte@washoeschools.net
 - Mail or dropped off to 380 Edison Way Suite 101, Reno, NV, 89502.
- Within 10 school/working days of receiving the **Signature Academy Appeal**, the WCSD SACTE Department must review whether the Appeal was received by the deadline; whether the student's application was submitted by the designated deadline date; and whether the student's application met the recommended qualifications for the qualified selection pool.
- If the WCSD SACTE Department determines that the student's application was submitted by the designated deadlines, met the recommended qualifications, and was included in the random lottery (when applicable), then the appeal process ends.
- If the WCSD SACTE Department determines that the student's application was submitted by the designated deadlines and met the recommended qualifications, but was not included in the random lottery (when applicable), corrective action will be taken which may include:
 - Placing the student in the program, or
 - Placing the student in a preferential status on the Wait List.
- To complete the Signature Academy Appeal process, an **Appeal Notification** letter will be sent to the parent/guardian indicating the action taken. A copy of the letter will be kept on file in the WCSD SACTE Department and a copy will be provided to the WCSD Office of Academics.

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- If the WCSD SACTE Department determines that there is no basis for the Appeal, the parent/guardian may request a **Signature Academy Appeal Review**, in writing, to the WCSD Office of Academics within 20 calendar days of the mailing date of the appeal notification letter. ***This is a strict deadline.*** Written notification, addressed to Attn: Chief Academic Officer, can be sent by mail or dropped at 425 E. Ninth Street, Reno, NV 89512.
- Upon receiving the written request for Signature Academy Appeal Review, the WCSD Office of Academics will verify that the request was received by the deadline and request a copy of the appeal packet from the WCSD SACTE Department. This packet will include copies of the written appeal request, documentation submitted by the applicant, and a rationale for denying the appeal.
- If the WCSD Office of Academics determines that the Signature Academy Appeal Review request was submitted by the designated deadline, the Appeal packet and all relevant information provided by the applicant will be reviewed by the Chief Academic Officer.
- Based on the results of the committee review, the Chief Academic Officer will render a final decision within 10 school/working days.
- An Appeal Review Notification will be sent to the parent/guardian indicating the final decision.

Attendance by Specialty Groups**Home School, Private School, or Charter School Students**

Home school, private school, or charter school students may apply to attend WCSD Signature Academy programs. Applicants must reside within the limit of Washoe County School District and follow all application timelines and procedures. If the student is accepted, the student must attend the Signature School or Signature Academy as a full-time student.

Home school, private school, or charter school students who cannot provide current (within 18 months of application), nationally recognized standardized test scores for math and reading will be required to take a District placement assessment in math and/or reading comprehension. These tests will be administered at the Signatures & CTE office during scheduled testing times or by appointment. Students must complete these tests prior to the application deadlines.

Out of District Students

WCSD has an obligation to serve students within its geographic boundaries. Students from outside of Washoe County will only be considered for admittance to a Signature School or Academy program if space is available after Application Round 1 and Round 2 have concluded, and all qualified students residing in Washoe County have been placed.

Athletic Participation by Accepted Students

In order to meet NIAA regulations, students who are accepted into a Signature Academy program outside of their high school zone will be placed on an Inter-WCSD Variance called a "Signature Variance". What does this mean?

- Students may not play at their zoned school while attending a Signature Academy program at a different school.
 - **Exception:** Students who attend the Academy of Arts, Careers & Technology do not require a "Signature Variance" and are eligible to participate in athletics at their zoned high school only.
- If the student enters the Signature Academy program as a freshman or sophomore, they shall be eligible to participate in sports at the sub-varsity level.
 - **Exception:** Students who make the varsity team can request to be switched to a "Magnet Variance" by contacting the Signatures and CTE Department.

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- **Exception:** Students who attend Earl Wooster High School will be placed on a “Magnet Variance” and are eligible to participate in athletics at Earl Wooster at any level. Contact the Signatures and CTE Department for more details regarding the “Magnet Variance”.
- If the student enters the 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.

Notice of Non-Discrimination

The Washoe County School District prohibits bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, and/or discrimination based on an individual's actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic information, veterans or military status, marital status, political affiliation, or the presence of any sensory, physical or mental disability in any of its educational programs/activities, employment or employment opportunities, or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The District prohibits discrimination against any youth group listed in Title 36, as a patriotic society, (i.e. Boy Scouts of America) from access to public school facilities use. The District is an Equal Opportunity Employer.