

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?

No. Signature Academies are specialty programs that have minimum requirements for acceptance and maintaining enrollment throughout high school. To be accepted, students must complete an application during one of the application rounds (the first one starts on or around November 1, annually), meet the minimum requirements for consideration, and be chosen for attendance through a lottery process. All acceptances are conditional from year-to-year based on maintenance of the acceptance criteria annually.

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 sometime in January. 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/program for which you are interested and apply directly to that school. Minimum acceptance/enrollment criteria still apply and most programs require lower level coursework in the technical area 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.

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. Selection for these 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 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 a class?

Students accepted in the spring of their 8th grade year are done so conditionally with the expectation that they will continue to meet the grade, attendance, self-management and testing criteria through the completion of the year. All accepted applicants are screened again in July to ensure that this is the case. Students who did not maintain the acceptance requirements through the end of the 8th grade year will be removed from the Academy acceptance list and redirected to enroll at their zoned high school. These available spaces will be filled from the wait list for that Signature Academy, in the order in which they were assigned from the original lottery.

All Signature Academy students, through graduation, are monitored each semester to ensure maintenance of the minimum enrollment criteria. Students who struggle to maintain the criteria anytime during their high school career will be placed on probation for up to 2 semesters. At the conclusion of the probationary period, students who continue to fall below the minimum enrollment requirements will be removed from the program.

Note: This can affect athletic eligibility.

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 will be granted a variance to attend a non-zoned school's Signature Academy (once the application has been processed and acceptance has been granted). Students on a variance for this purpose will be considered a full-time student at the non-zoned school.

As per the Inter-WCSD Variance Policy and NIAA Regulations, freshman and sophomore high school students granted variances shall be eligible to participate in sports at a sub-varsity level only. Juniors and seniors who are granted variances are ineligible for 180 school days. If a student returns to his/her zoned school anytime during high school, the student will lose his/her athletic eligibility for the remainder of the current school year. This also includes 180 school days in any other sport in which the student's name appeared on a NIAA roster.

Will transportation be provided to Signature Academies?

Signature Schools – AACT and Wooster High: YES for students accepted to Academy of Arts, Careers & Technology or Wooster High School. Both have 100% enrollment in a Signature Academy program through graduation and are considered 'Signature Schools.' Bussing is provided from pick up/drop off locations at the closest high school to your home. 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: MAYBE. Students who decide to participate in the Signature Academy at their zoned high school and who already would receive transportation to that zoned school will continue to be transported to their zoned school's Signature Academy (this includes Wooster High School). Students who do not currently receive transportation to their zoned high school will still not have access to transportation.

Signature Academies outside of your School Zone: NO. Students who elect to attend a different school's Signature Academy through a variance will not receive transportation as per the Inter-WCSD Variance Policy.

How will I be accommodated as a student with disabilities?

Students who meet the requirements for enrollment in a Signature Academy, are accepted and enrolled in an Academy program, and have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Section 504 Accommodation Plan (AP) will have their individual needs reviewed by the Signature Academy school team to determine how to best address the student's individual needs.