

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 minimum criteria 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, 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 Family Information Night, 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 December 1, 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).

Admission Criteria and Enrollment Eligibility

Entrance and continued enrollment into a Signature School or Academy is based on specific admission procedures and/or requirements. Academic and non-academic data from the 3 semesters prior to the application deadline or 4 semesters prior to the student start date in an Academy program are used to establish minimum initial selection criteria and develop rating scales. The criteria considered are:

- Demonstration of consistent "C" work in grade-level, core academic coursework (2.0 in core classes GPA, no Fs)
- Attainment of grade level scores on standardized tests administered within one year of student application (science, math, English/language arts)
- Regular school attendance (90%, all reasons included)
- Demonstration of appropriate self-management abilities (no major discipline events/suspensions; few minor discipline events)

***Students must maintain all eligibility 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.*

Applications received from students for whom previous enrollment does not provide data for designated selection criteria (e.g., behavior, standardized test scores, grades) will be asked to provide alternative data from

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which an assessment can be made. In cases where standardized test scores are not available, applicants will be required to take a placement test in math and/or reading. These scores will be used in the evaluation process. In areas where no data is available, the applicant's qualification score will be calculated using the information available which must include, at a minimum, placement test scores.

Specific programs may have additional criteria for consideration such as a successful personal interview, extended essay, or audition.

Continued enrollment in a Signature School or Academy from year to year, through graduation, requires maintenance of the admission requirements. All Signature Academy students 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 two 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.)

Blind Review Process

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 incoming 9th graders. The WCSD SACTE Department will import review data (grades, attendance, behavior, standardized test scores, recommendations, 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.

Second Review Committee

Those student applicants who score within 10% of the qualification criteria who were not placed in the qualified applicant pool during the blind review process will be reviewed by a Second Review Committee. The Second Review Committee will consist of representatives from high school counseling, academics, and administration, as well as a district office administrator and a representative from the WCSD SACTE Department.

The Second Review Committee will conduct a blind review of the application against the admissions criteria to determine if the applicant could be successful in the Signature program. If the second review committee determines that the applicant can be successful in the Signature program of his/her choice, the applicant will be included in the qualified selection pool.

Students Receiving Specialized Support Services

Upon meeting the minimum qualification through the blind review and second review process, 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 and/or location meeting.

A meeting will be scheduled by the WCSD SACTE Department at the middle school site to include a WCSD District Administrator, District Special Education or ESL Administrator, SACTE Department representative, and 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). This team will examine the IEP and 504 Plan, or equivalent, to help determine which supplementary aids, supports and services are required for the student to

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be successful. Team decision 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

Should the team determine that the desired Signature Academy program meets the student's needs and can be considered best placement and/or location, the student will be placed in the pool of qualified candidates for the selection process.

Notification of Eligibility

Those who meet the program criteria through the processes outlined above will be included in the qualified selection pool. Students who meet the qualification criteria 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 Academy program. Each school submits, by program, the number of open seats 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 the number of applicants for either group exceeds the reserved percentage, the District will randomly select qualified students to fill the seats. The names of the students who are not selected for the available seats will then be randomly selected to determine order and be placed on a Wait List for that program.

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. 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

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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 selection to a Signature Academy program, 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 transition meeting to modify the current 504/IEP/ELL goals and accommodations. **This meeting must take place before final acceptance to the Signature Academy program will be granted and must occur prior to the end of the school year.**

The transition meeting will be scheduled by the WCSD SACTE Department at the high school site to include a WCSD District Administrator, District Special Education or ESL Administrator, SACTE Department representative, the student's current 504/IEP/MTSS/ESL facilitator, and the high school 504/IEP/ESL team (to include the high school principal or designee, counselor, special education/ESL teacher, a core academic teacher and a Signature Academy teacher, parents and student). This team will evaluate the current 504/IEP/MTSS/ELL goals, adaptations and modifications and make changes as necessary to reflect the Signature Academy placement and/or location. Reasonable accommodations will be made at the designated Signature Academy high school for any students with a disability who was selected, as required under Section 504, IDEA, and the Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended.

Late Applicants

Late applications will be accepted beginning two weeks after the posted deadline. Applications will not be processed or considered until after all on-time, qualified applicants have been placed into a Signature Academy program. Upon consideration of late applications, the same process, as outlined above, will be used. Qualified applicants with a desire to enter a program that has no vacancies will be placed at the bottom of the Wait List.

Parent Appeal Procedure

The parents 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:

1. 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**, to:
 - a. Emailed Signatures&CTE@washoeschools.net
 - b. Mailed or dropped off to 380 Edison Way, Reno, NV, 89502.
2. 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 minimum criteria for the qualified selection pool.

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- a. If the WCSD SACTE Department determines that the student's application was submitted by the designated deadlines, met the selection criteria, and was included in the random lottery (when applicable), then the appeal process ends.
- b. If the WCSD SACTE Department determines that the student's application was submitted by the designated deadlines and met the selection criteria, but was not included in the random lottery (when applicable), corrective action will be taken which may include:
 - i. Placing the student in the program, or
 - ii. Placing the student in a preferential status on the Wait List.
3. 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.
4. 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.
 - a. 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.
 - b. 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 a committee that includes a District Area Superintendent, two department Directors, the Chief Academic Officer.
 - i. Based on the results of the committee review, the Chief Academic Officer will render a final decision within 10 school/working days.
 - ii. An Appeal Review Notification will be sent to the parent/guardian indicating the final decision.
5. If a parent/guardian chooses to appeal the final decision of the Chief Academic Officer, the parent/guardian must submit a written request for **Further Appeal Consideration** to the Deputy Superintendent within 20 calendar days of the mailing date of the Appeal Review notification. A review of all relevant information will be conducted and a written decision given to the parent/guardian within twenty school/working days of the receipt of the appeal.

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.

Behavior School Students

Students who currently attend a behavior school, either within the Washoe County School District or outside of the District, are not eligible to apply, nor accept a seat in a Signature Academy program until they have successfully met the conditions of the behavior school program and been released to return to a regular school environment. Referral to a behavior school program after being selected and/or accepting a seat to a Signature Academy program will nullify a student's seat.

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 all qualified students residing in Washoe County have been placed.

Athletic Participation by Accepted Students

Students who are accepted to a Signature Academy program in a school different than their zoned high school will be placed on an Inter-WCSD Variance that meets NIAA regulations. Students entering a Signature Academy program as a freshman or sophomore shall be eligible to participate in sports at a sub-varsity level only at the school they are attending (students may not continue to play at their zoned school while attending a Signature Academy program at a different school). Students entering a Signature Academy program as a junior or senior at a school other than their zoned high school will be ineligible for 180 school days.

If a student returns to his/her zoned school any time after attending a Signature Academy program in a non-zoned school, the student will lose his/her athletic eligibility for the remainder of the current year, as well as an additional 180 school days for any sport in which the student's name appeared on an NIAA (varsity) roster.

Students who attend the Academy of Arts, Careers & Technology are eligible to participate in athletics at their zoned high school only.