

Choice Lottery Application, Selection, Admissions, and Overview

HCS School Choice Definitions

School Choice: In addition to the zone school, families can apply to various programs in Kindergarten through 12th grade through a randomized choice lottery application process each school year. These programs provide opportunities such as innovative learning experiences, unique academic curricula, theme-based programs, eLabs, project-based learning, and individualized learning communities. School choice options include Magnet schools, Open Enrollment schools, Future Ready Institutes, and Early Post-Secondary Options.

Magnet School: Hamilton County curriculum standards and benchmarks form the foundation around which each magnet school theme and philosophy is developed while allowing each magnet school to be unique in its approach to instruction. Magnet programs in Hamilton County offer transportation options for out of zone students through centralized drop off and pick up points across the county.

Open Enrollment School: Open Enrollment schools in Hamilton County are neighborhood schools with programs created based on community response and school interest to provide more choice to students across the county. District transportation will not be provided to students living out-of-zone of an Open Enrollment school. Parents/guardians are responsible for their student's transportation to an Open Enrollment school.

Early Post-Secondary Options: The Early Postsecondary Opportunities offer students the chance to earn postsecondary credit during high school to jumpstart their post-graduation plans. Hamilton County Schools provides 5 full-time options: Collegiate High at Chattanooga State, Polytech Academy, Mechatronics Akademie at Volkswagen, Gestamp Work-Based Learning Program, and Sequoyah High School in addition to EPSO options offered at zone and Magnet high schools.

Future Ready Institutes: The Future Ready Institutes are offered in all 14 zone high schools, offering students small learning cohorts with career, theme-based teaching, and learning. Future Ready Institutes' principles include relevant instruction, partnerships beyond school, postsecondary jump start, and student choice.

Application, Selection, and Admissions Processes for Choice Lottery Schools

- a. Admission to choice schools/programs is on a space-available basis through the application. The application period runs annually from November 15 through January 31. Seats will be first filled by those applications received during the official application period. Applications may be filled out online at www.hcde.org/choosehamilton
- b. In the event there are more applicants than available seats, a lottery will be used to assign students a seat number according to their choice(s) indicated on their application. Any further openings are filled first from the waitlist. Waitlists expire on the first day of school of each school year and are not carried over to future years.
- c. If there is space available, children of full-time staff members may attend the choice school where their parent/guardian works full-time, but a choice school application must be completed.
- d. Incomplete applications will not be processed. Falsifying any information on the choice lottery application automatically disqualifies the application. Duplicate applications will be voided.
- e. Placement to any choice school is not confirmed until the parents/guardians accept the offered seat within 7 business days of offer.
- f. If a student applies and is accepted to more than one choice school placement, the student can only accept one choice seat. They will forfeit the other seat(s) and the seat(s) will be offered to the next student on the waitlist.
- g. Once admitted to a desired choice school, the student must remain at the school for the entire school year unless a Zero Tolerance offense occurs. Any other requests for a transfer during the school year must be approved by the Chief of Staff or their designee.

Future Ready Institute specific policies:

- i. It is critical that a student who applies for an Institute does so based on his or her interest in the college and career theme of the Institute. If a student withdraws from an institute, he or she must return to his or her zoned high school. Although a student may withdraw at any point in the school year, it is important to note this could impact a student's ability to complete a career and technical education (CTE) pathway. Parents and students should consult the school administration and guidance counselor prior to withdrawal. Mid-Year transfers from FRI's must be approved by the Director of Future Ready Institutes or their designee.

- ii. If students are attending the Institute out of zone, they must be enrolled in the Institute classes to remain at the school of choice. If the student, at the end of a school year, decides to enroll in classes that are not aligned with the Institute pathway, he or she will be withdrawn from the Institute and asked to return to his or her zoned high school.
- iii. Pending availability, a student who has transferred as a freshman in the middle of the 2022-2023 school year can be enrolled in the school's Institute.
- iv. Once a student has been accepted to an Institute, he or she is now considered a member of that school. If a student withdraws from the Institute, he or she must return to their zoned high school. If a student chooses to practice or play on a school sports team and then leave the Institute, the student should speak with the Athletic Director about eligibility rules for transfer students before withdrawing, as he or she must follow the existing transfer or hardship policies established by the TSSAA. See the TSSAA website <http://www.tssaa.org> for further clarification.

Sibling Preference at Magnet and Open Enrollment Schools

Definition of sibling for preference at Magnet or Open Enrollment School- brother, sister, half-brother, half-sister, step-brother or step-sister of a student currently enrolled at applying magnet and resides at the same address of the currently enrolled student. This does NOT include aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, etc. In cases involving joint custody, legal documentation is required.

Sibling Status: If space is available and a choice lottery application has been completed, siblings are accepted into the choice school in which their brother or sister currently attends.

Current families will be given a Sibling Identification Form to notify the school of incoming Kindergarten students. All families must complete the choice application process by January 31 to be eligible for admission.

The sibling preference is not considered until the currently enrolled student has been at Magnet or Open Enrollment school for one year and both the student and the parent(s) have successfully met the school's requirements.

Multiple Births: If during the lottery, one twin or triple is drawn and receives a seat, then the other sibling(s) will have automatic entrance for that year.

Application, Selection, and Admissions Processes for Center for Creative Arts

- a. Acceptance into Center for Creative Arts requires BOTH an application through the choice lottery process and successful completion of an audition, as specified by the school administration.
- c. Sibling preference is not considered at CCA due to the nature of auditions.

Magnet School Balanced Choice Lottery

- d. Students applying to Battle Academy (K), CSAS (K), CSLA (K), Normal Park (K, 6), and STEM School (9) must complete a choice lottery application during the choice lottery window.
- e. A student will be entered into a random lottery based on the school board district in which they live. Each school board district will allocate a percentage of seats to Battle Academy (K), CSAS (K), CSLA (K), Normal Park (K), and STEM School (9) based on the number of students living in each school board district. Any further openings are filled first from the waitlist per the school board district. The waitlist expires on the first day of school for the applying year.
- f. Application – Only the student’s parent or guardian may apply for admission to the STEM School Chattanooga. The Office of School Choice has established an admissions procedure that will provide transparent and equitable opportunities for all applicants. If an application is not made during the application time frame, or denied, students, shall report to their zone school at the beginning of the new school year.
- g. Only ONE application will be considered for each student. Duplicate applications will be voided.

CSAS and CSLA 3rd through 11th Grade Applicants

For grades 3rd-11th, CSAS and CSLA admit students on a first-come, first-served basis from preexisting waitlists. Applicants will be notified about acceptance between March and until the day before classes begin in August each school year.

CSAS and CSLA are currently not taking applications for 3rd through 12th grade at this time. Once the waitlist for each grade is exhausted, the choice lottery application process will be used to fill seats for that grade level.

Once a seat is available, and the applicant is offered a seat, pending grade promotion. The admissions office will contact the applicant's family to set up a required admissions conference. The admissions conference serves as an opportunity for the applicant and his/her parents to learn more about CSAS/CSLA and to discuss shared expectations. Attendance at an admissions conference is required prior to admission to CSAS/CSLA.

Applicants offered seats in 10th-12th grade must provide a current transcript to be considered for a position. If the student is not on grade level, (i.e. will not have the required credits to graduate from CSAS), he/she is not eligible for admission to CSAS.

Home-schooled students must either provide standardized test scores showing grade level proficiencies, or take a site-based assessment prior to being offered a position.

Late Applicants (those interested after January 31)

After January 31, any requests for a seat at a choice school will be done by completing a Late Application for Choice Lottery Schools.

This Late Application for Choice Lottery Schools will be posted on our website beginning March 1 until July 1.

Any Late Application will be added to this list at the bottom in the order of the date received. These Late Applications for Choice Lottery Schools will only be considered for possible placement AFTER all those that applied during the priority application period have been offered a choice seat.

Student Status for Choice Lottery

- a. After enrolling at a choice school, the choice student is not eligible to transfer to his/her zone school until the following school year. They may apply to a choice school when the next application period opens up for the following school year. The Office of School Choice may make exceptions to this policy. All students who show up for the first day of school are expected to remain in the choice school for the entire school year.
- b. Current choice students do not need to reapply to remain at their choice school beyond the current school year. However, in order for Magnet students to remain enrolled, the parents/guardians must attend required parent conferences and complete required parent

volunteer hours. The student also must have good attendance by the end of the school year and follow the Hamilton County Department of Education Code of Acceptable Behavior and Discipline Policy. (See Page 14 – Magnet Parent Commitment Form.)

- c. Zone students who attend a Magnet school for which they are zoned may apply to change their status to Magnet by going through the choice lottery process. Their place in the choice lottery pool will determine whether they receive magnet status.
- d. If a zone student at a choice school moves out of the zone and wishes to continue at that choice school the following year, they must complete a choice lottery application. Zone students who attend a magnet school are not guaranteed a magnet seat when they move out of the school's zone.
- e. Magnet schools with zone students will automatically accept those students with two proofs of residency. Proof of residency for zone students in a magnet school will need to be confirmed each year.
- f. Student athletes who transfer from a zone or a magnet school to another zone or magnet school will still fall under the TSSAA guidelines.
- g. Reciprocal agreements to participate in a sport that a magnet school does not offer will be at the discretion of the principals involved in the request.
- h. Magnet schools do not accept transfer or hardship students.
- i. If a choice school student fails a grade, they may return to the same choice school the following school year to repeat that grade if all other parent/student commitment requirements are met.

Magnet Parent/Guardian Commitments and Requirements

Parent/Guardian Conferences: Attending parent conferences is required each school year. One conference is usually for the fall semester and one for the spring semester. Parents who do not attend a conference shall be sent a letter stating that the conference must be held within two weeks of the originally scheduled conference. Missed Conference Letter. Each magnet school will send a list to the Office of Innovation and Choice of those parents who didn't respond to the letter requesting the parents/guardians to reschedule the conference.

Unexcused Absences and/or Unexcused Excessive Tardiness: If it is determined that a magnet student is accumulating an unacceptable number of unexcused absences and/or unexcused tardiness/early dismissals, a warning letter will be sent out. The warning letter should be sent out by the school as soon as a pattern of unexcused absences or unexcused tardiness is detected. Notifying the parents at the end of the first semester can be a good time as this will give the student time to improve. If the school administration does not see significant improvement in attendance, the student will lose his/her magnet seat.

Eight unexcused absences and/or ten unexcused tardiness can cause a student to lose his/her choice seat. A final letter will be sent out by the school at the end of the school year to those students whose attendance didn't drastically improve informing them that they must enroll in their zoned school for the following school year. (Attendance Warning Letter and Attendance Final Letter.)

Failure to meet the requirements to remain in a choice school will result in the student being sent back to his/her zone school

Inappropriate Behavior: After appropriate interventions to correct inappropriate behavior have been attempted, the student will lose his/her choice seat if the following circumstances occur:

Student's behavior is disruptive in the school setting or on the bus to the extent that it not only interferes with his/her learning, but also indicates a lack of self-discipline or respect for others.

Parent support and involvement are not adequate to insure the child's academic and behavioral success at the magnet school.

As soon as a pattern of inappropriate behavior is noticed, a warning letter will be sent to the parents/guardians. If the misbehavior continues, then a final behavior letter will be sent and the student must enroll in his/her zoned school for the following school year. (Behavior Warning Letter and Behavior Final Letter.)

Parents/Guardians are required to attend two parent/teacher conferences each school year. Parents with scheduling conflicts must plan to participate in a teacher conference within two weeks of the original conference date. Failure to complete the two-parent/teacher conferences will result in the student being dis-enrolled from CSAS/CSLA at the end of the school year. They may reapply to the school after one school year.

- 5). Students with 8 unexcused absences or 10 unexcused tardiness/early dismissals will be dis-enrolled for the following school year. They may reapply after one school year. A warning letter

will be sent as soon as a pattern of unexcused absences and unexcused tardiness is determined. If there is tremendous improvement in attendance, then there is a possibility that the seat will not be withdrawn.

1. Providing false information regarding residency or sibling status will disqualify an applicant's enrollment.
2. All transfer requests to another Hamilton County School must be approved by the Chief of Staff.
3. Exit Policy: After appropriate interventions have been attempted without success, it may be recommended that a child be withdrawn from a Magnet school if the following circumstances occur:
 - a. Student's behavior is disruptive in the school setting to the extent that it not only interferes with his/her learning, but also indicates a lack of self-discipline or respect for others.
 - b. Student's academic experiences and growth do not reflect commitment or self-motivation toward the learning process. This includes, but is not limited to, honoring academic and/or social support contracts.
4. Magnet school transportation is provided at pickup point locations. Most of these locations are other Hamilton County Schools. The safety of each student is of utmost importance to the Hamilton County Department of Education and its employees. With that in mind, parents are expected to be with their children when the bus arrives in the morning and when the bus drops off students in the afternoon. Students may be at risk if left at the bus stop in the morning or afternoon for any length of time. To ensure the safety of the students, transportation may be denied for students whose parents are not at the stop when the bus arrives.
5. When a principal at one of these pickup locations makes the Office of Innovation and Choice aware of a situation where the student is being dropped off too early or not picked up on time, a warning letter from the magnet school that the child attends will be sent to the parent indicating that the student is in danger of losing his/her magnet seat for the remainder of the year and the following year if the situation is not corrected immediately.
5. Failure to meet the requirements to remain in a magnet school will result in the student being sent back to his/her zone school. If the removal of the magnet seat is due to behavior or attendance, the other siblings in the family may remain enrolled at their magnet school as long as their behavior and attendance is acceptable. If the parents/guardians don't fulfill the two

parent conferences, then all magnet students of that family will lose their magnet seats. The student may reapply after being out one school year from the magnet schools. Kindergarten students and new magnet school applicants of that family will not be offered seats for that school year.

Kindergarten Procedures

Children enrolled in a school-based Pre-K program must fill out a choice lottery application if they wish to attend kindergarten at their current magnet location or if they wish to switch to another choice kindergarten program. This includes Pre-K children at Battle Academy, Brown Academy, and Normal Park Lower School. These applicants must follow the same procedures for acceptance as any other student would.

Students enrolled in the UTC Pre-K program at Brown and Battle are offered entrance into that school's kindergarten as long as they have filled out a choice lottery application during the December-January choice lottery application period for the upcoming school year and select that school as their first choice. Families from UTC Pre-K program

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