

Office of Magnet Programs

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. What are magnet programs?**

Magnet programs are theme-oriented programs that must be accessed through the magnet application process. They provide in-depth experiences and distinct choices for students with different interests, talents, and aptitudes. All magnet programs fulfill Baltimore County Public Schools' requirements for promotion and graduation.
- 2. How do I apply for a magnet program?**

You may obtain an application from a variety of sources: school counselors, magnet open houses, the Magnet *EXPO!*, public libraries, by mail, or via the Office of Magnet Programs' Web site. The parent/guardian should carefully review all application materials, noting that most middle and high schools require an **on-site audition/assessment that the student must attend**. The parent/guardian must attach the required report card information (middle and high only) and submit the application to the magnet office by the application deadline.
- 3. Are magnet programs only for Gifted & Talented students?**

No. The magnet programs address the interests and needs of a wide range of students. No admission priority is given to students in the GT program. Gifted and Talented programs are described in detail on the Office of Gifted & Talented Education's Web site (www.bcps.org/offices/gt).
- 4. Who may apply to magnet programs?**

Students who are eligible to attend a Baltimore County public school may apply. Grade level restrictions may be in place for certain programs. Additional information is available from the Office of Magnet Programs' Web site (www.bcps.org/offices/omp). Students who are homeless are entitled to apply to a magnet program just as any other student. (Please refer to PS 512 – www.bcps.org/offices/sss/manuals.html.) Residency proof requirements do not apply to homeless students who are eligible for enrollment in Baltimore County Public Schools as determined by the homeless education liaison's office.
- 5. May I select more than one magnet program on the application?**

You may select one (1) magnet program per school and up to three (3) schools.
- 6. How can I determine my child's zoned school?**

Baltimore County Public Schools maintains a boundary hotline (410-887-4125) and a Web site (<http://www.bcps.org/apps/boundaries/>) that can provide you with this information.
- 7. Do students currently enrolled in magnet programs receive preference in selection for magnet programs at the next level (middle or high)?**

No. Current magnet students must reapply for the next level (ex. fifth grader going to middle school or eighth grader going to high school) and are not provided with any preference in the application process.
- 8. Do siblings of students who are in magnet programs get preferential placement?**

ONLY kindergarten applicants who have an older sibling who is currently enrolled in and who will continue to attend the same magnet program for which admission is being sought receive preferential placement for that program. Sibling applicants do not receive preferential placement at any other grade level.
- 9. If I am currently on a wait list for a magnet program, do I need to re-apply, and, if so, do I get preferential placement?**

All students seeking admission to a magnet program must apply for the school year for which admission is sought. Please be aware that grade-level restrictions may be in place for certain programs. All eligible applicants receive equal consideration.

10. May I fax my application?

No. All applications are to be sent via U.S. mail or an approved carrier. Applications may also be hand-delivered to the Office of Magnet Programs, 6901 Charles Street, ESS Building – Room 106, Towson, MD 21204.

11. May I change my selection(s)?

ANY changes in program selection(s) MUST be made by submitting a **NEW** application **by the application deadline, November 30, 2010.**

12. How will I know that my application was received?

The Office of Magnet Programs does not mail out verifications of receipt for applications. To ensure that your application is received by the magnet office, parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to send the application via certified mail, with a return receipt requested from the U.S. Post Office. The certified mail receipt serves as your proof of timely submission.

13. What happens if my application is received after the deadline or is not received?

Applications will not be processed without proof of timely submission (i.e., certified mail receipt). This includes applications postmarked or hand-delivered after the application deadline, as well as those received after the deadline without a clear date stamp.

14. What if I moved to Baltimore County after the deadline?

Parents/Guardians of students who are new residents of Baltimore County **after** the application deadline and before the start of the school year for which admission is being sought may submit a letter of interest for up to three (3) magnet programs, one (1) program per school, to the Office of Magnet Programs. Information regarding the new resident application process, the letter of interest, and supporting documentation is made available on the Office of Magnet Programs' Web site beginning in April. Letters are reviewed as seats become available.

15. What are the requirements for admission to a magnet program?

Elementary

Elementary magnet school applicants must be eligible to attend a Baltimore County Public School and meet Maryland Age of Entry requirements at the time of application for the grade level for which admission is being sought or must have requested early admission to kindergarten testing with their zoned elementary schools. (A copy of the letter requesting early admission to kindergarten testing *must be attached* to the magnet application.) There are no other academic or performance criteria for the elementary magnet programs. Kindergarten applicants who have an older sibling who is currently enrolled in and who will continue to attend the same magnet program for which admission is being sought are given priority in placement in that magnet program. All remaining seats are assigned centrally through a random lottery selection process.

Middle and High

The school system has approved specific admission criteria for each of the middle and high school magnet programs. Students interested in applying to a particular magnet program should obtain all necessary application materials from the Office of Magnet Programs' Web site, the student's zoned school, or the Office of Magnet Programs. At the secondary level, no special consideration is given to students who have siblings currently attending the magnet school or program. The 10% and 20% priority placements are first applied (described below) and all remaining seats are then assigned centrally through a random lottery selection process.

The 10% and 20% Priority Placements

According to Superintendent's Rule 6400: *Magnet Schools Admission*, a percentage of seats may

be reserved for students who show exceptional commitment and promise in the magnet program. At the middle school level, up to 10% of the available seats in a program may be filled prior to the random lottery selection process. At the high school level, up to 20% of the available seats may be filled prior to the random lottery selection process. Priority placements are based solely on the approved magnet assessments.

16. What is the magnet assessment? (for middle and high ONLY)

Most secondary schools with magnet programs hold on-site assessments. These may include an audition, practicum, interview, writing sample, test, or performance assessment. **It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to note the date and time of the assessment, to review the application materials to determine the method of notification for the magnet assessment, and to ensure that the applicant attends the assessment.** If an assessment is indicated in the application materials and notification has not been received at least 5 days prior to the scheduled assessment date, **it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to contact the school to schedule an appointment for the magnet assessment.**

17. Why is it important to obtain the Assessment Guidelines prior to the assessment(s)? (for middle and high ONLY)

The Assessment Guidelines contain specific information regarding the components of each assessment and any preparation required prior to the assessment. The guidelines may be downloaded from the Office of Magnet Programs' Web site, or they may be obtained from individual schools at which assessments are held. It is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to obtain the Assessment Guidelines for each program to which the applicant applies.

18. How is academic eligibility determined? (for middle and high ONLY)

Both grades and performance factors may be reviewed for mathematics, language arts, social studies, and science. In some programs, physical education or world languages may also be reviewed. Only letter grades are used in the evaluation process – percentages will be converted to letter grades using the scale provided by the reporting school. **There is no weighting or special consideration given to grades received in gifted and talented classes, trimester grades, or grades that are calculated on scales other than those used by the Baltimore County Public Schools.**

19. What if my child has documented testing accommodations?

Students receiving special education services are given the same consideration in the selection process as all other students. The Office of Magnet Programs will obtain the documented testing accommodations for BCPS' students. Parents/Guardians of applicants not attending a Baltimore County public school must submit documented testing accommodation requirements with the magnet application. The individual accommodations and modifications, as documented, will be provided during the magnet assessment process at the schools.

Parents/Guardians are strongly encouraged to work with the school's Special Education team and/or Special Education Transition Facilitator in completing the Magnet application.

20. How and when will I be notified of my admission status?

Applicants receive written notification of their status by early March. The following status categories are possible:

- **Admitted:** The applicant qualified for and is offered a seat in the program.
- **Wait Listed:** The applicant qualified but is not offered a seat at that time (see below). Instead, the applicant is assigned a wait list number based on his/her computer-generated random number.
- **Not Admitted:** The applicant did not meet the minimum stated admission criteria for the program and will not be offered a seat.
- **Disqualified:** The applicant did not complete the application process. Applications are considered incomplete if any required materials are not submitted or if the applicant does

- not attend the required audition/assessment for the magnet program(s) to which he/she applied. The applicant is not offered admission to the program nor placed on the wait list.
- o **Not Eligible:** An application was submitted for a program to which the applicant could not apply due to residency or age-of-entry status.

21. What does it mean to be on a wait list?

Magnet programs have limited seats at each grade. When more applicants qualify for a magnet program than there are seats to accommodate them, a centralized random lottery selection process is used to fill the seats. Placement on the wait list means that the applicant met the admission criteria for the program, but, as a result of the lottery process, was not offered initial placement in the program.

22. How are program seats filled from the wait list?

If the parent/guardian of a student who has been admitted to a magnet program declines the seat in the program, the magnet office will use the telephone number(s) provided on the application to make one phone call to the next person on the wait list to offer the seat. **It is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to ensure that their contact information is up-to-date.** From the date of the offer, the parent/guardian will have **five (5) business days to accept the offer.** After that time, the offer will be revoked and the seat will be offered to the next person on the wait list. This process continues until the beginning of the second semester of the following school year. Updates to the wait list status are posted on the Office of Magnet Programs' Web site.

23. If my child is denied or not called from the wait list, may I apply again next year?

Some grade-level restrictions may be in place for certain programs. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to review the magnet brochures and applications to determine whether or not applications are accepted for the grade level and program(s) of interest.

24. Is it possible for my child to transfer from one magnet program to another?

No. Students may not transfer from one magnet program to another. Students wishing to change magnet programs must apply and qualify during the regular application cycle. Some grade-level restrictions may be in place for certain programs.

25. Will my child receive transportation?

Transportation is provided to students who live within the transportation zone of a magnet school or program. The transportation zones can be found in the magnet brochure, distributed to all students in PreK, Grade 5, and Grade 8, and available for download on the Office of Magnet Programs' Web site. At the elementary level, some transportation is arranged as shuttle service from the home school location. This may require students to ride the regular neighborhood bus or to walk to the home school, where they are picked up as a group and then transported to the magnet program. At the secondary level, transportation will be provided between a limited number of pick-up points, located at designated school sites in each of the five (5) geographical areas. Schools will notify students of their respective pick-up points prior to the opening of school for the upcoming year. Parents are responsible for transporting their student to and from the pick-up points. Pick-up points do not fall under the same guidelines as regular bus stops with regard to distance and walking conditions. In addition, supervision is not provided by the school system at pick-up points. Transportation is not provided for students who reside outside the transportation zone of a magnet program.

26. Can I request a temporary leave of absence from a magnet program?

Students admitted to the magnet programs may remain in the program as long as their parents/guardians are residents of Baltimore County, and the student has not been withdrawn to attend another school, public or private. A parent/guardian of a student enrolled in a magnet program may request a temporary leave of absence for up to one year. Any request for temporary leave from a magnet school or program must be approved, in advance of such leave of absence, by the principal of the school. Guidelines for such a request can be found in

Superintendent's Rule 6400: *Magnet Schools Admission*. Re-enrollment in a magnet program will not be granted if the student is withdrawn without a pre-approved leave of absence.

27. What if my question is not addressed here?

Please explore the Office of Magnet Programs' Web site in depth to get answers to other questions. To help you in your research, the Web site contains links to a variety of information including program descriptions, application materials, timelines, a flyer for the Magnet *EXPO!*, magnet open house schedules, and magnet assessment schedules. There is also a map showing the locations of the magnet programs to assist applicants in making application selections.

For additional information, please call the Office of Magnet Programs at (410) 887-4127.