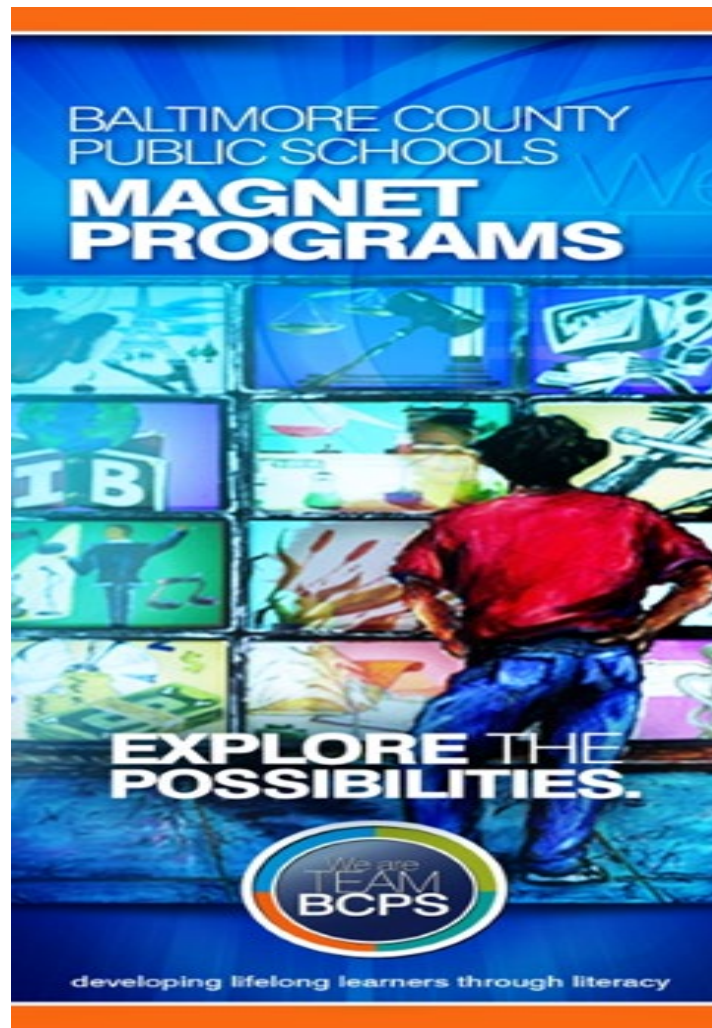


Internal
Audit
Report

Curriculum & Instruction – Office of Magnet Programs

Magnet Admissions Audit

September 2022



Baltimore County Public Schools
Office of Internal Audit

Andrea M. Barr, CGAP, CBM
Chief Auditor



Report Highlights

Magnet Admissions

September 2022

Objective

To determine whether the magnet program applications and admissions criteria and processes were fairly applied to all eligible students.

Background

The Office of Magnet Programs is a sub-unit of the Department of Academic Programs and Options within the Division of Curriculum and Instruction.

The mission of the office is to enhance students' educational experiences and academic performances by providing unique learning environments and/or experiences.

Audit Period

July 2021 – June 2022

Summary of Results

The required approvals for magnet seat projections were not properly documented in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).

- The individual school forms were not completed.
- There is no evidence that the Community Superintendent for the West Zone reviewed and approved the seat projections for magnet schools.

The disqualification reason(s) were not consistently documented.

- Thirteen of the 30 sampled disqualified students did not include a reason for the disqualification.

Audit Rating

Satisfactory

The Office of Magnet Programs received a satisfactory audit rating for the magnet admissions process:

- controls are largely operating in a satisfactory manner and are providing some level of assurance,
- the risks were effectively managed, and
- there were no high-rated or medium-rated issues identified.

Contents

BACKGROUND 1

COMMENDATIONS 1

RESULTS 2

 Issue 1: Required approvals for magnet seat projections were not properly documented in accordance with the SOP. 2

 Issue 2: Disqualification reasons were not consistently documented. 3

AUDIT RATING 4

OBJECTIVE, SCOPE & METHODOLOGY 4

APPENDIX A – Issue Rating Definitions 5

APPENDIX B – Audit Rating Definitions 6

BACKGROUND

Organizational Status & Information	The Office of Magnet Programs is a part of the Office of Educational Opportunities within the Department of Academic Programs and Options. There are currently 32 magnet programs: four at elementary schools, 12 at middle schools, and 16 at high schools.
Regulations	The Office of Magnet Programs is governed by Board Policy and Rule 6400 – Magnet Programs. It is also guided by Rule 5140 – Special Transfers.

COMMENDATIONS

Equitable Access	<p>The Office of Magnet Programs offers equitable access to magnet programs for BCPS students. The Office of Magnet Programs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Provides an informative website with program descriptions.2. Offers an annual Magnet Expo. The Magnet Expo features 32 schools with magnet programs and exhibitions so that parents and students can learn about all the options available to them.3. Presents an application meeting to assist parents with the magnet application process.4. Coordinates Magnet Showcases held in the Fall where students can learn about specific programs by attending events at each magnet school. There are also showcase videos for each school on the website.
Seat Projections	Magnet seat projections were not exceeded.
Admissions	Sampled students were properly admitted to magnet programs.
Smart Choice App	<p>During the period under review, the Office of Magnet Services used a comprehensive magnet application management system called “Smart Choice.”¹ Smart Choice:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Provides an online parent application portal.2. Sends reminder and deadline emails to parents.3. Conducts the lottery selection process.4. Organizes student application information in a logical way.5. Provides an audit trail of lottery results.

¹ This system will no longer be used as of 9/30/2022 due to increased cost and a transition of the application management system to the Focus platform.

RESULTS

Issue 1: Required approvals for magnet seat projections were not properly documented in accordance with the SOP.

Issue Rating	Low
Background	<p>The SOP for Magnet Seat Determination indicates that the Executive Directors for Schools and the Executive Director of Educational Opportunities will review and approve the seat projections by signing individual school forms. Board Rule 6400 also indicates that the Executive Director of Educational Opportunities must review and approve seat projections.</p> <p>The Magnet Seat Determination SOP also indicates that the Community Superintendents must review and approve the magnet seat projections for their zone.</p>
Issue	<p>The SOP for Magnet Seat Determination was not followed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The individual school forms were not completed.2. There is no evidence that the Community Superintendent for the West Zone reviewed and approved the seat projections for magnet schools.
Effect	<p>If individual magnet seat projections are not completed, there is not an official record that each school’s magnet seats were reviewed and approved. This could lead to admitting an excess number of students to a magnet program not capable of that many students.²</p>
Recommendation	<p>Ensure that all approvals noted in Board Rule 6400 and the Magnet Seat Determination SOP are documented and obtained.</p>
Management’s Corrective Action	<p><i>Documentation of the approved magnet seat projections will be obtained and maintained by saving a PDF of the approval e-mail from the Director.</i></p>
Responsible Person(s)	<p><i>Bryan Stoll, Coordinator</i></p>
Anticipated Completion Date	<p><i>November 1, 2022</i></p>

² It should be noted during the period under review, none of the magnet seat projections for any high school was exceeded.

Issue 2: Disqualification reasons were not consistently documented.

Issue Rating	Low
Background	There is no requirement to document and support the reason for a student’s disqualification for a placement. A student may be eligible for a magnet school lottery, but later disqualified for placement. Often the reason for disqualification is that the student did not attend the magnet assessment appointment.
Issue	<p>For 13 of the 30 sampled disqualified students, there was no reason for the disqualification noted in the records. The Magnet Specialist stated it was most likely because they were no shows to the assessment appointments, but this is not formally documented.</p> <p>This occurred because school-based magnet staff and Office of Magnet Programs staff who enter information for student assessments do not consistently document if a student did not show up for the assessment that resulted in their disqualification.</p>
Effect	Since there is no information for why certain students were disqualified, there could be questions from parents about the validity of their child’s disqualification.
Recommendation	Require documentation to support all reasons for student disqualifications.
Management’s Corrective Action	<i>School-based magnet coordinators will be instructed to identify the reason a student is disqualified in FOCUS or on a spreadsheet when the assessment scores are submitted to the magnet programs central office. The central office staff will verify that the reason for disqualification is documented consistently.</i>
Responsible Person(s)	<i>Bryan Stoll, Coordinator</i>
Anticipated Completion Date	<i>Instructions for documenting disqualification reasons will be provided to school-based magnet coordinators at the Nov. 16, 2022 High School Assessment Planning meeting. Verification of documentation will be completed by February 17, 2023 (after assessment scores are submitted and reviewed).</i>

AUDIT RATING

- Satisfactory** The Office of Magnet Programs received a satisfactory audit rating for the magnet admissions process:
- controls are largely operating in a satisfactory manner and are providing some level of assurance,
 - the risks were effectively managed, and
 - there were no high-rated or medium-rated issues identified.

See **APPENDIX B** for the audit rating definitions.

OBJECTIVE, SCOPE & METHODOLOGY

- Objective** The objective of this audit determines whether the risks and controls developed by the Office of Magnet Programs for the admissions process at the high school level were effective and efficient.

- Scope** The audit period is July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022.

- Methodology** To achieve the audit objectives, we performed the following:
- Planned the audit in cooperation with the Office of Magnet Programs staff to ensure an understanding of the BCPS magnet admissions process.
 - Interviewed key personnel knowledgeable of the magnet admissions process.
 - Reviewed Board Policy and Rule 6400: Magnet Programs and relevant SOPs.
 - Evaluated risks and controls over the magnet admissions process.
 - Performed detailed tests to support our conclusions.
 - We randomly selected samples of qualified and disqualified students to ensure that they were properly qualified or disqualified for magnet programs.
 - We compared the number of magnet seats per program to actual student admissions to ensure that the seats were not exceeded.
 - We reviewed the methods by which the Office of Magnet Programs distributes information about magnet programs.

APPENDIX A – Issue Rating Definitions

Issues will be rated high, medium, or low based on these factors:

1. Level of financial impact.
2. Extent of violation of external laws, regulations, and restrictions.
3. Lack of documented policy, procedure, or noncompliance with a policy in an important matter.
4. Lack of internal controls or ineffective controls and procedures.
5. Fraud, theft, inappropriate conflicts of interest or serious waste of school system resources.
6. Significant opportunity exists for real gains in processing efficiency.
7. Poor cost controls or potential for significant savings and/or revenue generation.
8. Condition places the school systems reputation at risk.
9. Ineffective reporting and/or communication structure results in financial risks and/or inefficient operations.
10. Post audit implementation review reveals little or no effort to implement an action plan in response to a previous audit finding.

APPENDIX B – Audit Rating Definitions

Audit Rating	Definition
<p>Unsatisfactory</p>	<p>Design - Design of controls is ineffective in addressing key risks Documentation and communication - Non-existent documentation and/or communication of controls/policies/procedures Operation/implementation - Controls are not in operation or have not yet been implemented Compliance - Significant breaches of legislative requirements and/or departmental policies and guidelines Risk management - Risks are not being managed Issues/deficiencies - Most issues were rated as high and urgent corrective actions are necessary</p>
<p>Needs Improvement</p>	<p>Design - Design of controls only partially addresses key risks Documentation and communication - Documentation and/or communication of controls/policies/procedures is incomplete, unclear, inconsistent, or outdated Operation/implementation - Controls are not operating consistently and/or effectively or have not been implemented in full Compliance - Breaches of legislative requirements and/or departmental policies and guidelines have occurred Risk management - Risks are not effectively managed which could result in failure to ensure school objectives are met Issues/deficiencies - Some high-rated and/or medium-rated issues were identified</p>
<p>Satisfactory</p>	<p>Design - Design of controls is largely adequate and effective in addressing key risks Documentation and communication - Controls/policies/procedures have been formally documented and are up to date but are not proactively communicated to relevant stakeholders Operation/implementation - Controls are largely operating in a satisfactory manner and are providing some level of assurance Compliance - No known breaches of legislative requirements and/or departmental policies and guidelines have occurred Risk management - Risks are largely effectively managed Issues/deficiencies - No high-rated or medium-rated issues identified</p>