

The District shall provide innovative and engaging programs to attract, retain, and empower students in a rich academic environment. Directly aligned with the Board's Beliefs and Visions, the District's magnet schools embody the mandates for change on school choice, decentralization, school empowerment, and meaningful engagement. The Board commits to inclusion and equality in educational attainment, ownership, and engagement in the District's magnet programs, and the District shall not support patterns of exclusion and inequality.

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are used herein:

1. Community – In this policy is defined as the overall District jurisdictional boundary and may be referred to as the greater Houston area.
2. Magnet School – Defined in this policy, Magnet Schools are unique to Neighborhood Schools with 'Themes' in that they seek to draw students from outside the school's attendance zone using specified criteria. These schools receive magnet funding and provide transportation to non-zoned students.
3. Vanguard Magnet – While all District schools have Vanguard programs designed to serve the special needs of G/T students, there are, in addition to the Vanguard programs provided at all District schools, some schools that have a Vanguard Magnet program. There is a separate application for Magnet Vanguard programs. Qualified students can apply and, once accepted, receive transportation.
4. Neighborhood Vanguard Programs/Gifted and Talented (G/T) – Vanguard programs serve G/T identified students in neighborhood schools. Vanguard schools are addressed in separate policies. [See FDB(LOCAL) and EHBB(LOCAL)]
5. Neighborhood School – A school that serves its zoned population of students. A neighborhood school may offer specialized programming and can accept transfers if space is available but does not receive transportation or extra funding from the District.
6. Separate and Unique – A magnet school that does not have a defined attendance zone to the overall District jurisdictional boundary. This magnet school is also referred to as a dedicated or standalone magnet.

SCHOOLS AND TYPES
OF PROGRAMS

The magnet program in the District offers students a portfolio of kindergarten–grade 12 engaging, academically rigorous, and theme-based choices. The program seeks to recruit and draw a socioeconomically and ethnically diverse student body from

throughout the District with the ultimate goal of the student population reflecting the diversity of the District's metropolitan community.

The District's magnet schools and/or programs can be structured in the following ways:

- Elementary school – Application and, when applicable, testing for appropriate program. [See EHBB(LOCAL)]
- Secondary school – May require more specific qualifications for entrance, as identified by magnet theme or unique standalone magnet school, and is subject to auditions and/or portfolio for fine art programs. Secondary fine arts programs with auditions and/or portfolios are exempt from lottery process.

PROGRAM
CHARACTERISTICS

The District's magnet programs shall develop engaging curricula that meet the learning, wellbeing and civic needs of the District's student population and economic demands of the community. Each magnet program shall identify the following characteristics in the initial proposals as well as maintain the characteristics for evaluation on an ongoing basis:

1. Academic achievement and intellectual entrepreneurship as its core goals, enhanced by thematic programming, teaching philosophies, and real world experiences;
2. An enriched curriculum designed around a specialized theme or philosophy;
3. A socioeconomically and ethnically diverse student body;
4. Increased student access to the program through the District's awareness activities, communication, and transfer procedures in order to meet the magnet enrollment goal of 20 percent (or 100 students per grade level, whichever is less in secondary schools) of the students, who must be from outside the school's attendance zone;
5. Actively involves parent, community, and business partnerships; and
6. Demonstrate school expenditures in support of the program. [See FUNDING SYSTEM, below]

MEASURES OF
SUCCESS AND
ACCOUNTABILITY

The District shall track and use school performance and hold leadership accountable for results including but not limited to:

- Student academic outcomes aligned with the Board Monitoring System and/or current accountability standards; and

- Magnet enrollment goal of 20 percent (or 100 students per grade level, whichever is less in secondary schools) of the students, who must be from outside the school's attendance zone.

FUNDING SYSTEM

Equal access to instructional excellence requires fair and equitable resources. Board-approved, program funding systems shall be created that take into account program costs, unique themes, and innovation. Board-approved funding shall also be distributed to various magnet programs or themes based on a program or theme's needs via the annual budget allocation process and/or via a rotating capital allocation system. Annually, program funding shall be reviewed by the Board and any changes to the allocations are subject to Board approval as part of the overall budget process. Magnet students are eligible for transportation. [See CNA series]

ESTABLISHING A
MAGNET PROGRAM

Schools interested in establishing a magnet program shall submit a written proposal to the Office of School Choice. The proposal shall include the following elements:

- Program specifics;
- Building capacity, which accommodates the magnet enrollment goal of 20 percent (or 100 students per grade level, whichever is less in secondary schools) of the students, who must be from outside the school's attendance zone; and
- Financial sustainability.

The District may identify new programs in alignment to the District strategic plan. The community shall always be involved in the creation, maintenance, and sun-setting of a magnet program.

MODIFYING AN
EXISTING MAGNET
PROGRAM

A magnet program should have a clear focus and be sustainable across many years recognizable as a brand for the campus. Major modifications that substantially change a program, such as impacting funding or changing theme, require Board approval and at least one transition year for planning and communication.

Continued improvement should be an ongoing mindset and shall naturally require frequent, minor changes to programs. Community meetings must be offered to gather input and suggestions from the magnet school's community at the beginning and end of each school year. The community's input and suggestions shall be reviewed and retained by the school.

SUN-SETTING A
MAGNET PROGRAM

The District shall track and monitor school performance and hold school leadership accountable for results. The standards referenced herein, as well as the criteria outlined in the proposal, must be maintained for a magnet program to retain its status, funding,

and transportation. Changes in status shall require a transparent review process with a clear time line for implementation prior to the student application process.

STUDENT
APPLICATION,
SELECTION, AND
ADMISSION PROCESS

Qualifications for entering a magnet program are specific to each program and consistent by magnet theme. Entrance to elementary programs is based on available space. The entrance criteria and process shall be transparent, made readily available and easily accessible to the public with the key elements of objectivity, impartiality, fairness, and equity while complying with state and federal laws.

When there are more qualified applicants than space available, a school-specific lottery shall be used to select students.

The District shall operate a database to implement a Districtwide application process and track acceptance of students to individual programs.

[Reference: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement, Innovations in Education: Creating Successful Magnet Schools Programs, Washington, D.C., 2004]