

General Magnet Questions

For general information please visit our website at www.houstonisd.org/magnet or call the Magnet Department at (713) 556-6947. Find out more about HISD Vanguard (G/T) programs by calling the Advanced Academics Department at (713) 556-6954.

Q: What is a Magnet Program?

A: A Magnet Program offers a specialized focus of study designed to appeal to a wide variety of student interests and needs. Magnet programs do not have an attendance boundary; if you live anywhere within HISD, you may apply to any Magnet program. If you apply to a particular Magnet program, qualify for it, and there is space in it, you will be invited to attend.

Q: I have questions about my child's magnet status, but HISD offices are closed until Monday. What can I do?

A: Please review your child's magnet status carefully and read through the FAQs to see if your question has been answered. If not, please send an email to magnet@houstonisd.org or call the Magnet office at (713) 556-6947, on Monday during office hours, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Q: What is the difference between Magnet and Vanguard (G/T)?

A: Vanguard (G/T) program refers to any of the programs in the district designed to serve the needs of gifted and talented (G/T) children. So, when you see the word Vanguard, just think G/T. All schools have a Vanguard (G/T) program. Vanguard Magnets are just one of the subsets of Magnet programs, just like fine arts or STEM. These district-wide programs are designed to serve the needs of identified G/T students. (Students must meet the entrance criteria.)

Q: Which program is right for my child and family?

A: Before submitting an application, we recommend that you research the program focus, eligibility requirements, and curriculum. One of the best ways to do this is to visit the schools. While all of our Magnet programs are quality programs, a thorough exploration will enable you to determine the best match for you, your child, and your family.

Q: How may I find out more about the Magnet programs in HISD?

A: Contact the individual schools with questions specific to a particular school or program. For general information, please visit our website at www.houstonisd.org/magnet or call the Magnet Department at (713) 556-6947. Find out more about HISD Vanguard (G/T) programs by calling the Advanced Academics Department at (713) 556-6954.

Application Questions

Q: When may I submit an application?

A: Applications will be accepted by all Magnet Programs beginning September 30, 2016. Applications must be completed and received by December 9, 2016, to be considered in the first round of screening. All complete applications received within this window will receive equal consideration, with no advantage being given for those applying earlier during the window.

Q: What is the fastest way to apply?

A: Online. Not only is your application instantly processed, but you can print a copy of your selections for your records. Applying online will also give you access to the parent portal where notifications will be posted.

Q: How do I apply online?

A: Go to www.hisdchoice.com; you may also access the online application through the Magnet Website at www.houstonisd.org/magnet. Follow the instructions on the website to set up your account and complete your applications. You do not need to complete online applications all at one time. You may save incomplete applications for completion at another time. Once the applications are complete, you will click on "Submit." After you have submitted the applications, no more changes may be made, and you will see a confirmation screen. Print this screen for your records.

Q: I applied online last year or the year before. Should I create a new account?

A: No. It is very important that you use the same account.

Q: What do I do if the information that appears on my child's online application is incorrect?

A: When you enter your child's HISD ID# on the online application, much of the demographic information will be automatically filled in for you. If this information is incorrect, you need to contact your child's current school to have it corrected. If your child is not currently in an HISD school, you will need to contact the last HISD school he or she attended to request a correction.

Q: How do I submit the required documentation when I apply online?

A: Normally, students who were in HISD the entire 2015-2016 school year are not required to submit any documents. The District Matrix and Overall Core average will be automatically calculated and visible on the application portal for students who apply to secondary programs online and provide their HISD ID#. However, there are several options this year to submit documents for students who were not in HISD last year or for those who are missing documents.

1. **Upload directly** - The quickest option is to upload documents directly from within the online application. You will see a list of documents that need to be uploaded. Each document only needs to be uploaded once, even if it is required for multiple applications for the same student.

2. **Send by U.S. mail to the Office of School Choice** - Send *copies* of the documents to Magnet Applications, Office of School Choice, Houston Independent School District, 4400 West 18th Street, Houston, TX 77092. The copies will be kept for our records. In the online application system you will see a confirmation, once the documents have been uploaded.

3. **Drop off at the Office of School Choice** - You can leave copies of the required forms at our offices. Once you arrive at the address listed above, please check-in at the reception desk by the main entrance to the building.

4. **Deliver to schools' Magnet Offices** - You may deliver copies to each school to which you are applying.

Q: How do I apply with a paper application?

A: We always encourage parents to fill-out online applications but if you choose to submit the paper application, you will need to fill-out one application (Elementary, Middle or High School) that will cover all the schools to which you are applying. You should mail or hand-deliver the applications to the Office of School Choice at HISD's Hattie Mae White Educational Support Center, 4400 West 18th Street, Houston, TX, 77092.

Q: How do I submit the required documentation when I apply with a paper application?

A: When you submit a paper application, if at all possible, you should attach a complete set of all of the required documentation. In any case, documentation should be received by January 24, 2017. Your application is not considered complete until all the required documentation is received.

Q: The application asks for my child's Student ID#. Where can I find that?

A: The Student ID# is found on your child's report card, progress report, test reports, and on many of the communications you receive from your child's school. You can also find it online at HISD Parent Student Connect. If you are unable to find it anywhere else, call or ask at your child's current school.

Q: To how many Magnet programs may I apply?

A: You may apply to a maximum of 5 Magnet programs. It is recommended that parents weigh their options carefully and consider the following: If you apply to 5 Vanguard programs, and your student is not ultimately identified as Gifted and Talented, your student will not be considered for any of the Vanguard programs chosen.

Q: May I submit my applications online and in hard copy, "just to be sure"?

A: No. We ask that you submit only one type of application. Redundant applications will not increase the chances of acceptance and it may cause difficulties when the applications are processed.

Q: Do all schools have the same entrance requirements?

A: Different programs may use different data points to evaluate whether a student qualifies for the program. Some individual schools have additional requirements such as auditions and testing. Please visit the HISD magnet website, individual school websites, or contact the schools for further information. Qualification Scores and Processes for Applicants to 2017-2018 Secondary Magnet Programs are also posted on our website at www.houstonisd.org/magnet. If you are applying to a secondary program and were a student in HISD for the entire 2015-2016, your district matrix score will be auto-generated when you apply online.

Q: May I visit campuses I am considering?

A: School Choice Thursdays will be held every Thursday from October 6 through December 8. All campuses will provide school tours. The tours will start at 9:00 a.m. at elementary and K-8 schools (like T.H. Rogers and Wharton), and at 1:00 p.m. at middle and high schools. Many schools schedule additional tours – call or check their websites. Elementary and K-8 schools will offer additional 1:00 p.m. tours on October 27th and November 17th.

Q: If I live out of the HISD attendance district, may I apply?

A: Yes, you may apply at any time but out of district applications are only considered June 1, 2017; however, restrictions may apply. Out of district applicants are considered if no in-district applicants remain. HISD employees who live outside the HISD attendance district are considered to be in-district residents for the purposes of Magnet applications.

Q: Is there still time to consider other magnet schools?

A. Yes, applications may be submitted to schools with space available during Phase II (December 10, 2016 – May 31, 2017). Schools with space available will be posted on our website after the Phase I Notification Date.

Q. What if my child has disabilities?

A. Students with disabilities are required to follow the HISD application process for Magnet programs. A student with disabilities who meets the specified magnet criteria and is accepted for admission to a Magnet program is required to have an Admission, Review, and Dismissal/ Individualized Education Program (ARD/IEP) or Section 504 committee meeting prior to enrolling in the program to ensure that the student's IEP or Section 504 plan can be implemented in the Magnet program.

If the ARD/ IEP or Section 504 committee determines that the services in the IEP or Section 504 plan are not in alignment with those available within the Magnet program without fundamentally altering the Magnet curriculum (e.g., modifying the curriculum or grading criteria), then the ARD/IEP or Section 504 committee may recommend the student continue placement at the student's home/zoned or current campus.

When a student with disabilities needs certain accommodations documented in the IEP or Section 504 plan for an audition for a Magnet program, a request for accommodations may be submitted to the Magnet coordinator of the receiving program at least 10 school days prior to the audition.

Selection Process Questions

Q: What changes are there to the magnet application process?

A: The changes relate to two areas: 1) student qualification criteria — also known as “qualifying matrices,” and 2) the application process. The changes are designed to make the system more equitable and efficient.

Q. How do these changes improve the matrix system?

A: The new system is standardized so that one matrix applies to all non-Vanguard programs, with the exception of any auditions for secondary performing and visual arts programs. Vanguard magnet programs may require testing for G/T identification.

Q. What is ranking and how does it affect the application process?

A: During the first round of applications, Sept. 30–Dec. 9, 2016, parents can apply to up to 5 magnet programs and must rank their selections in order of preference. Once accepted into a program, all of a student's lesser-ranked applications, including any other acceptances, will be “dropped” or “released”, so that those spots can be offered to other students. For example, if you get accepted into your #1 ranked choice and applied to 3 programs, the #2 and #3 choice will be dropped.

Q: What if there are more qualified applications than there are spaces at a particular school?

A: Then all qualified applications received by the deadline, December 9, 2016, will be placed in a lottery. All the students will then be offered spaces in the order they are picked from the lottery. By 4 p.m., on March 23, 2017, the lottery results will be made available to the parents. Some qualified students will be offered spaces and some placed on a waitlist.

Q: Will the chances of my child being accepted into our top choice program be any better?

A: The odds will remain the same, but the duration of the wait-list period may be greatly reduced.

Q: If my child is accepted into our third-choice school, but wait-listed on the top two, does that mean we'll lose his/her spot on those wait lists?

A: No, wait-list rankings for all higher-priority schools would be maintained. Only schools ranked lower than the highest one in which a student has been accepted would be released. If you are on the waitlist of a higher-ranked school and get offered a seat, you will be able to accept the seat and the lower ranked choices will be released.

Q. Can I see changes to the waitlist on my online parent dashboard?

A. Yes, you will need to carefully monitor your parent dashboard for any changes.

Q: My child was placed on a waitlist. As time goes by, he/she sometimes moves down the waitlist. That doesn't seem fair - it appears someone is skipping up above him.

A: Normally, the student's place on the waitlist only changes as it moves upward. However, in the case of a student who may have been lower down the list whose brother or sister is accepted, that child will be moved up the waitlist, and may skip above your child. (Please see the explanation for the question about sibling priority.)

Q: What is sibling priority?

A: Per School Guidelines, children who have siblings that will also attend the same Magnet school will enjoy limited priority in the application process for "entry grades". Entry grades are usually defined as the lowest grade-level in each program open to enrollment for all students. For elementary programs, this usually means kindergarten. Pre-K is not a part of the magnet program at most magnet elementary schools. However, Magnet dual language, Magnet language immersion, and Montessori Magnet programs do begin at Pre-K. The entry grade level is 6th grade for middle schools, and 9th grade for high school programs.

Up to 25% of available slots will be awarded first to students applying to an entry grade level who have a sibling that will attend the same program the year the student is applying for. If there are more students with siblings than the 25% of spaces allowed, they will be placed at the top of the waitlist in the relative order they were selected from the lottery.

If two siblings apply for an entry grade-level program (but do not have another attending sibling) they are treated the same as any other applicant. However, if one is offered a place, the other is moved up the waitlist, and placed among the other siblings. Each sibling must have a separate application on file.

Q: What is the multiple birth option?

A: Parents of qualifying twins, triplets, etc. applying for these children to attend the same Magnet program, may select to have these children treated as all other siblings (the default) or they may opt to have all the children receive the same lottery position, meaning that all children end up in the same situation, all offered a seat or all placed on the waitlist. If they are on a waitlist, they will not be offered seats until there is room for all of them. Each sibling must have a separate application on file.

Q: What if my child is applying to a Vanguard (G/T) Magnet program?

A: Vanguard Magnet programs screen applicants based on G/T identification. If your child has not been identified as G/T prior to Phase 1 deadline, then the Vanguard Coordinator for the school processing your application will contact you about testing. Please make sure that you have access to your Smart Choice account and email as that is how you will receive information regarding your child's application.

Q: What if my child qualifies as G/T, but I decide not to attend the Vanguard (G/T) Magnet program. Does he/she lose the G/T identification?

A: Once a student has been identified as G/T by HISD, he/she is eligible for Vanguard (G/T) services at any school in which he/she eventually enrolls, including his/her zoned school and other types of Magnet programs.

Q: My child has been offered a seat in a Vanguard magnet program. Does this mean that he or she has been identified as G/T?

A: Any student that has been offered a seat at a Vanguard magnet school has been identified as gifted and talented.

Q. In my letter I see a “not qualified” status beside a Vanguard magnet school? What does that mean?

A. The “not qualified” status means that the student did not meet the Vanguard qualification requirements in order to be identified as gifted and talented.

Q. Are there any special considerations/differences in the process if the child is applying for Pre-K? (For example, does that magnet status only apply for one year?)

A. There is no difference in the process for applications submitted to our magnet programs that begin at Pre-K. Those programs include the Arabic Immersion School, Mandarin Chinese Immersion School, Garden Oaks Montessori, Wilson Montessori, Blackshear Montessori, Wharton Dual Language, and Helms Dual Language. Currently enrolled Pre-K students do not need to reapply for kindergarten at these programs.

Q: How may I ensure that the application process goes smoothly?

A: In order to facilitate communications with the school(s) to which you apply, please make sure that all the information you provide on the application is the same as what is on file at your child’s current school. All contact information such as phone numbers, addresses, and e-mail must be current. Your child’s name on the application form should match the name on the child’s birth certificate. It is important that you check for e-mails sent by the application system.

Q: When and how will I know if my child was accepted by a school?

A: Letters stating the status of your child’s application will be mailed on March 23, 2017, or made available in your online parent dashboard by 4 p.m., on March 23, 2017.

Q. I got into a magnet school on my list, and I would like to accept the seat. What should I do next?

A. Accept the offered seat either online (for parents that submitted an online application) or in person.

Deliver, in person, the documents listed below and sign the entrance agreement.

Complete the campus enrollment process.

For offers received on March 23, 2017, you will have until April 6, 2017, to accept the offered seat and deliver the following documents in person:

- Proof of current residence
- Proof of age (if your child is entering Pre-K or kindergarten)

The school will be able to provide a copy of an entrance agreement that you will be required to sign.

Failure to meet the deadline can result in the loss of the offer.

For offers on or after April 6, 2017, parents will have 3 school days to accept the seat, deliver the required documents, and sign entrance agreement at the school to secure the seat.

Q. I got into my second or third choice. What happens to my lower-ranked choices?

A. Schools ranked lower than the highest one in which a student has been accepted would be released and no longer available to your student.

Q: What if my child is not accepted into a magnet program that I want him or her to attend?

A: Even if some Magnet programs fill-up completely, there are usually similar programs at other schools which may still have room. Additionally, many non-Magnet programs provide quality opportunities for students. You may meet with the school’s Magnet coordinator or administrator to discuss the decision. If you have specific concerns about the way your child’s application was handled or you feel that procedures were not followed, you may file an appeal with the Office of School Choice by e-mailing OSC@houstonisd.org, detailing your concerns.

Q. I believe there is a mistake on the magnet results. Who can I talk to?

A. Please contact the Magnet coordinator at the school for more details, contact the Magnet office at magnet@houstonisd.org, or call the Magnet office at (713) 556-6947.

Q: What if I have accepted one school, but another school calls me from the waitlist. May I accept this second school?

A: Yes, you will have three school days from the date that the seat was offered to take the following documents to the school whose offer you want to accept:

- Proof of current residence,
- Proof of age (if your child is entering Pre-K or kindergarten)
- The school will be able to provide you a copy of an entrance agreement that you will be required to sign.
- Complete the campus enrollment process.

Q. May I visit a school again before I make a final decision?

A. We recommend that you contact the school's Magnet coordinator to see what times are available. If you have been offered a seat at this school, please remember that there is a deadline to secure the seat.

Q. I am on the waitlist for all the magnet schools on my list. What should I do next?

A. You may also consider schools with space available that are posted on our website and apply during Phase II and Phase III.

Q. What if I get into a school I ranked first on my list, but I am interested in a school that I ranked lower? Can I get on the wait list of a school I originally ranked lower?

A. Yes, you can get on the waitlist if there is space available at the lower ranked school. You cannot hold two seats at the same time and would need to decline the higher ranked choice in order to accept the lower ranked school. You will have 3 school days from the date of the lower ranked offer to respond and to deliver any required documentation to the lower ranked school.

Q: What if my child has trouble with the Magnet program?

A: Upon entering a Magnet program, all students and parents will sign an Entrance Agreement. This details the expectations for the student in the program. A magnet transfer is a one-year commitment. A recommendation from the growth plan committee could result in a student losing his or her place in that magnet program at the end of the year and returning to their zoned school or another choice school at the beginning of the next school year. If the student voluntarily withdraws from the magnet school before the one-year time period is over, he/she may only return to his/her zoned campus.

Q: When I check on the status of my child's application on the parent dashboard, it says that the application is "Submitted, in processing." What does this mean?

A: For applications submitted after December 9, 2016, this simply means that your application is being processed by our system. No further action by you is required. If you are missing any documentation, you will be contacted. For applications submitted between September 30 and December 9, 2016 (Phase1), in processing could mean the application was not completed or you live outside the HISD boundary. Applications may also be left in processing for schools that have long waitlists and are no longer processing applications during Phase II and Phase III.

Q. I applied by mail and have not received a magnet letter. What should I do?

A. Letters will be mailed on March 23, so please allow the US mail a couple of days to make the delivery. If you have not received a magnet letter by March 30, 2017, contact magnet@houstonisd.org or call the Magnet department at (713)-556-6947.

Q. I am experiencing problems with the HISD website and dashboard. What should I do?

A. Send an email to magnet@houstonisd.org or call the Magnet office at (713) 556-6947, explaining in detail the issues you are having.

Q. I can't remember my login/password for my parent dashboard.

A. Use the "Forgot your password?" feature located at the bottom of the left hand side of the parent login page at <https://hisdchoice.com/apply/login.php>.

Q. Is there still time to apply to a magnet school if I am in or out-of-district?

A. Yes. However, restrictions may apply. Out-of-district applications will be considered beginning June 1, 2017. Applications from eligible HISD-resident students will be considered first. When no further eligible HISD-resident student applications remain, out-of-district eligible students will be considered in the order their applications were submitted. For Magnet-only programs (schools that do not have an attendance zone) such as the High School for Performing and Visual Arts, out-of-district magnet transfers must be approved by the superintendent of schools and tuition may be required.

Q. What is the process if the student is zoned to a magnet school they applied to?

A. There are different processes for different school types. There is no need for a zoned student to apply to a non-Vanguard elementary program. These are school-wide programs and all students will participate in the magnet program. The exception to this is a Vanguard magnet elementary school. A Magnet Vanguard program requires testing and the use of the Vanguard application. Some secondary programs have a qualification requirements for zoned students as well as out-of-zone students. Please visit the following link to view the qualification scores and process to apply to 2017-2018 secondary magnet programs or reach out to the schools for more detailed information.

http://www.houstonisd.org/cms/lib2/TX01001591/Centricity/Domain/21217/Qualifying-For-Secondary_Schools%202017-2018_final.pdf

Q. If my child gets into a different magnet school that he/she is not zoned to, does my child still have the option to switch gears and go to his/her zoned school? (Whether it is magnet or not).

Yes, should the child choose to leave the program voluntarily before the end of the school year, he or she may only return to his or her zoned campus.

Q: What happens if my child has a place in a Magnet program, but he/she misses the first day of school?

A: If there is an extenuating circumstance, please contact the Magnet coordinator at the school, the Magnet office at magnet@houstonisd.org, or call the Magnet office at (713) 556-6947. Any student with an approved transfer (e.g., Magnet) who does not attend his or her school on the first day of school is no longer guaranteed a spot at that school. When they arrive to enroll, if space is still available, their transfer will be accepted. If there is no longer any space, they will have lost their space and will need to enroll at their zoned school or another program with space. The rationale behind this rule is that we do not want to turn away zoned students because we are saving space for someone who may or may not come to the school. If the school is not over-crowded and space is available, all students wanting to attend will be able to do so.

Explanation of Magnet Application Results

Very Important! To Accept a Seat at a Magnet program:

For offers on Notification Day - March 23, and before April 3, 2016

By April 6, 2017

- **Accept the seat online or in person**
- **Provide proof of current residence, and**
- **Proof of age** (if your child will be entering Pre-K or kindergarten)
- The school will be able to provide you a copy of the **entrance agreement** that you will be required to sign.

For offers on or after April 6, 2017:

Within 3 schools days of the offer

- **Accept the seat online or in person**
- **Provide proof of current residence, and**
- **Proof of age** (if your child will be entering Pre-K or kindergarten)
- The school will be able to provide you a copy of the **entrance agreement** that you will be required to sign.

Below is a brief explanation of terms. Please reach out to the specific school or to the Office of School Choice for further details.

Status	Meaning	Next Steps	Timeline
Offered Seat <i>For offers before April 3, 2017</i>	Your child qualified for this program and the school is offering a seat in its Magnet program for the 2017-2018 school year.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accept the offered seat either online (for parents that submitted an online application) or in person at the school that has offered the seat. 2. Deliver, in person, the documents listed above and sign the entrance agreement. 3. Complete the campus enrollment process. 	Deadline: April 6, 2017 Failure to do so can result in the loss of the offer.
Offered Seat <i>For offers on or after April 6, 2017</i>			<i>After April 6, 2017</i> Deadline: 3 school days
Waitlist	Your child has qualified and has been placed on the waitlist. The number indicates the current place on the waitlist.	If you wish to stay on the waitlist no action is required. You can contact the school for updates of your waitlist number.	August 11, 2017.
(Qualified Pending)	Because your child still needs to be tested but has otherwise met all the requirements for this Vanguard program, he or she was entered into the lottery. The school is offering a seat or has placed him/her on the waitlist for the 2017-2018 school year, <i>conditional upon receiving a high enough score for the missing test(s)</i> . Please contact Advanced Academics department if you have questions.	For applicants with no email address, the coordinator for this school will attempt to call you to discuss your options. If for some reason, you do not hear from him/her, please call him/her.	August 11, 2017
	(Not Qualified) Your child did not meet the qualification guidelines for this specific program.	For information on programs that still have space available, contact us at (713) 556-6947.	August 11, 2017

Not Placed	(In processing) Your application was not completed, you live outside the HISD boundary, or your application was not received by December 9, 2016.	If you provide missing information, the application can be considered subject to space availability – if you live outside the HISD boundary your completed application will be considered after May 31.	August 11, 2017
	(Qualified) You have met the qualifications for this program, but you live outside the HISD boundary.	Your application will be considered after May 31.	August 11, 2017
Dropped/Released	Once offered a seat into a program, all of a student's lesser-ranked applications, including any other offered seats, are "dropped" or "released", so that those spots may be offered to other students.	You can reapply to the program; however your application will be submitted by the current date (Phase 2 if before May31, 2017) and not be considered until other Phase 2 applications have been processed in the order that they were received.	August 11, 2017