

HISD | FAQ

This is a living document created to help the HISD community understand recent changes to magnet programs. These Frequently Asked Questions will be updated as more information becomes available.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Magnet Program Announcements

Application of Minimum Standards to Magnet Programs

Q: I've heard some HISD magnet programs will be discontinued and other programs have been put on probation. Is this true?

A: Yes. HISD recently announced that 20 magnet programs would lose the district's magnet designation for the 2014-2015 school year. These 20 schools failed to meet the minimum enrollment requirements for students who reside outside the school's attendance zone. Five of these 20 schools also failed to meet state academic accountability standards.

Burbank ES	Wesley ES	Dowling MS	Patrick Henry MS	Sharpstown HS
Elrod ES	West University ES	Holland MS	Jones HS	Westbury HS
Law ES	Attucks MS	Jackson MS	Lee HS	Wheatley HS
Pleasantville ES	Deady MS	Key MS	Madison HS	Worthing HS

Additionally, 13 schools were notified that they were being placed on probation for academic performance. If these schools receive a "met standard" ranking for the current school year's performance, they will be removed from the probation list. If these programs receive a "required improvement" ranking, they will enter a "phase out" status where they receive 50% of their magnet funding for one additional school year.

Crespo ES	MacGregor ES	Wainwright ES	Kashmere HS	Washington HS
Garden Villas ES	Pugh ES	Hogg MS	Scarborough HS	
Helms ES	Ross ES	Long MS	Sterling HS	

Q: What are the magnet program student enrollment requirements?

A: Magnet programs at the elementary level can meet the enrollment standard if magnet students who live outside that school's neighborhood attendance zone represent at least 20 percent of the school's overall student population.

Middle schools and high schools can meet the enrollment standard if the 20 percent requirement is met OR if at least 100 students per grade level are magnet students who live outside the school's attendance zone.

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The following chart shows attendance levels at the 20 schools that are losing magnet designation:

Burbank ES	116	Deady MS	22	Lee HS	6
Elrod ES	68	Dowling MS	27	Madison HS	31
Law ES	80	Holland MS	9	Sharpstown HS	64
Pleasantville ES	23	Jackson MS	21	Westbury HS	102
Wesley ES	37	Key MS	4	Wheatley HS	40
West University ES	41	Patrick Henry MS	22	Worthing HS	1
Attucks MS	29	Jones HS	15		

Q: Why is HISD making these changes now?

A: HISD has been working for some time to establish minimum standards for its magnet programs. These recent announcements are a first step toward applying these minimum standards to schools across the district.

While the district understands that changes to school programs can be disruptive, it firmly believes that each magnet program must fulfill its mission to attract students from outside its attendance zone as well as meet state academic accountability standards.

School choice requires that parents and students are well informed of the educational options that they have. Therefore, when a program no longer meets the requirements set forth in the magnet program policy, it's important that it is not marketed to parents and students as a magnet program. These recent changes help ensure that when a family considers a magnet program, they can feel confident that it meets a standard of excellence and attracts students from outside its attendance zone.

Q: I've heard there are other schools with magnet programs that are not meeting the minimum enrollment requirements for students who reside outside the school's attendance zone. Why aren't they losing their magnet designation?

A: Yes, there are an additional 27 schools that are currently not meeting the minimum enrollment requirement for students who reside outside the school's attendance zone. In taking this first step to apply the district's magnet standards, the district decided to remove the magnet designation only from those programs that were far below the minimum requirement levels. This decision provides schools that are closer to meeting the enrollment requirement a one-year grace period to improve their enrollment levels.

Q: Why wasn't this presented to the board for a vote?

A: It does not require Board action either to create a new magnet program or to sunset an existing magnet program (i.e. remove a magnet designation). As such, administration notified the Board that 20 of the district's

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magnet programs do not meet the minimum enrollment requirements as outlined in the district's magnet program policy and would therefore lose their magnet designation at the end of the current 2013-2014 school year. Since the magnet application deadline for the 2014-2015 school year is quickly approaching, the district is actively communicating the sunseting of these magnet programs to affected families so that parents and students can prepare for the next school year.

While the district is moving forward to sunset these programs, it's important to note that changes to the funding for magnet programs must be approved by the Board. The administration will recommend that affected magnet programs receive 50 percent of their magnet funding for one additional school year (i.e. the 2014-2015 school year) to ease the transition. This recommendation will be included in the overall budget package next summer.

Appeal Process

Q: I've heard that schools can appeal the district's recent decision to remove their magnet designation. Is this true? Can you tell me more about this process?

A: Yes, a process has been established for schools to appeal the loss of their magnet program designation. Principals of affected schools have been provided details about the appeal process. Following are highlights of this process:

Timeline

- Oct. 28, 2013 Schools sent information on Appeals Process
- Nov. 1, 2013 Deadline to notify the Office of School Choice of Intent to Appeal
- Nov. 7, 2013 Community Meetings
- Nov. 11 – 15 Appeals held before committee
- Nov. 18, 2013 Magnet schools notified of committee decision

Content of Appeals Presentation

Schools will be given 15 minutes to present information or lead a discussion on the following topics that have been a part of the *Magnet Standard Procedures* since 2011:

- Brief overview of the program on their campus
- Magnet recruitment plan
- Enrollment goals
- Snapshot enrollment
- Number of non-zone magnet students

This HISD FAQ was last updated on Oct. 25, 2013.
If you have a question about this topic, please email info@houstonisd.org.

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- % of non-zone magnet students
- 2013-2014 applications
- Building capacity to accept 20% non-zone students
- How magnet budget is used
- TEA accountability ratings

Funding

Q: Can you explain when my magnet program will lose its magnet designation and related funding?

A: In an effort to ease the transition for magnet programs that are losing the district’s magnet designation, the administration is recommending that those programs **receive 50 percent of their magnet funding for one additional school year**, rather than losing all funding at the end of the 2013-2014 school year.

This continuation of funding will be included in the 2014-2015 budget package, which the Board of Education votes on next summer. Here is an overview of our recommendations:

Current school year	2014-2015	2015-2016
Keeps magnet designation and 100 percent magnet funding	Loses magnet designation; keeps 50 percent magnet funding	No magnet designation or magnet funding

Q: If my school’s magnet program loses its magnet designation, how much funding is my school going to lose?

A: This has yet to be determined because changes to the funding for magnet programs must be approved by the Board in the summer. The administration will recommend that magnet programs losing their magnet designation receive 50 percent of their magnet funding for one additional school year (i.e. the 2014-2015 school year) to ease the transition. This recommendation will be included in the overall budget package next spring.

Current funding per school:

Burbank ES	\$236,567	Deady MS	\$45,000	Lee HS	\$60,121
Elrod ES	\$271,074	Dowling MS	\$195,469	Madison HS	\$45,532
Law ES	\$144,570	Holland MS	\$43,189	Sharpstown HS	\$60,901
Pleasantville ES	\$129,097	Jackson MS	\$77,810	Westbury HS	\$44,282
Wesley ES	\$196,394	Key MS	\$187,184	Wheatley HS	\$52,736
West University ES	\$273,562	Patrick Henry MS	\$45,000	Worthing HS	\$77,753
Attucks MS	\$159,493	Jones HS	\$0		

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Q: How does the district plan to use the savings that will result from the defunding of these magnet programs?

A: The district plans to recommend to the Board in the overall budget package next summer that the savings resulting from the defunding of these magnet programs be applied to other HISD magnet programs to create more equitable funding across the district and/or toward the district's budget deficit. The final decision, of course, resides with the board.

Potential Changes to Programs and Services

Q: If my child's program loses its magnet designation and we are not zoned to the school, will my child still be able to still attend that school?

A: Yes, students currently enrolled in magnet programs that are losing their magnet designation will be allowed to remain at their schools until they complete the highest grade level offered at that school. Magnet transportations service, however, will generally not be offered after this school year. Schools can continue to fund non-zoned student transportation from their own budgets, if they choose to do so.

Q: Can schools continue to offer specialized classes and programs such as STEM and Fine Arts, even if they are not magnet programs?

A: Yes. However, these programmatic decisions will be made at the school level by the principal in collaboration with the school's site-based decision making committee (SDMC).

Q: Will the reduction in funding result in staff reductions?

A: Potentially. Magnet funding varies by school. Some schools use their magnet funding to pay for the staff that supports their magnet themes. Others do not use magnet funds for staff. Each affected school will, therefore, need to evaluate their programs and related staffing and make adjustments as needed.

Q: Will my child get any priority during the next magnet application process?

A: Unfortunately, we cannot give preference or priority to groups of students during the magnet application process. All families in HISD are given equal access to these programs, and students are selected through a lottery system that is applied fairly and consistently to all magnet programs. Parents can select up to 10 magnet programs during the application process. After the first round of applications are accepted, students can still be admitted to other programs on a space-available basis.

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Q: Where can I go to get more information about magnet programs?

A: Parents can go to www.houstonisd.org/magnet for information on the array of options HISD has to meet the needs, talents, and/or interests of their children. The district will begin accepting applications for magnet programs for the coming school year on Monday, Nov. 4, and parents must submit those applications on or before Friday, Dec. 20, 2013, for guaranteed first-round consideration.

To assist families in choosing a school, HISD will be hosting its annual School Choice Open House on Saturday, Nov. 2, at Northwest Mall (9500 Hempstead Hwy., 77092). The event will take place from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m., and representatives from many of HISD's schools of choice will be on hand to answer questions and offer information about their programs.

HISD will also be offering special, campus-based school choice fairs through mid-November for parents in these situations. A full schedule is available at <http://www.houstonisd.org/magnet>.

Community meetings will also be scheduled in early November for families of the affected 20 magnet programs. Callouts will notify families of those dates and times as more information becomes available. Principals and district representatives will be on hand to answer questions and help parents understand their options for the coming school year.