

Specialty Center Q and A

While Coordinators of individual Specialty Centers are always willing to respond to questions specific to their Center, some questions that are typically asked and have general responses are listed below.

How does a student find out information regarding a Specialty Center?

There are several avenues by which students and parents can gather information about specialty center options. If you have navigated to this webpage, you can see that the various specialty center titles are listed under a tab called Program Overview for High School Options. A short vignette helps provide a snapshot of what a Center exposes students to during their four years at a school. Typically, in the fall of each school year, CCPS hosts two general specialty center fairs where schools have the Coordinator and others present to offer general information and to respond to questions. After the two general fairs are held, individual evenings are held at each school in the fall to provide more specific information about the program of study. For the 2021-2022 school year, the Specialty Center Fair and Open Houses will be virtual. Information about these events and links to these presentations/events will be posted here on the CCPS website under Schools, then Speciality Centers.

How are students admitted to a Specialty Center?

Students complete an online application indicating their interest in being considered for selection to a site. Due to each Center having a particular focus, there will be different application information needed and qualifying criteria for acceptance. For example, students will be asked to audition to be admitted as a performing artist or prepare and submit a portfolio for review as a visual artist at the Thomas Dale Center for the Arts while students entering the Math & Science High School at Clover Hill High School will be required to take a reading comprehension test, as well as a math and critical thinking test with admissions. Based upon the criteria established at each school location, student applications are reviewed and students are informed electronically in the Spring about the status of their application.

What does “waitlisted” mean in the admissions process?

Each Center has a set number of students it is allowed to admit with each entering class. Sometimes the number of qualified applicants exceeds the number of available slots. At the same time, some students may have applied and been accepted at two or more Centers. When one of these students elects that other Center, this opens a slot at the original school site.

Instead of starting the admissions process over again, applicants in the next highest scoring group of students in the application process are considered waitlisted.

What are your chances of getting in if you are “waitlisted” and when will I find out if I get in?

This answer is harder to narrow down for several reasons. First, there is no guarantee that a student on the waitlist will be admitted. There is a possibility that no new slot opens up and therefore no new students are added. There is a possibility that another student on the waitlist who scored ahead of a student accepts an offer from another Center and this opens a slot further down the wait list. There is another possibility that another student who was admitted moves away over the summer. In each case, the difficulty in predicting what may happen leaves a general position that if a student is placed on the waitlist there is a chance they will still be offered admission but no formula to communicate what that chance actually is or when that communication will actually take place. Typically, by mid-September, students are no longer pulled from the waitlist.

When I am admitted, am I considered a part of the school or just there for the specialty center?

A student is considered, like a student on a placement waiver to another school, a guest in a non-attendance zone school building with access to all school opportunities. The goal of each Center is to attempt to immerse Center students into the life and activity of the school they are attending. The school becomes that student’s school setting as if it were their school unless there is a major disciplinary, behavioral, or academic issue which may result in a student being removed from the Specialty Center and/or returned to their attendance zone school.

Does this mean I must apply for a waiver to remain in the Center each year?

No. As per our School Board Policy, students admitted into Specialty Centers do not have to use the annual waiver process.

Will my diploma come from the school where I attended the Specialty Center or my attendance-zone high school?

A student who meets the qualifications for a diploma while actively enrolled in a Specialty Center at their non-attendance high school will receive their diploma from the school they are actively enrolled at.

Is there transportation provided for a student to a Specialty Center out of their attendance zone?

While this is reviewed annually, at this time there is some transportation provided with CCPS school buses to assist families with getting to and from the Center they attend back to the area in which their attendance zone school is located. Each year parents are encouraged to review the transportation page for CCPS to see which bus routes may best serve their student’s plans.

Does each Specialty Center require students to attain the same things for a diploma?

Each student in any CCPS school must meet the State mandated requirements to attain a diploma. At the same time, each Center may have specific expectations to attain a diploma with recognition from that Specialty Center. In addition, programs like the International Baccalaureate Programs at Meadowbrook and Midlothian(require external assessments for specific diploma designations.

Can a student participate in a sport back at their attendance-zone school if the school with the Center does not have that sport?

No. As each CCPS high school is a member of the Virginia High School League (VHSL), students may only participate in a sport at the school with the Center they are attending.

Is there one set academic standard for all Specialty Centers as related to continued enrollment?

No. Each Center is responsible to monitor the academic progress for each of their students. While a school may dismiss a student for failing performance in a Center course at the semester of any school year without prior warning after review by both the Specialty Center Coordinator and the School Principal, low performance on any course may result in consequences such as a probationary status warning at a nine week time frame and subsequent removal from the program for failure to improve.

Is ParentVue an option if the student is attending a Center that is not their attendance zone school?

Yes. Parent Vue (the online class-by-class communication tool for parents) is available for all parents at a specific school location.

If I have questions about my child's academic progress in a Specialty Center, who should I contact?

The response to this question really depends upon the issue itself. If a student is struggling with a specific course, the first point of contact should always be the teacher of that course. If a student is having difficulty with general school areas (like getting to school on time impacting the classwork) you may wish to discuss this issue with the student's school counselor.

Which school generates a student's transcript – the school they attend with the Center or their attendance zone school?

The school the student is actively enrolled at. If the student is actively attending a school with the Specialty Center that would be the school from which a transcript would be generated.

If a family has two high school age children and one is a student at a Specialty Center, can their sibling get an automatic waiver to the same school?

No. The School Board Policy does not allow for this option.