



The National Association for Magnet and Theme-based Schools

Facts about Magnet Schools

- According to MSA's analysis of the U.S. Department of Education's Common Core dataset, there are approximately 3,800 magnet schools nationwide, enrolling more than 2.6 million students, making them the largest form of public school choice.
- Magnet schools are free public elementary and secondary schools of choice that are operated by school districts or a consortium of districts. Magnet schools feature specialized theme-based curriculum in areas such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), Fine and Performing Arts, Careers and Technology, Business, Finance, Communications, Montessori, and International Baccalaureate.
- Three distinguishing characteristics of a magnet school include:
 - A theme-based curriculum;
 - Integration and student diversity as an explicit goal;
 - Open enrollment for students outside of traditional school attendance boundaries.
- Magnet schools were originally created in the 1960's and 1970's as a means of voluntarily promoting school integration and improving the quality of America's educational system through innovative curricula and classroom instruction.
- The first magnet schools were modeled after the Bronx School of Science, the Boston Latin School, Chicago's Lane Tech, and San Francisco's, Lowell High School, which offered specialized or advanced curricula to select students.
- While many people believe magnet schools are selective and only accept students based on academic prowess, a majority of magnet schools **do not** have entrance criteria, but rather, use a computer-based lottery system for admissions. According to a recent survey of Magnet Schools of America member schools, only 17% had academic based entrance criteria.
- Since the only eligibility requirement to attend a magnet school is an interest in the theme, students from a wide array of backgrounds attend magnet schools resulting in higher level cognitive and social learning.
- Magnet schools serve all students including English language learners as well as students receiving special education services.
- Transportation to magnet schools is typically provided at no cost to families.
- Unlike charter schools, magnet schools do not operate autonomously under any sort of "charter," but are administered by the school district. They are subject to the same measures of accountability and standards as traditional public schools, as well as the collective bargaining agreements made with teachers unions.