

6275 POLICY – Specialty Programs

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all students have the opportunity to have equitable access to Specialty Programs through an open and accessible process. The Board of Education is committed to developing, maintaining and supporting Specialty Programs. The District implements Specialty Programs to provide students the opportunity to participate in programs that address their interests and talents and to attend programs with students from diverse backgrounds and experiences. The Board of Education is committed to promoting equity and diversity in Specialty Programs, including the outreach, admission and selection process, through an alignment with Board of Education Policy 6000 - Excellence, Equity and Access.

The Superintendent is responsible for the administration of this policy and will provide direction to the Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning to implement this policy.

Policy
Adopted: 11/23/15
Revised: 12/16/24

Board of Education Utica Community Schools

6275 RULES AND REGULATIONS – Specialty Programs

I. Definitions

- A. Sibling: Any brother and/or sister relationship including through adoption, marriage, or court appointed guardianship permanently who resides at the same address.
- B. Assigned Attendance Area: A student whose parent(s)/legal guardian(s) resides in an assigned attendance area in the District.
- C. Resident Student: A pupil whose parent(s)/ legal guardian(s) resides in a dwelling in the District.
- D. Non-Resident Student: A pupil whose parent(s)/legal guardian(s) resides outside of the District boundaries.
- E. Diversity/Students with Diverse Backgrounds: The inclusion of students in a program who are from different backgrounds, including students from more than one national origin, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English learners, students with disabilities and gender.
- F. School Attendance Area: A designated path or feeder pattern for students to advance from one school grade grouping to another – elementary school to junior high school and junior high school to high school, as established by Board of Education Policy 5300 – School Attendance Areas.
- G. Schools of Choice Student: Non-resident student residing within the boundaries of the Macomb Intermediate School District, in compliance with Section 105 of the State School Aid Act (MCL 388.1705) or within the boundaries of an intermediate school district that is contiguous to the Macomb Intermediate School District in compliance with Section 105c of the State School Aid Act (MCL 388.1705c).
- H. Transfer Request: A written request by parent(s)/guardian(s) for a resident student to attend a school other than his/her assigned attendance area school.
- I. Transfer Student: A resident student who is granted a transfer request to attend a school other than his/her assigned attendance area school.
- J. Program Capacity: The number of students that a program can support when the restrictions of the building capacity and/or number of seats and curriculum of studies is applied.
- K. Specialty Program: A program within the District or within a school that offers a special curriculum capable of attracting students with particular interests, unique talents and diverse backgrounds, such as Utica Center for Science and Industry (UCSI), Gene L. Klida Utica Academy for International Studies (GLK-UAIS) Utica Center for Mathematics, Science and Technology (UCMST), Stevenson Center for Manufacturing, Automation, and Design Engineering (MADE), and Utica High School Academy for Health and Human Services (UHHS).

II. Communication, Recruitment and Outreach

The Superintendent or designee will develop and supervise communication, recruitment and outreach activities to inform parents/guardians, students and administrators regarding: information about the program offered at each Specialty Program; application time periods; testing dates, if applicable; admission criteria; and expected acceptance dates. These communication, recruitment and outreach activities will include providing information on the District website and through social media and electronic distribution, and as appropriate from time to time holding open houses and face-to-face meetings and intentional/deliberate strategies to ensure that parents of underrepresented groups are aware of the Specialty Programs. In implementing its communication and outreach activities, the District will include strategies designed to reach parents/guardians who face barriers to receiving communication and outreach information, including lack of digital access.

III. Eligibility for Specialty Programs

Residents of the District and non-resident (Schools of Choice) students are eligible to apply for Specialty Programs. The District will consider Specialty Program applications from new non-resident students after all qualified District and existing non-resident (Schools of Choice) applicants have been accepted for placement in a Specialty Program and there are open seats. The established timelines will be followed during this process.

Eligible students interested in entering a Specialty Program in grades 10-12 may be considered for entrance if seats are available. The prior educational experiences of these students will be considered.

IV. Application Process/Information

- A. The District shall publish the application timeline for applications for Specialty Programs electronically and in school newsletters.
- B. Prior to the application period, the District shall develop a common application that shall be used by parent(s)/guardian(s) to apply to Specialty Programs.
- C. At the beginning of and during each application period, the District shall make the common application for Specialty Programs available at the District Administrative Services Center, 11303 Greendale, Sterling Heights, MI 48312, at each school, and on the District website. In addition, at the beginning of each application period, the District shall ensure that applications are available to appropriate District grade level students.
- D. The parent(s)/guardian(s) of all students who are interested in their child attending a Specialty Program must submit a completed application by the application deadline via the online application portal, email or U.S. Mail. Parent(s) /guardian(s) may not make any changes to the application once it is submitted to the District. The Student Services Office will date and time stamp each application when it is received by the District.

- E. Parent(s)/guardian(s) of students currently enrolled in a Specialty Program and who wish to remain in the school/program for the following school year do not need to submit an application to remain in the program.
- F. Parent(s)/guardian(s) of students who are interested in their children attending a Specialty Program must submit a separate application for each child.
- G. If the District determines that an application is not complete or that there are any inaccuracies in the application, including false or misleading statements, the District may reject the application, withdraw the offer of placement in a Specialty Program or remove the student from the Specialty Program.

V. Selection Criteria and Process for Secondary Specialty Programs

- A. Secondary Specialty Programs may have academic criteria to select students for the Specialty Program. The Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning is responsible for working with District and school or program-based staff to develop the recommended criteria that may be used and for ensuring that any academic criteria that are used are educationally sound and related to the Specialty Program theme. The Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning will recommend the academic criteria to the Superintendent.
- B. The Superintendent shall appoint the members of the District-level Screening Committee and shall ensure that the District-Level Screening Committee adheres to Policy 6000 – Excellence, Equity, and Access.
- C. For Specialty Programs, the District will use a District-level Screening Committee to select students by reviewing holistically the data and information about each applicant to determine the qualified applicant pool.
- D. Annually, the Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning shall review the academic criteria used by a Specialty Program to determine the impact that the use of such criteria are having on the interests, talent development, diversity and achievement of the students admitted to each Specialty Program, and based on this review, may make recommendations to the Superintendent for revising the criteria for selecting students.
- E. If there are fewer applicants in the qualified applicant pool for a Specialty Program than there are seats available in the Specialty Program, the District will consider admitting students whose parents/guardians submitted a completed application in the following order: (1) all resident students, (2) all non-resident students currently enrolled in the district, and (3) all non-resident students not previously enrolled in the district until program capacity is reached.
- F. If there are more applicants in the qualified applicant pool for a secondary Specialty Program than there are seats in the Specialty Program, the District will use a random lottery process to select students for the Specialty Program carried out in the following order: (1) all resident students, (2) all non-resident students currently enrolled in the

district, and (3) all non-resident students not previously enrolled in the district until program capacity is reached.

G. For Specialty Programs no sibling preference for placement exists.

VI. Notification Process

- A. The Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning or designee will notify all parent(s)/guardian(s) who applied for their student to attend a Specialty Program regarding whether their student has been offered a seat into a Specialty Program via email, if provided, or via U.S. Mail.
- B. If a student has been accepted into a Specialty Program, parent(s)/guardians have 10 business days from the date of the notification letter to notify the District regarding whether they accept or decline placement for their child in a Specialty Program. If a parent/guardian does not respond to the notification letter within 10 school days from the date of the notification letter, the District will treat the failure to respond as declining placement and will provide another student the opportunity to attend that Specialty Program.
- C. Special education students may receive a provisional letter regarding acceptance into a Specialty Program. The student's seat will be held as the application is processed through the Individual Educational Plan process to ensure program needs can be met at the Specialty Program.

VII. Waiting List

- A. The District will place a student who is not offered a seat in his/her first-choice Specialty Program on a waiting list for that Specialty Program. The District will place and consider the applications that were submitted by the application deadline on the waiting list before applications that were submitted after the application deadline.
- B. An eligible student whose parent(s)/guardian(s) submit an application by the deadline will remain on the waiting list for that Specialty Program for the remainder of the school year or until the student is offered a seat in his/her first-choice Specialty Program, whichever occurs first.

VIII. Appeals

- A. If a student is not accepted into a Specialty Program, the parent(s)/guardian(s) may appeal to the Superintendent or designee the denial into a Specialty Program. A parent(s)/guardian(s) must make the appeal in writing and the appeal must state the reason(s) for the appeal. A parent(s)/guardian(s) must submit the appeal to the Superintendent or designee within five school days of the date of the notification letter.

- B. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, the Superintendent or designee will review the appeal submitted by the parent(s)/guardian(s) and will decide the appeal within ten school days of receiving the appeal. Notice of the decision will be provided to the parent(s)/guardian(s).
- C. Possible outcomes of an appeal:
 - 1. The Superintendent or designee may grant the appeal and allow the change of program assignment to occur.
 - 2. The Superintendent or designee may deny the appeal, in which case the student remains in their original school and/or program assignment
- D. The decision of the Superintendent or designee is final and there is no further appeal.

IX. Continuation in a Specialty Program

- A. The District expects that all students who are admitted and who enroll in a Specialty Program will remain in that Specialty Program until he/she completes the highest grade offered by that Specialty Program. If, however, a student who is enrolled in a Specialty Program is not successful (success as measured by grade-level academic progress, participation in Specialty Program activities, adherence to the student code of conduct, and overall well-being of the student) in that Specialty Program, the staff at the Specialty Program will develop a plan, including supports for the student, with the student and his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) to address identified issues regarding the student's success in the Specialty Program. Staff at the Specialty Program will implement the plan for at least one semester.
- B. If the student has not improved after implementation of the plan, the Principal/Program Administrator of the Specialty Program may recommend to the Superintendent or designee that the student be returned to his/her assigned attendance area school. The Superintendent or designee will review the recommendation by the Principal/Program Administrator, including the development and implementation of an appropriate plan and supporting data and information, and may return the student to his/her assigned attendance area school.

X. Monitoring and Reporting

By April of each school year, the Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning will submit to the Superintendent the information and data listed below. The Superintendent will report this information in compliance with Board of Education Policy 6000 - Excellence, Equity and Access. The data and information will include:

- A. The number of applicants for each Specialty Program, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English learner status, students with disabilities, and gender;
- B. The number of students who were accepted for each Specialty Program disaggregated by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English learner status, students with disabilities, and gender;

- C. The number of students who were not accepted for each Specialty Program disaggregated by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English learner status, students with disabilities and gender;
- D. The number of students enrolled in each Specialty Program, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English learner status, students with disabilities, and gender;
- E. The number of appeals requested, denied and approved for each Specialty Program;
- F. Information on the academic criteria used by all Specialty Programs and analysis of data regarding applicants admitted to Specialty Programs pursuant to Section V. D. above;
- G. Recommendations regarding analysis of the data and information in A. through F. above.