

Frequently Asked Questions about CMCSS College and Career Academies

What is a college and career academy? A small learning community that is focused on a career theme. The curriculum is integrated around the career theme and in most cases students share the same core group of teachers. Students have opportunities for post-secondary certifications and or college counseling or planning.

What is the benefit of a small learning community? The smaller learning community in an academy allows students to work with students who have similar interests. In addition, lessons can be tailored to the interest levels of students, which provides for a more relevant learning experience. In addition, students develop and improve on their 21st century skills of teamwork, critical thinking, and communication.

Is the academy for college preparatory only? The academy should accomplish both a career and college-ready experience. The classes will be demanding because they are focused on preparing students for the next level in their chosen area of interest. Each academy is expected to have integrated experiences which foster critical thinking skills necessary for future success.

How does graduating from an academy improve a student's quality of life? Research findings indicate that eight years after high school graduation, academy graduates produced sustained earning gains that average 11 percent higher compared to students who didn't graduate from an academy.

Are there other benefits to students? Yes! Research shows that academy students in grades 10-12 have better attendance; earn more credits; and are more likely to graduate than comparison groups. Also, 55 percent of academy graduates compared to 22 percent of non-academy graduates are expected to complete their bachelor's degree or higher.

Who can apply for an academy? Any zoned CMCSS 8th grade student who is scheduled to be a freshman next year.

How do you apply for an academy? Attendance at an Academy Parent Information Night is highly recommended. Information about CMCSS College and Career Academies will be presented at the meetings, as well as an opportunity to visit an academy of your choice and ask questions that are important for your student to know prior to applying for an academy. Applications are available at the Academy Parent Information Night, your student's middle school, all the high school websites, and the CMCSS website. Students must turn applications in to their middle school counselor by March 14, 2013.

What is the application criteria for academies? With the exception of The STEM Academy at Kenwood High School, the application criteria for the academies is purely

student interest based. The criteria for application at The STEM Academy at Kenwood High School is both student interest based and academic.

What is the selection process for academies? Each academy has a goal of attracting 75 students who are interested in its college and career theme. In order to ensure that all students that have interest in the academy have a chance to attend, CMCSS has a goal of attracting 50 students that live within the zone of the academy and 25 students who live outside the zone of the academy. If an academy has more than 75 applicants, a lottery will be held on March 15, 2013 to determine selection of students. Students and parents will be notified of their selection status after March 15, 2013 and registration for the academy will be between the dates of March 16-22, 2013.

If my student is not selected for the academy will they still have a chance to attend? Each academy will maintain a wait list until at least April 15, 2013. If other students who were selected choose not to register, the academy will contact students on the wait list.

What is the withdrawal policy if a student changes his/her mind about attending the academy? It is critical that a student who applies for an academy does so based on their interest in the college and career theme of the academy. The only time a student can withdraw from an academy is at the end of a semester. If a student withdraws from an academy, they must return to their zoned high school.

What if my student is admitted to the academy, but decides they no longer want to take the academy pathway classes? If students are attending the academy out of zone, they must be enrolled in academy pathway classes. If the student at semester decides to enroll in classes that are not aligned with the academy pathway, they will be withdrawn and return to their zoned high school.

If my student decides to withdraw from an academy, will that affect their graduation status? The situation is the same for all students whether they are enrolled in an academy or not. The core credits are not a concern. However, the student's Elective Focus needs to be considered. Each student must earn a minimum of 3 credits in the specific Focused Elective Group he has chosen. Since elective courses and programs will vary from school to school, a student may not be able to complete his original Focused Elective requirements at a new school. The student would then select a new Focused Elective Group and would complete 3 credits from that new group.

If my student decides to withdraw from an academy, will that affect their ability to compete in sports? Once a student has been accepted to an academy they are now considered a member of that school. If the student participates in any school extracurricular activities, they will be as a member of that school. If a student participates in athletics and establishes varsity status and decides to withdraw from the academy and return to their zone school, they must follow existing transfer or hardship policies established by the TSSAA.

What transportation options are available if a student chooses an academy not offered at his/her zoned school? Parents are responsible for transportation to the academy if it is located outside of the student's zoned school. In an effort to provide limited transportation options that CMCSS can sustain, we have established bus transportation options in the following clusters. Here is an example of how it would work: If your student is zoned to attend CHS and wants to attend the academy at MCHS, the system can provide transportation that would pick your student up at the CHS-zoned middle school (which is Richview) and return them to CHS in the afternoon. We can provide that same option if a student is zoned for MCHS and wants to attend CHS. You can apply that same example to the following clusters. If interested in this transportation option you would fill out a transportation form during the academy registration process.

CHS-MCHS

RHS-NEHS

WCHS-NWHS

The only exception to this out-of-zone transportation option is The STEM Academy students who will have pick-up points for next year across the county. This academy was established three years ago by a grant that provided funding for the academy and transportation. The grant expires at the end of next year and we will have similar transportation options for the STEM Academy after next school year.