Shelby County Schools
Division of Optional Schools & Advanced Academics
2021-22 Frequently Asked Questions

What are Optional Schools?
One of the most exciting choices in Shelby County Schools (SCS) is the Optional Program. Parents/legal guardians may choose from 46 theme-based programs tailored to their children's special talents and abilities. Optional schools offer programs at the elementary, middle, and high school levels throughout the county. These programs enrich, supplement, and broaden the standard school curriculum.

Some Optional programs offer more challenging or additional courses of study. Some use different methods in unique learning environments. Others focus on developing students' talents in particular areas. What all Optional schools have in common is they foster an environment of high expectations where children will learn beside classmates who are similarly driven to succeed.

Who can transfer into an Optional program?
Qualified students can transfer into an Optional Program when the applicants meet all of the entrance requirements of the school's Optional Program and there is space available.

How do I apply online?
The Optional Schools Application Process is completely online for new students. Parents/legal guardians can easily complete and submit an online application from any personal computer, tablet or smartphone (with Internet access) that supports online forms.

The online application portal will be accessible on the SCS website, www.scsk12.org, beginning at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, January 26, 2021. A valid email address is required in order to submit the application online. Current SCS students are encouraged to use their PowerSchool student number (also same as lunch number). For non-SCS students, a social security number is requested. You will receive an email confirmation with the date and time of your application submission.

How do I participate in the process if I do not have a computer with Internet access?
Parents/guardians without a personal computer or smartphone with Internet access may consider visiting a Memphis Public Library location during regular business hours to access the online application.

What documents are needed in order to apply for an Optional transfer?
If the applicant is a current SCS student, SCS already has the required documents on file. Once a current SCS student’s online application is submitted, no further action is needed to finalize the application. Parents/legal guardians of non-SCS students must submit the following documents within 10 business days AFTER submitting the online application:

1. Nationally normed achievement test scores
   - Test results in the FastBridge aReading and aMath assessments; the TCAP TNReady English Language Arts and the TCAP TNReady Mathematics assessments; the NWEA MAP Growth Reading and NWEA MAP Growth Mathematics assessments; Total Reading/Reading Composite and Total Mathematics/Mathematics Composite of another acceptable nationally normed achievement test. Acceptable tests must be dated Spring 2019 or later.

What happens if I submit my child’s Application for Optional Schools with the proper documents but my child does not meet the school’s minimum requirements?

- If, at the time of application, the student does not meet the school’s entrance requirements, he/she will not be approved to attend the school requested.
- If, at a later date, the student’s attendance, skills and behaviors, conduct, and/or academic performance improve and he/she meets the entrance requirements of the school requested, he/she may re-apply.
- If, at a later date, the FastBridge Spring 2021 or the TNReady Spring 2021 test scores become available and meet the test score requirements, the student may re-apply.
- If, at a later date, the student’s family chooses to have the applicant evaluated by a licensed psychological examiner using an appropriate assessment, and the student meets the test requirements, then he/she may re-apply.
- The student’s new application will receive a new electronic date and time.

What if, at the end of the school year, a student who was approved did not maintain entrance requirements for the specific program?
Final approval for enrollment in an Optional program is reserved until the end of the school year. Final report cards must be submitted and reviewed by the school. The student’s second semester grades, conduct, skills and behaviors, and attendance must meet the school’s entrance requirements.

If I receive an Optional transfer to an Optional school, is transportation provided?
No. If an Optional transfer is approved, transportation must be provided by the parent/legal guardian.

If I live in an SCS zone when my child is accepted but we move to an area not zoned to SCS when school begins? Newly approved applicants who are zoned to SCS must continue to reside within the SCS zone to maintain an approved status in schools where space availability is limited.

Are students who are not zoned to SCS eligible to transfer to SCS through the Optional Schools Application Process? Yes. SCS invites all interested parents/legal guardians to complete an online application for Optional Schools regardless of residence. However, applications for students zoned to SCS will be given first priority, and if spaces remain in Optional programs, non-SCS residents may be awarded transfers if requirements are met. Tuition may apply.

If you have questions, you may email scsop@scsk12.org or call 901-416-5338.

Shelby County Schools offers educational and employment opportunities without regard to race, color, religion, sex, creed, age, disability, national origin, or genetic information.
• Other acceptable tests for high schools include the FastBridge aReading and aMath assessments; the spring NWEA MAP Growth Reading and NWEA MAP Growth Mathematics assessments (including MAP Growth Math 6+, Algebra I, Algebra II or Geometry), a TCAP English or Mathematics End of Course test or another acceptable nationally normed assessment, including the ACT (Reading and Math, PSAT or SAT (Evidence-Based Reading and Writing and Mathematics), dated spring 2019 or later.

• The only acceptable achievement tests from licensed psychological examiners are the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement, 2nd and/or 3rd Edition (KTEA-II or III), or the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test, 2nd or 3rd Edition (WIAT-II or III), with composite scores in Reading and Mathematics on grade-level norms. Entrance requirements vary by school. See 2021-22 Optional Handbook.

2. A copy of a current comprehensive report card including grades, skills and behaviors, conduct and attendance is required.

3. An original copy of the birth certificate is required for all Kindergarten applicants.

All documents are required from non-SCS applicants as part of the application process. Documents must be submitted within 10 business days of the online application submission to:

Division of Optional Schools & Advanced Academics
160 S. Hollywood, Coe 106
Memphis, TN 38112
(901) 416-5338

You may also scan and email your documents to scsop@scsk12.org.

May I apply for more than one Optional school per child?
Yes, parents/legal guardians may apply for two Optional schools. The online application process offers opportunities for a parent/legal guardian to list a first choice and a second choice for each child. If you choose to apply for two schools, please note the following:

• Parents/legal guardians are not required to select two schools.
• If the student qualifies for the first choice and space is available, the student will be approved for his/her first choice school. The second choice school will no longer be valid.
• If the student does not qualify for his/her first choice but does qualify for his/her second choice and space is available, then the student will be approved for his/her second choice. The student will not be placed on a waiting list for the first choice.
• If the student qualifies for both schools but neither school has space, he/she will automatically be placed on the waiting list for his/her first preference only. Parents/legal guardians will be notified that their child has been placed on a waiting list, which will be maintained until 20 days after the first day of the 2021-22 school year. Parents/legal guardians will have the option either to keep their child on the waiting list or to apply for another school that has space. If the student applies for another school, his/her name will be removed from the waiting list.
• If the student does not qualify for his/her first or second choice, the student will not be approved for either school and may restart the application process for a new school. The new application will receive a new electronic date and time once the new application is submitted.

When will I find out if my child has been accepted into an Optional school?
The Division of Optional Schools & Advanced Academics staff will attempt to notify parents/legal guardians within 10 to 12 weeks from the time the application is submitted. If an answer is needed sooner, please contact the requested Optional school or the Division of Optional Schools & Advanced Academics in writing at www.scsop@scsk12.org.

Applications from incoming 1st and 2nd grade applicants who apply to schools that require testing will take additional time to process. Admittance testing begins in March.