

Hernando County School District

Magnet Program Procedures 2026-2027



Definitions:

For the purposes of this document, the following terms apply:

- “Lottery system” refers to the computer program that handles the lottery.
- “Staff’s child” refers to the child of the person who is employed with the Hernando County School Board and whose sole employment is at the school of application.
- “Committee refers to the Portfolio and Audition Committee composed of a representative from the Department of Academic Services, the school, and when possible a volunteer from the community.
- Residency shall be defined as the home for which the parent/guardian files homestead exemption, leases or rents, and lives in the residence on a full-time basis.

Application Procedures: (Refer to page 8 for the timeline)

Chocachatti, Challenger, and Nature Coast Technical High School applicants will complete an *online application. Chocachatti and Challenger applicants wishing to also apply by portfolio must submit the portfolio at the designated location by the deadline. Parents without a computer or Internet access may seek assistance from their nearest school, public library, or District Office.

1. An application is required for:
 - a. A student wishing to submit a portfolio;
 - b. A student wishing to participate in the lottery;
 - c. A student who is a child of staff at the school of application.
2. There will be one application per student per school.

*Parents must create an account at [Hernandoschools.schoolmint.net](https://hernandoschools.schoolmint.net).

**Parents who do not receive a confirmation email and/or text message should resubmit

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their application.

3. Applicants for kindergarten must have attained the age of 5 years on or before September 1st of the school year for which they are applying. Applicants for 1st grade must have attained the age of 6 years on or before September 1st of the school year for which they are applying (per FS 1003.21).
4. The parent(s)/guardian(s) of selected applicants must provide proof of full-time residence at the time of enrollment at the school. (Please refer to Hernando County's Registrar Manual.) Residents of Hernando County are given preference for admission pursuant to F.S. 1002.31.
5. Portfolios for Challenger and Chocachatti must be submitted at the designated location on the dates and times established by the Superintendent (see page 8). A random identifier number will be assigned to each portfolio submitted.

Application Period:

Refer to the timeline on page 8.

Continuity of a Magnet Program Enrollment:

1. Enrollment at a school outside of your attendance zone is a privilege. Once approved, it will continue as long as the student's attendance, conduct, and scholarship are satisfactory. In accordance with the District's Choice Plan (page 4 of Controlled Choice Plan), the decision to rescind a School Choice approval requires discussion with the parent and the school administration, and between the administration and the Supervisor of School Choice. A student whose reassignment has been rescinded by the principal will return to his/her zoned school the following year.
2. The parent(s)/guardian(s) of each magnet program student must certify his/her residency in Hernando County each year before the start of school on the Intent to Return Form. If the student's county of residence has changed, and a resident of Hernando County is on the wait list for the seat, the out-of-county student's seat will be rescinded. Families are encouraged to immediately notify the school in the event that there is an address change.
3. Children of staff members who voluntarily leave or transfer are withdrawn at the end of that school year unless a waiver is obtained due to special circumstances via the District Hardship Committee. This will not apply to staff children who are admitted by portfolio or lottery.
4. Enrollment in the magnet program will be terminated if:
 - a. False information was provided on the application form;
 - b. Parent/Guardian fails to provide residency certification, which is stated on the Intent to Return form;

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- c. The student withdraws from the school. This includes enrollment in full-time online courses, or programs available at the school of choice.
- 5. The school board retains the right to consider appeals if a student's seat has been rescinded for attendance, repeated violations of the Student Code of Conduct, and/or scholarship. The procedure for requesting an appeal is to contact the Supervisor of School Choice. The Supervisor of School Choice will explain what will be needed from the parent(s)/guardian(s) based on the reason for the appeal. Upon receipt of the appeal documentation, the Supervisor of School Choice will convene the Appeal Committee to review the appeal documentation. The members of the Appeal Committee are the Executive Director of Student Support Services, the Director of Student Services, and the Supervisor of School Choice. The decision of the Appeal Committee shall be provided in writing to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student.
 - a. If a parent(s)/guardian(s) does not agree with the Committee's decision to revoke magnet school attendance, they must provide a written appeal within ten (10) calendar days of the receipt of the Appeal Committee's decision with supporting documentation (e.g., legal, medical) to the Supervisor of School Choice.
 - b. The Supervisor of School Choice will forward the appeal and the original denial paperwork to the Executive Director of Student Support Services for distribution to the Superintendent and Board.
 - c. The Board shall have a hearing within thirty (30) business days to consider the appeal, which at the parent(s)/guardian(s) election shall be closed to the public to protect student privacy information.
 - d. A decision shall be made by the Board and communicated in writing to the Superintendent, the Executive Director of Student Support Services, the Supervisor of School Choice, and the parent(s)/guardian(s).
 - e. If an appeal is granted, the student will be subject to the provisions of the Magnet policies, Under Continuity of Magnet Program Enrollment, for conditions of continued attendance.

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Preference for Selection:

1. The order of preference is as follows:
 - a. Children living within the designated school zone (Nature Coast Technical High School);
 - b. Dependent children of: active duty military personnel; members or veterans of the uniformed services who are severely injured *and* medically discharged or retired for a period of one year after military discharge or retirement; members of the uniformed armed services who die on active duty or as a result of injuries sustained on active duty, for a period of one year after death **with an application within the application period**. Eligible children not placed by lottery or portfolio procedures will be placed at the top of the lottery waiting list (per FS 1000.36 and 1003.05);
 - c. Children of staff at the school;
 - d. Portfolios/auditions (according to the Board's established percentages)*;
 - e. Lottery*

**Effective July 1, 2023, HB 633, in part, amends section 1003.05, Florida Statutes, to require dependent children of active-duty military personnel who meet eligibility criteria for special academic programs offered through public schools to be enrolled in such a program if the student's parent is transferred to the state during the school year.*

The bill also provided that a student whose parent is on active duty and is transferred within the state after the controlled open enrollment window may enroll in any school within the state.

**Pursuant to F.S. 1002.31, non-residents of Hernando County cannot displace Hernando County residents. As such, students not residing in Hernando County will be moved to the bottom of the waiting list for admissions.*

2. The Board may require that the school grant preferences to students who apply from schools that exceed instructional capacity.
3. If an application is submitted and the student is accepted and the child is retained, and there is no opening at that grade level, then he/she will be placed at the top of the waiting list immediately following students designated as eligible for military preference for the school year in which the application was made.
4. If you apply for children who are designated as multiples (e.g., twins, triplets) and all of the children are not placed via lottery or portfolio, the other child/children will

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be placed on the wait list immediately following students designated as eligible for military preference. Applications during the application period for each child are required in order to claim multiples' preference.

Selection Procedures:

1. Portfolios and Auditions:

- a. Each school with a magnet program will post an orientation presentation on each of their websites.
- b. Portfolios shall not include the student's name or any identifying information other than photographs and/or videos related to the application process. All portfolios will be assigned an individual number when submitted.
- c. Established selection percentages are the following for each school:
Chocachatti – 70% lottery and 30% portfolio/auditions
Challenger K-8 – 70% lottery and 30% portfolio
Nature Coast Technical High School – 100% lottery for non-zoned students.
- d. Portfolio and audition specifications will be provided by the schools in their orientation presentations posted on their school's websites in October/November. The portfolio process will be different for each school based on the programs of the school, but in all cases the Division of Teaching and Learning staff will direct and coordinate the process.
 - i. Portfolios for Chocachatti Elementary School may include a recorded media audition or an art portfolio as specified in the online presentation. These auditions/portfolios will be reviewed and scored by representatives from the Fine Arts Department at the school under the direction of the Supervisor of School Choice. Students will then be accepted based on their final score and availability at the respective grade level.
 - ii. Portfolios for Challenger will include a collection portfolio for Kindergarten and first grade and a written portfolio for grades 2-8 as specified in the online presentation. These portfolios will be reviewed and scored by representatives from the school under the direction of the Supervisor of School Choice. Students will then be accepted based on their final score and availability at the respective grade level.
 - iii. There will be no portfolios for Nature Coast Technical High School. Students living outside of the school zone will be selected via lottery.
- e. Final decisions on which students will be accepted by portfolio for each program will be made by a School Portfolio Committee under the direction of the Supervisor of School Choice. The committee will include the Principal or designee; staff from the school; volunteers and/or retired educators from the

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community; and the Supervisor of School Choice.

- f. Portfolio ratings are assigned by the committee. Applicants are placed by the committee according to their rating and will be marked accepted in the lottery system before the lottery is run.
- g. Portfolio applicants not selected will be automatically placed in the lottery.

Portfolios submitted for Chocachatti and Challenger K-8 can be picked up by the end of the first year. Portfolios must be picked up by the parent before July 1, 2026 or they become the property of the Hernando County School Board and may be destroyed in accordance with Board policy and Florida law.

2. Lottery System:

- a. The lottery system will not operate to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, disability/exceptionality, history in alternative education settings, or free-lunch status.
- b. Lotteries for all schools will have the same rules.
- c. Lotteries for Nature Coast, Chocachatti, and Challenger will be drawn during the month of December.
- d. The computerized lottery system will fill openings in random number order. At the high school level, all efforts will be made to give students their first program choice.
- e. Selected applicants for whom there is no opening are placed on a waiting list.
- f. Notification to selected applicants will be made through email and/or text message. Parents will need to accept or decline via their SchoolMint account. (Refer to page 8 for timeline.)

3. Waiting List:

- a. The District will maintain a waiting list of students who applied, but were not selected, for future vacancies. As vacancies occur, the school will select students from the waiting list by grade level and/or program in the order in which they appear.
- b. Students that have accepted a seat in the 2026-2027 lottery will be removed from all other magnet program waiting lists for the 2026-2027 school year.
- c. The 2026-2027 waitlist for the school year will expire on the last Friday in March 2027.

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- d. The waiting list will be the only source of admission after the lottery.
- e. Waiting lists are only kept for the current school year. Any student remaining on a waiting list not selected must re-apply if they wish to be considered for the following school year.

Enrollment/Withdrawal Procedures:

1. The parent(s)/guardian(s) must accept placement within five (5) working days of notification or they will forfeit their seat. (Refer to page 8 for the timeline.)
2. During the school year, students selected from the waiting list have up to five (5) working days to accept placement and complete enrollment or they will forfeit the seat.
3. A student who does not enter/attend the magnet program within five (5) working days of the start of the school year will be withdrawn unless there is a documented hardship for delayed enrollment.
4. Students who withdraw and enroll in other options (e.g., private school, home education, virtual school) and then wish to re-enroll into a Hernando County public school will return to their zoned school. Students who withdraw and enter their zoned school or another school of choice and then wish to re-enroll in a Magnet school are subject to the next available application period. In accordance with FHSA rules and state statutes, students returning to their zoned school for any reason are ineligible to participate in a sport that is already in season.

* Magnet schools are exempt from school choice hardship requests. The only way into Chocachatti and Challenger K8 is through portfolio or lottery. The only way into Nature Coast Technical High School is through the lottery or if a student lives in the Board approved school attendance zone.

Promoting Parent Involvement:

1. The parent(s)/guardian(s) at Chocachatti and Challenger will be required to volunteer a minimum of 8 hours. If the commitment is not met before the last grading period, the parent or guardian must meet with an administrator or his/her designee to agree on a necessary plan of action.
2. There is a mandatory nominal fee for a safety and security background check for all school volunteers.

Transportation:

Limited transportation options are available for students accepted into magnet programs.

Area bus stops for Hernando County Students are designed to service as many students as possible with a minimum number of stops. Therefore, bus stops may be further than 1.5 miles from the students' residences. It may be necessary for parents to transport their child to and from their assigned bus stop. Hazardous walking conditions to/from bus stops do not apply to these students .

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2026-2027 Magnet Programs Awareness Activities, Dates and Deadlines	
Chocachatti Elementary School 4135 California St. Brooksville, FL 34604 352-797-7067	Orientation Presentation will be available for viewing and acknowledgment starting on October 13, 2025, at https://www.hernandoschools.org/schools/chocachatti-elementary-school
Challenger K-8 School Of Science & Mathematics 13400 Elgin Blvd. Spring Hill, FL 34609 352-797-7024	Orientation Presentation will be available for viewing and acknowledgment starting on October 13, 2025, at https://www.hernandoschools.org/schools/challenger-k-8
Nature Coast Technical High School 4057 California St. Brooksville, FL 34604 352-797-7088	Orientation Presentation will be available for viewing and acknowledgment starting on October 13, 2025, at https://www.hernandoschools.org/schools/nature-coast-technical-high-school
Application Available on hernandoschools.schoolmint.net Families must create an account in order to submit an application. All notifications will be made through the SchoolMint program. No applications will be accepted prior to October 13th	
Online application for NCT, CES, and CK8	October 13th – November 13th Parents without a computer or Internet access may seek assistance from their nearest school, public library, or District Office.
<u>PORTFOLIO Submissions</u>	
CES – Grades K-5	Portfolios will be submitted electronically via Google Share Drive. Portfolios must be submitted by November 13, 2025. An application must be on file for the portfolio to be accepted.
CK8 – Grades K-8 Submitted at: District Office, 919 N. Broad Street, Brooksville, FL 34601 (8:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.)	Portfolios need to be dropped off at the HCSD Office on one of the following days: Tuesday, November 18th and Thursday, November 20th from 8:30 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. each day. An application must be on file for the portfolio to be accepted.
CES and CK8 Portfolio Reviews	December 2025
<u>Lottery</u> CES – Grades K-5; CK8 – Grades K-8; NCTHS	December 2025
<u>NOTIFICATION</u> Parents notified of selection by:	December 19st
<u>INTENT TO ATTEND</u> Parent accepts/declines the seat and enrolls in the School by:	January 12th Any seats not accepted by the deadline will be filled using the wait list.

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EQUITY

It is the policy of the School Board of Hernando County, Florida, not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital status, or handicap in its educational programs or employment practices. By operating in this manner, the School Board adheres to the provisions of Federal Law and other applicable laws.

Specifically, Hernando District Policy states, "It is the policy of the Hernando County School Board not to illegally discriminate or to allow its employees to illegally discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital status, disability, pregnancy, military status, ancestry, or Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 (GINA) in its educational programs or employment practice." The District also provides equal access to its facilities to the Boy Scouts and other identified Title 36 patriotic youth groups, as required within 34 C.F.R. 108.9.

In accordance with Florida Administrative Code, national origin minority or English Language Learners (ELL) students shall not be subjected to any disciplinary action because of their appropriate use of a language other than English.

To file concerns, please follow the complaint procedures found in School Board Policy.

Compliance officers for Employee related issues are the Director of Human Resources 352-797-7005 and the Director of Labor Relations and Professional Standards 352-797-7005. Compliance officers for student related issues are the Director of Student Services 352-797-7022 and the Director of Exceptional Student Services 352-797-7008.

See School Board Policy 1122, 3122 and 4122. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

THE POLICY OF NONDISCRIMINATION OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF HERNANDO COUNTY

GENERAL: It is the policy of the Hernando County School Board not to illegally discriminate or to allow its employees to illegally discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital status, disability, handicap or other legally protected status in its educational programs or employment practices. By operating in this manner, the School Board adheres to the provisions of Federal Law and other applicable laws.

EMPLOYMENT: Neither the Hernando County School District nor its employees shall illegally discriminate in its employment policies and practices on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, age or any other legally protected status as defined by applicable law.

STUDENTS: The Hernando County School Board prohibits exclusion of any student from participation in or the denial of the benefits of any educational program or activity as well as any and all forms of illegal discrimination against any student on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital

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status, disability or other legally protected status as provided by applicable law.

PRECEDENCE: This policy shall take precedence over any other statement in the policies, procedures, rules and regulations of the Hernando County School Board wherever such may appear unless in conflict with any collective bargaining agreement.

In accordance with Florida Administrative Code, national origin minority or English Language Learners (ELL) students shall not be subjected to any disciplinary action because of their appropriate use of a language other than English.

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F.S. 1000.05

It is the policy of the Hernando County School district not to illegally discriminate or allow its employees to illegally discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital status, disability or GINA in its educational programs or employment practices.

For questions regarding equity within the school system, please contact Matthew Goldrick; by email goldrick_m@hcsb.k12.fl.us, phone 352-797-7005, or mail 919 N. Broad St. Brooksville, FL 34601. To file concerns, please follow the complaint procedures found in School Board Policy.

See School Board Policy 1122, 3122 and 4122. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

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**Hernando County School
District**

Process for Board Consideration of Hardship Appeals

1. If a parent contacts school board member (s), send to Executive Director of Student Support Programs.
2. Executive Director sends to Supervisor of School Choice.
3. Has the parent/guardian already contacted the Supervisor of School Choice? (If not, Supervisor of School Choice takes the appeal to the District Hardship Committee). If yes, proceed to next step.
4. Does the request demonstrate a documented hardship for the student that is otherwise prohibited by the Controlled Choice and/or Magnet policy? If not, refer back to Supervisor of School Choice. If yes, proceed to next step.
5. Parent provides a written appeal with supporting documentation (e.g., legal, medical) to the Supervisor of School Choice, who will forward the appeal and the original hardship denial paperwork to the Executive Director of Student Support Programs for distribution to the Superintendent and Board. The board shall have a hearing within thirty (30) business days to consider the appeal, which at the parent/guardian(s) election shall be closed to the public to protect student privacy information. A decision shall be made by the Board and communicated in writing to the Superintendent, Executive Director of Student Support Programs, Supervisor of School Choice, and the parent/guardian. Decisions of the Board shall indicate the term of the approval (e.g., current school year only, through the highest grade level). If an appeal is granted, the student will be subject to the provisions of the Choice and/or Magnet policies. Please refer to the Controlled Choice Plan and/or Magnet Program Procedures for conditions of continued attendance.

F.S. 120.57(2)

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