

Arts & Innovation Magnet Program @ CFIT

Frequently Asked Questions



Q: What is the Arts & Innovation Magnet Program?

A: The Arts & Innovation Magnet (AIM) Program utilizes the school system's Center for Innovative Teaching (CFIT) Campus to provide our families with an optional model of middle school education for 6th and 7th grade students that features innovative teaching and learning practices that include Project-Based Learning, Arts Integration, STEM/STEAM, Instructional Conversations, Creative Technologies, and 21st Century Education. The educational environment of the program is designed to maximize student engagement and depth of learning through lessons and assignments that are real-world, rigorous, and relevant. Students attend the program on the CFIT Campus every school day in order to receive all of their core content and elective instruction, but remain enrolled as students of their homebase middle school.

Q: What does the program's daily student schedule look like?

A: AIM program students may either be shuttled to the CFIT Campus from their homebase middle school or transported directly to CFIT by a parent each day by 8:00am. They will then have homeroom followed by either a 105 minute integrated block of Math & Science or Language Arts & Social Studies instruction. That is followed by 30 minutes of extended learning time that we refer to as Individualized Success, which is focused on the personal needs of each student. After that, they will have 45 minutes of one of six mini-academies, which are the program's version of connections classes. Lunch is next on the schedule, and is always done in project teams with an assigned instructional conversation. After lunch, students have another 105 minute block of integrated instruction time to complete their core content instruction for the day. Student pickup to return to the homeschool begins at 1:30 so that students can either participate in afterschool activities at CFIT or their homebase middle school.

Q: What makes this program different from regular middle school?

A: While students in the AIM program will still be taught the same mandatory core content standards that they would at any of the school system's traditional middle schools, the instructional approaches and expectations of how they experience, apply, and show mastery of that content is significantly different. Through both project-based learning and arts integration, students in the program are presented with learning in a way that intentionally connects the required facts and skills of various subject areas to one another and to their real-life applications. Students in the program also experience a higher than typical level of authentic and holistic assessment that includes, but goes far beyond traditional paper and pencil testing. Students not only take traditional quizzes and tests, but are also expected to demonstrate mastery of learning through created artifacts, live demonstration, personal performance, peer leadership, and project completion within a collaborative environment that models the expectations of 21st century college and career readiness.

Q: What are the elective mini-academies, and how are they different from traditional middle school connections classes?

A: An exploratory connections time will be incorporated into the program's daily schedule next year so that all students will cycle through six different three-week long Mini-Academies that will focus on the various unique opportunities and learning spaces available at CFIT and how they align with future opportunities at both the high school and post-secondary levels.

The AIM Program Mini-Academy model currently includes...

- Engineering & Technology in the CFIT Makerspace
- Dance & Choreography in the CFIT Dance Studio
- Theatrical Production in the CFIT Black Box Theater
- Agriculture and Food Science in the GIKI Garden/Food Lab
- Visual Art & Design in the CFIT Visual Art Studio
- Music/Sound Technology in the CFIT Digital Media Laboratory.

Students will participate in all six Mini-Academies each semester.

Q: What about traditional middle school connections classes like Band and Chorus?

A: While the AIM program will not be offering these two connections classes in a traditional format, we are planning to add some music-based options that are not currently in place. These music-based opportunities would be available through the Music/Sound Technology Mini-Academy and through new music integration components of the AIM program's project-based learning units that are similar to how other art forms are integrated throughout the current year. The system also hopes to develop more robust music opportunities in the future at CFIT as interests and resources continue to grow.

Q: What does the future for students in this program beyond next year look like?

A: We anticipate being able to extend the AIM@CFIT program through 8th grade in future years. Also, in the fall of 2020 the district will open its third high school which will be an Arts & Science Magnet High School of choice. The new high school will be an extension and adaptation of the innovative work already taking place at CFIT. We hope that you have had an opportunity to attend one of the community meetings scheduled in March 2019 to learn more about this opportunity for your child.

Q: Is this program better suited for certain types of students?

A: This program is focused on maximizing student learning and engagement for all students and is not intended to serve only one certain type of student. The AIM@CFIT program is not exclusively a "gifted" program, or a "remediation" program, or a "disciplinary" program, but provides an appropriate learning environment where we believe students of all backgrounds can excel. Students have equal access to submit a program lottery application regardless of special need or demographic. Once the class rosters have been generated through the program lottery process, an assessment will be made to determine each participating students' specific needs (if applicable) and services that must be provided. Should a student with an IEP be selected for the program through the lottery process, it may be necessary for the student's IEP Team to hold an IEP meeting to discuss placement options.

Q: How many students will be selected for the program?

A: For the 2019-20 school year, the program will include 4 classes of 6th graders and 2 classes of 7th graders, with 24 students in each class. This results in a total of 144 students in the program.

Q: Who is eligible for the program?

A: It is the intention of the school system to grow the AIM program to ensure that it is an option for all students regardless of their address. For 2019-20, the program has been expanded to include one 6th grade class from each of the four BCSS middle schools, as well as one 7th grade class each from Bear Creek MS and Westside MS. New openings in the program are available for students who will be in 6th grade next year at either Russell MS or Westside MS, or in 7th grade at Westside MS. The remaining class rosters are already filled by existing program students.

Q: How will students will be selected to participate in the program for 2019-20?

A: Students will be selected to participate in the program through a voluntary and public lottery system. Only eligible students who have a lottery application submitted by Friday, April 12th will be assigned a lottery number and be allowed to participate in the program lottery. On Wednesday, April 17th, the program lottery will take place at the Barrow County School System Professional Development Center (Board Office) located at 179 West Athens Street in Winder, GA. The lottery drawings will begin at 9:00am and should conclude no later than 11:00am. There will be three separate lottery drawings. Two drawings will be used to create the class rosters and waiting lists for each of the new 6th grade grade classes from Westside Middle School and Russell Middle School, and a third drawing will take place to fill a few open seats in the 7th grade class roster for Westside Middle School. The 6th grade class rosters for Bear Creek Middle School and Haymon-Morris Middle School have already been filled from the program's existing 5th grade classes from Yargo and Statham Elementary Schools.

Q: Can employees of the school system bypass the lottery process and request that their child be placed directly in the program?

A: No. There is no special consideration for children of school system employees who are interested in the program. They, too, must apply and participate in the lottery process.

Q: How does a family submit an application?

A: Applications for the lottery are available for pickup at either...

BCSS Professional Development System (Board Office)
179 West Athens Street, Winder, GA
or
BCSS Center for Innovative Teaching
84 W. Midland Ave, Winder, GA

Lottery Applications can also be downloaded from the school system website at <http://www.barrow.k12.ga.us/cfit>
Lottery Applications may be turned in to the front desk of either the Professional Development Center or Center for Innovative Teaching by 4:00pm on Friday, April 12th. Any eligible student whose application is turned after 4:00pm on April 12th will not be allowed to participate in the lottery but will be added to the bottom of the program waiting list once all lotteries are completed. Completed applications may also be emailed to the Lee Bane, the Program Director at lee.bane@barrow.k12.ga.us

Q: How much does it cost to participate in the program?

A: There are no additional costs to families in order for their child to participate in this program thanks to the Barrow County School System's status as a Georgia Charter School System.

Q: Who will be teaching the students in the program?

A: Ashley Bailey, Letitia Macdowell, Laura Payne, and Julie Wood will be teaching the 6th grade classes. Ysheena Lyles and McKendree Ramsell will be teaching the 7th grade classes. These teachers were selected for this program as a result of their successes in the ArtsNow Professional Learning Residency Program, their specific certifications and endorsements, their teaching experience, and their overall teaching philosophies and competencies that align with the goals of this magnet program.

Q: If a student is selected in the lottery, but decides during the school year that the program is not a good fit for them, can they leave the program?

A: Such a situation would be handled on a case-by-case basis in order to ensure that a transition plan could be created that would be in the best interest of the student.

Q: Can a student on the waiting list be added to the program once the school year has started?

A: Should an opening in one of the program classes occur during the school year, an invitation to the program will be extended to the student atop that class's waiting list. Careful attention would be taken to ensure that a transition plan could be created that would be in the best interest of the student.

Q: How will student discipline issues be handled in the program?

A: Students in the program remain enrolled in their homebase school. Therefore, communications between the AIM program administration and homebase school administration will remain consistent throughout the year should a significant discipline issue arise. The AIM Program administration includes both Lee Bane, the Director of Innovative Learning, and Shawn Williams, the AIM@CFIT Program Principal. General classroom discipline and PBIS procedures will be managed by each classroom teacher with the support of the program administration.

Q: Can parents transport their students directly to/from CFIT instead of taking them to their homebase school?

A: Yes. For the 2019-20 school year, families can choose to have their student delivered to the homeschool each morning and then shuttled to/from CFIT via school system-provided transportation, or take it upon themselves to provide their child's transportation directly between their home and the Center for Innovative Teaching. The school system will not be adding dedicated routes directly between student homes and CFIT for the 2019-20 school year.