

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 arts integrated and innovative model of middle school education for 6th and 7th grade students that features 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 type of student is most successful in the program?

A: Students are engaged in dance, theater, music technology, engineering and innovative and integrated learning experiences. These experiences require students to be self motivated, willing to work with groups, create and perform dances, plays, videography, etc. Students who are willing to step outside their comfort zone to try new things and explore their own limits are most successful.

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 9:00 am. Students have homeroom followed by two integrated core content classes. Students will have 45 minutes of one of eight mini-academies, which are the program's version of connections classes. After lunch, students have their remaining two core content classes of integrated instruction time to complete their core content instruction for the day. Students have a 30 minute block of time called Individualized Success during which they are able to receive additional academic support or continue to work on group and individual projects. Student pickup to return to the homeschool begins at 2:30 pm 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 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
- Communicative Arts
- Media Arts

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: Can my child participate in the program as a Distance/Digital Learner?

A: The AIM program did offer a digital learning platform during the 2020-2021 school year due to the uncertainty of in-person learning during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is very difficult to replicate the hands-on, project and performance based program digitally. After careful consideration, there will not be a digital learning option for AIM students in 2021-2022.

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

A: In the fall of 2020 the district opened its third high school, The Barrow Arts and Sciences Academy, is 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. 8th grade students are able to attend BASA.

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 determine the placement of the student.

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

A: For the 2021-22 school year, the program will include four classes of 6th graders and four classes of 7th graders, with 24 students in each class. This results in a total of 192 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 2021-22, the program will include one 6th grade class from each of the four BCSS middle schools. The four 7th grade class rosters will be filled by existing program students. If there are openings, 7th grade students from any Barrow County Middle School may apply.

Q: How will students be selected to participate in the program for 2021-22?

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 February 8, 2021 will be assigned a lottery number and be allowed to participate in the program lottery. On February 25, 2021, a program lottery will take place via live stream.

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: Lottery Applications can be found on our website: www.barrow.k12.ga.us/aim Applications must be submitted by Feb. 8, 2021 by 4 pm.

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?

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. It is important to decide if the program is a good fit prior to entering the lottery.

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. General classroom discipline and PBIS procedures will be managed by each classroom teacher with the support of the program administration.

Q: Can a student be dismissed from the program?

A: While we work with students and parents to ensure their success in the AIM program, continuation in the program is contingent upon good attendance and good behavior. Chronic absenteeism or office referrals could result in removal from the program.

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

A: Yes. For the 2021-22 school year, families can choose to have their student delivered to the homeschool each morning and then shuttled to/from AIM @ 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 2021-22 school year.