

## FRHSD LEARNING CENTERS AND ACADEMIES

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### What are Learning Centers and Academies?

**Learning Centers** are four-year programs of academic study offered to a selected group of highly motivated students who have demonstrated interests and abilities in particular fields of study. They prepare students for further study of that field in college. Students and faculty of a particular program join together to form a unique learning community located within the comprehensive high school setting. All Learning Centers include in-depth study of targeted courses on an advanced level, with many courses meeting the requirements of Advanced Placement or college-level work. Learning Center courses fall under traditional academic disciplines such as science, math, social studies, and language arts. The four-year sequences combine to make an integrated and interdisciplinary academic experience for students. The Learning Centers address the core skills, knowledge, and values that are essential to success in high school and in preparation for acceptance to a competitive four-year college or university.

**Academies** are four-year programs of specialized coursework and experiences for students who have a particular career interest. Students who attend Academies are prepared to directly enter the work force where they can immediately use the knowledge and skills, attend a post-secondary technical program, or attend a two- or four-year college. The programs integrate career and technical courses in addition to the traditional academic curriculum. Students who attend our Academies benefit from being part of a career-oriented learning community while at the same time being a fully participating student within a comprehensive high school. The Academy environment encourages students to engage in meaningful learning activities that are relevant to real-world settings.

#### How will I get to school if I am accepted into a program that is not located in my home school?

The Freehold Regional High School District provides bussing for all Academy and Learning Center students, including an activity bus to accommodate after school participation in extracurricular activities.

#### How do I know which Learning Center or Academy is right for me?

You should ask yourself the following questions. Your responses will help you to decide whether or not you are a good fit for a Learning Center or Academy.

Learning Centers:

- ✓ Do my personal interests match the focus of the Learning Center?
- ✓ Do my grades in the subjects that are the academic focus of the Learning Center demonstrate that I am ready to accept the challenge of the program?
- ✓ Have I demonstrated that I can balance the demands of accelerated classes while still participating in sports, clubs, hobbies, and other extra-curricular activities?
- ✓ For the Business Administration, Science and Engineering, and the Medical Sciences Learning Centers, am I taking Algebra I or higher in 8<sup>th</sup> grade?
- ✓ Can I identify two teachers in my school that will be willing to provide me with excellent recommendations for these programs?
- ✓ Have my scores on standardized tests been strong?
- ✓ Am I willing to attend the high school where this program is located?

## How do I know which Learning Center or Academy is right for me? (continued)

Academies:

- ✓ Do my personal and career interests match the focus of the Academy?
- ✓ Have I participated in classes, after-school activities, hobbies, or other activities that demonstrate that I have some experience with the focus of the Academy?
- ✓ Have I demonstrated that I can balance my interests and my required school work and be successful at both?
- ✓ For the Computer Science Academy, am I taking Algebra I or higher in 8<sup>th</sup> grade?
- ✓ Can I identify two teachers in my school that will be willing to provide me with excellent recommendations for these programs?
- ✓ If applying to FPAA, LEPS, or JROTC, can I identify one other professional who has knowledge of my skills, interests, or performing arts talent and who will provide me with an excellent recommendation?
- ✓ If applying to FPAA, am I willing to participate in an audition?
- ✓ If applying to JROTC, am I willing to participate in an interview?
- ✓ Am I willing to attend the high school where this program is located?

## Why is Algebra I required by the Business Administration, Medical Sciences, Science and Engineering Learning Centers, and the Computer Science Academy?

9<sup>th</sup> grade coursework in these programs assumes and depends on student proficiency in Algebra I. Therefore, middle/sending school transcripts must reflect successful completion (a grade of B or better) of Algebra I by 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation in order for a successful applicant to be enrolled in one of these four programs. Pre-Algebra does not satisfy this requirement, nor does Algebra I taken during the summer immediately prior to 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

## What opportunities will I have to learn more about these programs?

We offer students an opportunity to learn more specific information about particular Learning Centers and Academies during our Open Houses. Students will have an opportunity to attend a formal presentation on the program, meet with staff and students, and tour the high school where the program is located. Please see our web site for a full schedule of these events.

## How do I apply?

The online application will open on October 3, 2016. The application will remain open to new applicants until 11:59 PM on October 31, 2016. Once you log into the application site, set up your username and password, and provide basic contact information, you will officially be recognized as an applicant. Each time you log onto your application, you will be able to make changes or additions to your work. At 11:59 PM on October 31, your application will be frozen and you will not be able to make further changes or additions, except to your essay(s) and personal statement. You may edit your essay(s) and personal statement until 11:59 PM on November 14, 2016.

The selection process considers many different criteria and involves large amounts of data collection with partner middle schools. As such, the selection process is a lengthy one. We strive to release our initial invitations in February in order to meet the needs of staffing, budgeting, and student registration. Private schools, the Monmouth County Vocational School District, and other schools have selection and registration processes that are completely separate from ours, and which may overlap with ours. We are cannot accommodate requests for early decision.

## How many programs may I apply to?

You may apply to up to TWO programs. You can apply to any combination of Learning Center and/or Academy Programs (e.g., Law/Public Service Learning Center and Computer Science Academy). You do not have to apply to two programs. You may apply to just one, if you wish. FPAA applicants may apply to two majors within the Academy.

### What is included in the application?

- Basic student contact information, including a parent/guardian e-mail address
- Student's choice of up to 2 programs
- One student essay for each program
- A list of student's activities and interests
- Student's academic records including 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade report cards (provided by the sending schools)
- Recommendations from appropriate teachers or professionals
- Entrance exam for all Learning Centers and the Computer Science Academy
- Audition for Fine and Performing Arts Academy
- Interview for Navy Junior ROTC Academy

### How do you decide who gets a seat?

The admissions formula considers multiple measures to ensure that each accepted student is a good fit for the program. In Learning Centers and the Computer Science Academy, our formula considers 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade academic grades in several subjects (weighted at 40% in the formula), the entrance examination (weighted at 40%), teacher recommendations (10%), an essay (5%), and statement of activities (5%).

Our remaining five academies vary in their formulas:

Animal and Botanical Sciences Academy: recommendations (25%), essay (15%), statement of activities (20%), academic grades (40%)

Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management Academy: recommendations (30%), essay (20%), statement of activities (20%), academic grades (30%)

Fine and Performing Arts Academy: recommendations (5%), essay (5%), statement of activities (5%), academic grades (15%), audition (70%)

Law Enforcement and Public Safety Academy: recommendations (30%), essay (20%), statement of activities (15%), academic grades (35%)

Navy JROTC Academy: recommendations (25%), essay (10%), statement of activities (15%), academic grades (30%), interview (20%)

Note that we do not weight grades based on level (honors, resource, etc.). We view each grade as a measurement of how well a student performed toward appropriately leveled objectives. An A+, for example, is equal to any other A+, no matter the levels of the courses. We do encourage students to discuss honors or other specialized programs in their essays. After all, the fact that a student is in honors classes is not as relevant to our admissions process as that student's articulation of how well that participation informed the decision to apply, and prepared the student to succeed in our program.

### Who should I ask for a recommendation?

You should ask two teachers who know you well and can provide feedback on your interests, academic work, and likelihood of success in the program(s) to which you are applying. Select these individuals carefully and ask those teachers who teach classes that most closely resemble the focus of the program (e.g., ask your science and math teachers if you are applying to Science and Engineering, but ask your English and social studies teachers if you are applying to Law & Public Service). Teacher recommendations are completed in our online application program.

Some programs (FPAA, JROTC, LEPS) may require additional paper recommendations (available as a printable PDF file) from another teacher in your school or professional outside of your school who has trained you or has knowledge of your talent.

**Why must I audition for FPAA and interview for JROTC? How do I schedule an appointment?**

These programs are focused on a student's talents and potential for growth in unique areas of interest. The professionals who work in and with these programs will evaluate you. They will utilize very carefully designed criteria. Only those students who demonstrate a genuine interest in the programs, previous training (FPAA only), and potential for success in the programs are accepted.

You will be asked to submit a request (available as a printable PDF file) for an audition and/or interview appointment at the time you apply. This request must be signed by your parent/guardian. You will be contacted by the supervisor of the program to schedule an audition and/or appointment for an interview.

**Can I prepare for the Learning Center test?**

The district utilizes percentile scores from InView, an assessment of cognitive ability and aptitude published by CTB/McGraw Hill and administered nationally. This is not a subject-specific test for which students can study, but a test of skills and abilities that many schools use to determine appropriateness for specialized programs like ours.

**When will you review my application?**

We will monitor the applications coming into our system during the application period, but we will not begin the review process until after all parts of the application are complete, including parts that are coming from your school and recommenders. You will be able to check "status notes" on your application so that you can be assured that all of the parts that are out of your hands have been completed. Note that applications that are incomplete (that is, missing required items) will not be reviewed.

**When will I find out if I have been accepted?**

We are planning to notify students in early March 2017. We notify applicants via email to log back into our online application system to obtain their status.

**If I apply to two programs, can I be accepted to both?**

Yes. You will be accepted to or offered a seat on the waiting list for any program for which you are qualified. You will only have a few days to make your choice. Once you accept a seat in a program or a spot on a waiting list, you cannot switch into another one.

**What is the waiting list and how does it work?**

Because we have limited positions in each program, we begin by offering acceptance to the top students who qualify for admission. However, not all of those students will choose to enroll. Therefore, we offer other students who meet all of the standards for acceptance a place on the waiting list. As students make their choices to attend or not, we invite students from the waiting list to attend. Because this is a fluid process, we cannot tell you what your likelihood of being accepted is. We will encourage you to make decisions based on your interests.

**What happens if I am not accepted to any program?**

You will attend your home school. All of our high schools offer a variety of courses that will meet your interests and abilities.

*If you have other questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Curriculum & Instruction at  
732-792-7300, x8529*