

Seven high schools in Hamilton County Schools listed in U.S. News and World Report best rankings

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The Top 100 high schools in Tennessee includes seven from Hamilton County Schools in the latest rankings from the U.S. News and World Report. Chattanooga High School Center for Creative Arts (8) was ranked in the top ten high schools in Tennessee, Hamilton County Collegiate High at Chattanooga State (31) and Signal Mountain Middle/High (33) were in the top 35. Soddy Daisy High (61), Chattanooga School for the Arts and Sciences (66), STEM School Chattanooga (73) and East Hamilton Middle/High (89) were also included in the top 100 schools in the state.

The annual Best High Schools rankings by the U.S. News and World Report includes data on more than 23,000 public high schools in 50 states and the District of Columbia. Schools were ranked on six factors based on their performance on state assessments and how well the high schools prepare students for college.

Chattanooga High Center for Creative Arts (CCA) ranked #8 in Tennessee high schools for 2019. The latest ranking was the second year in a row for CCA in the Tennessee Top 10. The school was mentioned specifically for its impressive student participation and success in Advanced Placement (AP) and a 100 percent graduation rate. The school was founded in 1998 and is a unique fine arts magnet school in Hamilton County Schools promoting academic and artistic excellence for students in grades six through twelve. Chattanooga High Center for Creative Arts was named a National Magnet School of Excellence for 2018. Students have performed with national touring company productions of Porgy and Bess and Barry Manilow. The



school offers programs in communications, music, dance, theatre, and visual arts.

“The amazing work that occurs each day at CCA is due to the staff and students working together. When you add our parents and our arts theme to this winning combination success is achieved,” said Debbie Smith, principal at Chattanooga High School Center for Creative Arts. “I am so proud to be the principal of Chattanooga High School Center for Creative Arts where dreamers reach for the stars every day!”

Hamilton County Collegiate High at Chattanooga State is listed under its old name of Hamilton County Middle College High on the report, but it is the same special program helping young people expedite their education. High school students can get ahead of the game with their education at Collegiate High. Students have the opportunity to earn a high school diploma and an associate’s degree at Collegiate High. Even if graduates have not earned an associate’s by graduation, they will have earned credit hours toward a college major while in high school.

Signal Mountain High School was lauded for the school’s 97 percent graduation rate and the percentage of students passing at least one AP

exam. Signal Mountain Middle/High opened in August 2008 with a vision to create a community of caring and committed learners with a passion for excellence. Every student in grades 6 through 10 are part of the International Baccalaureate program at the school. Three students have recorded perfect scores of 36 on the ACT college entrance exam in the last year.

“It is such an honor for our school to be recognized alongside other Hamilton County Schools as a Top 100 high school in the state of Tennessee,” said Dr. Shane Harwood, executive principal of Signal Mountain Middle-High School. “We are so proud of our students, teachers, and the families that support all as we partner each day to prepare our students for successful futures.”

Soddy Daisy High School has been in existence since 1937 with a rich history and tradition of excellence. Soddy Daisy High recognizes that quality learning is a cooperative effort involving staff, students, parents, and the community. The high school values risk-taking as a valuable part of learning and provide opportunities to apply knowledge in real-life situations.

“To quote Don Galer, ‘Continuous improvement is impossible without continuous innovation,’” said Steven Henry, principal of Soddy Daisy High. “This year, our staff adopted this philosophy along with the motto **Where students come first**, and we believe this shift in thinking has been a major part of our success.”

Chattanooga School for the Arts and Sciences is a magnet school in Hamilton County Schools. The school follows the principles of *The Paideia Proposal* which advocates the same curriculum for all students. The school has a proven record of success with more than 95 percent of its graduates going on to post-secondary education. “We like to say we are changing the world one graduating class at a time,” said Jim Boles, principal of Chattanooga School for the Arts and Sciences Upper School.

“Our number one job is to prepare students for college and careers, and we reiterate that to students daily,” said Jim Boles, principal of Chattanooga School for the Arts and Sciences. “While we don’t do it for the recognition, our teachers and students do appreciate that their hard work is being noticed. There is always room for improvement, and this is a reminder; there is still work to be done. “

STEM School Chattanooga began in 2012 and is a science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and the arts-focused magnet school in the district. The school focuses on learning through solving real-world problems using innovation, critical thinking and collaborative learning. STEM School Chattanooga is a TN STEM Designated School: the highest rated STEM school in the state, one of two schools in the country to be an MIT’S FAB Foundation Leadership School in digital fabrication and one of thirty schools in the world to be a World Leading Learning School for Innovation. The school uses a 4K microscope with the area’s gigabit network to experience biology and STEM like never before. The interactive, high-resolution microscopy system allows researchers at USC to place live biological specimens in a Digital Cinema microscope and capture ultra-high resolution movies of the specimen and share with students in STEM class.

“It is an honor to work in a school system that promotes and values the work of teachers and students,” said Dr. Tony Donen, principal of STEM School Chattanooga. “This recognition is just another example of the great work that takes place throughout our school system.”

East Hamilton High School is in the Missionary Ridge Learning Community in Hamilton County Schools and home to just over 1,000 high school students. The school opened in 2009, and its academic performance outpaces the district and state in math and reading.

Photo: Students perform during the annual Dinner and the Arts Gala at Chattanooga High Center for Creative Arts

Hamilton County Schools

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