

CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHOOLS

POLICY STUDENT ASSIGNMENT PLAN	CMS/NEPN Code: JCA
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Pursuant to North Carolina law, a student shall be assigned to a school by the Board of Education in accordance with the student's place of residence and a student assignment plan adopted by the Board.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR STUDENT ASSIGNMENT¹

In making decisions regarding the student assignment plan, the Board shall follow these Guiding Principles for Student Assignment, which are based on our Vision, Mission, Core Beliefs and Commitments, our Theory of Action, and input from the community.

The Mission of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools is to maximize academic achievement by every student in every school. Effective school-based leadership and teaching, differentiated staffing, and equitable and differentiated allocation of resources as expressed in Policy ADA (Equitable Distribution of Resources) have the greatest potential impacts on individual student learning. In addition, an effective student assignment plan can contribute to positive, supportive learning environments. The Board of Education is committed to creating such environments.

Home Schools

Home Schools are the foundation of our academic instruction delivery model. Since accomplishing our mission requires that every home school maximize student achievement, home schools are our first priority when making student assignment and operational decisions. Every student will be guaranteed an opportunity to attend a home school within proximity to where he/she lives.

Magnet Schools

Magnet Schools (Full and Partial) offer students opportunities for learning outside the assigned home school in environments that combine three characteristics:

1. A track record of consistently high student achievement
2. A track record of narrowing achievement gaps at a rate that exceeds the aggregate rate of home schools
3. One or more of the following: an academically distinct program, demonstrated innovation in creating high academic growth, and/or a student population that is distinctly more diverse than neighboring home schools.

¹ The Guiding Principles were adopted by the Board on August 10, 2010 and incorporated into this policy on November 9, 2010.

Stability and Predictability

In order to generate and sustain community support, the student assignment plan must provide students and families with stability and predictability. To that end, the Board of Education commits to the following:

1. The Board shall consider current and future population growth, potential demographic shifts, and other factors in order to create assignment patterns that are sustainable over time.
2. The Board shall consider undertaking a comprehensive district-wide review of the student assignment plan every six years.
3. The Board reserves the right to make changes to the assignment plan on a localized basis due to the following factors: the opening and/or closing of schools, overcrowding, or underutilization. With the exception of situations deemed to constitute an emergency threat to the safety of students and/or staff, the Board will notify students and families of potential changes no fewer than nine months in advance and will approve any decision no later than November 15 affecting the school year beginning in the following calendar year, while striving to provide more ample notice whenever possible.
4. The current sibling guarantee that includes meeting eligibility requirements for magnet programs remains in effect.

Diversity

The student assignment plan will reflect the demographics of the school feeder areas in order to create diverse learning environments that better prepare students to live in our increasingly diverse country and to compete successfully in the global workforce.

Effective use of Capital Resources

The student assignment plan must be cost effective and make efficient use of our facilities and transportation resources. We will develop a facility use policy that includes overcrowding and underutilization, as well as alternative teaching delivery methods to maximize student achievement while reducing facilities and transportation costs.

Decision Matrix

While the Board will be mindful of our Mission, our commitment to Equity, and all aspects of our Guiding Principles when making student assignment decisions, only certain components currently can be measured objectively. Therefore, in order to provide fact-based starting points, the Board directs the Superintendent and staff to include the following prioritized decision-making rubric in any proposed changes to the student assignment plan.

1. Home Schools – Proximity will be based in priority order on:
 - a. travel distance from home to school;
 - b. keeping entire neighborhoods assigned to the same school (staff shall use its discretion in considering commonly accepted neighborhood boundaries, zoning decisions, covenant agreements, HOAs, etc); and
 - c. to the extent possible, keeping whole elementary zones intact in middle and high school feeder patterns.
2. Stability and Predictability – the likelihood that the proposed assignments may be

- sustained over a period of time without adjustment.
3. Diversity – consideration for creating a relative balance of economically disadvantaged students (EDS), with the understanding that there is currently a predictive link between poverty levels and achievement gaps.
 4. Effective use of capital resources – the total projected operating and replacement costs of facilities and transportation resources over a defined period of time.

Community Involvement

Along with our commitment to these Principles, the Board calls upon our community to join us in preparing our students to become productive citizens. For all our students to succeed, they need the support of more than just the CMS staff. Students, families, community members and groups, businesses, philanthropic groups, and other governmental bodies must become more aware of how their decisions impact students and join us in making educating all students a top priority. We call upon our entire community to act now to support individual students and schools.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT PLAN POLICY

I. School Attendance Areas

The Board of Education shall establish geographic boundaries for home schools and transportation zones, locations for magnet programs, and feeder patterns for home schools and magnet programs that identify the schools or programs at the next school level to which students have a guaranteed assignment (continuation schools).

- Attendance areas shall be determined based on the Guiding Principles set forth at the beginning of this policy.
- Any such action shall be taken only after the Board has held a public hearing on the initial proposal.
- With the exception of situations that constitute an emergency threat to the safety of staff or students, the Board will notify students and parents of potential changes to the student assignment plan no less than nine months in advance of the school year in which the changes would be effective.
- Notwithstanding the above, the Superintendent is authorized to make minor changes within a school year to home school boundaries in response to the construction of new roads.²

II. Determination of Student Residence

- A. Except as set forth below, the residence of a student is defined as the domicile of the student's parent. A student's domicile may be changed only in the event the parent has abandoned the parent's former domicile with no intention

² The Superintendent is authorized to take such action only when a school boundary splits an area in which a new subdivision has been developed and in which no students yet reside. The Superintendent may modify the boundary to include the entire subdivision based on newly established streets or lot lines, thereby assigning students who will live in the subdivision to the same school.

of returning to it, established actual residence in another location, and evidenced an intention to remain in the new location permanently or indefinitely. A minor may not select, acquire, or change his/her domicile to a domicile other than that of the minor's parent.

B. Notwithstanding the domicile of a student's parent:

1. The residence of a married student shall be the domicile of the student rather than the domicile of the student's parent.
2. The residence of a student who is an emancipated minor shall be the domicile of the emancipated student.
3. The residence of a student who is residing in a group home, foster home, or pre-adoptive home shall be the group home, foster home, or pre-adoptive home. A pre-adoptive home is one in which a child is placed by a county Department of Social Services or licensed child-placing agency.

III. Lottery Process

The Lottery will be used only to make assignments to magnet programs and for students enrolled in Title I Choice Schools. Otherwise, the Lottery will not be used to make assignments to non-magnet schools. Effective with the 2011-2012 school year, students (including students formerly entitled to a sibling guarantee) who wish to attend non-magnet schools other than their home schools may request a transfer through the process set forth in Policy JFAC and its accompanying regulation, JFAC-R.³

The Superintendent shall establish a Lottery process that is fair, equitable, and consistent with the priorities of the Board.⁴

A. Magnet Lottery

Each year, CMS will conduct a Magnet Lottery through which students who wish to newly enter a magnet program or change to a different magnet program may apply for a seat in three magnet programs. Students (including siblings) who wish to attend magnet programs must meet eligibility requirements in place for a particular magnet program before they may submit an application or be admitted to the program. Students and their parents⁵ must also agree to fulfill program requirements in order to apply for and remain enrolled in magnet programs.

The following categories of students do not need to participate in the Lottery:

- Students who want to be assigned to their home schools for the next school year; these students should follow the process described in the regulations accompanying this policy and Policy JFAC, Student Reassignments and Transfers.

³ All CMS Policies and regulations are available on the CMS website: www.CMS.k12.nc.us.

⁴ Lottery Priorities are set forth in Exhibit JCA-E.

⁵ "Parent" is defined in Regulation JCA-R as "unless otherwise stated, one or both parents, legal guardian, or legal custodian of a student."

- Students in terminal grades of magnet programs if they wish to be assigned to the continuation program for their particular magnet program.

Students who submit timely applications for the Lottery will be placed in magnet programs at which there are available seats in the appropriate grade levels based on the assignment of a random number for each applicant and the guarantees and priority rankings set forth in the current student assignment plan adopted by the Board, set forth in Exhibit JCA-E.

B. Title I Choice Lottery

In addition, CMS will conduct a Lottery to provide school placement options to students enrolled in Title I Choice Schools.⁶ Pursuant to federal law, a student to whom the district is required by the federal “No Child Left Behind Act” to offer placement in a non-Title I Choice School and who participates in the Lottery is guaranteed placement in a non-Title I Choice School. Students to whom the district is required to offer this placement are:

- Rising Kindergarten students or newly enrolling students whose home schools are Title I Choice Schools who want to attend different schools;
- Current 5th graders whose middle school home schools or magnet continuation schools are Title I Choice Schools who want to attend different schools;
- Students in grades K – 4 and grades 6 and 7 currently assigned to Title I Choice Schools who want to attend different schools; and
- Other students who are currently assigned to Title I Choice Schools to whom the district is required by Federal law to offer the opportunity to attend different schools and who want to attend different schools.

Students placed in different schools through this process may remain enrolled in their new schools through the terminal grade of the school. However, effective with the 2011-2012 school year, if the school from which a student was reassigned ceases to be a Title I Choice School, transportation will be provided only for the immediately subsequent school year. Thereafter, transportation will no longer be provided.

⁶ Title I Choice Schools are certain schools that receive Title I funds and have been identified for school improvement or corrective action or restructuring pursuant to the federal “No Child Left Behind Act.” The guaranteed placement is not to a *particular* non-Title I Choice School. The No Child Left Behind Act requires only that districts provide these students the opportunity to attend schools that are not Title I Choice Schools. Parents may decline the school offered by the district and choose to keep their child enrolled in a Title I Choice School.

IV. Assignment Rules

A. Non-Magnet Assignments

1. Home School Guarantee
Every student will be guaranteed an opportunity to attend the home school which has been designated by the Board to serve his or her residence.
2. Change of Residence During School Year
Students who move into new home school areas during an instructional year may either attend the home school serving their new address or remain in their current placements for the duration of the school year. Effective with the subsequent school year, these students will be assigned to attend the home school that serves their new address. Transportation will not be provided to students who elect to remain in their current placements for the remainder of the school year in which they moved.
3. Exceptions
An exception to the above rule applies to students in the 11th grade. Students who move into a new home school area after beginning the 11th grade may remain at the school to which they were properly assigned in 11th grade for their senior year in high school with these stipulations:
 - a. Students who choose to remain at their current schools are not eligible for transportation to the school.
 - b. Younger siblings of rising seniors who choose to remain at their current schools will not have a sibling guarantee to attend the same school.
4. Continuation Schools
For students who, under prior student assignment rules, were assigned through the Lottery to non-magnet schools that are not their home schools, the continuation schools for the next school level are their home schools.

B. Magnet Assignments

A student will be expected to attend the magnet program to which the student is assigned in the Lottery. After a student receives a Lottery assignment, the student may not submit a new application for a different magnet program for the school year for which the assignment was made. For the school year for which the assignment was made, a student may be placed in a different magnet program only in the following circumstances:

1. The student is invited to move to a vacant seat in a different magnet program through the open seat option process;
2. The student is offered a seat in a different magnet program from a Wait Pool;
3. The student is granted a reassignment or transfer by the administration or Board pursuant to Policy JFAC; or

4. A student is in the Exceptional Children Program (EC) and has an Individual Education Plan that requires a program not located in the student's current school.

After enrolling in their Lottery-assigned magnet programs, students who wish to attend different magnet programs for the next school year must participate in the Lottery for that school year.

C. Transportation

With designated exceptions⁷, a family must provide transportation if their child is admitted to a magnet program that does not serve the student's high school feeder area.⁸

V. Applications Submitted After the Close of the Application Period

- A. Students who are enrolled in CMS and submit a Lottery application after the close of the application period will be placed in their home schools or magnet continuation program.
- B. Students who were not enrolled in CMS during the application period and submit a Lottery application after the close of the application period will be placed in their home schools. Students who do not want to attend their home schools may apply for a transfer or reassignment according to the process described in Policy JFAC and its accompanying regulation.

VI. Participation in Partial-School Magnet Programs by Non-magnet Program Students

A non-magnet student assigned to a school that houses a partial-school magnet program may, with the permission of the principal, take classes in the magnet program only if the student otherwise meets any eligibility criteria in place for the magnet program. An exception to this general rule applies to partial magnet high school International Baccalaureate programs. For those programs, only students who live within the transportation zone for a particular high school IB magnet program may participate in that magnet program.

VII. Contingent Assignments

Except as may be inconsistent with federal law (e.g. the No Child Left Behind Act, Section 1116 (b) (1) (E), "Public School Choice") all assignments to schools other than the guaranteed home school are contingent upon a student following all disciplinary and attendance rules and, for students not eligible for or not using CMS transportation, the student's parents arranging for reliable transportation to

⁷ Exceptions include students assigned through the Title I Choice Lottery, students who received a transfer from a school that is persistently dangerous, students identified as entitled to McKinney-Vento services and certain foster children.

⁸ Transportation rules are set forth in detail in Regulation JCA-R.

and from school. A student may be reassigned to his or her home school if the student:

- A. Violates the Code of Student Conduct,
- B. Has an excessive number of absences or tardies, and/or
- C. Is not transported from campus in a timely manner after the end of the school day or after-school activity.

In addition, students assigned to magnet programs may be reassigned to the home school if they do not fulfill all requirements of the Magnet Compact for their particular magnet program.

A detailed description of the specific circumstances in which this rule will be applicable and the process that will be followed to reassign these students to their home schools is set forth in Regulation JCA-R.

VIII. Notice of Assignment

Notice of student assignment must be made prior to the effective date of the assignment. Notice of assignment may be given by noting the assignment on the report card of the student or any other means that will adequately ensure the delivery of written notice to the parent, including sending the notice of assignment by mail to the address of record of the student.

IX. Communications

It is the intent of the Board that the administration will develop techniques to effectively communicate to parents and students about the student assignment plan and the various school choices that are available to each student.

X. Comprehensive Review

Beginning with the 2011-2012 school year, the Board will consider conducting a comprehensive review of the student assignment plan at least every six years.

XI. Regulations

The Superintendent shall adopt regulations and develop procedures to implement the details of the student assignment plan.