

# Exceptional Children



## What is special about special education in CMS?

Individualized instruction and student achievement are valued in CMS. This is evident through the services that are available, including:

- Specially designed instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities
- Access to the general curriculum and intervention programs designed to provide appropriate opportunities for instruction in the general-education setting
- Continuum of services, including but not limited to, regular, resource and separate settings
- Curriculum-driven instruction: North Carolina Standard Course of Study and North Carolina Extended Content Standards
- Related services that include but are not limited to speech, occupational and physical therapy
- Specialized instruction for students with hearing, visual and physical disabilities
- Modified materials, including but not limited to books on tape, large-print materials, specialized equipment and furniture
- Accessible space in schools to meet the needs of students with physical disabilities
- Appropriate technology to support students

## Who determines what services are provided for students with disabilities and where are they offered?

Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams consider service-delivery options based on each student's needs. Teams may consider regular, resource or separate settings which are available at every school for students participating in the North Carolina

Standard Course of Study. Teams may also consider self-contained classes for students with significant cognitive disabilities who participate in the North Carolina Extended Content Standards or have significant behavioral challenges.

## What curriculum is used in classes for students with disabilities?

The North Carolina Standard Course of Study is used throughout Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. Exceptional Children teachers use a variety of strategies to help students make progress in the curriculum, and sometimes co-teach with general education teachers. At the high school level, students with disabilities may participate in the Occupational Course of Study, one of the pathways leading to a North Carolina diploma.

Students with significant cognitive disabilities participate in the Extended Content Standards of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. This curriculum teaches the essential elements of the traditional course of study while also emphasizing the acquisition of functional skills.

## How are students with disabilities assessed?

All students with disabilities participate in the district-wide grade level local and state accountability programs. Assessment decisions are made by IEP teams. The North Carolina End-of-Grade and End-of Course assessments are taken by all students participating in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. These tests may be taken with or without accommodations.

The North Carolina Extend 2 assessment may be taken by students with disabilities who participate in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and who are unlikely to reach grade-level proficiency in the same amount of time as students without disabilities. The North Carolina Extend 1 assessment may be taken by students with significant cognitive disabilities. Using alternate achievement standards, these students are assessed on achievement in an alternate curriculum, the Extended Content Standards of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.

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## How does CMS ensure access to general education?

The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 and the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 require school districts to provide access to the general curriculum and to be held accountable for the progress of students with disabilities. The implementation of inclusive practices in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools is one effective way to provide access, increase accountability and assure academic achievement by all students.

Inclusive practices are used in every school and are based on the individual student's needs. A wide variety of service-delivery systems emphasize collaboration between general and special education to support students with disabilities. These include:

- Professionals skilled in working with students with disabilities meet on a regular basis with general education teachers to resolve any learning problems.
- Teams of general and special education teachers at specific grade levels meet regularly to discuss curriculum differentiation and design modifications.
- General and special education teachers or other licensed professionals work together to deliver instructional content to students with and without disabilities in the general education classroom.
- Paraprofessionals assist students with disabilities in general education classrooms; special education teachers or other licensed personnel provide periodic assistance or parallel curriculum activities in the general education classroom.

## Does CMS offer a full continuum of services?

Yes. A full continuum of services is offered in CMS. This means that students with disabilities may receive services such as co-teaching in the regular classroom, pull-out special education in resource classrooms or services in a self contained class. These decisions are made by IEP teams.

## How do parents access special education services?

Each school follows a systematic process for identifying students with disabilities. Referrals for evaluation come from a variety of sources. Parents, teachers and others can refer a student to the school-based assistance team. This team reviews the student's current progress, observes in the classroom and talks with parents and teachers, then develops a set of interventions designed to address the student's needs. If these interventions are not successful, the team may refer the student to an IEP team of parents, teachers and administrators. The IEP team meets, discusses areas of concern and determines a course of action that may include a battery of assessments. Using North Carolina policies for Exceptional Children, the IEP team uses the assessment information to determine eligibility. The amount of service an eligible student receives is not based on a category. Services are based on the needs of the student.

## Exceptional Children Programs

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Visit us on the Web at [www.cms.k12.nc.us](http://www.cms.k12.nc.us). Click on the Departments tab and then click on E for Exceptional Children or e-mail [ec@cms.k12.nc.us](mailto:ec@cms.k12.nc.us).