



## What is an ombudsman?

(pronounced "om-budz-man")

The word ombudsman comes from the Swedish word meaning "representative." An ombudsman serves as an intermediary who seeks to resolve school and district issues and concerns from parents, students, employees and members of the public. Our office is a member of the International Ombudsman Association, a worldwide organization which upholds standards and issues certifications.

## Issues We Handle

- ▶ Attendance
- ▶ Bullying
- ▶ Safety
- ▶ Special education
- ▶ Transportation

*"The Ombudsman's Office has been a wealth of information and has offered exceptional help to me this morning."*

C.P.  
(grandmother of a CMS middle school student)



## CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHOOLS Ombudsman's Office

### How to Contact Us

**Website:** <http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/parents/Ombudsman/Pages/default.aspx>

**Email:** [ombudsman@cms.k12.nc.us](mailto:ombudsman@cms.k12.nc.us)

**Phone:** 980-343-0055

**Address letters to:**

**Ombudsman's Office**  
4421 Stuart Andrew Blvd., Suite 100  
Charlotte, NC 28217

Our goal is to respond to all questions or complaints within 48 hours.



In compliance with federal law, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools administers all education programs, employment activities and admissions without discrimination against any person on the basis of gender, race, color, religion, national origin, age or disability.

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## What We Do

- ▶ Listen to and clarify concerns
- ▶ Help visitors explore a range of solutions
- ▶ Provide information about rights for dealing with concerns
- ▶ Facilitate informal dispute resolution
- ▶ Coach individuals on how to prepare for difficult conversations

## We Are

- ▶ **Independent** – we report directly to the superintendent and are not part of another department.
- ▶ **Impartial** – we will not take sides in a dispute; we advocate for fairness and equity; we have no personal stake in the outcome.
- ▶ **Informal** – communication with the Ombudsman’s Office does not put the district on notice of a problem. It’s a place to explore options and work towards resolution in an informal way.
- ▶ **Confidential** – the identity of those who contact us is kept confidential, except for threats of imminent risk of serious harm. We provide a safe place for discussing concerns.

## Who We Serve

- ▶ Parents/guardians (and prospective families)
- ▶ Students
- ▶ Community members
- ▶ Employees

## What Our Office Does Not Do

- ▶ Take personnel action against school staff
- ▶ Overturn student disciplinary decisions
- ▶ Provide legal advice
- ▶ Intervene when parties are involved in legal or administrative proceedings

## When to Contact Us

- ▶ You’re facing a problem you have not been able to resolve by speaking to the school principal and learning community superintendent
- ▶ You don’t know where to go for help
- ▶ You’re having trouble finding the information that you need
- ▶ You have requests for information that go unanswered
- ▶ Communication between the parent and school has broken down



**Earnest Winston, CMS ombudsman**

The Ombudsman's Office is responsible for assisting parents, community members and employees with school-related concerns and issues. We work to help those who have questions or concerns to find the best channels for resolving them.

Our office was created in 2017 by Superintendent Clayton Wilcox to make CMS more accessible and responsive to all families. The ombudsman is a troubleshooter, who helps remove roadblocks when they occur. The ombudsman also assists in dispute resolution and makes recommendations to the superintendent about potential improvements. We know that the best environment for kids is to have everyone – families, employees and the community – engaged with our public schools. Our office works with families and staff to remove obstacles to full engagement. We work to help all parties find acceptable options and solutions.

We want every student and every family to find what they need in our district. We also recognize that a large urban district like ours can be sometimes difficult to navigate – and we’re here to help.