

CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHOOLS

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| POLICY STUDENT ASSIGNMENT PLAN | CMS/NEPN Code: JCA |
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PART ONE

GOALS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

The vision of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools is to provide all students the best education available anywhere, preparing every child to lead a rich and productive life. Our mission is to maximize academic achievement by every student in every school.

Student assignment is the responsibility of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education. The Student Assignment Goals represent the Board's priorities for assigning students to schools, while the Guiding Principles provide our superintendent and staff the blueprint for developing the Student Assignment Plan.

Student Assignment Goals¹

The Board believes that a student assignment plan that promotes the vision and the mission of the Board will, to the extent possible:²

- A. Provide choice and promote equitable access to varied and viable programmatic options for all children;
- B. Maximize efficiency in the use of school facilities, transportation and other capital and operational resources to reduce overcrowding;
- C. Reduce the number of schools with high concentrations of poor and high-needs children;
- D. Provide school assignment options to students assigned to schools that are not meeting performance standards established by the state; and
- E. Preserve and expand schools and programs in which students are successfully achieving the mission and vision of the Board.

¹ The Student Assignment Goals were adopted by the Board on February 23, 2016, and incorporated into this policy on November 9, 2016.

² The Goals for the Student Assignment Plan are not listed in priority order.

Date of Adoption: 3/11/65, 8/10/70, 4/28/98

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Revised: 8/17/71...11/27/01, 11/23/04, 10/25/05, 7/22/08, 12/9/08, 11/10/09, 11/9/10, 12/11/13, 11/9/16

Legal Reference: N.C.G.S. § 7B-3507, §§ 115C-366, -366.2, -367, -368; 42 U.S.C. § 11431 et. seq.

Cross Reference: ADA, IHBJ, JCA-R, JCA-E, JEB, JFAA, JFAB, JFAC, JFAC-R

Guiding Principles for Student Assignment³

Many factors related to student assignment are within the Board's influence and authority, including responding to the valuable input and feedback from our families and broader community. Still, there are many factors driving student assignment that are outside the Board's control. These include but are not limited to housing patterns, public transportation and the local economy. The Board calls on all of our community, especially elected officials in Mecklenburg County, business owners, civic organizations, faith houses and philanthropists, to prioritize our children when making decisions that impact schools. If we are to maximize academic achievement for every child, it must be a community effort.

The Student Assignment Plan will be built on a foundation of equitable access to high-quality schools including home schools, magnet schools and additional types of school options. All schools, regardless of type, should consistently demonstrate high student achievement and must eliminate achievement gaps. The district's portfolio of schools should include a range of theme-based programs as well as instructional models that respond to the various learning styles and preferences of its student body.

The Board will intentionally expand and replicate successful programs and schools throughout the county in ways that increase equitable access to high-demand themes and instructional models.

In order to create and maintain a plan that is sustainable over time, the Board will consider several factors when determining and adjusting assignment patterns. These include but are not limited to current and future population growth and potential demographic shifts, overcrowding and underutilization of facilities. Additionally, the Board will consider undertaking a comprehensive district-wide review of the Student Assignment Plan every six years, while recognizing it may be necessary to make more frequent localized changes to the assignment plan based on the aforementioned factors.

The Student Assignment Goals and Guiding Principles will drive all related student assignment decisions.

I. Types of Schools

A. Home Schools

Home schools are schools with fixed, contiguous attendance boundaries. Every student will be assigned to a designated home school within proximity to where he/she lives.

1. To the extent possible when establishing home-school attendance boundaries and determining proximity, the Board will consider:
 - a. Facility capacity (based on classroom standards for each school);
 - b. Travel distance from the home to school;
 - c. Keeping entire neighborhoods assigned to the same school (staff shall use discretion in considering commonly accepted neighborhood

³ The Guiding Principles for Student Assignment were approved by the Board on April 26, 2016 and incorporated into this policy on November 9, 2016.

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- boundaries, zoning decisions, covenant agreements, homeowners associations [HOAs], municipal jurisdictions, etc.);
 - d. Population density within neighborhoods and school attendance areas; and
 - e. Keeping whole elementary attendance areas intact as part of middle and high school feeder patterns.
2. In establishing home schools, the Board will consider:
- a. Configuring schools with varying grade levels;
 - b. Constructing attendance boundaries, especially for newly established schools, that contribute to a socioeconomically diverse student population; and
 - c. Collaborating with other local governmental bodies to inform those policy decisions (e.g., housing, transportation) that directly impact student assignment.
- B. School Options⁴
1. Non-Magnet School Options
- Non-magnet school options do not have fixed attendance boundaries. Access is within a transportation zone or a choice zone (a geographic area that may or may not correspond with a transportation zone). Broader than magnet schools and not governed by the Board’s magnet policies, non-magnet school options include but are not limited to middle and early colleges, innovative small schools and e-Learning academies. Students may apply to attend a non-magnet school option using the district’s school options lottery. As provided in Exhibit JCA-E, sibling guarantees and proximity priorities do not apply for admission to non-magnet school options, nor do non-magnet school options have continuation schools.
2. Full and Partial Magnet Schools
- Magnet schools do not have fixed attendance boundaries, and access is within a transportation zone or a choice zone (a geographic area that may or may not correspond with a transportation zone). Admission is governed by the Board’s magnet policies. Students may apply to attend a magnet school using the district’s school options lottery. Magnet schools may be full or partial school programs. Partial magnets are schools where part of the seats are assigned to students residing within a fixed home school attendance area (the “home school guarantee”) and the remaining seats are assigned to students who apply via the school options lottery. At full magnet schools, all of the seats are assigned via the school options lottery.
- C. In preserving, expanding, replicating and establishing new school options, the Board will consider:

⁴ Throughout this document, the term “school options” refers to full and partial magnet schools, magnet programs, and non-magnet school options.

1. Responding to demand as demonstrated by lottery applications and parent and community feedback;
 2. Strategically locating school options throughout the county; and
 3. Establishing a variety of choice and/or transportation zones.
- D. In assuring equitable access to school options, the Board will consider:
1. Establishing priorities in the school options lottery based on socioeconomic status;
 2. Streamlining criteria for enrollment and continuation based on programmatic requirements; and
 3. Providing varied transportation options.

II. Ensuring Equitable Access to High-Quality Schools

To increase each student's opportunity to access high-quality schools, the Board will:

- A. Establish a priority in the school options lottery and the transfer process for students attending a school that has been designated by the state as low performing for three consecutive years; and/or
- B. Implement partial magnet, targeted turnaround programs and specialized academic options in low-performing schools to improve outcomes for all students.

III. Operational Efficiency

The Student Assignment Plan must be cost effective and make efficient use of our facilities, transportation and other capital and operational resources. To that end, the Board will strive to:

- A. Prioritize ensuring every home school is a high quality and viable school choice;
- B. Increase utilization of schools operating under capacity by expanding partial magnet schools and school options;
- C. Consider alternative instructional delivery models that maximize student achievement while reducing facility and transportation costs; and
- D. Consider modifications to transportation zones and feeder patterns that are designed to provide operational efficiency and equitable access to quality educational programs.

PART TWO**STUDENT ASSIGNMENT PLAN POLICY**

As provided by North Carolina law, all students under the age of 21 years who are domiciled in Mecklenburg County and who have not been removed from school for cause or have not yet obtained a high school diploma are entitled to be enrolled in public school.⁵ Students shall be assigned to a particular school by the Board of Education in accordance with the student's place of residence and a student assignment plan adopted by the Board.

I. School Attendance Areas

- A. The Board of Education shall establish geographic boundaries for home schools, transportation zones and other zones of choice, locations for school options, and feeder patterns for home schools and school options.
 - 1. Attendance areas shall be determined based on the Goals and Guiding Principles set forth at the beginning of this policy.
 - 2. Any such action shall be taken only after the Board has held a public hearing on the initial proposal.
 - 3. With the exception of situations that constitute an emergency threat to the safety of staff or students, the Board will notify students and parents⁶ of potential changes to the Student Assignment Plan by the first Board meeting in November prior to the school year in which the changes are scheduled to go into effect.
- B. Notwithstanding the above, the superintendent is authorized to make minor changes within a school year to school attendance boundaries in response to the construction of new roads or new subdivisions.⁷

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 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.

⁵ Students with a disability who receive Exceptional Children services are entitled to be enrolled in school until they turn 22 years old.

⁶ "Parent" is defined in Regulation JCA-R as "unless otherwise stated, one or both parents, legal guardian, or legal custodian of a student."

⁷ 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 or existing streets or lot lines, thereby assigning students who will live in the subdivision to the same school.

- 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. School Options Lottery

- A. Effective with assignments for the 2017-18 school year, assignments for the following categories of schools will be made through the School Options Lottery:
1. School Options⁸
 - a. magnet schools
 - b. non-magnet school options
 2. Designated Home Schools with Seats
Non-magnet schools for students attending home schools designated by the state as low performing for three consecutive years (the "School Performance Priority").
- B. The Board will establish guarantees and priorities for each category of school or program to which students may apply in the lottery. Students who submit timely applications for the lottery will be placed in schools 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 adopted by the Board. These guarantees and priorities are set forth in Exhibit JCA-E.
- C. The superintendent shall establish a lottery process that is fair, equitable, and consistent with the priorities of the Board.⁹
1. The Board directs the superintendent to make reasonable efforts to ensure that seats are available in designated home schools for the purpose of facilitating school assignments for students who qualify for the School Performance Priority.
 2. Students qualifying for the School Performance Priority may apply for a designated home school under the School Performance Priority even though they have not yet attended the continuation school for their current school if they meet the following criteria:

⁸ These categories of schools are defined in Part One, Section I, B.

⁹ Lottery Guarantees and Priorities are set forth in Exhibit JCA-E.

- a. They are in the terminal grade of their school, and
 - b. Their continuation schools are low performing schools where students also qualify for the School Performance Priority.
3. Students (including siblings) who wish to attend magnet programs must meet eligibility requirements in place for a particular program before they may submit an application or be admitted to that program. Students and their parents must also agree to fulfill program requirements in order to apply for and remain enrolled in school options and magnet programs.
4. The following students do not need to participate in the lottery:
- a. 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.”
 - b. Students who wish to attend non-magnet schools other than their home schools: these students must request a transfer through the process set forth in Policy JFAC, “Reassignments and Transfers,” and its accompanying regulation, JFAC-R.¹⁰ This provision does not apply to students who qualify for the School Performance Priority.
 - c. Students in terminal grades of school options if they wish to be assigned to the continuation program for their particular school option: the default assignment for these students will be the continuation program.¹¹
 - d. Students in the terminal grade of schools to which they were assigned under the School Performance Priority: the default assignment for these students will be the continuation school for their current school.

IV. Assignment Rules

A. Non-Magnet Assignments

1. Home School Guarantee
Every student will be assigned to a designated home school within proximity to where he/she lives.
2. Change of Residence During School Year
 - a. 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 placement for the duration of the school year.
 - b. Subject to the exceptions set forth below, effective with the subsequent school year, these students will be assigned to attend the home schools

¹⁰ CMS Policies and Regulations are available at the CMS website: www.cms.k12.nc.us.

¹¹ The Board has approved guaranteed continuation schools for only some school options. Information about continuation schools for particular school options is available in the School Options Guide published annually by the district.

that serve 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. “Stay Put” Option for Students with Change of Residence

An exception to the rule set forth above in subsection 2 applies to students who move into a new home school area during the school year or in the summer prior to the terminal grade of their current school. These students may remain at the same school with these stipulations:

- a. The student must have been properly assigned to the school;
- b. Students who choose to remain at their current schools are not eligible for transportation to the school.
- c. Younger siblings of students who choose to remain at their current schools under this exception will not have a sibling guarantee to attend the same school.

4. “Stay Put” Option and Continuation Schools for Students assigned to Home Schools under the School Performance Priority

- a. Subject to the exceptions set forth below, students assigned to home schools under the School Performance Priority may remain in the feeder pattern for the new school to which they were assigned through the 12th grade. Transportation will be provided for these students.
- b. The following exceptions apply to the continuation and transportation guarantees for students assigned to home schools under the School Performance Priority who move out of the home school area where they were living when they received the School Performance Priority assignments:
 - i. If the home school for the student’s new residence is not a school designated by the state as a low-performing school for that school year, the student will be reassigned to that school.
 - ii. If the home school for the student’s new residence is a school designated by the state as a low-performing school for that school year, the student will have a choice of assignments to other home schools designated for assignments under the School Performance Priority from that school.
 - iii. Students who move during a school year may remain in their current assignment for the remainder of that school year. CMS transportation will not be provided during that time. For these students, the option to remain in the current assignment does not continue after the end of the school year. For the following school year, the student will be reassigned as described above.

B. Lottery Assignments

A student is expected to attend the school option to which he or she is assigned in the lottery. For the school year for which the assignment was

made, a student may be placed in a different school only in the following circumstances:

1. The student is offered a seat in a different school option from a Wait Pool;
2. The student is granted a reassignment or transfer by the administration or Board pursuant to Policy JFAC; or
3. 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 the lottery-assigned school a student who wishes to attend a different school option for the next school year must participate in the lottery for that school year.¹²

C. Transportation

With designated exceptions,¹³ students who reside outside the transportation zone for the program in which they are enrolled are not eligible for CMS-provided transportation.¹⁴ An exception applies for students assigned to home schools through the School Performance Priority. Transportation will be provided for these students through the terminal grade in high school, subject to the exceptions set forth in Section IV, A, 4, above.

V. Lottery Deadlines

- A. All lottery applications must be submitted via an online process established by the superintendent. Late applications will not be accepted.
- B. Students who are enrolled in CMS and miss a lottery deadline will be placed in their home schools or magnet continuation program.
- C. Students who were not enrolled in CMS during the application period, or who were enrolled but not registered, and who miss a lottery deadline, 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. Student Participation in Partial Magnet Schools

For elementary and most middle schools that are partial-magnet schools, the magnet theme is school wide. Therefore, all students in the school, whether or not they were assigned to the school through the lottery and are designated as magnet students, participate in the magnet program. For high school and designated middle school partial magnet programs, home school students may participate in magnet classes if space is available and any prerequisites have been met. However, for all grade levels, only students enrolled in the magnet program are entitled to the guaranteed continuation magnet school.

¹² In some circumstances, students may be able to apply for reassignment to a different school through the reassignment/transfer process provided in Policy JFAC and its accompanying regulation.

¹³ Exceptions include students who received a transfer from a school that is persistently dangerous and students identified as entitled to McKinney-Vento services.

¹⁴ Transportation rules are set forth in detail in Regulation JCA-R.

VII. Contingent Assignments

- A. Except as may be inconsistent with federal law, all assignments to schools other than the designated home school are contingent upon a student's parents arranging for reliable transportation to and from school when CMS transportation is not provided or is not used by the student.
- B. A student may be reassigned to his or her home school if the student's parents consistently fail to bring the student to school on time at the start of the school day or to transport the student from campus in a timely manner after the end of the school day or after-school activity, such that the student's success at the school is negatively impacted or there are safety issues.
- C. Principals must ensure that all reasonable efforts are made to work with the student and his/her parents to seek solutions to the underlying issues causing the transportation problems before the student is reassigned to his/her home school. 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.
- D. In addition, students assigned to magnet programs may be reassigned to their home school if they do not fulfill all requirements of the Magnet Compact for their particular magnet program.

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 communicate effectively with parents and students about the Student Assignment Plan and the various school choices that are available to each student that, at a minimum, employ a variety of forms of print, telephone, online and in-person methods of communication in the languages predominantly used by students and families in CMS. The superintendent shall include a description of the planned communication plan with the Student Assignment Plan recommendation that is presented to the Board for adoption.

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 this policy.