

Community Engagement Forum

South Mecklenburg High School

Note: Issues and clarifications are not listed in priority order unless indicated within each group.

Guiding Principle 1: The student assignment plan must provide our students and families with stability and predictability to the extent possible. This will require careful consideration of both expected growth patterns and additional schools planned for the area before home school boundaries are established. Home school boundaries will be changed only in accordance with a predetermined schedule or when required by the opening of new schools. New schools in high-growth areas will reserve capacity for future growth. Consideration will be given to placing special/alternative programs in new schools to use seats until needed for growth.

Issues	Clarification	S	U	G
1. Follow set guidelines (12 dots)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly communicate guidelines • Rationalize any change/deviation from guidelines • Simplify guidelines for student assignment • Don't buckle to public pressure 	H	M	H
2. Equitable curriculum & adequate/equal resources at all schools (10 dots)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity/update curriculum guide to reflect what is offered • Better transition plans • Include Talent Development/Language English Proficient/Standard 	H	M	M
3. Clarify/simplify feeder patterns (equitable split of schools) (5 dots)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100 percent of elementary school would feed into set middle school • Stability • Set a percentage (baseline) of the split 	L	L	L
4. Influenced by parent groups (2 dots)				
5. Earlier input/communication in school assignment decision (1 dot)				
6. Movement of special-need students (1 dot)				
7. Socioeconomic/equity in schools				
8. Continue FOCUS schools				
9. Clarify allotment formula for schools				
10. Consider additional factors on top of utilization				
11. Strategic magnet placement to accommodate overcrowding (1 dot)				

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Guiding Principle 2: Every student will be guaranteed a seat in a school close to home. There will be no capping of schools for students within the home-school area. Home-school zones will be logically drawn, compact and contiguous. To the extent possible, the boundary lines for such home-school zones will incorporate whole neighborhoods, anticipate growth and make efficient use of facilities.				
Issues	Clarification	Dots	U	G
1. Transportation costs everyone – both families and CMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we put money into busing or into schools/classrooms/teachers? 	4		
2. Do not split neighborhoods.		4		
3. What happens when a neighborhood school is overcrowded?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are mobiles brought in? Do boundaries have to be redrawn? How is it decided? • Fear is created when a school is overcrowded. 	3		
4. Need definition of home school boundaries in layman’s terms. There is too much shuffling of kids.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need stability. • Need transparency. 	3		
5. What happens when a family doesn’t want to attend the home school? Need choice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need more choices for neighborhood school seats. 	2		
6. Neighborhood schools strengthen the neighborhood AND neighborhoods strengthen neighborhood schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like community connections • Student achievement is most important. Not everyone has that. 	1		
7. Need communication to families when boundary changes are being considered (transparency).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need transparency • Need stability 	1		
8. How does CMS verify residency?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plenty of families go around the rules • There has been recent improvement since stiff penalties have been enforced. 	1		
9. Boundary lines should be drawn to current neighborhood capacity. Students in suburban growth areas can attend the existing neighborhood school until a new school is built.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw lines so school can’t become over capacity. • New schools are at or over capacity when they open. • What is the plan for high growth areas? • Why don’t developers have to provide land/funding for new schools? • Why isn’t zoning board and school board working more closely? • Boundary lines should be drawn with diversity in mind. 			
10. Need clear formula for how capacity is determined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need transparency. • There is potential for every school by assuring adequate resources. 			
11. Need standard for assigning students when the neighborhood school is overcrowded (if there is a cap).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need definition • Need transparency 			
12. Should there be consistency regarding overall school size & diversity? (for similar experience from one school to the next)				

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Guiding Principle 3: We will make effective use of all of our school buildings. Determination of capacity must consider the need for room for differentiated staffing and special-needs programs. We will consider smaller schools within schools, innovative scheduling and different grade configurations as methods to use schools efficiently. We will develop a school overcrowding policy.				
Issues	Clarification	Dots	U	G
1. Need an overcrowding policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication, also credibility because it's been 5 years since Board has reviewed. • Compliance – who is 'overcrowd police'? • Give administrators tool kit/resources and autonomy to implement. • 	11		
2. Better criteria established for closing schools. Need to communicate, make more transparent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student achievement factor or business factors; use student achievement to be a deciding factor. • Use grants for additional funds to supplement facilities. • Don't close anything new or recently renovated. 	7		
3. How to determine resources to go in the building, especially if it's an aging facility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the specific factors? 	2		
4. Desire more schools within schools, value small schools and the success they foster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More support for looking at other schools that may provide more options. 	2		
5. Lack of tie to student achievement in principle a concern.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough space for kids and equipment (cafeteria, auditorium, media center) 	1		
6. Need to deal with most critical conditions now	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put in parking lot 			
7. Move magnets to underutilized schools (the program is more important than then building or location).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Related to #1. 			
8. For outdated schools, prioritize based on curriculum needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't lock up mobiles (based on teacher allocation. Base on renovations on labs, special classrooms. 			
9. Desire for a formal underutilization plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More flexibility with boundaries – move boundaries when there is overcrowding. 			
10. Consider outsourcing of administrative buildings, non educational functions				

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Guiding Principle 4: We believe that a diverse educational environment enhances learning. Therefore, diversity should be fostered, although it should not be forced. We will focus on strengthening schools in naturally diverse areas.				
Issues	Clarification	Dots	U	G
1. There can be a tension between desire for a neighborhood school and desire for diversity and desire for school with high academic achievement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some think neighborhood schools are the first value. They choose neighborhoods based on the schools and then the boundaries change. Others think neighborhood schools are unfair to parents where the neighborhood school will result in high concentrations of poverty. This creates separate and not equal resource allocation. 	8		
2. Our students enter school with vastly different levels of readiness to learn? How much are we willing to invest to ensure that all students learn?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bright Beginnings can help, but what about es, ms, hs? What are we prepared to do to help these children learn? 	6		
3. What is the relationship of diversity to academic performance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does diversity help? Hurt? For Whom? Is there no relation? Should diversity trump academic achievement? 	5		
4. Does diversity in terms of educational readiness make it difficult for schools/teachers to instruct (i.e., from a pedagogical viewpoint, is it better to have students with similar educational needs grouped together so that the school's teacher or school does not have to divide its focus?).		1		
5. When the guiding principle says "We believe..." what is this belief based on? Research? Opinion?		1		
6. Diversity is preparation for life beyond K-12. We need diversity now so that our students will know how to work with people after they graduate.		1		
7. Why aren't we partnering with non-profits for after-school programs?		1		
8. Will the board be willing to stop busing students out of their neighborhoods to achieve diversity at another school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How and why do you draw student assignment lines in order to diversify schools? 	1		
9. What do we mean by diversity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic? Ethnic? Cultural? Readiness to learn? Students who are parents? 			
10. What do we mean by fostering?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is it different than forcing? Is forcing a code word for busing? 			
11. What do we mean by naturally diverse? Why do we assume that naturally diverse schools need strengthening?				
12. What are the political meanings of the words in this guiding principle?				

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Issues	Clarification	Dots	U	G
13. We need a clear, concise statement that says what it means.				
14. All students need to have fair shot at choices for good schools				
15. What is role of magnets in promoting diversity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some see positive role. Others say that magnets have drained the diversity from their neighborhood school (Rama Road). 			

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Guiding Principle 5: Magnet programs should be strengthened. Magnet schools should offer academically distinct programs. Ineffective magnet programs should be eliminated, and additional strong magnet programs should be considered. Magnets should be strategically placed to make effective use of facilities and offer reasonable access to students from all parts of the county. Magnet programs should offer diverse learning environments. Consideration will be given to establishing prerequisites and/or merit-based admission to some magnets. Consideration will be given to establishing magnet zones; this would not allow a student to choose a magnet outside of his/her zone. The sibling guarantee should be maintained except for programs with merit-based admission.

Issues	Clarification	S	U	G
1. Vague definitions near clarification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective • Strong • Strengthen • Magnets • Academically Distinct • Sibling Guarantee (definition changes from year to year) • Admissions requirements (varies from school to school) 	H		
2. Transportation (or the lack thereof)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affects accessibility • Limited transportation creates the need to add programs in all zones (embed magnets in home schools) • Reduction on students (due to shuttle stops) • Members of certain communities are left out • Creates need to add other programs for shuttle students (i.e. ASEP) • Creates need to plan for magnet students transition back to home schools 	H		
3. Magnet Brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived as elitist • Lacks support/commitment of district leaders • Us vs. Them mentality (magnets vs. home school) • Perceived as more costly • Viewed as taking funds from home school • Magnets should be used to strengthen home schools 	H		
4. Admissions Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full participation should be required of all students • All should qualify (even siblings) 	M		
5. Academically Distinct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change curriculum • Includes diversity? • Size matters • Is “academic” still important • Is TD distinct (since it’s also offered in home schools) 	M		

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Issues	Clarification	Dots	U	G
6. Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding availability? • Does not limit academic distinction • Having more may limit diversity (specifically if they are expanded in zones) • Is important 	M		
7. Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of funding creates lack of stability • Consider “pay as you go” for those who can afford 	M L		
8. Enrollment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of students appear to be expanding • No partial magnets (full only) 	L		
9. Impact of Guiding Principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created over five years ago, is it still relevant? 	L		
10. Strengthen programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we do it? • High Schools in particular • Especially TD • Add more programs (taking \$ into consideration) 	L		
11. Lottery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects access for students 	L		
12. Strategic Placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offset transportation • Elementary especially • Should be spread more equitably 	L		
13. Magnet Zones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limits access • Boundaries appear to be artificially drawn to accommodate certain groups 	L		

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Guiding Principle 6: The student assignment plan should be simplified. Relevant costs and benefits of the plan must be carefully weighed and costs should be reduced if at all possible. Transportation costs and travel time for students should be minimized. The sibling guarantee should be maintained. Consideration will be given to reducing the size of the non-magnet zones and eligibility for transportation. Because actual non-magnet choice options have been limited, consideration will be given to providing non-magnet choice only through No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and a staff-operated transfer process for open seats.				
Issues	Clarification	S	U	G
Travel time & cost	Just want a school closer to home; maximize bus usage & efficiency; there is an acceptable length of time for bus rides; communication between transportation & parents breaking down; explore controlling costs through use of bell schedules; NCLB and transportation implications			
Where are we? Where are we going?	Have we met our goals? Where are teaching and learning going?; status of NCLB; gifted & talented students?; perception we are always playing “catch-up;” be proactive			
Role of student achievement in student assignment	Home schools v. “equal” schools; adequacy and safety of home school; use achievement to guide process			
Sibling guarantee	Clear guiding principle needed; entrance requirements should trump guarantee; denies seats to others; consider program appropriateness for sibs; whither grandfathering?			
Cost/benefit analysis	What was reason, expectation, cost, and outcome of major decisions?; value received on investment; what were measurements used?; why new initiatives now?; costs of regulation; small schools at Olympic and Garinger?			
Boundary lines that make sense	Alignment with school board representation; consider when as well as where; reactionary v. proactive ; frequency of redraw; cap students at home schools?; why are magnet schools located where they are?			
Fairness	Perception of lack of fairness driven by apparent lack of consistency; “there aren’t really any guidelines;” resources: teachers, administration, not just supplies; transparency; transfer process; magnet eligibility; transportation eligibility; consistent application of consistent policies; meet the needs of ALL children at EVERY school			
Too much choice?	Too many transportation options; devolved over time from original choice plan, but too much may still exist			

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Guiding Principle 7: To the greatest extent possible, students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency will be offered the same assignment opportunities as those given to other students.				
Issues	Clarification	S	U	G
1. Individualization—assignments need to be aligned with individual needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not one size fits all 	H		
2. Differentiation (educating students at the individual level)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High performing students need their needs met • Teacher effectiveness w/EC and LEP students • More training for teachers • Putting students in the appropriate class 	H		
3. Physical disabilities omitted from principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC students the focus—physical disabilities not focused on within CMS. • Need help when students are out of hospital 	H		
4. Broad verbiage in the principal—needs to be more specific like the others				
5. Foreign language teachers need to be sensitive to student needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers have higher expectations for second language learners. They are harder on students who originate from the country of the language class (i.e. Spanish teachers are harder on native Spanish speaking students) 			
6. Education omitted from principles				
7. Flexibility with grade assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade assignments—students should not be promoted when they are not ready • Social promotion does not benefit students and classmates 			
8. Testing/assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps parents know what to do • Do we have the right assessments 			
9. Need to identify students for EC if they aren't at grade level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detrimental to the whole class 			
10. Class size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard on teachers with EC students in their class especially schools with larger EC populations • Cutting assistants doesn't help 			
11. Students in classes who don't speak the language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student progress suffers • Assignments should be associated within needs and programs not neighborhoods 			
12. Mixing students different language make the LEP students learn English better				

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Comments from the open microphone speakers:

1. Neighborhoods are not naturally diverse; do what is best for all students.
2. Keep it simple. Start from scratch.
3. Student achievement should be a guiding principle.
4. Make each school better.
5. Magnet programs – it is difficult to be under siege once again.
6. Improve options at the home school.
7. Work with CATS about getting students a special bus pass.
8. Student achievement should be a part of each guiding principle.
9. Abolish the lottery.
10. Expand partial magnets.
11. Improve home schools and give students the flexibility to attend programs not offered at the home school.
12. Need a robust discussion of increasing funding for schools with the city and the county similar to what happened with the Library.
13. The decision should be about diverse programs and diverse learning environments.
14. Continue to support the magnet schools.
15. If our values are academic performance, diversity and good neighborhood schools, magnet schools should be strengthened because they provide these.
16. Make all schools equal.
17. Magnet schools aren't broken, don't fix them.
18. Underperforming schools use more resources than over performing schools.
19. Magnet schools offer a good return on investment.
20. Apply good results found in research to all schools.
21. Define "strengthen" as in number 5.
22. Sibling guarantee is not a guarantee.
23. If we tell you what to do, will you listen?
24. Language immersion at all schools.
25. Glenn Finan neighborhood does not attend closest high school. It has been calculated that the extra travel miles for the bus is 1548 miles per year which translates to real savings.
26. Neighborhood schools are segregated schools. Diversify.
27. Request for information on Hough High racial and EDS breakdown.