

Guiding Principles for Student Assignment

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

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.

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 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 Options (*Throughout this document, the term “school options” refers to full and partial magnet schools, magnet programs, and non-magnet school options. Policy JCA Student Assignment Plan*)
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:

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.