

Rewriting Guiding Principles: Draft 1

May 20, 2015
To be adopted by Dec. 8, 2015

The Board today revises its approach to student assignment to place excellent educational outcomes for every student at the center of the district's efforts. We acknowledge the N.C. Constitution's mandate that Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools provide every child access to a sound basic education. Our current assignment plan ensured our failure to meet that mandate because it concentrated underachieving students, creating environments not conducive to teacher retention and student achievement. Therefore:

1. The foundation of our academic program beginning in 2017-18 will be the identification by parents or legal guardians of an academic program that fosters their child's development. The Board directs the administration to redouble its efforts to assist parents and legal guardians as they make those academic choices. Each family will choose two or more academic programs offered by the district that the student qualifies to attend.
2. The program list may include programs historically offered by the district in its neighborhood schools, magnet schools, special programs, other choice options and partnership programs with postsecondary educational institutions. The program list should include programs built around learning styles, life goals and career goals. Parents who decline to participate in this choice will be assigned to a program by the administration based on what the administration can ascertain about the child's learning style, academic preparation and other relevant information.
3. The Board expects that at least one-third of a child's school day will be inspired by the chosen academic program, with the rest of the day devoted to educational activities shared by students in all programs operating at that schoolhouse.
4. The Board directs the administration to adjust the size and placement of programs to maximize first-choice admissions and make efficient use of its facilities. The administration may house multiple academic programs within one school, and may adjust the locations of programs annually. The administration will notify parents by April 30 of any program move that will affect their child's assignment on the opening day of the next school year.
5. The Board directs the administration to locate programs and, when a program operates at more than one location, to assign individual students to a schoolhouse offering their chosen academic program so as to avoid the concentration of underachieving students within any school.
6. Transportation will be provided by agreement between the district and the family and will involve a state-approved conveyance, including but not limited to District school buses.
7. The Board directs the administration to establish for each student a path to graduation

that will allow that student to pursue the family's academic program choice. In an annual notification, the administration will outline the school or schools where a student might be assigned, e.g. where an elementary student might attend middle and high school. Parents are hereby notified that these projections are subject to change as the administration fulfills the Board's directives in (4) and (5) above.

8. A family may register new academic program choices at two transition points: from elementary to middle school, and from middle or K-8 school to high schools. Exceptions to deal with extraordinary circumstances will be outlined in the regulations to the attendance policy. Parents registering their children in the district after an annual cutoff date will be accommodated in their academic choices to the extent possible, but will be assigned where there is available space. If that midyear assignment falls outside their two academic program choices, they will be allowed to re-submit their choices for the next full school year.

9. The Board directs the administration to prepare by April 29, 2016 a list of academic programs that will be available for the 2017-18 school year. Initial allocation of teaching spaces for 2017-18 will be based on parent choices from the April 29, 2016 list. All parents are hereby notified that locations of the programs will be set only after initial parent choices are made.

10. The Board approves these principles to make a major course correction in CMS education. To signal that shift, the Board directs the administration to prepare by February 22, 2016 for Board approval a list of new school names that will be used in initial notifications of assignments for the 2017-18 year, and that will be in place at schools by the beginning of the 2017-18 year. The administration may seek suggestions from the public, but the Board directs that this process is not to be controlled by parents or neighborhoods or other outside parties. In its internal review, the administration may find many existing schoolhouse names acceptable. The Board directs that the completed list of retained and proposed names avoid focus on an academic program (because it might be moved) or any geographical feature or historical event that might give rise to an assumption that a nearby neighborhood "owns" that school. The chosen names should allow any CMS and CMS student to feel embraced and welcomed.

11. For the 2017-18 year, rising seniors may elect to remain at their existing high school.

12. The Board acknowledges that placing primary emphasis on the academic programs best suited to each child may place extra burdens on parents. Children can be very different, and each may thrive best in different academic programs at different locations. Therefore the Board rescinds all previously approved guarantees of placement of siblings in the same school. The regulations controlling the details of assignment to programs will not treat siblings any different than neighbors.

13. The Board believes that additional resources devoted to transportation are warranted to make possible its new focus on academic programs chosen by parents to best meet their children's needs. While Guiding Principle (5) must be met, the administration should

minimize transportation costs by assigning to the same schoolhouse students in the same academic program who are assigned to the same bus stop.

14. The Board recommits to undertaking a comprehensive district-wide review of its student assignment plan every six years.

– Steve Johnston