



---

## Fact Sheet

---

### WCPSS “Choice” Student Assignment Plan: Feeder Patterns

*Note: All data used to prepare this fact sheet is publicly available from the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS).*

- Historically, students had a *base school assignment* that was tied to a home address. With the implementation of the new “choice” student assignment plan effective in the 2012-2013 school year, students are instead assigned to a *feeder pattern*, “the progression a student will follow from elementary to middle to high school.”
- A student currently enrolled in a WCPSS school is already assigned to a feeder pattern. For example, a student at Fox Road Elementary is on a path to attend East Millbrook Middle School, then Wakefield High School. A student who does not want to follow this K-12 path must enter the choice process.
- A student who is not enrolled in a WCPSS school must enter the choice process. Once assigned to a school, the student will follow the feeder pattern of that school, or re-enter the choice process if a different path is desired.
- While feeder patterns offer a predictable path, they also pose problematic consequences for families:
  - **Feeder patterns pre-fill schools with students who may or may not want to attend them.** For example, 40 to 50 percent of middle school magnet students have historically opted to attend what was their base high school.
  - **Advertising tentative information about available seats is directly influencing parental choices.** Pre-filling schools with students in the feeder pattern skews the number of available seats by suggesting that there are fewer seats available than may actually be the case. A perceived lack of available magnet seats has prompted fewer families to apply; magnet applications for the 2012-2013 school year were down by approximately 30 percent.
  - **Feeder patterns create a disadvantage for students coming into the system from charter, private, or home schools.** All of these populations of students lack the feeder pattern seat that would have been available to them if they had chosen to attend a WCPSS public school.

January 26, 2012

- **Feeder patterns create a disadvantage for current magnet students** who would like to return to their historically guaranteed base assignment. Like charter, private, or home schoolers, these students must enter the choice process and hope that there is capacity in a more proximate school.
- **Feeder patterns can actually give families less choice.** Because feeder patterns essentially predetermine a student’s pathway for K-12, they can trump parents’ choice of which programs will best meet their children’s needs, which can change over time. Students in a year-round elementary school are locked into a year-round middle school; similarly magnet elementary students are locked into a particular magnet middle school. Families may likely find that when they enter the choice process to change their children’s school, they will be faced with a lower assignment priority and fewer available seats at schools to which they would like to apply.
- **Feeder patterns reduce flexibility and run counter to the first stated goal of Board Policy 6200 (Student Assignment): “achieving academic success for ALL children.”** In the same way that feeder patterns appear to “fill” a school and discourage newcomers from choosing it, they also make it difficult to allocate a percentage of seats that would allow students from low performing neighborhoods to attend a high performing school.
- **Feeder patterns are creating segregated schools.** Middle schools including, Carnage and Durant Road, will likely become more segregated, poorer, and overall proficiency will decline dramatically. Where there is concentrated poverty, recruiting and retaining teachers is difficult, and schools are costly to run. Racial segregation undermines student achievement and will not allow WCPSS to apply for federal funding for magnet and other programs, as we have in the past.

	% Black	%Black	%Black	%F&R	%F&R	%F&R	%Proficient	%Proficient	%Proficient
Middle School	2010-11	2012-13	Diff.	2010-11	2012-13	Diff.	2010-11	2012-13	Diff.
Carnage	41.5	53.1	11.6	32.4	53.9	21.5	81.6	71.2	-10.4
Durant	27.2	34.3	7.1	32.9	52.8	19.9	81	69.6	-11.4

- **Feeder patterns do not appear to comply with the assignment plan magnet school group designations.** The choice plan calls for a specific percentage of magnet students at each group level. For example, the proportion of proximity and magnet seats at Group I schools is 55-60 percent magnet/40-45 percent proximity students. However, the number of seats being filled by feeder pattern students at schools such as Centennial Middle School is skewing these percentages at some schools.
- **Feeder patterns have the potential to reduce the attractiveness of AG Basics magnets.** Pre-filling AG Basic middle schools (Carnage, Ligon) with particular elementary schools will result in a reduction of AIG-identified students in those middle schools because only a portion of the feeder elementary school populations are AIG-identified. Historically, a critical mass of AIG-identified students has been needed to run a rigorous and effective AG Basics magnet middle or high school successfully; feeder patterns threaten the continued existence of these schools as AG Basics magnets. Notably, these magnets are a critical component of the plan’s strategy to maintain racially integrated schools—and avoid the creation of additional high-poverty schools..

- **Feeder patterns are resulting in peculiar assignments, sending some students further away than their most proximate school.** Although sibling priority and proximity are the two highest assignment priorities of the school choice plan, these stated priorities are being trumped, ironically, by the rigid, fixed nature of feeder patterns. For example, despite living less than a mile from Daniels Middle School and having a sibling who attends Daniels, a student who is on a feeder pattern to Martin Middle School from their elementary school must attend Martin if there is no capacity at Daniels. These results are counterproductive in a plan that seeks stability for families.
- **Feeder patterns are resulting in inefficient transportation patterns.** Rather than “nodes” or neighborhoods being bused together to the same school, students are locked into feeder patterns that may require even more buses to come into neighborhoods than with the previous assignment plan.
- **Feeder patterns are stranding some families by not providing transportation to their assigned school.** For example, students who opted to attend a traditional calendar school instead of what was their year-round base assignment are no longer provided transportation as they move to their feeder pattern middle school. Their alternative is to enter the choice process, which in at least one case offers a single calendar option with limited available seats.

**Resources:**

Wake County Public School System Student Assignment Plan:

<http://assignment.wcpss.net/downloads/choice-assignment-plan-with-appendices.pdf>

School Feeder Patterns:

[http://assignment.wcpss.net/downloads/approved-feeder-patterns\\_101811.pdf](http://assignment.wcpss.net/downloads/approved-feeder-patterns_101811.pdf)

Board Work Session Assignment-Related Documents:

- January 3, 2012: <http://www.wcpss.net/Board/work-session-materials/01-03-2012--work-session/>
- January 10, 2012: <http://www.wcpss.net/Board/work-session-materials/>