



# Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Strategic Plan 2024–2029

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# A Letter from Dr. Hill



## Dear Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools families, students, staff and community:

I am excited and proud to share our 2024-2029 Strategic Plan with you. I know this plan, when executed with fidelity, will lead us to achieving the ambitious goals we have for our students, and ultimately will impact economic mobility outcomes in Charlotte. This plan is our commitment to you, and it sets out what we will collectively do for students over the next five years.

Our plan includes a mix of both the familiar and the new. That balance is intentional. Among the familiar items, we plan to invest in our teachers - pay them better, recruit more of them, train and develop them, and support them as fully as we can. We also need to work more closely than ever with the entire community because we know there are limits to what we can accomplish without more help from all of you. As we study and plan for the future, we know we must innovate quickly to take advantage of the best that new technologies and techniques offer us in terms of improving our teaching and running our organization. Over these next five years, the pace of our progress will accelerate as we move toward more innovation.

Strategic planning is a long and arduous process. Our Board began planning for this work in the Summer of 2023 with a series of community outreach meetings that produced the four goals they set out for us to accomplish by 2029. These student-outcome focused goals have been the focal points of our work since then. We published our strategy and the four pillars

of excellence upon which we have built our district's operational model. That work guided our annual plan, and it led to our successes during the 2023-24 academic year.

Because our strategic plan covers the next five years, we must combine the long-term focus on the goals with the urgency of the now. I will report our progress to you annually – letting you know how far we have come, what has worked, what needs to be changed, what new things we have learned, and how we are moving toward our measured goals for students.

I want you all to know that our entire staff is excited to implement this plan, to take these actions and to see the results of this promising work. We also know that achieving our goals will not be easy – nothing worth having ever is. It will take hard work, but we are determined to see this through to success for our students.

Yours in partnership,

*Dr. Crystal Hill*

Superintendent

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# Strategic Plan Overview



# We are future-focused.

Our mission is to create an innovative, inclusive, student-centered environment that supports the development of independent learners.

The future is brightest when we invest in it.  
Over the next five years, we will...

Empower  
academic success



Deliver efficient  
operations



Enable  
a thriving  
workforce



Forge strong  
community  
partnerships

These focus areas were chosen to support our core mission of student learning, recognizing the vital ways that staff recruitment and retention, modernized systems and technology, and community partnerships all contribute to student success.

# We are community-driven.

Our vision is to lead the community in educational excellence, inspiring intellectual curiosity, creativity, and achievement so that all students reach their full potential.



Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools exists to enhance student outcomes. Beginning with academic excellence, and taking into account that every student is unique, we educate the whole child and empower each student with the opportunities to pursue their dreams in their chosen pathway. Recognizing our responsibility in each student's journey, we eliminate gaps in performance and opportunities while providing an educational environment of inspiration and discovery to cultivate a love of learning.

We recognize that as a school system, our role extends beyond the classroom. While providing high-quality instruction uniformly across the school system is an imperative, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools is deeply invested in the holistic health and wellbeing of the community. When the school ecosystem thrives, so does the community.

# Goals

By June 2029, we will have....



## Improved Early Literacy in Grades K-2

In the early grades, students learn to read by mastering letter sounds, practicing sounding out words, and building their vocabulary across subject areas. Literacy skills are foundational to success later in life so it is crucial to establish a strong reading foundation in the early grades.

### GOAL

The percentage of students scoring at or above benchmark on the spring reading diagnostic (DIBELS) will increase from 67% to 91%.



## Improved Literacy Skills in Grades 3-8

In the later grades, students move from learning to read to reading to learn. Supporting students to develop strong reading fluency and comprehension skills will empower them to be successful across the board in school and in life.

### GOAL

The percentage of students scoring CCR (college and career ready) on the state's End-of-Grade tests for Reading will increase from 31% to 50%.



## Strengthened Mathematics Performance

Math is everywhere you look, from household budgets to construction projects to polls in the news. Success in Math I in middle or high school opens doors for students to take higher level mathematics and to be ready for whatever post-graduate opportunities they choose to pursue.

### GOAL

The percentage of students scoring CCR (college and career ready) on the state's End-of-Course test for Math I will increase from 27% to 57%.



## Post-Grad Readiness

Launching into adult life is not easy. Our schools will intentionally prepare and empower students to be ready for their chosen path after graduation, whether that is enrolling at a college or university, enlisting in the military, or pursuing employment.

### GOAL

Increase the percentage of rising 12<sup>th</sup> grade students on track to graduate from high school enrolled, enlisted, or employed. *\*The specific metrics will be shared upon development.*

# Guardrails

In pursuit of our goals, we have established guardrails that embody our values that we will not forsake. These are not outputs, but ways of being at Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools.



## Equity over Equality

**We are gap closers, ensuring an equitable distribution of outcomes for our students.**

While ensuring schools have the resources needed to meet students needs, CMS shall not neglect strategies or resources for significantly reducing achievement gaps.



## Safety & Security

**Without safety and security, our students, staff, and community cannot thrive.**

CMS will not allow an unsafe environment in our schools, at school-related events, or in transportation.



## Attending to the Whole Child

**Ensuring student wellbeing is core to who we are as a school system.**

CMS will not neglect social, emotional, character development support for students. Access to enrichment activities and offering attendance support are critical to successfully engage students.



## High-Quality Teachers

**Our people are our program.**

While ensuring all schools have teachers equipped to deliver high-quality instruction, CMS shall neither neglect targeted nor comprehensive strategies for teacher recruitment, retention, and engagement.

# Pillars of Excellence

**Our strategic plan enables excellence without exception.**

Our vision and mission have driven our goals and guardrails, which collectively enable four pillars of excellence across our school system – academic excellence, people excellence, operational excellence, and engagement excellence.



**Academic  
Excellence**



**People  
Excellence**



**Operational  
Excellence**



**Engagement  
Excellence**



# Plan Development

We built this with you and for you.

60,000+ pieces of feedback from...



Focus groups  
across  
the county



Working  
sessions with  
CMS Staff



Think-tank meetings  
with  
the community

The Board of Education launched the process of developing our strategic plan in 2023 with a thorough community listening tour that led to the development of our new Goals and Guardrails. This listening effort gathered 60,000+ pieces of feedback from community members over the course of several months. From there, we held working sessions in large and small groups across the county, allowing community members to participate in online surveys. These participants included parents, students, educators, and community members. We then prepared a summary of the feedback and published the new Goals in late 2023.

Once our Board developed the Goals, groups of CMS staff began to meet in working sessions to develop the key portions of the strategic plan. We gathered more feedback on preliminary observations from the community in early 2024, at a Think-tank meeting, with attendees from diverse community perspectives. The key portions of the plan were then reviewed by our CMS Board of Education at two sessions in preparation for implementing the plan beginning on July 1, 2024.

# Academic Excellence



# Overview & Impact



Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools commits to educating the whole child to world class standards and will provide a standards-aligned comprehensive curriculum.

## Priorities

1. Provide high-quality standards-based **instruction** across CMS to achieve the student outcome focused goals
2. Create **multiple life pathways** for each student, ensuring their success, whether enrolled, employed or enlisted
3. **Eliminate the gaps** in performance and opportunities between student groups
4. Provide inspiring educational experiences for students to discover and maintain a **love of learning**
5. Develop the **well-being** of the entire child, promoting positive behaviors, consistent attendance, and building strong social-emotional skills

## How this will impact...

### Our Students & Families

can expect greater consistency of high-quality core instruction, enhanced student engagement, and improved growth in students' foundational skills.

### Our Staff

can expect increased clarity on criteria-aligned curriculum, increased focus on educational experiences, and a shift to holistic well-being and student-specific life pathways.

### Our Community

can expect improved local and national school ratings, increased educational integration with the local business community, and a focus on closing gaps for historically marginalized students.

# Priority Deep Dive



## PRIORITY 1

### **Provide high-quality standards-based instruction across CMS to achieve the student outcome focused goals.**

#### STRATEGIES TO GET THERE:

- Provide a comprehensive Pre-K to 12 curriculum with clear expectations for the level and complexity of content students are asked to learn, together with the associated outcomes
- Ensure equitable instructional practices are administered uniformly across the district
- Incentivize and invest in teachers, principals and staff applying to, accepting positions at, and persisting at high-needs schools
- Guide instruction with appropriate data driven analysis so all students reach the student outcome focused goals

## PRIORITY 2

### **Create multiple life pathways for each student, ensuring their success, whether enrolled, employed or enlisted.**

#### STRATEGIES TO GET THERE:

- Create CMS Learner Profiles to provide in a cohesive, digestible, format a map for students, families, and other stakeholders of the milestones by grade level a CMS should meet by graduation from high school
- Leverage the new Learner Profile Platform where a learner profile will be created for the middle and high school levels to ensure that all students have access to a trusted adult to become next-step-ready
- Collaborate with government and private industries to increase opportunities for students to explore careers and the military and other postsecondary pathways, including internships, apprenticeships, and employment
- Build a continuous pipeline of credentials for students, progressing to 2-year or 4-year colleges and enhancing their commitment to future endeavors



## PRIORITY 3

### **Eliminate the gaps in performance and opportunities between student groups.**

#### STRATEGIES TO GET THERE:

- Continue working with community partners to provide exposure/opportunities to Pre-Kindergarten-aged students to meet their needs for academic support
- Implement core experiences to accelerate the academic growth of all student groups
- Offer multiple opportunities for enhanced learning to students in need, coordinating with community partners as needed
- Expand access to advanced learning experiences, programs, and courses to address the disproportionality of students identified to receive services

## PRIORITY 4

### **Provide inspiring educational experiences for students to discover and maintain a love of learning.**

#### STRATEGIES TO GET THERE:

- Continue providing a wide variety of classes and experiences that produce a well-rounded education
- Ensure regular exposure to cultural and artistic experiences for students inside and outside of the classroom, especially those students from under-resourced communities
- Create affordable opportunities for all students to engage in extracurricular activities, including student interest clubs, volunteerism, and civic engagement

# Priority Deep Dive



## PRIORITY 5

### Eliminate the gaps in performance and opportunities between student groups.

#### STRATEGIES TO GET THERE:

- Continue working with community partners to provide exposure/opportunities to Pre-Kindergarten-aged students to meet their needs for academic support
- Implement core experiences to accelerate the academic growth of all student groups
- Offer multiple opportunities for enhanced learning to students in need, coordinating with community partners as needed
- Expand access to advanced learning experiences, programs, and courses to address the disproportionality of students identified to receive services



# People Excellence



# Overview & Impact



Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools commits to an improved employee experience inclusive of enhancing recruiting, retention, and training opportunities.

## Priorities

1. Competitively recruit and retain a highly qualified and committed workforce
2. Develop the workforce with high-quality, rigorous **professional learning** that is competency-based
3. Improve **staff wellness** with recurring positive practices celebrating the employees' contributions
4. Instill **high performance standards** by developing excellent leaders, ensuring thorough training, and measuring performance effectively

## How this will impact...

### Our Students & Families

can expect to interact with a better trained and cared for staff, benefiting from newly recruited, thoughtfully retained, and intentionally upskilled talent.

### Our Staff

can expect an increasingly rewarding employee experience ranging from an increased focus on well-being, enhanced opportunities for training, and a celebratory environment for positive contributions.

### Our Community

can expect to be a national talent destination, positively impacting local businesses, real estate, and community closeness.

# Priority Deep Dive



## PRIORITY 1

### **Competitively recruit and retain a highly qualified and committed workforce.**

#### STRATEGIES TO GET THERE:

- Increase investments in the recruitment, selection, staffing, and retention of employees, including the new housing initiative in development
- Refine our recruitment strategy to ensure we can identify qualified candidates to fill vacancies for hard-to-staff roles
- Implement a streamlined onboarding process to improve hiring timelines and to bring new employees to functional effectiveness as quickly as possible
- Develop comprehensive total rewards compensation and incentive plans for all teachers and supporting staff of the District, targeted at sustainable compensation levels

## PRIORITY 2

### **Develop the workforce with high-quality, rigorous professional learning that is competency-based.**

#### STRATEGIES TO GET THERE:

- Develop innovative ways to increase the availability of ongoing professional development and coaching, including finding the time required
- Provide regular opportunities for educators to observe instruction in their content area
- Provide targeted professional learning opportunities and coaching for newly hired teachers that result in effective, equity-driven instruction and are aligned to our goals/guardrails and the intended outcomes
- Increase employees' skills on inclusive practices and develop systems to constantly refine these practices
- Develop and implement a succession planning process for the District that includes talent planning



## PRIORITY 3

### **Improve staff wellness with recurring positive practices celebrating the employees' contributions.**

#### STRATEGIES TO GET THERE:

- Ensure that programs which recognize and elevate the appreciation of teachers and other staff are consistently implemented district-wide
- Collaborate with community partners to create and implement targeted employee wellness programs
- Build the capacity of employees to promote wellness strategies for their teams and schools

## PRIORITY 4

### **Instill high performance standards by developing excellent leaders, ensuring thorough training, and measuring performance effectively**

#### STRATEGIES TO GET THERE:

- Deepen CMS's culture of universally shared commitment to student success
- Strengthen leadership and management training and coaching for supervisors and managers to improve their capabilities where needed
- Enhance the implementation of the formal performance evaluation system for all employees, grounded in District-developed frameworks

# Operational Excellence



# Overview & Impact



Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools commits to operational efficiency and effectiveness through safe and clean environments, the best technologies for students to learn, prudent spending, and enhanced data use.

## Priorities

1. Build and actively maintain great **facilities**
2. Modernize our **technological infrastructure and systems**
3. Develop and implement sustainable budgets and financial forecasts to guide **prudent spending**
4. Continuously **improve effectiveness** in all operations across the district
5. Enhance the use of **data** to improve decision-making in all of our actions

## How this will impact...

### Our Students & Families

can expect world-class learning environments that foster safety, security, and unparalleled educational experiences.

### Our Staff

can expect to work in environments that put their well-being first and enable them to educate and care for students better than ever before.

### Our Community

can expect increased partnership with businesses to enhance the collective school experience while also setting a community example for transparent and trustable spending.

# Priority Deep Dives



## PRIORITY 1

### Build and actively maintain great facilities.

#### STRATEGIES TO GET THERE:

- Address Deferred Maintenance: (1) conduct a complete system-wide review of all facilities (the DSA, FCA), noting all deferred maintenance items by priority, and (2) create a multi-year funding plan to address the corrective actions, integrating the needed funding into the budget process
- Build and maintain modern facilities that maximize student learning, prioritizing areas of need. Integrate this work with the periodic comprehensive review as needed
- Ensure we meet safety and accessibility standards and make necessary facility upgrades in all classrooms and workspaces
- Reduce completion time for submitted work orders at all sites and improve communication between the Operations Department and schools

## PRIORITY 2

### Modernize our technological infrastructure and systems

#### STRATEGIES TO GET THERE:

- Enhance the resilience of our cybersecurity infrastructure through the implementation of advanced defense mechanisms, system upgrades, meticulous refinement of work procedures, and targeted training
- Implement the CMS Business modernization system to streamline workflow and reporting, including finance, procurement, and HR modules
- Establish a comprehensive device life cycle replacement protocol, designed to optimize student accessibility and ensure that no device utilized by students or staff surpasses a four-year in-service period
- Prepare for adoption of the new student information system that North Carolina will be launching statewide in the 2025-26 school year
- Implement an advanced Information Technology Service Management (ITSM) platform to decrease ticket resolution times, improve operational efficiency, and increase satisfaction for users

# Priority Deep Dives



## PRIORITY 3

### Develop and implement sustainable budgets and financial forecasts to guide prudent spending.

#### STRATEGIES TO GET THERE:

- Develop a multi-year financial forecast for the district to assist in the prioritization and sequencing of our actions, and the prudent identification of resource needs
- Improve funding formulas and create mechanisms to ensure equitable distribution of all resources across the district
- Enhance comprehensive periodic financial reviews so resources are aligned to maximize return on investment and to balance short- and long-term needs
- Streamline financial systems, policies, and procedures to ensure schools are adequately and efficiently equipped to deliver high-quality learning experiences

## PRIORITY 4

### Continuously improve effectiveness in all operations across the district

#### STRATEGIES TO GET THERE:

- Establish system-wide project management excellence to develop a collaborative, trusted, and results-oriented culture
- Continue implementing the continuous improvement mindset, strengthening and improving the ability to work across department lines, and improve the documentation of work processes and procedures
- Systematically engage in reviewing targeted areas of opportunity with peer groups, such as the Council of the Great City Schools and others, to enhance the performance of the District

# Priority Deep Dives



## PRIORITY 5

### Enhance the use of data to improve decision-making in all of our actions.

#### STRATEGIES TO GET THERE:

- Modernize our data reporting platforms to improve the timeliness and accessibility of key data for supporting strategic efforts, improving operational efficiency, and informing instruction
- Conduct regular data review meetings to drive continuous improvement at schools and across the District
- Enhance the capability of all staff to use data to drive improvement, including training
- Monitor developments with generative artificial intelligence (AI), seeking to adopt this to serve students better when suitable for specific use case



# Engagement Excellence



# Overview & Impact



Charlotte-Mecklenburg commits to being a collaborative and inclusive community partner, ensuring consistent two-way communication to equitably meet needs, source funding, and create new opportunities for all.

## Priorities

1. Work collaboratively with **community partners** and **governmental agencies** to equitably meet the needs of our students and staff
2. Strengthen **home-school partnerships** to increase student academic achievement
3. Establish open dialogue for **two-way communication** between the district and community, providing clear information and listening attentively
4. Coordinate with **community organizations** and pursue new funding opportunities to provide the resources needed for our students and staff, and to create new opportunities for them

## How this will impact...

### Our Students & Families

can expect enhanced partnerships that will create more equitable opportunities, increased opportunities for feedback, and improved support for home-schooling families.

### Our Staff

can expect better coordination with the local community and more thoughtful communication, resulting in improved opportunities and outcomes.

### Our Community

can expect more regular updates and opportunity for feedback from the school system and increased partnership opportunities for business owners and diverse cohorts.

# Priority Deep Dives



## PRIORITY 1

### **Work collaboratively with community partners and governmental agencies to equitably meet the needs of our students and staff.**

#### STRATEGIES TO GET THERE:

- Cultivate authentic partnerships with community-based organizations, the business community, and institutions of higher education to meet the needs of our students
- Partner with all community entities required to ensure that:
  - we create meaningful career opportunities and internships to advance students
  - we build ongoing programs to show community appreciation for teachers, and respect for the contributions they make in our students' lives (e.g., a "thank a teacher" campaign)
  - all families have access to internet connectivity and adequate training to promote two-way communication
- Hold an annual partnership summit meeting with the CMS Superintendent and our community partners
- Develop local and state coalitions consisting of parents, other school districts, education associations and local community-based organizations to advance the district's advocacy priorities
- Participate in national and state networks of school districts to better inform policies and practices

## PRIORITY 2

### **Strengthen home-school partnerships to increase student academic achievement.**

#### STRATEGIES TO GET THERE:

- Support all school sites in: (1) developing a cohort of school volunteers and parent leaders that is truly representative of the school, and (2) gaining access to targeted community partner resources
- Develop CMS as a trusted source of valuable information for families with all things relevant to their children's' educational needs and progress, including revamping and relaunching the CMS Family Academy to provide resources and support to families

# Priority Deep Dives



## PRIORITY 3

**Establish open dialogue for two-way communication between the district and community, providing clear information and listening attentively.**

### STRATEGIES TO GET THERE:

- Maintain effective collaboration with media partners to share positive and uplifting stories of CMS and our students
- Continue to improve District and school websites, communication channels, and social media
- Strengthen our customer service at every touch point, and institute a system for measuring our quality of service to inform improvements
- Improve internal communication structures to ensure all employees receive timely District news and important information
- Communicate with families in multiple languages and modes to best meet their needs

## PRIORITY 4

**Coordinate with community organizations and pursue new funding opportunities to provide the resources needed for our students and staff, and to create new opportunities for them.**

### STRATEGIES TO GET THERE:

- Secure more resources for our students and educators by aggressively pursuing funds targeted to the areas of highest impact and supporting ongoing innovation
- Increase the coordination of our efforts:
  - Within CMS: Across the CMS Grants department, Partnerships, Family and Community Engagement, the Federal programs department and others as needed, and
  - Between CMS and the CMS Foundation
- Identify new sources of revenue from federal, state, and local levels to maximize the use of recurring and non-recurring funds for all district operations

# Monitoring Milestones

## Ensuring progress on implementing the strategic plan is essential.

The strategic plan implementation will be continually monitored by the Board of Education and the community. Milestones may be monitored on the CMS website.

Annually, the Superintendent will review the summary status of the year's work toward the strategic plan, noting progress made in executing the strategies, the status of the relevant measures for success of each priority area, and any adjustments made to the plan. This work will be timed to be completed prior to the submission of the draft budget to the Board, so that it can help to provide the Board and the Superintendent a common background on the adequacy of the planned actions toward achieving the student outcome focused goals.

Additionally, throughout the year on the specified schedule, there will be numerous reports to the Board of Education on the student outcome focused goals and the interim measures for these goals. This will provide an ongoing and continuous view of the progress being made toward the achievement of the student outcome focused goals.



# Resources



## Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education is the governing body for the public school district of Mecklenburg County. Accordingly, the Board is responsible for the control and supervision of the public schools located in Mecklenburg County and the enforcement of school law in Mecklenburg County.



## Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) website is the primary source for comprehensive information about one of the largest school districts in North Carolina. The site offers a wealth of resources for parents, students, staff, and the community.

Find the latest updates on school events, district policies, educational programs, and achievements. You can also connect with us on our other social platforms linked below.



## CMS Foundation

The CMS Foundation invests in innovation to help Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools address big challenges and expand opportunities for our students and educators. As the nonprofit fundraising partner for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, we harness the power of philanthropy to seed innovative ideas and accelerate system-wide transformation.



**cms**  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

