



THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

March 18, 2025

2024-2025 Board Members

President Kim Brattain
Pres Elect Patrick Baker
Past Pres Edwin Peacock
Secretary Bill Gill
Treasurer Craig Field
Sergeant at Arms
Mike Wollinger
Exec Dir Christine Cipriano

Directors 2023-2025

Terri DeBoo
Andy Dinkin
Donna Dunlap
Joel Ford

Directors 2024-2026

Benton Bragg
John Cantrell
Tish Atkins Charles
Dena Diorio
Stuart Hair
Jesse Hite
Lori Keeton
Virginia Owen

Membership John Cantrell

Foundation Joe Morris

Programs Luther Moore



Dr. Crystal Hill *CMS Superintendent*

by **Elly Clary**

Improved performance through focus on student achievement is a picture the superintendent of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System painted for Rotarians.

Dr. Crystal Hill delivered 2023-24 highlights. These include 33 schools with improved state performance grades and a system graduation rate of 84 percent, with notable increases for Hispanic students. For literacy in kindergarten through 2nd grade, the achievement gap between white, Black and Hispanic students shrank.

Hill lauded a CMS partnership with the Charlotte Executive Leadership Council, whose advice led to four student outcome goals for 2024 through 2029. These include a concentration on early literacy in kindergarten through 2nd grade and on literacy skills in grades 3-8, plus a strengthened math foundation.

"We want to ensure that all students who graduate from CMS schools finish enrolled, enlisted or employed," Hill said in explaining an emphasis on post-graduate readiness.

Pursuing these goals requires excellence in academics, staff, operations, and engagement, she added. Guardrails include closing achievement gaps, ensuring safety and security, attending to students' engagement, and providing high-quality teachers.

CMS serves 141,700 students with 186 schools and 20,000 employees. Hill

took the helm in July 2023. She listed additional 2023-24 achievements.

- Passage of a \$2.5 billion bond – largest in state history – to fund 30 new schools.
- Development of five-year goals in partnership with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education.
- Development and launch of a five-year strategic plan and a one-year annual plan.
- Absorbing a loss of \$190 million in Covid-related federal funds while retaining every employee.

CMS teacher salaries are consistently at the top of the 115 state school districts, Hill said, due largely to a strong local supplement. A huge priority for the education board and Mecklenburg County commissioners “is to ensure we get that local supplement as high as possible,” Hill said. “Our goal is always to be tops in the state.”

Teachers are “game changers,” Hill said. “Our ability to pay, train, develop, and retain teachers is extremely important,” she added, calling it the biggest challenge for the next five years. Principals are change agents, she continued, and achieving goals depends on their capabilities.

Last year CMS added a master math and a master literacy teacher to every school. For professional development, Hill said, CMS expects these master teachers to help colleagues improve.

“We have to have high-quality core instruction as well as engaged students and really strong family engagement,” she said.

The Charlotte Executive Leadership Council, which provided 12 executives-in-residence, is among numerous entities partnering with CMS. Hill called attention to a CMS “Engage With Us” card at each table seat. It outlines partnership and volunteer opportunities and includes ways to contact the system.

“All the great things we do in CMS are the result of an entire community effort,” Hill said. “I absolutely love Mecklenburg County because everyone wants to lean in and see the success of our students.”

A recording of the meeting can be found here:

With Slides: <https://vimeo.com/1067121062>

Without Slides: <https://vimeo.com/1067128475>

The introduction begins at about 28 minutes and 30 seconds.