



# 2024 STRATEGIC PLAN

# Playbook

2021-2022 Edition

**cms**  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

# A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

## DEAR CMS COMMUNITY,



*Earnest Winston,  
Superintendent of  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools*

As the new school year begins, I am hopeful and optimistic about what's ahead for our students. COVID-19 remains a concern, making now more than ever the time to rally together. Over the last year-and-a-half, students were pushed to be resilient and flexible with unforeseen shifts in educational settings. Without a doubt there have been setbacks, but my hope is that life skills learned may benefit students as they move forward in their academic careers.

Here we introduce the 2024 Strategic Plan Playbook, which outlines the action plan and necessary steps for the coming year. Our primary goal continues to be meeting the needs of CMS students at all levels through improved equity, access, culture, and outcomes. With a focus on results and commitment to improvement, we are dedicated to leading students on a path to academic achievement and future success.

It is essential that CMS ensures academic excellence for every student, providing them with access to a rigorous curriculum that meets their potential. Through expanded resources and the expertise of teachers, counselors, administrators, and support staff, we will assess students' needs and provide them with the customized instruction and tools they need to excel.

Our actions are targeted and specific. We are dedicated to providing an education experience that reflects diversity of the community at all levels. Staff training on race, bias, and equity will continue as a tool to help teachers best serve all students. We've added literacy and math specialist teams for grades K-8 to ensure equity of support in each learning community.

Our teams are focused on conducting frequent school evaluations and classroom check-ins to monitor progress and to identify disparities in student's learning. By recognizing achievement gaps sooner than later, school leaders can respond with viable solutions. To improve time in schools for at-risk students, we are piloting school-level intervention centers and providing social and emotional support through additional counseling services.

We know there is work to be done and we are embarking on a multi-year effort to improve outcomes for all students, but with renewed spirit and continued collaboration, it is achievable. By working together, we can make sustainable changes that are impactful for students. Whether your child is just beginning kindergarten, moving toward graduation, or somewhere in between, CMS is steadfastly committed to focusing on what matters most: supporting and inspiring students to excel on a path to future success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Earnest".



# INTRODUCTION

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools is the second largest school district in North Carolina and provides academic instruction to more than 144,000 students in K-13 in 180 schools throughout Mecklenburg County. With each day of learning, CMS students are prepared to be college and career ready in a modern and globally competitive world. A cornerstone of the district is its diverse mix of students who represent 183 countries and speak 197 languages and dialects. CMS offers an extensive range of magnet programs in 70 of its schools as a way to nurture the talents of students who have interests and abilities in specific areas. Built upon the efforts of many individuals who firmly believed in the importance of education to this community, public schools in this area have had a tremendous impact on the growth and economy of the region – as well as the thousands of individuals they have served.

Data analyzed in 2016-2017 in the CMS "Breaking the Link" report identified differences in performance between school poverty level, race, and academic performance. Students in low-poverty schools consistently outperformed their peers in moderate and high-poverty schools on End of Grade, End of Course, American College Testing and Advanced Placement exams. There were both within-school-poverty level and across-school-poverty level achievement gaps between black, Hispanic and white students. Students in high-poverty schools also lost time due to absenteeism or out-of-school suspensions.

A focus on equity in the classroom will help close achievement gaps linked to race and poverty. This includes giving at-risk students more time in school, more highly-effective teachers to close learning gaps, more access to challenging classes, and providing equitable educational opportunities to every child.

In order to create the necessary change in existing educational gaps among students, CMS remains focused on the goals of the 2024 Strategic Plan, the tactics and targets that guide the work. We are transforming our approach to the work as a result of the devastating effects of the pandemic and remote learning, by improving the way we teach, support staff and students and monitor results. Through the actions outlined in this playbook, we will continuously improve our work to increase equitable opportunities for every child to improve student outcomes.

## VISION

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

## MISSION

To create an innovative, inclusive, student-centered environment that supports the development of independent learners.



# GOALS



**Every student graduates with meaningful employment or higher education opportunities.**

My parents, through their construction/ housekeeping jobs, and by overcoming diverse challenges, have shown me the everyday blessings of life. In 10 years, I hope to obtain a Ph.D. in engineering and join the growing community of biomedical engineers working to advance medical technology for current and future generations.

**MARIA MORALES SALGADO, 1ST GENERATION STUDENT, PHILLIP O. BERRY ACADEMY VALEDICTORIAN ATTENDING PRINCETON UNIVERSITY**



**Every student has access to a rich, diverse and rigorous curriculum.**

Our new curriculum promotes student engagement and allows educators to maintain high expectations for all learners. By providing a range of subject background knowledge, complementary materials, and key vocabulary, students build their comprehension of more complex texts and their ability to speak and write effectively about a topic, concept or idea. This is the foundation to developing 21st Century critical thinking and writing skills.

**LISA M. DERVISHIAN, NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHER, SHARON ELEMENTARY**



**Every student has access to more social and emotional support.**

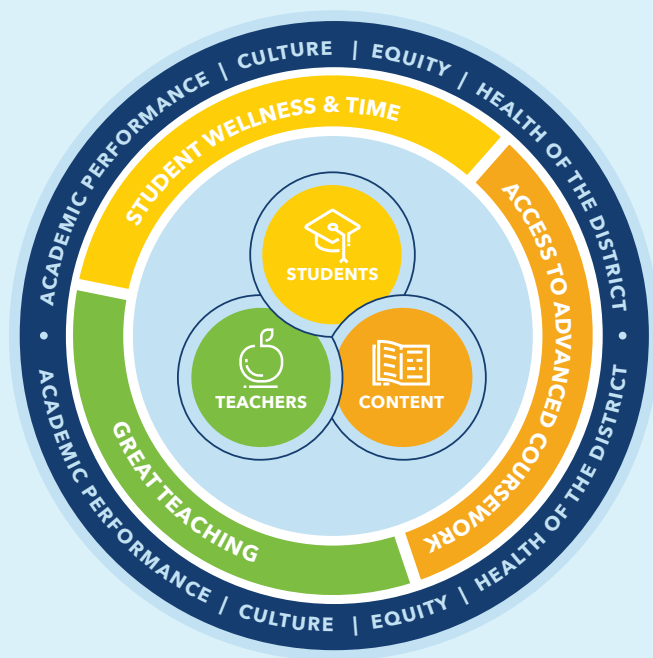
We know that social and emotional learning is the key to positive academic outcomes for our students. By ensuring every K-12 student has equitable access to age-appropriate lessons, research tells us that students will have fewer behavior problems, less substance abuse and improved academic achievement. We measure skills and competencies over the course of a school year to ensure that the students' needs are being met.

**JOELLEN MALVEAUX, SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST, SOUTHWEST MIDDLE**

# FOCUS AREAS

**Instructional core** is defined as the interaction between students, teachers and content. Richard Elmore, co-author of “Instructional Rounds in Education: A Network Approach to Improving Teaching and Learning,” explained there are only three ways to improve learning at scale. First is to improve the skill and knowledge of teachers; second is to increase the complexity of the content taught, and third is to change the role students play in learning.

Our focus areas are centered on improving student outcomes. By focusing on great teaching, increasing supplemental and intensive supports, access to advanced courses, student wellness and time in instruction, we believe it is possible to break the link between poverty, race and academic performance.



## GREAT TEACHING

CMS will transform student outcomes by strengthening the instructional core. This includes increasing the level and complexity of content, building the knowledge and skill of teachers and increasing student engagement as independent learners.



### KEY INITIATIVES

- » Adopt curriculum and resources for math and English Language Arts (ELA) grades K-12.
- » Provide aligned assessments to track student progress in core instruction and intervention.
- » Offer professional development in math and ELA for instructional staff focused on high-quality instruction.
- » Monitor effectiveness of instruction at all schools.



### MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS

- » Percentage of increase in evidence of high-quality instruction in classroom walk-throughs with leadership.
- » Percentage of teachers, instructional and school leaders who completed math and ELA professional development.



### WHAT'S ALREADY IN PLACE?

- » Adopted K-12 district-wide math and ELA curricula ensuring cultural responsiveness.
- » Provisioned math and ELA curricula on a districtwide learning management system.
- » Updated assessment system across all grades, curricula and magnet programs.
- » Increased teacher support, coaching and feedback.
- » Provided professional development for teachers, specialists, instructional leaders and school leaders.



### 2021 - 2022 ACTIONS

- » Launch Math 1 and English 1 curriculum and associated resources in all high schools.
- » Monitor student mastery of math and ELA grade level standards on a districtwide data platform.
- » Add support positions at high schools for new curriculum adoption, planning and coaching.
- » Develop a comprehensive training and development plan for all school-based staff and district specialists.
- » Continue classroom walk-throughs using established guidelines to monitor effectiveness of instruction at all schools.

# ACCESS TO ADVANCED COURSEWORK

CMS will ensure all students have access to and experience success in college-level courses with a particular focus on closing the gaps among groups of students who are historically underrepresented in the coursework.



## KEY INITIATIVES

- » Equip and empower students to identify their post-secondary goals and develop a high school plan to achieve them.
- » Ensure equitable access to high-quality advanced coursework and programs across CMS schools.
- » Provide students with the adult support necessary to navigate high school in pursuit of postsecondary goals.



## MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS

- » Students on track as indicated by early warning indicators at the end of grades 9, 10 and 11.
- » Percentage of students enrolled in at least one college-level course by the end of 11th grade.
- » Percentage of students with post-secondary and associated high school plans in place.
- » Percentage of Career and Technical Education (CTE) students enrolled in a pathway and on-track based on course progress after 9th, 10th and 11th grades.
- » Percentage of students who have a minimum 2.6 GPA.



## WHAT'S ALREADY IN PLACE?

- » Launched Naviance software at all schools to provide students with college planning and career assessment tools.
- » Introduced CTE Pathways as a new approach to career education and established programs at multiple high schools.
- » Established a minimum of 10 AP course options at each high school.
- » Started a district-wide career education advisory board of higher education and business leaders, to increase opportunities for students.
- » Launched Access 2024 to increase enrollment in advanced courses by raising awareness and removing barriers to success.
- » Revised Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) plan to broaden student access to services.



## 2021 - 2022 ACTIONS

- » Launch a campaign to raise student awareness about college-level course options and how to access them.
- » Collaborate with Student Wellness to develop an advisory curriculum for social emotional learning, advising, and post-secondary planning.
- » Improve access to pathways Cambridge, CTE, IB, AP Capstone, and Career and College Promise.
- » Engage partners in improving a post-secondary pipeline, including Central Piedmont Community College, Johnson C. Smith University, UNC Charlotte and Leading on Opportunity Council.





## STUDENT WELLNESS & TIME

Increase the social emotional and mental health supports by building an integrated approach to student wellness that combines multiple disciplines and focuses on the whole child.



### KEY INITIATIVES

- » Provide adequate staffing to meet the social emotional needs of students.
- » Improve attendance through innovative policies and programs.
- » Strengthen student-staff relationships.
- » Ensure equitable treatment of students in response to behavioral issues.
- » Focus on restorative rather than punitive discipline practices.



### MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS

- » Percentage of schools with decreased levels of chronic absenteeism.
- » Percentage of schools with improvement in student attendance, behavior, self-management and social awareness.
- » Percentage of schools reducing out-of-school suspension and disciplinary violations.



### WHAT'S ALREADY IN PLACE?

- » Added 118 school counselors, social workers and psychologists since 2019.
- » Implemented assessments to identify students' social emotional needs.
- » Scheduled Social Emotional Learning (SEL) blocks at every school.
- » Implemented K-8 SEL curriculum.
- » Trained 43 schools and 2,200 staff members in restorative practices for positive discipline.
- » Principals and district leaders completed anti-racism studies and Intercultural Development Inventory plans.



### 2021 - 2022 ACTIONS

- » Adopt new SEL curriculum for grades 9-12.
- » Hire 20 additional social emotional support staff, contracting with specialized vendors for school-based mental health.
- » Fully integrate mental health supports at Turning Point middle and high schools.
- » Offer interpretation services and a language assistance line to increase bilingual student support.
- » Ensure students grades 6-12 have an adult advocate to guide them throughout school.
- » Partner with community organizations to engage chronically absent students.
- » Continue staff training in restorative practices, crisis de-escalation and trauma-informed care.
- » Create school environments that support the social emotional well-being of students and staff.
- » Pilot in-school suspension intervention centers, peer-to-peer suicide prevention programs, activities for chronically absent students.
- » Develop consistent discipline standards including intervention centers, discipline team meetings and discipline matrices.
- » Invest up to \$50 million over three years in our 42 low-performing schools to offer students extra academic support.

## ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Universal screening will assist in data-informed decision making and progress monitoring, as well as the development of school infrastructure and support systems.



### KEY INITIATIVES

- » Universal screening for all students with a district benchmark to trigger academic interventions.
- » Data-informed decision making and progress monitoring.
- » Multi-level prevention system to support students with math and ELA intervention.
- » Development of school infrastructure and support resources.



### MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS

- » Percentage of students in targeted grades with universal screener.
- » Percentage of students identified with an intervention plan.
- » Percentage of students receiving interventions.
- » Percentage of students making progress based on universal screener.



### WHAT'S ALREADY IN PLACE?

- » Established framework for Multi-Tier Systems of Support (MTSS).
- » Adopted a K-8 universal screener.
- » Created a K-8 menu of academic interventions for math and ELA.
- » Established school-based MTSS teams.



### 2021 - 2022 ACTIONS

- » Conduct screening tests three times a year with district-wide benchmarks.
- » Identify a universal screener for grade 9 math and ELA, and plan pilot for 2022-23.
- » Determine criteria for activating student academic interventions.
- » Purchase a platform to analyze screening and intervention data at all levels.
- » Continue with evidenced-based interventions for K-8 math and ELA.
- » Hire additional staff to support MTSS intervention and progress monitoring.
- » Emphasize monitoring of the student academic experience in the classroom to improve results.





# CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

CMS is becoming an organization that consistently and continuously improves to achieve desired outcomes for all students - establishing comprehensive aligned plans that meet actual needs and move us forward. We execute those plans cross-functionally and effectively, evaluate progress over time, on a cadence, and then take action where desired results are not achieved.

**This cycle of continuous improvement is what guides our work and ensures we focus on the right outcomes for all of our students. It will be:**

- » **Outcomes-focused:** Grounded in leading outcomes that measure progress toward goals and lagging outcomes.
- » **Data-informed:** Uses established metrics, targets, and data to identify gaps and tell a true story of results.
- » **Timely:** Based on an established, regular cadence, at each level, and incorporating an escalation process, as appropriate.
- » **Action-oriented:** Incorporates robust conversations that accelerate change and drive action by determining effective tactics and rapidly deploying resources where most needed.
- » **Collaborative and Supportive:** Alerts issues quickly and supports problem solving and barrier removal, promotes honest conversations about results, problems, and solutions.

## 2018-20

CMS began the process of strengthening the existing academic core systemically and putting conditions into place, but plans were interrupted in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2020-21

This school year resulted in shifting to remote learning and plans to operationalize the shifts between in-person/remote instruction; where possible, teams still pursued the interrupted work from 2019-20.

## 2021-22

CMS has created and will implement a districtwide cadence for continuous improvement, including monitoring the effectiveness of instruction using classroom walk-throughs at all schools and monitoring the degree to which classroom formative assessments are driving effective small group and tiered instructional practices for improved student outcomes.



“...equity is not the same as equality. In some instances, equity means giving those with less more: more time for learning, more highly effective teachers to reduce learning gaps, more access to challenging classes.”

#### **BREAKING THE LINK**

## **CULTURE, EQUITY AND HEALTH OF THE DISTRICT**

Regardless of background, people of any age who feel and see their identities reflected in the work they are doing and who feel connected to each other can transform lives through education.

The health of the district is an important part of our work to improve student outcomes and to charting a positive path forward. School districts are made up of people working together for academic achievement – students, teachers, parents, families, staff, leaders and partners.

Our ability to provide high quality operational, technical and human resource support services and resources, is crucial to supporting the work in the classroom: Great Teaching, Access to Advanced Coursework, Student Time and Wellness, and Academic Performance. These supports and focus areas work to build a healthy school district that focuses on equity and closing existing achievement gaps linked to race and poverty.

Each student's needs may be different, but those needs should be met by every school in CMS.

## LOOKING FORWARD

We are steadfastly committed to the work of our 2024 Strategic Plan, which ensures every student is career and college ready, has access to rich, diverse and rigorous curriculum and receives the social and emotional support needed. We will continue to seek community stakeholder feedback and make improvements in response to input.





*Images included are from previous and current school years.*