

WCNC Charlotte

## **CMS school board weighs how achievable and realistic upcoming district goals are**

AJ Crabill, a consultant with the Council of the Great City Schools hired by CMS, helped to guide the discussion among board members.

Author: Shamarria Morrison

Published: 11:18 PM EDT September 26, 2023

MECKLENBURG COUNTY, N.C. — The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools district is continuing its efforts to revamp long-term academic goals for students over the next few years.

Every five years, CMS centers itself around new goals and guardrails that can range from increasing literacy among elementary school students to increasing the number of students post-graduation who get a job.

Experts say the hallmark of a good goal needs a few things.

It needs to be specific, measurable, achievable, timely, and realistic. These attributes were at the center of the discussion around the goals and guardrails conversation on Tuesday night.

CMS Board Member Melissa Easley immediately expressed frustration with the first recommended CMS goal.

"There is absolutely no way we can require our staff to have 97% in anything, we're just setting them up to fail," Easley said.

For the latest breaking news, weather and traffic alerts, download the WCNC Charlotte mobile app and enable push notifications.

Easley is referring to a recommendation that by 2029, 97% of students in kindergarten through second grade will score at or above grade level in early literacy. This number would have to increase from 67% currently.

AJ Crabill, a consultant with the **Council of the Great City Schools** hired by CMS, helped to guide the discussion among board members.

Crabill frequently redirected the conversation to stay on task and squashed repetitive commentary. When goals were recommended to be modified, Crabill looped in the superintendent, who would ultimately be in charge of reaching these goals.

"What would recommend to your board," Crabill asked CMS Superintendent Crystal Hill about the feasibility of the first recommended goal.

"My recommendation would be 90%, 90.9%, to be exact," Hill responded. Hill rationalized the goals should be lower due to several variabilities.

"That 97% assumes a lot of things, right? It assumes that that group of students has been with us the entire year, and has received the treatment that we've provided year over year," Hill said.

Hill said students considered in this data are not always only getting education from CMS.

"If today is testing day, and a new student enrolls to take the test, if they're coming to us from Houston, Honolulu, or Honduras, we still have to give them the test, and they count in these numbers," she said. "That's true if they have been with us for 15 minutes, five days, 15 weeks, or the beginning of the school year."

Though tense at times, the back and forth is how CMS Board members and the CMS superintendent worked to get to the best five-year goals for the district.

For the last few years, CMS has used its list of goals and guard rails to guide school policy. One of those goals was to increase the number of Black and Hispanic students reading at an advanced level.

At the Tuesday meeting, the board talked about the feasibility of raising future goals even higher.

"I'm not willing to have a lesser goal than where we already started," Stephanie Sneed, a CMS School Board member said. "Even if we didn't achieve it."

While discussing the goals, Hill and Crabill reminded the board they had to be mindful of current and expected resources.

"What we're going to have to do is make decisions about the resources that we do have and use them differently," Hill said.

The board is focused on three goals and four guardrails. Before voting on the final goals CMS will have a public hearing to get feedback from community members.