

**Rotary**  
Club of  
Charlotte



# THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

October 19, 2021

## 2021- 2022 Board Members

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## Eric Davis, Chairman, NC Board of Education

By Jim Kelley

[Luther Moore](#) introduced our speaker, Eric Davis, the Chair of the State Board of Education.

Native Charlottean and former Charlotte Rotarian Eric Davis has chaired the State Board of Education since 2018 and earlier this year was appointed by Gov. Roy Cooper to eight more years on the panel. Then-Gov. Pat McCrory appointed him to the state board in 2015.

"It's a wonderful role," Eric told an interviewer earlier this year. "It's a great opportunity to give back to a terrific state that, frankly, gave me a great start in life through the public school system and has really blessed my family."

Eric was elected to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education in 2009 and chaired it from 2009-11. He and his wife Adrienne have two daughters who attended CMS. He is a West Point graduate and was an Airborne Ranger in the US Army. He has served multiple civic groups in Charlotte.

Eric called out [Margaret Marshall](#) and thanked her for her leadership on the Charlotte Mecklenburg School Board. He thanked all the Rotary members for their support of Classroom Central, for being active Reading Buddies, for supporting bonds, for paying taxes that support schools. Eric said that Rotary has set an example for the rest of the state in solving problems across differences and by disagreeing civilly.

He spoke of three challenges facing students that have been become greater since COVID. Students are facing mental health challenges, physical/nutrition needs and academic challenges from the students not being in the classroom.

Eric said there is nothing better for students than learning face to face with teachers. Over the last 18 months, school board members, principals and teachers have been very creative in teaching students using technology and other ways to teach. For example, UNC-TV and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction are working together to make sure grade-school students don't have a lapse in learning during that time particularly for those who don't have access to broadband. UNC-TV is airing content for fourth through 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students, between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. on weekdays. With a simple TV monitor and an antenna, students can watch the educational programming for free.

Eric explained how the state school board and schools are playing catch up. Most importantly, they are focusing on the strategic plan. That plan as three goals.

Goal 1: Eliminate opportunity gaps by 2025. It is important to the North Carolina State Board of Education to make the elimination of opportunity gaps as the focus of the first goal. The Board recognizes that there are several out-of-school factors that impact student performance and attendance, and this goal is the Board's attempt to acknowledge and act on those factors.

Goal 2: Improve school and district performance by 2025. The Board fully recognizes that performance on statewide or federally-mandated tests is not a complete, accurate representation of who children are or how a school or district performs; rather, it is only one piece of a complex puzzle to identify overall performance.

Goal 3: Increase educator preparedness to meet the needs of every student by 2025. The Board wants the best educators teaching North Carolina's students. The Board believes that if we can increase and improve educator preparedness, then the needs of each child can be met across the state.

Eric updated us on the Leandro case. A judge said Monday he's giving state leaders three weeks to comply with his order to fully fund a multibillion-dollar plan for education. The judge asked plaintiffs' attorneys to submit to him by Nov. 1 their proposed order for compelling the state to fund the plan, giving the state a week to respond. The judge could issue an order as soon as Nov. 8.

Eric spoke about seven areas that the state board is addressing to respond to the Leandro case:

1. Provide a qualified, well-prepared, and diverse teaching staff in every school.
2. Provide a qualified and well-prepared principal in every school.
3. Revise the state funding model to provide adequate, efficient, and equitable resources
4. Revise the student assessment system and school accountability system.
5. Build an effective regional and statewide system of support for the improvement of low-performing schools.
6. Provide all at-risk students with the opportunity to attend high-quality early childhood programs.
7. Provide an effective transition from high school to the workforce whether that transition is directly to work, to community college or to university.

Eric made some of the following comments in answering some questions from our members:

Leandro has made some progress in addressing the state's need to provide every child with a sound, basic education. There is still a question of how much funds will be allocated to help make that happen.

The executive and legislative branches of government in NC have had agreement on getting students back to in person learning and to focus on literacy skills.

Charter schools in North Carolina are achieving the same academic performance as our other public schools.

The North Carolina State Board of Education is now mandating that students take a personal finance course in order to graduate from high school.

Eric is part of the Hunt Lee Commission which will identify and apply high-impact strategies for strengthening systems across the education continuum in North Carolina. The Hunt Lee Commission provides an exciting opportunity to take a close look at long-standing challenges in the education space and identify innovative solutions.

\*A recording of the program is available here: <https://vimeo.com/636741556>

The program introduction begins at 13:30 minutes.