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EDITOR'S PICK

FEATURED

## Superintendent Tom Forcella announces retirement in midst of CHCCS changes

Katie Jansen May 24, 2016



Tom Forcella

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CHAPEL HILL — Superintendent Tom Forcella announced Tuesday that he will retire from the helm of Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools.

Forcella has been with the district since 2011 and, effective Aug. 1, will end a 42-year career in schools.

Forcella is known for implementing a long-range strategic plan for the district and for the creation of Project ADVANCE, or “Achieving Our District Vision: Accelerating North Carolina Education.” The project, which is set for an “opt-in” model launch in the district next school year, is a new teacher pay model that will reward professional development and performance rather than years of experience. He has also been working with state leaders to investigate the possibility of Project ADVANCE eventually becoming a model for teacher compensation statewide.



“My five years in Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools have been extremely rewarding,” Forcella said in a release. “I am thankful for the opportunity to work with our amazing students, as well as the staff, parents and agencies that make this community remarkable.”

Jeff Nash, executive director for community relations for the district, said that Forcella made the move to be able to spend more time with his sons and his aging parents, who live out of state.

Nash also said Project ADVANCE and all other strategies implemented under Forcella would continue as planned.

During the last year of Forcella’s tenure, he faced challenges such as a community-produced report from the Campaign for Racial Equity In Our Schools addressing a “crisis” and the racial achievement gap in the district, as well as questions and concerns from teachers about his new pay model, with some threatening to leave the district.

Forcella’s announcement comes one day after teachers were required to opt in or opt out of Project ADVANCE. Those who opt in were promised an increase in their local pay supplements — 16 percent for teachers with 14 or fewer years of teaching experience, compared to 12 percent for those with the same amount of experience who chose to opt out.



Also hanging in the balance is a \$1.8 million budget request to increase the district's local supplement and remain competitive with Wake County's pay. That request, which would impact more than 75 percent of the district's teachers, went unfunded in the county manager's recommended budget and is still being discussed by the county commissioners.

Wanda Hunter, co-chair of the Campaign for Racial Equity In Our Schools, said she hopes the district will consider hiring a leader with racial equity experience who promotes excellence for all students. She added the group is hopeful because Board of Education Chair James Barrett reached out and said the board would be listening to what the community is looking for in a leader.

"While sad to lose him at this critical time, I am grateful for Dr. Forcella's five years of service to this

district," Barrett said in a release. "His efforts to improve quality of instruction will make a lasting impact for the benefit of all our students. These efforts are cultural shifts in our district that will live beyond his tenure and continue to help our students succeed."

The Board of Education meets next Thursday, June 2 at 7 p.m. at The Lincoln Center. Nash said it is unclear whether the board will determine a process for selecting a new superintendent at that meeting or at a subsequent meeting.



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