



Board Member Biographies

Michael E. Blair

Mike joined the ALP Board in September 2020 and has served on the boards of numerous community organizations including serving as Chairman of Leadership Charlotte and Hospice and Palliative Care- Charlotte. He has a keen personal interest in literacy and education and spent two terms on the Board of the Fletcher School. Currently he serves on the Board of Novant Presbyterian Foundation. Mike is a Managing Principal at Captrust Financial Advisors and has a BS and MBA from UNC-Chapel Hill. An eighth generation Charlottean, Mike and wife Betsy have two grown children and three grandchildren so far. They are members of New City Church.

Betty Blackwell

Betty relocated to Charlotte from Ohio after 37 years of service in education. She served in various capacities at the local, state and national levels. Her dedication to supporting struggling readers stem from her personal struggles as a child. She has served on numerous boards and continues to be involved with organizations that support women and children. She believes that given the right resources, equal access and support, every child can reach their full potential. Her experiences as Director of Early Childhood Education and Head Start, Coordinator of both Reading Recovery training site and Office of School Improvement for Title I have equipped her with an outstanding insight into what it takes to improve educational opportunities for children. She currently serves as an Executive Board Member of Carolina Women's Club, a Directorate of Sterling Math and Science Foundation and Life-Member of Leadership Akron. She is married to Roosevelt and has two sons and three grandchildren.

Jim Boylan

Jim joined the ALP Board in July 2018 and became Chair of the Governance Committee in January 2019. He helps to drive the mission of ALP through his work as an ALP tutor at Billingsville Elementary. He retired in 2017 from MetLife, Inc. after a 37-year career in Human Resources and Law. At the time of his retirement he was the Chief Human Resources Officer for Brighthouse Financial. Jim also serves on the Board of Advisors for the UNC Charlotte Belk College of Business and the Board of Directors for the Charlotte 49er Athletic Foundation.

Koren S. Cranford

Koren is currently Treasurer of the ALP Board. She is the owner of Koren S. Cranford, CPA, specializing in the taxation of small businesses, family groups and high net worth individuals. Previously employed at local public accounting firms and Grant Thornton, LLP, Koren manages relationships with clients to assist them with financial planning, accounting, tax audits, rentals, healthcare, and payroll, in addition to tax compliance. Prior to accounting, Koren was an actuary for the global consulting firm Mercer, specializing in the administration and compliance of defined benefit retirement plans. Koren is a coordinator for the winter shelter program for homeless citizens of Charlotte at the Urban Ministry Center and is a Deacon at Myers Park Baptist Church. She has had previous involvement with various non-profit and educational organizations in Charlotte as a board treasurer.

Bonnie Fleming

I have been a community volunteer for 30 years with most of my efforts to benefit children such as serving on the boards of Discovery Place, Children's Theatre, Charlotte Museum of History and the Charlotte Junior League. In 1989 I founded the Nutcracker Ball, an annual holiday event for parents and children with funds going to various children's organizations. My principal role in most non-profit organizations has been fundraising. In my professional career, I was a distributor for the English AGA cookstove which allowed me to develop a business model which uniquely combined many of my passions. I was selected as the Charlotte Chamber entrepreneur of the year and have been the top Aga distributor for more than 15 years. I have been featured in Southern Living, The Charlotte Observer, The Business Journal, Builder-Architect and The Wall Street Journal. Being an entrepreneur allowed me to continue to serve our community and especially our children, our future.

Anthony T. Jones

Anthony joined ALP Board July 2020. Through his vast work with children and families, he understands literacy is a key component to rewriting the narrative for many children in our community. Anthony Jones is the Chief operations Officer for Thompson Child & Family Focus where he assist in establishing strategic direction, growth, and transformation for the organization. Anthony also serves as the agency's Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer. Prior to working at Thompson, Anthony brought about innovative solutions for the juvenile justice, child welfare, and behavioral health populations with over 26 years in the private sector, state government, and nonprofit human services. He earned his Bachelor's degree in Social Work from Mars Hill University and his Master's degree in Business Management & Leadership from Liberty University. Anthony's passion and "why" comes from living out his leadership purpose to "motivate others through transformational leadership, to be a change agent, and inspire hope."

Desmond Keller

Des joined the ALP board in January 2017 as a representative of St. Peter's Episcopal Church. He has also served as a member of the church's governing body, the Vestry, as well as the Outreach and Social Justice Grant Committee, and the Grant Committee of the St. Peter's Capital Campaign. He served for more than a decade as a board member-volunteer for Charlotte Ultimate, another non-profit dedicated to creating playing opportunities in ultimate frisbee for adults and youth. He and his wife, Susan Dosier, operate DK Communications Group, providing public relations, marketing strategy and written and visual content for clients since 2011. Des and Susan have two adult daughters.

Kristin LaPrise

Kristin joined the ALP Board in July 2018. She first became interested in literacy through her participation in adult literacy tutoring that began 20 years ago. After seeing firsthand the challenges adults face, both in their lives and with their efforts to learn to read later in life, she realized the power and importance of helping children learn to read. Kristin has been with Wells Fargo for 25 years, currently leading the Emerging Affluent segment strategy for the Consumer Bank. Education is a household passion as her wife, Barbara Lom, is a Professor at Davidson College.

Anjali Markey

Anjali has been active on the ALP Board since January 2016. She has been a committed and passionate Augustine Literacy Tutor since 2012. She has also served as an event organizer and has coached and mentored tutors so that more of them are highly trained and effectively helping students struggling with literacy. Anjali's career background was in Information Technology in a variety of industries, including banking and aviation. In the past, she has served on the Charlotte Advisory Boards of Pratham Reading USA and the Society of St. Andrews Gleaning Network.

Bert J. Miano

Bert has been an active member of St. Peter's Episcopal Church since 2012, having recently completed a three-year term on the Vestry, with the last two as Senior Warden. He is the coordinator for the Room in the Inn program at St. Peter's, and has served on the Youth Advisory Committee, two Associate Rector search committees, the Finance Committee, and two discernment committees. He currently serves on the Strategic Planning Committee. Bert is an attorney with more than 21 years of experience. Previously, he was a newspaper journalist in his home state of Mississippi where he wrote about business and politics. Bert is married to an architect, Ann, and they have three children.

Michele Melchior

Michele is a Tax Director at Grant Thornton, LLP where she leads the firm's Southeast Not-for-Profit tax practice. Michele previously served as a board member and Governance Chair of Theatre Charlotte.

Christina O'Dell

Christina's passion for literacy and the ALP mission has motivated her to recommend ALP tutoring to many of her friends in the community. Currently, Christina is on the Board of the Myers Park High School Foundation as Vice President and head of the development committee. She is also on the board of the Myers Park Field Hockey Association. She held positions at Citibank in both Private and Retail Banking, followed by time at Northern Trust. Christina and her husband, Dee, were Co-Chairpersons of ALP's 2019 Rise and Read Breakfast.

Don E. Olmstead

Don is the Managing Director and founder of Novare Capital. He is currently on the board of Charlotte Family Housing and has served as President of this Board. Don has also served as President of the Board of Habitat for Humanity Charlotte and as a member of the Board of Sharon Towers, a senior living community in Charlotte. He is a trustee of the University of the South, his alma mater. Don and his wife Jill are members of First Presbyterian Church, where he is leading the Investment Committee on the Capital Campaign Cabinet. Both Don and Jill have a passion for the education of children and family housing.

Valerie Pearsall Roberts

Valerie is currently Secretary of the ALP Board and former chair of the Governance Committee. She is a University of Chicago-trained lawyer who was a partner at Jones Day (NYC office). Since moving to Charlotte in 2015, Valerie has been active in the tax exempt world and has been a member of the Carolina Women's Club Executive Board, Chamber Music 4 All, Sterling Science and Math, Providence Plantation Homeowners Association, and is president of the Lady Lynxters of Ballantyne Country Club. Valerie has also served as Attorney-Advisor in Mecklenburg County Teen Court. She's been active with Tutor Charlotte and greatly enjoyed reading with a kindergarten student weekly. Her passion is to empower children by teaching them the small building blocks they need in order to master reading and other literacy skills.

Trish Sexton

Patricia C. "Trish" Sexton, who was named associate superintendent for elementary school programs in March 2018, has more than two decades of teaching and leadership experience in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. "I believe that every student has great potential and it's our job as educators to help children realize that potential fully," Sexton said. "Being an educator is a privilege and I'm honored to serve our students in this new role." She began her career with the district in 1995 at Piedmont Open Middle School, where she taught fourth and sixth grades. In 2001, she became a principal fellow at the University of North Carolina Charlotte, and completed her principal internship at Shiloh Elementary in Monroe. She served as an assistant principal there until 2006, when she returned to CMS as an assistant principal at Providence Spring Elementary for two years. She moved to Pinewood Elementary as principal in 2008, leading the school to three years of high growth (2011, 2012 and 2014). During her tenure, Pinewood was also named a Title I Reward School by the state. The school also moved from a designation of proficiency in its school quality review to a designation of well-developed. In addition, Pinewood was awarded multiple grants under her leadership, including ones from the NFL, Blue Cross and Blue Shield, and US Airways. In 2014, Sexton was named executive director of the West Learning Community and became the interim learning community superintendent in 2017. A native of Virginia Beach, Va., Sexton is the daughter of a Navy pilot and spent part of her childhood in Japan. She earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from the College of William and Mary, and a master's degree in school administration from the University of North Carolina Charlotte. She is also certified in curriculum instructional support. Sexton is married and has three daughters.

Tom Temple

Tom has a particular passion for aiding and empowering children to realize their potential. His wife Ann has been an Augustine tutor for ten years and previously served on Augustine's Board. Tom has advised senior management teams and boards of directors on mergers & acquisitions and strategic options for more than 30 years. He is a Managing Director with Fidus Partners and has served on several boards of directors. Tom and Ann have 3 grown sons.