



## CLASS OF 2036

**What will their future hold?**

A team of community members who, with Reos Partners' support, is taking a systemic look at the current state of education in Charleston County in order to create a set of possible future scenarios for improving educational outcomes.

# Charleston Shared Future:

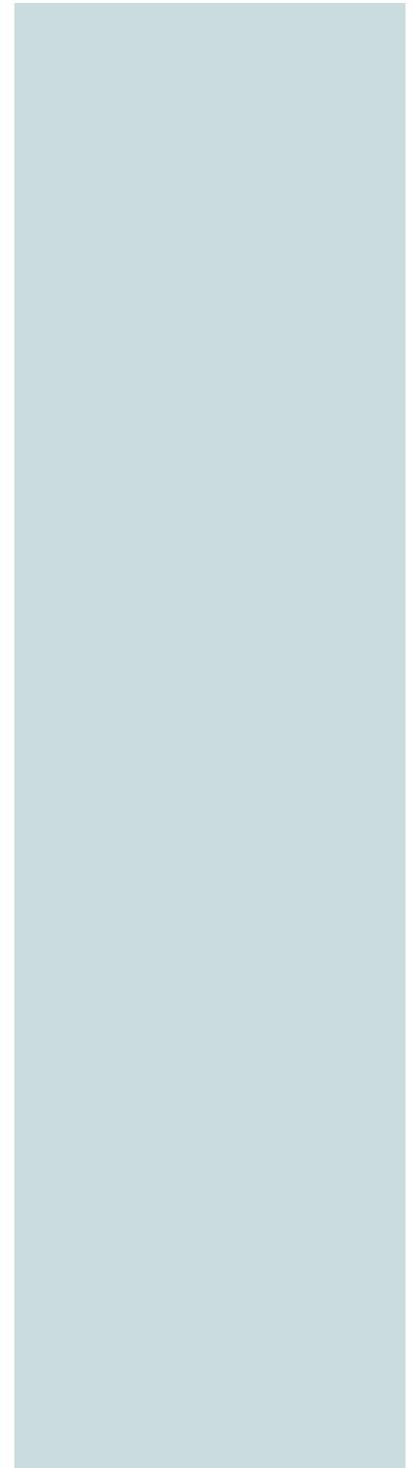
A Community Scenario Project on the Future of Education in Charleston County

Prepared by Reos Partners  
September, 2018

INTERVIEW  
SYNTHESIS

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## Introduction

Reos Partners interviewed 24 members of the Scenario Team in August and September 2018. The purpose of these interviews was to surface a range of perspectives about educational outcomes in Charleston County. What follows is a synthesis of these perspectives, in the words of the interviewees.

## What are we concerned about?

### The gap between what the current system is providing for students of color and white students

"The worst five high schools in South Carolina were all located in Charleston County. Burke, Baptist Hill, Garrett, Lincoln, and North Charleston High, and all five have a 90% black enrollment. Come on, really? Really? You can't make this stuff up. I know we were better than that."

"We have no consistent literacy program now. Very few children are reading at grade level. There is something seriously wrong."

"For the minority population, 80% are below grade level. What do you do if they don't have basic skills? Only 11.5% of black students are achieving at grade level. This is not acceptable to me nor should it be to anyone else. Without proper support services for the high poverty schools, inequality won't turn around and it could actually get worse."

"Too many kids of color are just left behind. They aren't being educated the same as white kids. Majority minority schools seem to be lacking in terms of test scores, literacy, math skills, and drop out and detention rates are higher. The deficiency gap is very noticeable, and I don't think it has to be that way."

"Prior to Boeing and Volvo, our economy only had to produce people who could wash dishes and make beds. The expectations have been so low for so long, that the achievement gap is the norm."

"If someone graduates in the top 10 percent of their graduating class from a school in Charleston and they get to college and have to take remedial English, that's disappointing. There is a difference in the level of education that a child receives, because those kid's peers from other schools were able to do the work."

"You don't want to close the achievement gap by just bringing Caucasian children down the level of the children of color. You want all children to improve."

"This isn't the story of "the rising tide lifts all boats." Some boats have holes in them and we have to fix the holes first."

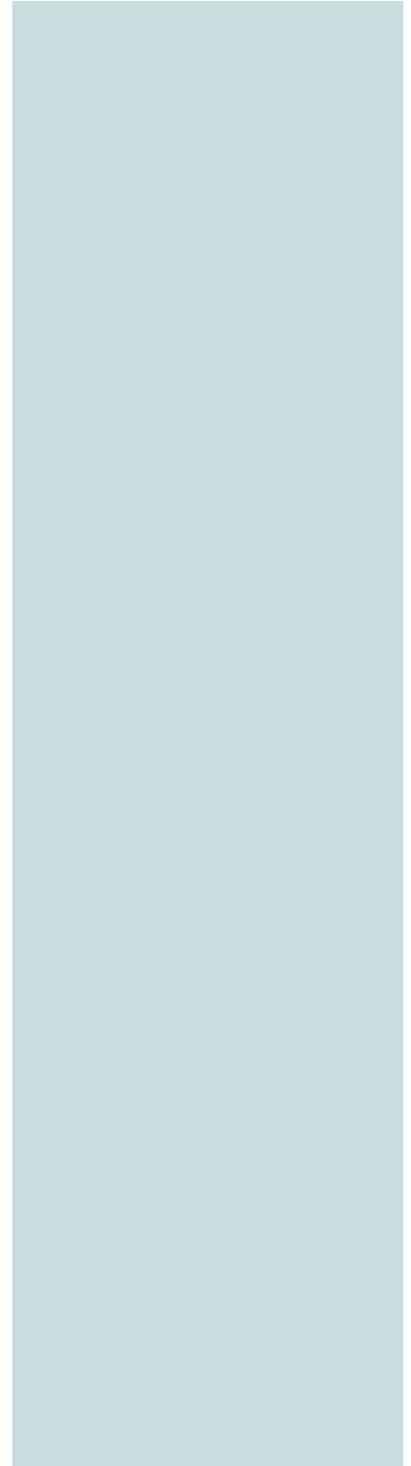
"We have to be honest. . . we cannot say we are successful when some are not achieving."

### The racial issues that continue to plague the community

"Right now, there is a lot of animosity, a lot of it across racial lines.

"One thing about Charleston, you can really see and feel the remnants of a slave past and a caste system and you hear it in people's language. These folks won't let you move."

"Some parents did not want their kids to have a diploma with Burke High School's name on it. Parents did not want their kids to go to the same prom."



"Academic Magnet does not have African Americans except for the janitor and cooks. Why would I let my child go into an environment like that?"

"I think right now it's just that if you pass by a school you know what type of children are in the building. I think the district is working at doing a better job with that. But right now, it still exists."

"The mindset still is that we will always need a segment of our society to be servants. And so, in that mindset then we don't have to educate them to 'the best of our ability.' I just need them to be able to wash my car or make my hotel bed or cook my food. They're not going to be my doctor or my lawyer or my engineer. They're not going to be my pilot. That's not what I expect from them."

"People with influence and power deliberately plant seeds to render a permanent underclass of people through the education system."

"I think the one that jumps into my mind is the scandal under which our previous superintendent lost her job. Very racially charged scandal."

"The future is pretty bleak here already. The majority of our students of color are not getting an appropriate education. They're not. And we know that. And so, I don't really know how we got there."

"I realized that what we were trying to do was not perceived as help. It was perceived as we were here to take over and if you do what we say things will get better. And I came back, and I said 'Listen, we have to change our approach here. It's not working. And we've got to come up with a different approach because it's not about taking over something. It's about working in partnership to make things better.'"

"There is a resistance in the black community to change their communities even to the detriment of the outcomes of their children."

### **The inequitable system of schools within CCSD**

"The magnet choice school system is essentially a private school system for mainly affluent white kids."

"The magnet school option has created a private school system within a public school system. Only a few benefited, but everyone pays into with property taxes. A lot of people say we need to change, but don't touch the magnet or charter schools. Because over the years, the schools have become sort of sacred."

"Burke High School sits in the middle of the richest city in South Carolina--one of the best cities supposedly in the world and it is bottom five in the state. And try to change anything and watch groups rally around to support the way it's been. Really, it starts at Head Start. Our Head Start programs should go away."

"I don't think there is a public for public schools because people can opt out. And I don't think it's because of racism. I think it's because of apathy. They find a way out for themselves. And they don't have enough time in their lives or enough will to try to make a change with everything else there."

"In general, I'm pro-charter because I think they offer a mirror to what a district says can be done versus what somebody else may be able to do better. But they also carve up our budget significantly and if they pop up in the middle of a Mount Pleasant or West Ashley where we're doing an OK job of keeping sort of integrated schools then they tend to further carve up our dollars and our share of students."



"That's the other thing too about the magnet schools, they get to kick kids out. Community schools don't. Community schools had to take responsibility for trying to graduate them and making up for any deficit they had."

"We have some of the very best schools in the country. We also have some of the very worst."

"Instead of having the perception that magnets are where you get the rigor... instead believe that everyone gets that rigor regardless of the type of school"

### Separate and not equal

"The experience of Charleston County in regard to Brown vs Board of Education: Charleston County was the last school district in the state to integrate schools."

"South Carolina didn't integrate schools until the early 70s, after Brown versus Board of Education. We will build nice good schools for African-American children and that will be our way to say look we did what he told us to. You know, we're doing the same for them as for the white kids. They're just not in the same building."

"I once heard: 'It is better for African-Americans to have our own schools, locally controlled, in our own communities even if it means that the outcomes for our students will not be as great as otherwise they would have been.'"

"Segregation is very real. We need to find the root causes and decide what to do about that. I read the Clemson report. We need to look at attendance lines. This is pressing."

"There are school board members essentially saying that if a school was predominantly African-American you can't hire white people there or you shouldn't. And you can't hire a white principal there."

"Why are you white people trying to take over our school?"

### Resistance to change

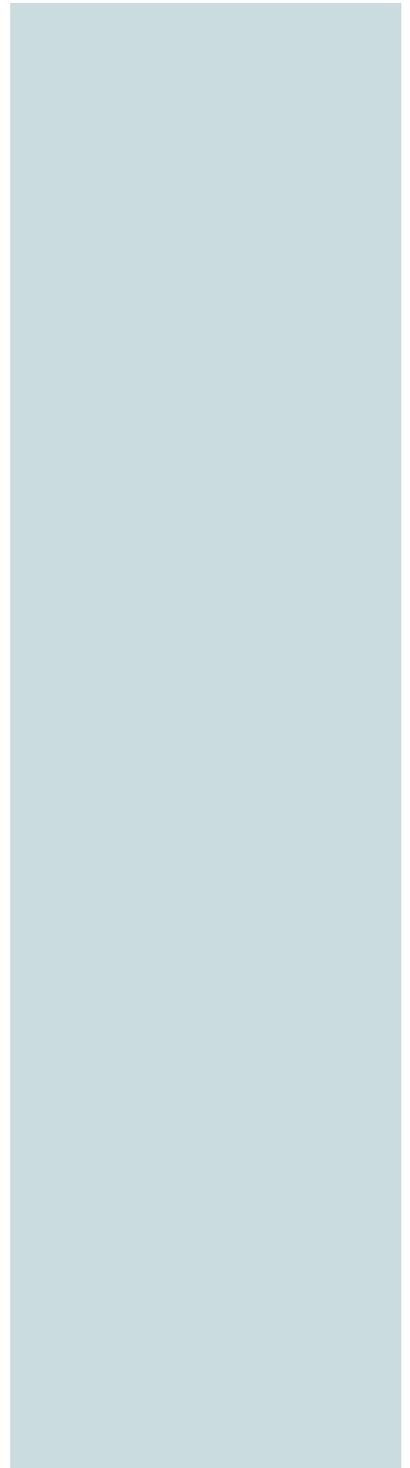
"We still have a lot of the people with the old thinking still in key positions. People who've been in place 20 something years and the change still hasn't occurred, but they get a different title. I don't know how that magically is supposed to make change happen."

"People from the settlement communities, particularly African Americans who have been here for generations are deeply suspicious of 'come yas', who we are, vs. the 'bin yas', who they are."

"One of the trickier aspects of this work is recognizing that there is a culture here, there is a resistance from that culture from outside influences, which is embedded in the fabric of the community."

"White parents are not interested in a group coming from out of town coming and telling them how to change. It took them 50 years to get this system right. They aren't interested in changing it. It took them 50 years to create a private school system funded by public dollars."

"Equity. There needs to be equity in the standards and what we expect teachers to teach. It's equity as far as our buildings and resources. Who are these people that don't want this to happen? Why is this such a struggle for so long? You know these invisible forces left we never see but we feel that the influence of..."



"I am so ready to pull the plug if this does not work just because the political will has not been there over the years to do half the things that need to be done to move forward. We are consciously failing half our kids and the predominance of that falls on our poor kids in the district. And so if and whenever significant change has been pushed forward it's always been batted back by the adults in the room."

"In many ways, Charleston is the way it is for reasons. There are many ways to put a bowtie on a bag of dung. Racism, classism is very real."

"There's Meeting Street Academy and I'd be happy to expand them to every failing elementary school we've got. But you'll get pushback from groups on that, primarily from the knee jerk ideological anti-Charter groups."

"So you've got the adults in the district and then you've got the racial pushback. For the adults it's "don't change my job, don't make me go to a different school and don't make me work for different principal." It comes in various forms but they are essentially saying don't move my cheese. On the racial aspect it tends to be more--Why are you doing this to OUR school? Why should this school change? Why should this school become Montessori so that you can make middle class white moms happy. Montessori is one of the few things that we've done that has worked to integrate schools. And there has been push back along racial lines essentially with that argument. The reason nothing has happened at Burke is exactly that same argument. Why are you doing this to us? Why is something always going to happen to us for y'all or for something y'all want. Pitting white against black. So it feels like those have been the consistent fault lines that stuff is pushed back on and the result is at some point people say it's not worth it. We've found our way out."

### **Leadership wanted: teachers, principal and administrators**

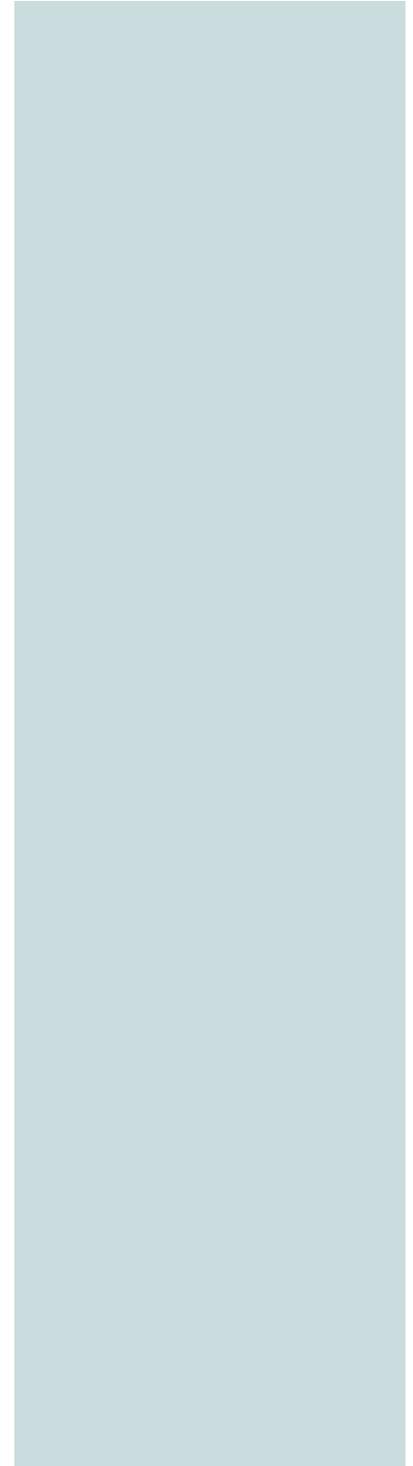
"I experience the difference that one principal can make. It is not even the same school when that principal is removed."

"Teachers and principal positions in Title 1 schools are filled by the least senior and probably the least capable people who, for the most part, don't want to be there. In every other sector I know about, the most challenging jobs go to the most capable and they prove their worth by being effective under those conditions and that's upside down in education. This shows just how complicated unsnarling the equity question will be, because it will raise hell with the teaching and principal profession."

"You need to have an engaged superintendent who will fight with courageousness for the education of all children regardless of color, or socioeconomic background. You have to engage other partners to ensure that all kids are being educated to the best of our community's ability to educate them."

"We'd have teachers that are paid fairly and sufficiently to live comfortably in the community."

"There needs to be better respect for teachers. You don't have to focus on the test scores or the test to bring about high achievement. You bring that high achievement about by having meaningful learning experiences and engagement with children and families. Then you garner the respect of folks because you are an effective teacher. But I'd love to see teachers more valued in the community and for teachers to value themselves and that there is this respect that they get because of the important work they do."



"There's a lot of unevenness now among principals as far as being instructional leaders. And the principal really is key in the school building. If you've got a good leadership team and the principal knows how to motivate teachers and motivate students then the probability of bringing about some good change is increased. Leadership matters."

"A lot of the teachers accept positions in the poorer performing schools because they want to get their foot in the door at Charleston County. They are new to town or they haven't been able to find a job anywhere else and so they take that position and as soon as the opportunity comes, then they leave. Others accept those positions believing that it's not going to be hard work or that they are not going to have to work hard because it's in the country and it's "those kids" kind of attitude."

"In Charleston County, when you interview for a principal job--guess who's on the principal committee? Teachers. Parents, and community members. So right away you're already taking power or respect away from the principal when you put a teacher that they're supposed to supervise on their interview committee."

"We need well-trained people in order to deliver the curriculum all our students need to learn. We now have teachers that come into the system. They have huge debt. They may not necessarily be committed to education. They can knock down their student loan debt by teaching in this system. If people are not committed to public education it won't work."

"I had only one black educator all through school and it was two of my best years. She understood how to communicate from the culture."

"Teachers matter. I had an English teacher in 11th grade. She was new to the south. A white woman. She allowed us to be us. She loved hip hop. She would create assignments that were relevant to us. Teachers that are special—letting me be a young black male. She brought in people who could be role models, that I related to. There was something I could actualize."

"If we taught them with a whole lot more passion it would matter. Capturing kids' hearts is important, but what about your own heart? You can't capture kids' hearts if you are heartless."

## The Boards and their politics

"We can't expect that the district is going to be able to make good decisions about education if we don't have people on the board that understand education. They have governance over policies that they don't understand."

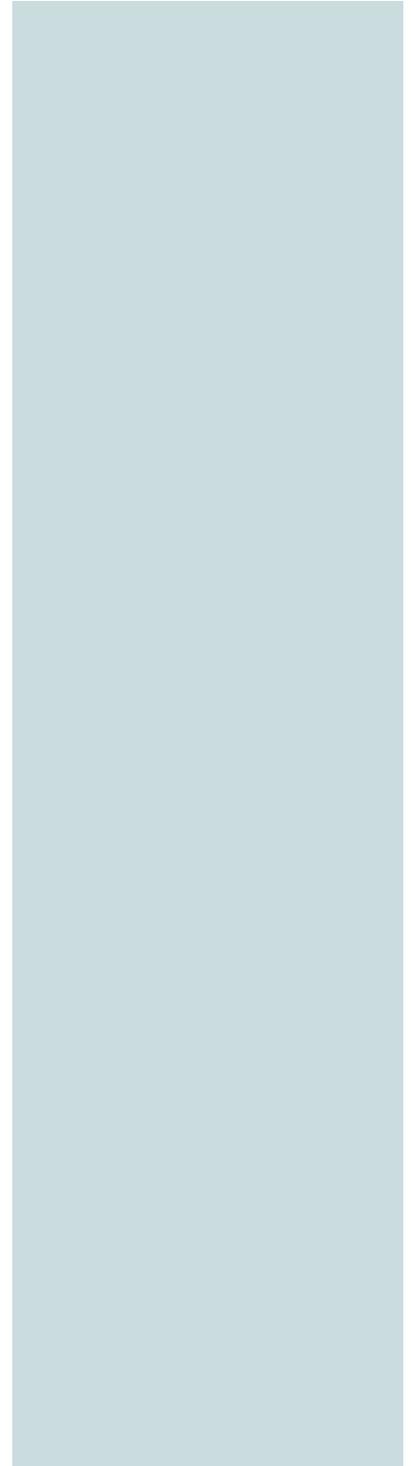
"The board is very dysfunctional and demanding. They seem to think that they are supposed to have involvement in the day to day operations of the school."

"They've threatened to have press conferences every other week. People are being accused of stealing money. This is crazy. They are very dysfunctional."

"We have a school board that with few exceptions is largely incompetent, which will go through some changes this November."

"You have board members who don't even read the documents and then ask ridiculous questions in the sessions. And those positions are very political. Some people just get into those positions so they can springboard to a city council position or they are a reverend in the area and they're highly esteemed so they think they need to run for school board when they have no business being involved in schools so there is a huge disconnect here."

"The Board leaks like a sieve. If you don't like something, leak it to the press."



"I'd be in favor of changing this to a Board appointed by the mayor. It probably is not ever going to happen, but just the way we're organized is not effective."

"The creation of the constituent districts was a catastrophe."

"We have a school board who do not understand their responsibility. There are extra politicized conversations. This is all complicated by constituent boards."

"A lot of the people who are elected are not the best that we could have. And because of that, good people leave the system. Or they get thrown out. We've fired a bunch of really good superintendents. To me it was that the school board didn't know how to do their job."

"I do think in Charleston the system itself is bust because we have the county system and then we have these constituent boards and the constituent boards don't have a lot of power, but they have some power. And I think it makes the system not too efficient."

"If I were king, I'd eliminate the constituent boards. They are a throwback to Jim Crow. They oversee attendance lines but that's about it. It's a black hole. Most of the authority has been taken away from them. Each district has one seat, you don't have much authority and when you don't have much authority you don't get the best people. Most of these people aren't used to politics."

"We've got to have people on our school board that don't have private agendas and have people that sit on our board to help drive our policies and make decisions for our district have to be people that are educated enough to really understand organizational structure that understand business. And finances. You know it just can't be because that person is just the only person that's running."

"The board was split along racial lines for who the next superintendent would be. I think that was a pivotal moment for where we are now because we have not come out of those politics."

"School boards are not partisan politics-- it's the nastiest politics in the world but it's not Democrat/Republican. At least not in South Carolina."

### Politics negatively affect positive educational outcomes

"The superintendent wasn't here very long before they were talking about getting rid of her."

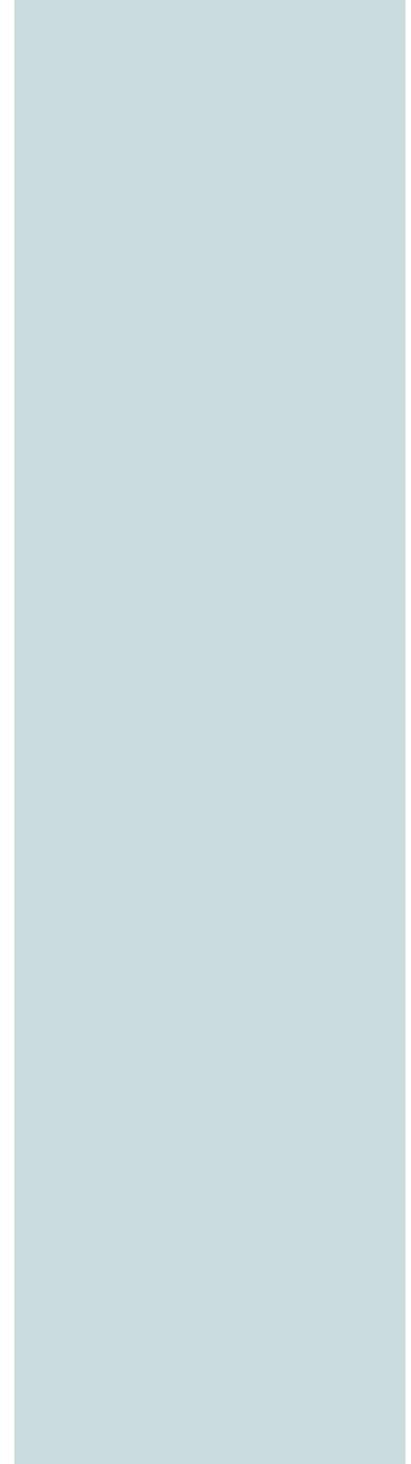
"We have a bureaucratic district office that isn't signed up to support this superintendent particularly if they smell blood in the air."

"Inside the building, it's more organizational politics. How long is this superintendent going to last? I'm going to hold back on my enthusiasm for what she's asking us to do to see if I can outlast her."

"There are current board members pushing extremely hard to fill the seats that will be vacant with people who will oppose the superintendent and her agenda. The biggest risk is the outcome of elections in November. If folks opposing are successful, they will push her out, many of our senior staff will be pushed out."

There's a guy running for the School Board from Mt. Pleasant who was pulled out of a good school and headed towards not such a good school and took such offense at it that he quit in a huff and now he's out for the Superintendent by joining the School Board."

"The School Board is not political in the traditional sense. To get elected to the school board here it's helpful to have your last name begin with one of the first six letters of the alphabet because most people here don't care about school board elections and just check the top boxes."



"It's helpful to have a constituency—if you are black and have a ministry, you rely on them to get you elected even if you don't know anything about education."

"In my heart of hearts, I feel like Dr. Postlewaite wants to do the work. My fear is, is Charleston going to allow her to do the work or as she begins to really do it, are those unseen forces going to make sure that she's no longer the superintendent? I don't know who those forces are. I just don't know where the power comes from. You don't see it. You don't see them in public saying anything. But they are there."

"I mean it's not just race-based politics, some of it is teacher contract politics where it's sort of a union mentality even though we're not unionized. That teachers are protected status and you can't demand results from their kids in their classroom. Change gets fought by the teacher union mentality."

"The politics in Charleston are just crazy. What about the kids?"

"I think it's all going to come down to the quality of the leadership. I know that's very simple. But that's how I see it. It's going to come down to the quality and the courageousness of the leadership of the district. If the leadership panders to special interest groups, we're not going to move in a direction driven by a real vision."

"It's always who you know. So if your mother-in-law was somebody or knows somebody in this district then you get special privileges and you get special picks on what school you go to or what resources you get. It really shouldn't be like that but that's how it is."

### Family, communities, and the schools

"Education is everyone's business—business community, municipal government, church, family are all moving parts outside the strength of the school district."

"The parents we are trying to reach are products of this system. They don't realize that the levels we set for their children are different than for others."

"I feel more and more parents and society expect schools to be responsible for the kids and raise the kids. So how do we go back to a system where it's really a true partnership and we work together to raise kids?"

"I think we can't fix or create better kids until we again go back and focus on family and what's happening in the home. And family can look like whatever. Family could be two gay men with children. It could be a single mom with kids which is how I was raised. It doesn't matter. What's going on in the home and how can we strengthen that to help our children be more successful in school so we're raising better children?"

"What kids do outside of school is as important as what they do in school."

"It really, really gets my goat when people—and I heard a little bit of that in the room—and I totally understand where it's coming from—that parents just need to do better. Parents need to be better advocates. Yes, and they can't always. It's not a matter of won't, it's a matter of what is it that they can do."

"How do we welcome one another? In the good future, it was socially okay to talk about these things. Maybe that is how we measure—PTA! It should look like our schools. It should not be only Caucasian mothers."

"Parents need to feel respected and involved. Some schools don't encourage parent visits. All need to be treated with dignity and respect."



"The problems are systemic. Some kids have not been exposed to some of the values. The social stuff has to be addressed before you can get into the school part."

"You can raise the bar but if kids are coming from broken homes and abusive environments and very poor backgrounds, you can put all the money in the world and raise the bar as high as you want, you will still have problems."

"We are teaching survivors more than we are teaching students."

"It is a survival like thing. You have to change the mindset of people who are trying to survive."

"One organization I heard of was giving families bags of books (almost in the delivery room) and encouraging them to read to their kids. There needs to be a focus on pre-school. It has to start at an early age. If you do some math—take someone from 0-18 years, 365 days a year, it comes out to something like 157,000 hours. If you take 12 grades and you are in school 180 days a year, you are in school about 15,000 hours—about 10% of the time, and we expect the school to fix our stuff. You wouldn't work on anything else that way. So it's not a problem of school, it's a problem of families, parents, influence and all the other stuff that goes into the other 90 % of the time."

## Gentrification

"Because Charleston keeps getting ranked as the number one city in the U.S., a lot of people from different places in the United States are coming here which I think will bring new ideas will maybe even help with the aspect of change. But I feel like those people are also segregating themselves."

"What I've seen in the five years that I've been here is that they've been doing a push to get the low-income poverty people out of the area. They keep pushing them north."

"Gentrification and housing and access to housing. What used to be Section 8 housing now has a hip gym and the hip brewery and the hip this and so we're forcing people out. Are we going to kick everyone out of Charleston peninsula who is poor and not white before we even give them the opportunity to have great resources or schools?"

"There are different issues now that cause us to not be as effective. Mostly gentrification. Once it comes in, the perception of your school is hard to get people to rethink those perceptions."

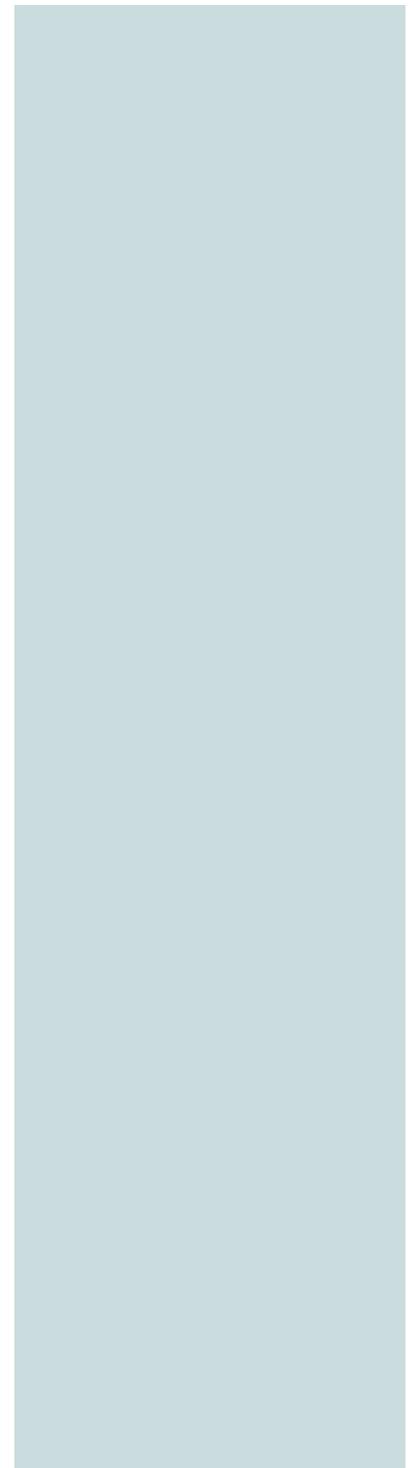
## Funding Issues

"Money is not a problem. Can't always throw money at an issue and expect to resolve it. Maybe you need to look at the management structure."

"Funding is often an issue in K-12. In Charleston in 2015 there was a big financial difficulty, loss of about \$18 million. The district has overcome the financial issues, but how the district is viewed has not been overcome."

"There are restrictions here in state of South Carolina on how districts can be funded. We need to remove some of these restrictions in Charleston. We need support from certain state legislators to do that. We will not get that support from them if we can't demonstrate that we are able to control the structures of the schools."

"In other places, it's all property tax and here it is not. Here it's vehicle and second homes



and that's just something that has to be change at the state legislative level, because we have million-dollar houses here that aren't contributing to our educational system. Everything sometimes comes down to money."

"How do we deal with these TIFs? We need to dig beneath the surface and try to figure out the long-term financial impact on certain schools. The district forfeits a lot of revenues acquiescing to the desires of the city. Too much of peninsula city is covered with these TIF districts and yes, it encourages development, but that drives up the cost of housing which pushes these same black kids out of their long-time neighborhoods."

"Our funding is going to be shrinking. We project next year a \$16 million deficit growing to almost a \$40 million deficit the year after that. And that's primarily due to our pension and health care cost growing well beyond our ability to raise taxes. Taxes are increasing by roughly 2% annually, but our costs have been growing in general by 4.5, 5.5, and 6.2% over the next three years. So, we just cannot keep up. Unless the state changes as well."

"Funding and resources matter. One year a Title 1 school was getting \$270,000 in funding. The next year, that was cut to \$70,000. The difference between those two years was night and day."

### The pain in the community due to the current situation

"Charleston has a history that it needs to overcome. But if I were to speak for today, there's a lot of empty promises that have been given to the community. Things being said—nothing being done. What is the end goal of this process? Different people come in with projects, but nothing changes. Empty hopes. Great idea, but nothing happens. Equality hasn't happened."

"This is almost like trying to climb Mount Everest with no legs and no hands. It is that challenging."

"Our students have family members who were directly murdered at Mother Emanuel. That will forever affect that child for the rest of her life."

"I saw horrible people, horrible people—let alone horrible teachers—moved around and protected by jobs where they had no business being in front of children."

"My whole community, my black community, my church community and my business community: we have had a tough time with just being who we are, telling the truth about what we experience. The oppression we face!"

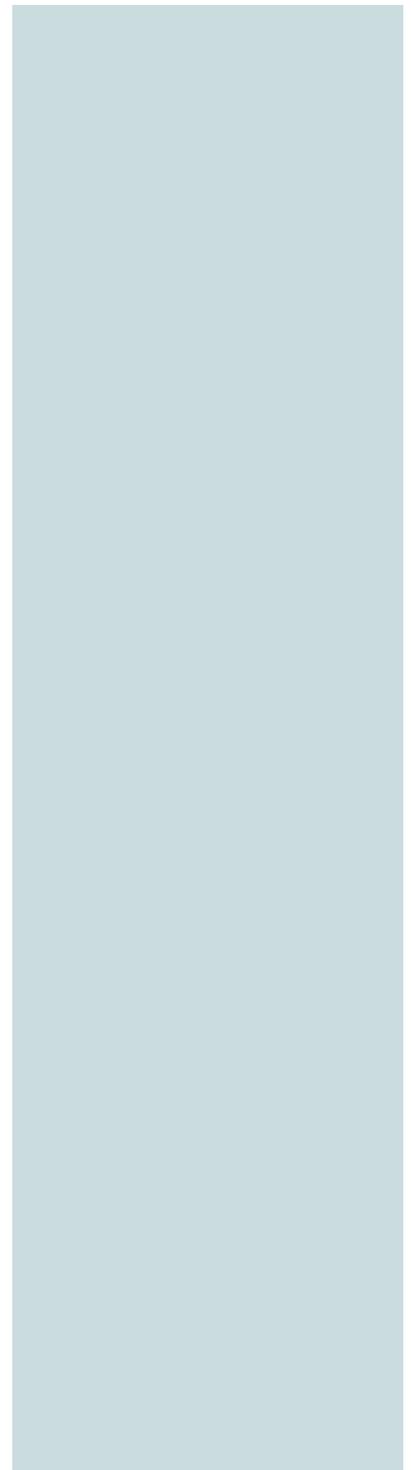
"If we continue on this path, we're back to total segregation. Funding is disproportionate. I can really see this happening. It almost makes you cry. It's so unfair to kids. We turn out adults who are unable to be members of society. The elite become more elite. It's almost immoral. No. It is immoral."

## What lessons from the past should we be paying attention to?

### How we work together matters

"You have to have dialogue and not bludgeon people. You have to be proactive. You cannot shoot people like they are dogs."

"Have to have communities where people will fight for each other when the gauntlet is dropped. If



you cannot embrace people's differences, as a leader you have a problem."

"Being able to bring in people with different perspectives to work together on complex issues has been more effective than trying to figure it out in isolation."

"One of the bright spots in our work has been the coming together of the four school superintendents in the three-county area—from a time when they didn't talk to each other. They meet every month or two, and they have two or three significant areas of collaboration."

"This education concept is everyone's business: business community, municipal government, church, family are all moving parts outside the strength of the school district."

"It would help if the mayors came out strong. If the County Council, if everybody, community leaders came out and said, church leaders came out and said—we've got to do something different and we may not agree on the path there, but we agree that it's worth pursuing a path to get it done even though it might not be the path that I would choose. It's a path where we feel like we can reasonably expect to get to where we want to be in five years. You've got to have everybody come together on it. You can't have people saying that's not my way so I'm not in favor of it."

"People in Charleston don't trust outside groups. You know there's that saying are you a binya or a comeya? And that's very real. And so, I would say we need to develop relationships with one another to fully trust."

"If I held up this sheet of paper and asked you what you were looking at, you'd say a lot of words, writing. If you asked me, I'd say a blank sheet of paper. To know that and always understand that keeps you in the game."

"We cannot ignore the history of Charleston. We need to center those marginalized voices to understand the history culturally."

"Charleston needs honesty. A lot of black people, we know. We know. We need to have really honest conversations until it's uncomfortable. We need to get to the root causes"

"Loving and respecting others matters. If you see something that's wrong, say something. You may not be able to do something about it but you can make a lot of noise about it. Say it like it is."

"Ask us—when this is over, what would you be willing to do? Engage people in the process AFTERwards. Community ownership is essential. We want to see where it's going and what is happening."

## Take heed

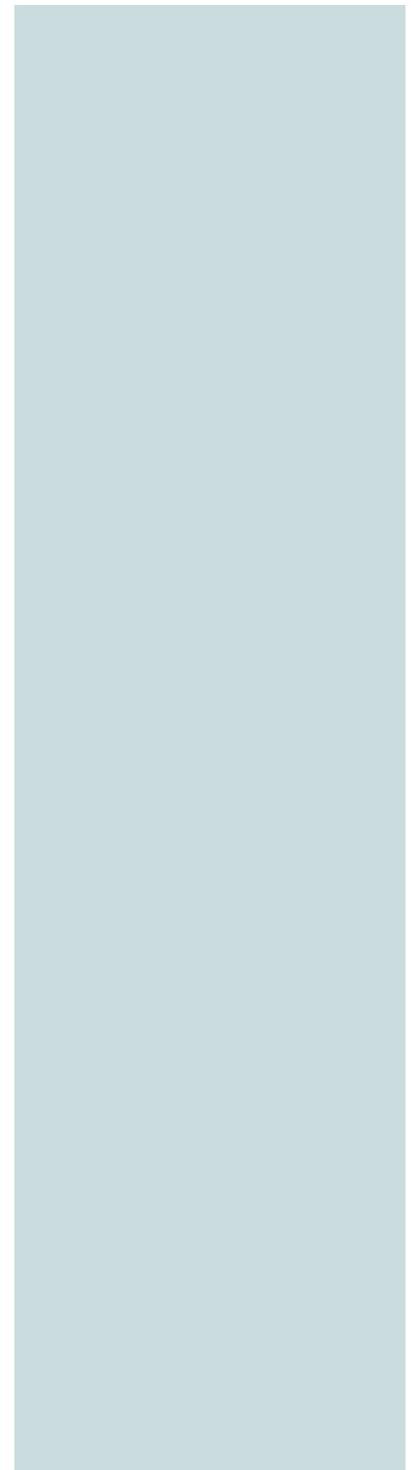
"When you are talking to them about the needs of the community today, they have their answer from 10 or 15 years ago. There have to be some fresh faces with open-minded perspectives. That human capital is that we have to have folks who are willing to be uncomfortable."

"If there is a lesson to be learned from the past, it is that we cannot continue to do what we have been doing. We have to do something different."

"In order to become great, it takes time and practice. Nothing happens overnight. But if you continue to make the same errors and aren't learning from your mistakes, then a different approach needs to be taken."

"I think we have to look at alternative school options. I think we have to do something different."

"We need marginalized people in the process—we need to get rid of people if they don't see



this.”

“Over the last decade we’ve had a lot of initiatives here. Great workshops, great turnout. But implementation falters. So how do we push to implement these things? Mostly we come out with good recommendations, but nothing happens.”

“Communication is terrible. It makes everything worse. They take something good and it becomes horrible.”

“With any attempt to improve education, you gotta understand who those neighborhood groups are and how engaged they are and you better make sure they are part of the conversation because after all you are talking about schools that their neighborhoods are built around. These are formal groups organized and supported by cities. These school board members come from neighborhoods, so they feel that heat from these organizations.”

“Too often we fall short. Too often we start something that’s great.. And we allow the naysayers to convince us that it’s not so great. And we just back away from it because we don’t want to deal with the community challenge instead of fighting for something that you believe is good. If you didn’t believe it was good you wouldn’t have started it in the first place. Give it a chance.”

“As a black person I’m tired of explaining it to white people. Don’t underestimate that this isn’t deliberate.”

“The culture in Charleston benefits the white status quo. We’re nice in the South. We say hello and when black people are murdered in a church we line up on the bridge holding hands. Civil disobedience has nothing to do with being nice. Civil disobedience and holding civil servants accountable is necessary. It has to be uncomfortable. The cloud of civility and comfort that keeps marginalized voices silence is a hindrance to any deep systemic change.

## What questions are we asking about the future?

### Will we overcome racial inequality?

“Will Charleston County ever overcome its racial, class, economic segregation in neighborhood schools?”

“Would we in fact have an integrated school system in Charleston County, integrated along the lines of race, along the lines of socio-economic backgrounds?”

“How can we create schools that don’t segregate kids?”

“I want to know whether the underlying institutional, mostly implicit racial inequity, in this district, and many others, will be overcome by this superintendent or her successors?”

“When will schools fully be integrated?”

“Will the schools have diversity among the faculty?”

“Is Charleston County ever going to get to a place where race and socioeconomics does not determine whether a child gets a quality education?”

“Will Charleston County continue to segregate our schools in the future? Will it continue to get worse?”



“When will the access to opportunities be equalized and what will that look like?”

“Will the school buildings and funding for the schools become more equitable?”

### **Will we be able to collaborate and change?**

“Will there be change? Or will we continue to educate our children at the rate we’re doing it now?”

“If the change has not been made, what can we do now to make a difference?”

“When are we going to wake up as adults and create schools that work for all students and parents?”

“To what extent will there be collaboration amongst the adults who have responsibility for student outcomes in terms of being able to focus on those outcomes vs some of the adult issues that we tend to deal with?”

“What can we do for people in education in the community to more quickly accept the change that needs to happen?”

### **What role will the Boards play?**

“What does the Board believe their role is to improve the learning outcomes of Charleston students?”

“What do they understand about governance?”

“What is the role of the community in putting pressure on those Board members?”

“What are School Board members and superintendents doing to challenge those other important partners to help improve the education process of our students?”

### **How can we ensure all kids receive good quality education?**

“Would there in the future be a high-quality public education for all students?”

“Will there be a comprehensive curriculum that includes vocational and academic and idealistic, moralistic values components—like the civics class?”

“How do you take something like the Academic Magnet School and make it available to every single kid in the district without lowering its standards?”

“What programs can we put in place so that 3rd graders are reading at grade level?”

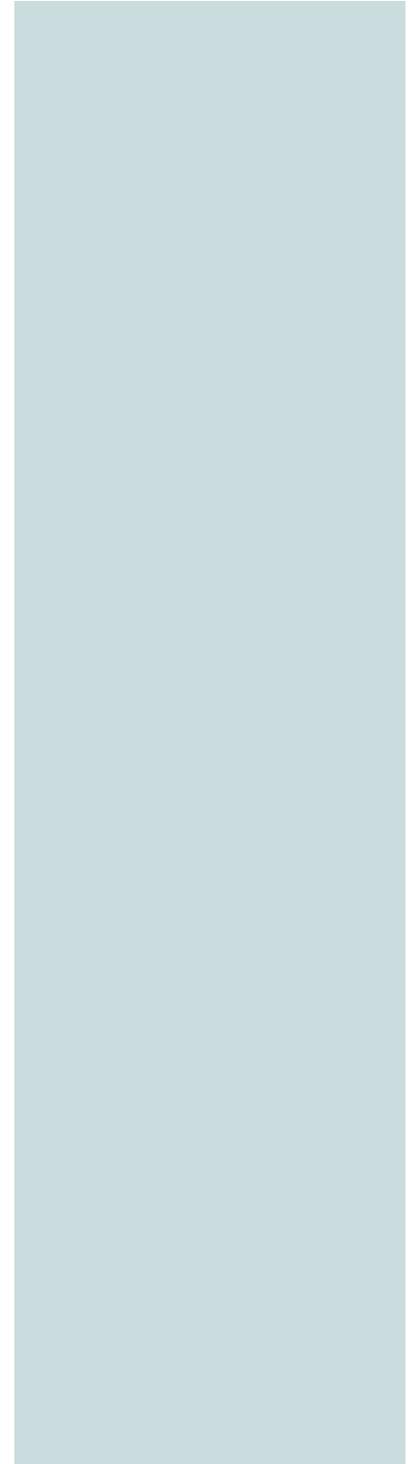
“Are we ever going to get to a place where our standards are held across the board?”

“How can we improve the work of teachers and teaching and learning in Charleston County?”

### **How can we close the achievement gap?**

“What is the most effective way to close the achievement gap between rich and poor, black and white in Charleston County?”

“Did our achievement gap decrease in the future?”



"Will the achievement gap between children of color and white children disappear so that we have all children achieving at a successful level?"

### **How do we prepare our students for the jobs and needs of our community?**

"What can we do to make sure our graduates are prepared for the jobs and demands of our community?"

"What are the most effective ways to bring the students in Charleston county into productive careers and satisfying lives?"

"Have we sampled the employment marketplace to see where we're going industry-wise and whether or not we are preparing our students for where industry and the economy of the local area is going?"

"How to better prepare for career, not just college. How to remove stereotypes?"

"Are all students leaving us college or career ready?"

### **How do we best support our schools, teachers, and principals?**

"When will teachers, students, staff and all human capital have access to the same resources?"

"What support services do we need for our high poverty schools?"

"Will the school be supported fairly and not with lip service by the administration?"

"Will we provide an equal level of support for all teachers?"

"How do I attract the principals and teachers that can extract that desire from every student?"

"What kinds of people will be needed in that new education system?"

## **What possible futures can we envisage?**

### **The Board pulls in the same direction**

"The School Board would have regained credibility with the community."

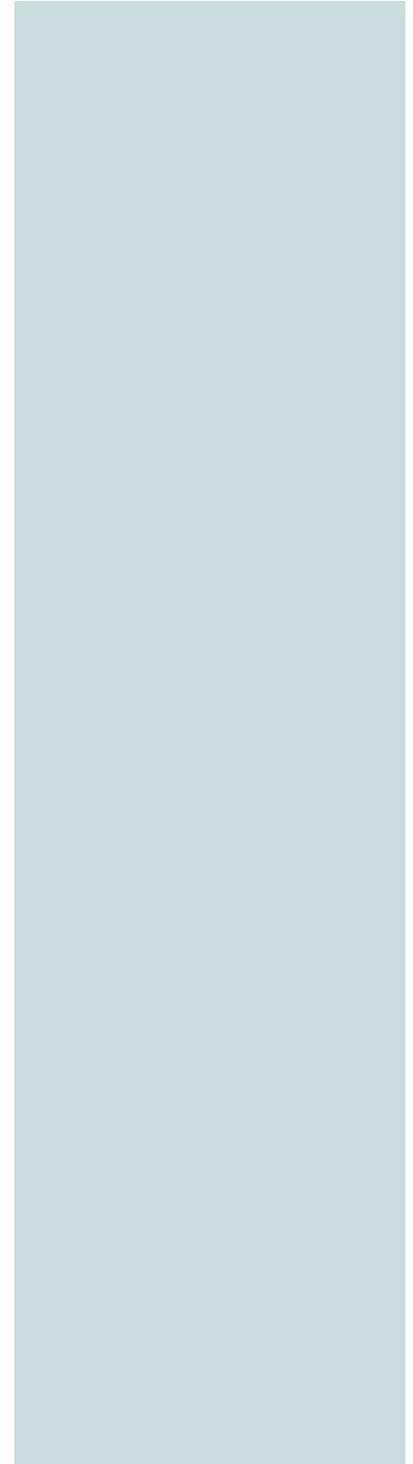
"Board members would have been removed who weren't with the program. We need nine people all pulling the boat in the same direction."

"The superintendent would have been given total autonomy to get the job done. We are staying out of her way and holding her accountable to get the job done."

### **The Board becomes more political and conflict continues**

"I would continue to see a School Board and a school district administration that rarely are aligned on the same path of student outcomes."

"The school board for the County will be as much or more political and incompetent as fiduciaries as they are today. Surrounding community will have joined the parents on the peninsula in their hopelessness for the future of those kids."



## The community works together for a common goal

"This community in its entirety, leadership, grass tops, grass roots had taken responsibility for the education of our children here as if they were their own. That institutions and individuals had been working to align themselves around education attainment and equity for children."

"A better future would be people working together because of the need to support kids vs whatever other political agendas may be out there."

"We might have different ways from getting from Point A to Point B, but we are all about getting to point B. You have to listen to each other. And take the best of both worlds."

"Let's work on the commonality and work on the differences. Not you are right or I'm right, but what's best for the community."

"To a great extent there would be a diminishment of the troubling way that the adults that run the system of education work together."

"To me, it isn't necessarily everybody having good will and warm feelings toward everybody else, but it is people understanding the pragmatics of what a successful society looks like. And what the real costs are of the kind of society we have created are."

"I would see a truly engaged community that is excited about the education of all children, that resists creating lines or barriers between public education and private, charter and public, magnet and non-magnet wherever a child sits regardless of where that classroom is, this community embraces wholeheartedly the education of the child."

## Crime increases in our community

"A bad future would be that we keep seeing kids increasing the pipeline to prison."

"Crime would be really high here."

"Our kids are getting a hold of guns. They're not going to school, they're not being successful. So, if we keep making some of the choices that we do with segregating and not intervening early enough that's what I see. We're going to have more of that."

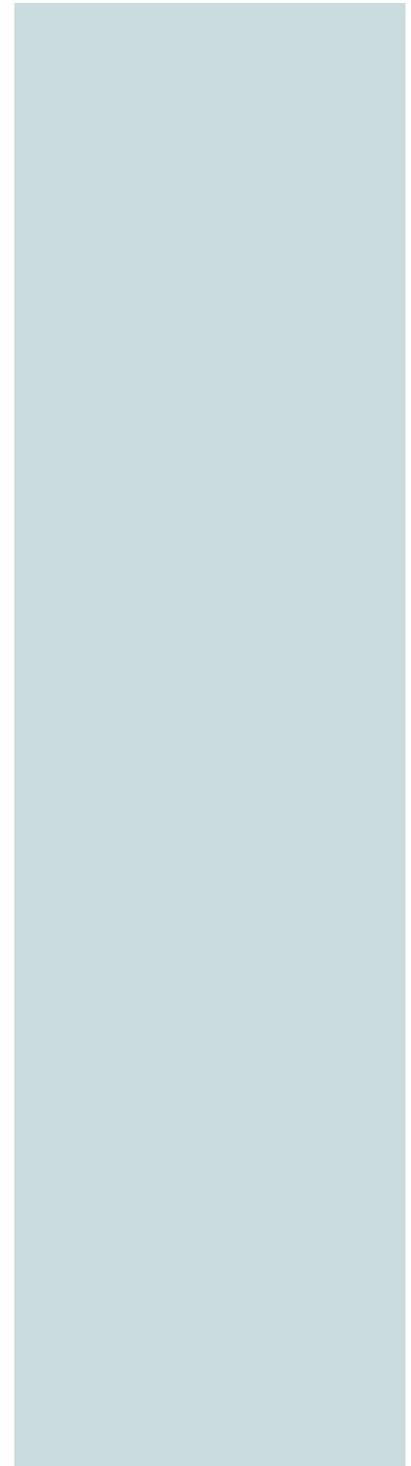
"Teenagers getting shot, getting involved in activities such as crime and drugs. They have nothing positive to look forward to, no aspirations. More young people without a future turning to things that are not positive. I don't want that. Students need positive influence to strive and to realize their God-given potential."

"I would say that things would just stay the same. They would continue how they're continuing. We are failing kids. And we are failing them worse every year. Our kids are dying, our families are dying. This is a very violent place."

## Our community is thriving

"All the schools will be integrated, and resources and funding will be distributed equitably. We have top-notch teachers in all schools and students would attend schools with kids who don't look like them and that would be so powerful."

"We'd have teachers that are paid fairly and sufficiently to live comfortably in the community. We'd have a school board that knew their role and could bring better leadership in that could then bring about better opportunities for all children."



"We realize that the foundation of a strong local economy, a high level quality of life, addressing affordability in terms of housing and income earnings all rest on the quality of education system of a city, county, state."

"We will have changed the hearts and minds of the people in power. And changing someone's heart is really tough."

### **Our kids are not getting the necessary skills through their education**

"That we keep producing kids that don't have the skills to work or to even be successful in college because most college students now need to take remedial classes while they're in college because they're not even ready for college."

"More students aren't going to graduate. Job opportunities will come but based on our graduation rates, our children won't be able to do those jobs because their education level is so low."

There wouldn't be a Charleston. It would become a ghost town. Education affects everything—economy, opportunity, politics. It becomes a city that is overrun by people not from here.

### **Education is being supported and improving**

"The community would see increased and improved retention and graduation in schools."

"The kids that were once a product of ours who are now making the decisions in America by breaking the barriers in America because you know they can."

"I see many young kids going to school and starting their own business."

"More activities, more people getting involved in school, advanced technology. More opportunity to do what you like. There are so many classes we don't have. More variety."

"Every school had access to an amazing student support team. The mental health and wellness of children is taken care of. There would be well-equipped, well informed guidance counselors and therapists, and speech pathologists, and occupational therapists and every school had them. A full mental health suite."

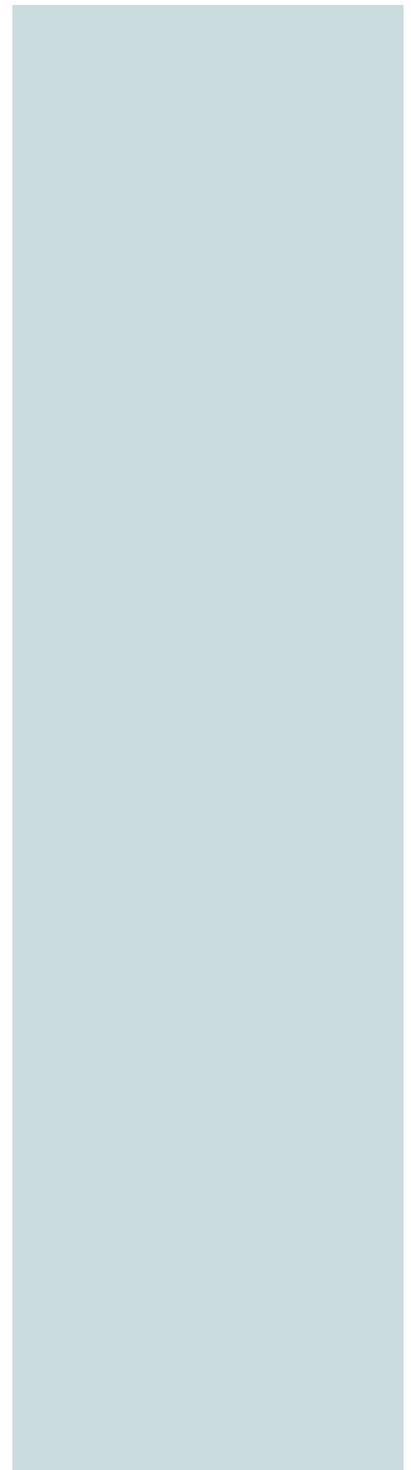
### **We do not solve our racial or equity issues**

"A clear line of demarcation between the haves and the have nots. We would continue to operate with this corridor of shame. We would continue to have the gap of kids who are from poverty or of color underperforming their peers."

"We would continue to have families that want to only buy property in certain areas so their kids can only go to schools in certain areas."

"Disparity will grow or be stagnant. Schools in Charleston County on the peninsula will be increasingly re-segregated."

]"I would continue to see that whether the administration that is led by a superintendent who is white or by African American or another race other than white, that continuation of mean spiritedness and being driven more about opposition to a person's background vs a person's ability to perform to the levels that are expected."



"Our children would not have the opportunity to experience that and the community would still be divided along racial and economic lines and around those geographical boundaries that produce those types of results."

"We would continue to see a divided society. In Charleston, the economic growth has been tremendous, unlike other places I have lived and the opportunities in Charleston are tremendous. If our kids are not prepared for this, they will not be able to participate in those opportunities."

### **We are able to solve our racial and equity issues**

"You will have a combination of all races and genders. That is what America is all about. At my school now, we have majority white teachers."

"I have seen, in some instances, where people who are from different racial background with different political views have, in State of South Carolina been able to come together to work for some common cause."

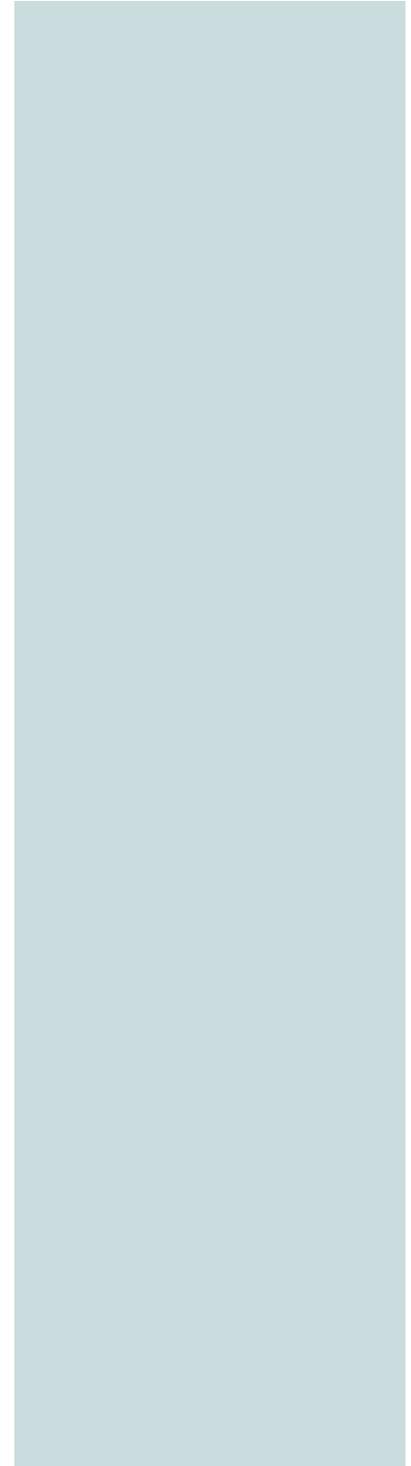
"Knowing the real history of Charleston, the real history of slavery, knowing the real history of what we have done to systematically oppress black people in this country, knowing the advantages we as white people have."

"An environment where kids are able to relate to one each other, not on their basis of their race, but on other common interests."

"Equality in schools. Equality in our education system. Until we can teach our children as equals when it comes to their race. A child shouldn't get an education based on their zip code."

"All of our facilities would look the same. You would look at a school building and not know if there were poor children inside or if there were affluent children inside. All of our teachers would have the same guidelines for what they were expected to be teaching to the students that were in the building."

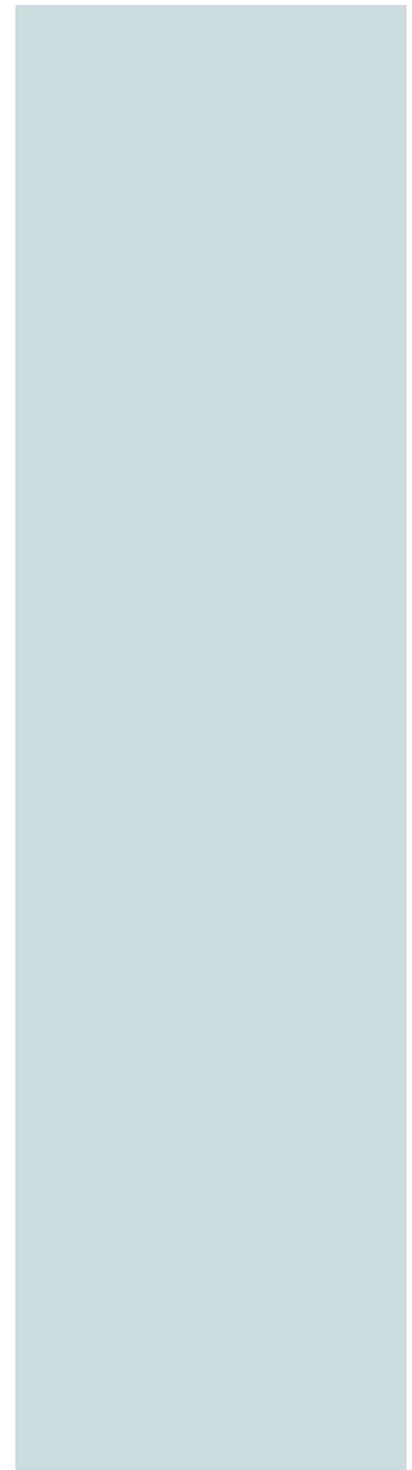
"Kids, 12-13 years from now, those kids, upon graduating from high school, would be on a trajectory to eliminate generational poverty within their communities. They would have the skills and the abilities to be able to engage in the world in such a way that they would not, for their families, their offspring, bring them into a life of poverty."



## What would constitute success or failure of this project?



What would success look like?	What would failure look like?
<p>Having an action plan</p> <p>“That Charleston County has an action plan that they are going to implement to make Charleston County schools equitable, to make the education that kids receive equitable, and to make sure that we are really graduating students that are college and career ready across the board.”</p>	<p>Nothing happens</p> <p>“Failure would be that nothing happens with the scenarios. The system would be so resistant to change that the scenarios just get discarded. The system won’t allow change to happen. It is a strong system, very strong, very strong.”</p> <p>“The only thing that would be failure is if we do nothing.”</p>
<p>Having a conversation about the issues</p> <p>“I think getting all of those people in the same room together working on something, just in and of itself would be success, because right now we’re pulling from so many different resources and we’re having a lot of the same conversations with each other and not working together. It would just be great if we can work together, period.”</p>	<p>Not speaking again</p> <p>“If we left the last meeting and never spoke again. If we forgot what we learned from one another.”</p>
<p>Having funding for a path forward</p> <p>“Success would be if we could have a path forward approved by the board and then funded.”</p>	<p>That this becomes just another report</p> <p>“Nothing would have changed. The report we are producing would be put on a shelf and used for talking points.”</p>
<p>Creating hope for the community</p> <p>“Success coming out of the scenario planning process would be that in Jan/Feb we have enough hope, enough energy.”</p>	<p>Creating false hope</p> <p>“Failure is if we continue to give our community false hope.”</p>
<p>Seeing significant progress</p> <p>“Success for me would be that we actually got better in Charleston County. We could see some significant improvement in third grade math and reading. We could see some significant improvements in eighth grade math and reading. We can see some serious improvements in kindergarten readiness that we could see that achievement gap closing.”</p>	<p>That things continue to get worse</p> <p>“Failure would be if it continues to get worse. For four years: that report has come out, and every year it looks worse.”</p>



What would success look like?	What would failure look like?
<p>Having a unified vision</p> <p>“A clear shared vision. Maybe not an agreed upon vision but one that we can agree to buy into and support and work toward.”</p>	<p>Not having consensus</p> <p>“Producing something that has no traction inside the building below the superintendent. A group of people who aren’t well facilitated and don’t get to a scenario plan that is viable and doesn’t have consensus support of the broader community and the potential for a process like this to go on and on and just peter out like other processes before.”</p>
<p>Having people ready to move forward</p> <p>“It is vitally important that we improve our system, irrespective of racism. We need to begin to employ people who can move past that.”</p>	<p>Continue resisting change</p> <p>“Same old, same old.”</p>
<p>Having the community support this project</p> <p>“Having people understand that this is not a CCSD-owned project and that it is owned by the community.”</p>	<p>Not working together</p> <p>“Continuing to not get along.”</p>



## Dialogue Interviewees

- |                        |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Craig Ascue            | Natasha Jefferson  |
| Jennifer Baez          | Don Kennedy        |
| Zaniyah Bennett        | Kathleen King      |
| Barney Blakeney        | Gregory Ladewski   |
| Vanessa Brown          | Linnard McCloud    |
| Stephen Copher-Shabica | Michael Miller     |
| Vanessa Denney         | Bill Moody         |
| Michelle Faust         | John Read          |
| Kyra Freeman           | Benny Starr        |
| Todd Garrett           | John Steinberger   |
| Sully Gholson          | Maurice Washington |
| Lee Gill               | Fran Welch         |

## Reos/Staff Team

- LeAnne Grillo
- Adam Kahane
- Gerardo Marquez
- Jacque McLemore
- Christel Scholten
- Portia Stoney

