

# Focus ON CCSD

News for, by and about Charleston County School District,  
the state of South Carolina's premier school district where *Students are the Heart of Our Work.*

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## Superintendent Gerrita Postlewait: It's Time to Bring Equity to Charleston County Schools

Charleston County for too long has accepted a school system where half of all students — mostly black and Hispanic children and those living in poverty — fail to thrive, and it's time to make the dramatic systemic changes required to turn that around, Superintendent Gerrita Postlewait told members of the Historic Rotary Club of Charleston.

Postlewait began her Nov. 28 talk with some startling facts about the Charleston County public schools. “We have schools in Charleston County that rate among the top nationally, and we have schools in Charleston County that are the worst performing schools in the state. That represents a system failure”, she said. “There is a time for plain speaking,” she said. And for her, that time is now.

There are five CCSD schools where fewer than 8 percent of students read at grade-level, she said. “And in those schools, there is a terrible over-representation of children of color and poverty.”

Everyone employed by the district is working hard, including teachers, principals and people who work in the district office. “But we’re not getting the job done for half of our children. That’s a classic definition of a systems failure,” she said.

The roots of the inequity can be traced back at least to the 1800s, when the state of South Carolina passed a law that

made it illegal to educate black people. That tragic and painful legacy was built into the state’s education system and still is present today. And it manifests in the system in myriad ways.

First, there simply are not enough experienced teachers working in schools with a high percentage of children of color and those from lower-income families. The district’s greatest challenges are found in those schools, and it needs to steer its top talent to them to meet those challenges. “We need to learn to spot teachers who take children who are below grade-level and move them more than a year in a year,” Postlewait said. That’s the only way children who have fallen behind academically can catch up and then get ahead. And the district needs to offer incentives to great teachers who work in its most challenging schools.

The district also must find and celebrate excellent principals and other leaders. “Teachers will come to work for great leaders,” she said.

And finally, the district must develop a pipeline to create a continuous flow of talented people into the system. One of the main drawbacks to this is the rate at which the district pays teachers, she said. Now, a starting CCSD teacher makes about \$36,000. But other school districts that recruit teachers in the same places as CCSD pay beginning teachers as much

as \$51,000. Postlewait wants starting pay for Charleston County teachers to be bumped up to at least \$40,000. Better pay is essential to attracting top teachers in today’s teacher shortage. But, she said, it will cost the district about \$20 million to increase teacher salaries. — *continued on page 4*



*“We have schools in Charleston County that rate among the top nationally, and we have schools in Charleston County that are the worst performing schools in the state. That represents a system failure. There is a time for plain speaking.”*

GERRITA POSTLEWAIT  
SUPERINTENDENT

## GRADUATES FIGHTING TO PRESERVE THE HISTORY OF THE LAING SCHOOL



*“If we don’t tell our story, someone will tell his story.”*

MARTHA PEARL VANDERHORST ASCUE, A MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATION AND A 1963 GRADUATE OF LAING.

Drive down U.S. Highway 17 past the intersection of Six Mile Road and you will see the old Laing School building. It looks like any other old, empty school building, and soon it will be demolished to make way for a new Home Depot in the rapidly gentrifying section of Mount Pleasant.

But members of the Laing School Association want everybody to know it’s not an ordinary school building. And they want to make sure that the story, memories and significance of the Laing School, which originally opened to serve freed black students in a charred church in the town’s Old Village just months after the end of the Civil War, doesn’t get swept away with rubble. It’s their story and they want it told in their voices. “If we don’t tell our story, someone will tell his story,” said Martha Pearl Vanderhorst Ascue, a member of the association and a 1963 graduate of Laing.

The Six-Mile site, which was one of several Laing School sites, opened in 1953 to serve black seventh- through 12th-grade students, said Dorothy Elizabeth Fludd. Fludd is a 1955 graduate, one of the first black librarians hired at the College of Charleston and the association’s historian. Seventeen high school classes graduated from Laing. In the early 1970s, the building briefly served as an eighth-grade campus for the newly opened Wando High School, and then reopened in 1974 as Laing Middle School. — *continued on page 3*

## Expanded Technical and Career Education Headed to North Charleston

### THE NEW NORTH CHARLESTON CENTER FOR ADVANCED STUDIES OPENS IN 2020.

**The new model will benefit students because the larger training center, which serves more schools, can offer more technical programs.**

When the new North Charleston Center for Advanced Studies opens in 2020, students from all North Charleston High Schools will have the opportunity to learn skills that will give them an edge when it comes to landing jobs in the Lowcountry’s growing economy.

The school board in November voted in favor of building the \$43.7 million career training facility across East Montague Avenue from North Charleston High School, on the site of Attaway-Heinsohn Stadium. When it’s done, students from all North Charleston High Schools — including Stall, North Charleston and Military Magnet — can take classes in the fields of health science technologies,

information technology, pre-engineering, and arts and audio visual technologies.

The new Center for Advanced Studies (CAS) model represents a departure from the traditional technical school model, where students take both their academic and trade courses at one school. When the new center opens, all students will have a home high school. But those who are interested will take courses or participate in training programs for part of the day at the CAS.

The new model will benefit students because the larger training center, which serves more schools, can offer more technical programs. The model also will benefit existing high schools by bringing in more students so they also can expand offerings for students who attend them.

Charleston County voters approved funding for the North Charleston CAS, and another one in West Ashley, in the 2014 penny sales tax referendum. A center is already open on the Wando High School campus in Mount Pleasant.

The decision on the North Charleston center site came after months of discussion on the best location. The board on Nov. 2 voted 7-2 in favor of the North Charleston High site. District officials initially recommended that site because it was centrally located and there was space available to build the facility. Board members Rev. Chris Collins and Michael Miller were opposed. — *continued on page 4*

## School Board Approves CCSD’s Strategic Plan

**Question:** What is a strategic plan and why should it matter to me?

**Answer:** The South Carolina Department of Education requires all school districts to submit a strategic plan every five years, and to update that plan every year. The Charleston County School Board in December gave final approval to CCSD’s plan, which included gathering input from teachers and other district staff, parents and community leaders. The plan details the district’s goals for students and the organization, and provides a framework for how it will achieve them. While some elements of the plan are very detailed and might seem like “inside baseball,” others will directly impact what goes on in the district’s classrooms. Essentially, the plan provides the big picture for the kind of learning experiences the district wants to provide and the steps it will take to ensure it can provide them.

**Q:** According to the plan, what are the district’s goals for the next five years?

**A:** The district will:

- Maximize academic achievement and ensure every student is career, college and citizenship ready.
- Provide learning opportunities that allow every student to develop and demonstrate talents, interests and modern workplace skills.
- Ensure a safe, supportive and inclusive environment for every student and adult in the system.
- Implement a pipeline that recruits, supports, retains and rewards talented teachers, principals and staff for every school.
- Align resources to address student needs.
- Engage in continuous progress processes to create system effectiveness in meeting student needs.
- Communicate student progress. Seek feedback and cultivate family and community partnerships to ensure success for every student.
- Address local priorities to provide systemwide equity. — *continued on page 4*

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# New Diversity Plan for Academic Magnet High School

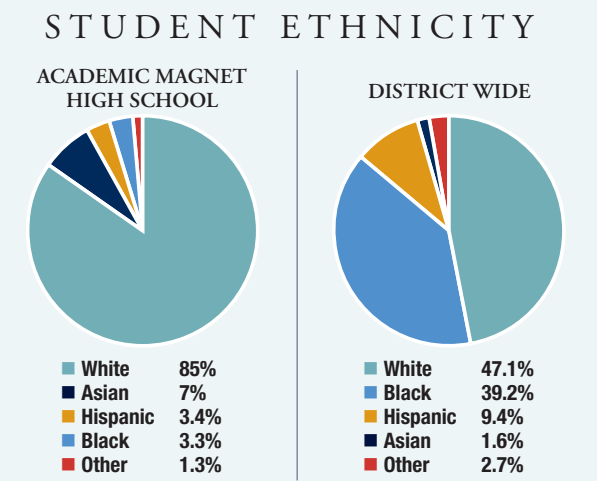


Academic Magnet High School every year is ranked one of the best public schools in America, but when it comes to the diversity of its student body, the school needs improvement.

The Charleston County school board in October voted in favor of a plan aimed at increasing the number of minority students, especially black students, admitted to the school. This year, about 85 percent of the students enrolled at the school in North Charleston are white, 7 percent are Asian, 3.4 percent are Hispanic, 3.3 percent are black and 1.3 percent are of another race. That's in stark contrast to the overall racial make-up of students in the school district which is: 47.1 percent white, 39.2 percent black, 9.4 percent Hispanic, 1.6 percent Asian and 2.7 percent other.

The school board in January 2017 approved a plan to increase diversity in the 2017-2018, which included guaranteed acceptance to Academic Magnet for the top two eighth-grade students in all of the district's schools and programs who met the minimum requirements for acceptance. Those requirements include getting a score of 13 or more on a 15-point rubric based on grades, test scores, a writing sample and teacher recommendations.

But that plan had less than impressive results. For instance, it brought in only nine more black students. Judith Peterson, Academic Magnet's former principal, told the school board



that all nine of those students are doing well this year.

The new plan for the ninth-grade class in the 2018-2019 school year again includes identifying the top two eighth-graders in all of the district's schools and programs. Those who score 13 or higher on the rubric will automatically be accepted at Academic Magnet. And those who score between 12.0 and

12.99 will be invited to attend a series of spring and summer workshops designed to strengthen academic skills and plan for successful enrollment at the school. Students who complete the workshop series and demonstrate the skills, work ethic and motivations that are likely indicators of success at Academic Magnet will be enrolled.

The school board approved the new plan with a 4-2 vote. Rev. Chris Collins and Chris Staubes were opposed.

Collins wanted more students — perhaps even the top five from each eighth-grade school or program — admitted.

Staubes said he was concerned because the average score on the rubric for students currently enrolled at Academic Magnet is 14.2. That means that some students who are among the top two at some schools will be enrolled, even if there are other students who score higher on the rubric but who are not one of the top two students at their schools.

School district attorney Natalie Ham told school board members that the new plan would pass legal muster because it will be applied equally and consistently among all students at all schools.

District officials said they expect this change to result in at least two students from each district middle school and kindergarten through eighth-grade program to be enrolled as freshmen at Academic Magnet in the 2018-2019 school year.

# Students get Hooked on Guitars from the First Chord



*“Every single being on the planet is endowed with the ability to create music. This is an extension of your heart.”*

DANIELLE HOWLE  
ARTIST IN RESIDENCE AT AWENDAW GREEN

**What do you get when you mix a group of enthusiastic middle-schoolers, a bunch of new guitars and a nationally known recording artist?**  
*You get an afterschool program that rocks.*

Eleven students from St. James-Santee Elementary-Middle School in McClellanville had their first guitar lesson in November, and they were totally focused on the instruments despite the lesson coming at the end of a long school day. Danielle Howle, artist in residence at Awendaw Green, who recently released a new CD, spent the first class teaching the children to connect with their instruments, tune them and strum a chord. “Every single being on the planet is endowed with the ability to create music,” she told the group. “This is an extension of your heart.”

Students at St. James-Santee weighed in on which musical instrument they would like to learn to play, and they overwhelmingly chose the guitar, said Ashley Peters, a program officer for the district's Department of Expanded Learning.

She said her department is using a portion of a federal 21st Century Grant to run the program. The four-year, \$700,000 grant is meant to bring after-school opportunities to students in rural schools that have a large percentage of lower-income students. Grant funds also are covering the cost of transporting students. That's especially important in rural schools, because many parents must rely on the school bus to bring their children home at the end of the day. If the grant didn't provide transportation, many students couldn't participate in after-school programs. “Kids in rural areas might not have the opportunity to do these things,” Peters said.

Seventh-grader Destiny Green said she's excited about learning to play the guitar, and she hopes someday to be able to play *This Little Light of Mine*, one of her favorite songs. “I love music,” she said.

Kerry Hayes, another seventh-grader, said he likes the sound a guitar makes. And he hopes he eventually can learn to play a hip-hop song.

Stefani Timmerman, visual arts teacher at St. James-Santee, said the students' first goal is to learn to play R. Kelly's *I Believe I Can Fly*. She hopes that by the spring, they can play that song for the school board.

Timmerman, a song writer who also plays the guitar, is working with Howle in the after-school program. She said music simply is another good vehicle to help students learn, and many students are receptive to it. They relate well to music because they hear it a lot in their homes and churches, she said.

For instance, her students recently were studying artist Romare Bearden, who is widely known for his work in collages. In addition to drawing and painting, the lessons include writing and recording songs. The music component helps the students engage in learning, she said.

The school now has 22 guitars, which were purchased by the grant, Timmerman said. In addition to using them in the after-school program, she keeps some in her classroom and uses them with younger students.

Timmerman hopes that someday soon the school will have enough guitars so students who are learning to play can take them home to practice. For now, the instruments have to remain at the school. She thinks the students would be even more excited about music if they could bring the instruments home. “There's just something about holding a guitar.”

# ENGAGING PARENTS IN TITLE I SCHOOLS

When Maria Sanchez picked up her children at the end of the school day last year, her attention usually was focused on the next thing on her to-do list.

But now, she asks them about what they did in school and what their day was like. “It makes them feel important,” Sanchez said. And it tells them that school is important. While that may not sound like a big change, the impact of it, along with other techniques Sanchez learned in Parenting Partners workshops sponsored by the Charleston County School District, has been dramatic in her family.

The Parenting Partners program is one of the ways the district engages parents in their children's education at its Title I schools, which have a high percentage of low-income students, said Rosa Fulmore, the district's Title I Parent and Family Engagement Coordinator. The program workshops cover topics such as: creating confident children, communication that works, creating a structure for achievement, and discipline.

The district also has a Parent Advisory Council — made up of parents, community members and district staff — and it offers regular training for members of the parenting staff who work in many of the district's 49 Title I schools. There is a misconception that district officials recently eliminated parent engagement positions, Fulmore said, but that's not correct. Most schools have a parent engagement staff member. But some schools decided to spend their federal Title I dollars on other priorities, she said.

Getting parents involved is important, Fulmore said. “Parents are a child's first teacher,” and, she added, “the more parents are involved, the better kids do in school. It's a direct correlation.”

Sanchez said she learned a lot in the Parenting Partners workshops last year, and she would recommend them to other parents. One of the best things she now does as a result of attending the workshops, she said, is that she allows her children to use the phone only between 6 and 8 p.m. They had been glued to their phones, she said. Now, they get done what they need to get done. And, the rule has brought her closer to her seven children, especially the older ones, who are in middle school. “Now they come into the kitchen and talk to me,” she said.

She also has learned to be a more consistent parent, she said. In the past, she had taken the phone away from her children, but she often gave in and gave it back to them quickly. Now, she sticks to the rule that her children can use the phone only between 6 and 8 p.m., she said. If it's 5:50 p.m., they wouldn't think of asking to use the phone, she said.

Fulmore, who has been with the district for the past 17 years, said the Parent Advisory Council serves an important role getting out information to parents of children in Title I schools.

Kim Odom, the group's current chairwoman, said information parents need always has been out there. But it might be printed on a brochure parents don't read or on a website they don't see. Odom, the parent of two daughters who previously attended Title I elementary and middle schools, said she sees the council as “a clearinghouse for parent feedback.”

The group is required to provide certain information, she said, such as how federal funds for Title I schools are being spent. But it also disseminates information on trending topics, she said. For instance, parent-teacher conferences are

coming up, so the group is getting out information about effective communication.

Odom, who has been part of the council for about a decade, said she continues in her volunteer role because the work is important. Parents are the best people to get information to other parents, she said. “Someone reached out to me so I reached out to someone else.”

Fulmore said her office also offers regular training to parent engagement staffers, who are available to parents in most schools. And those staff members help parents find what they need to better support their children. “We need that buy-in from parents.”

For more information, contact Rosa Fulmore at 843-937-6446.



*“Parents are a child's first teacher. The more parents are involved, the better kids do in school. It's a direct correlation.”*

ROSA FULMORE  
CCSD TITLE I PARENT AND FAMILY  
ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR



# CCSD Working Toward Accreditation through AdvancEd

The best way to start making something better is to get very clear about what it’s like now—warts and all. That’s what the Charleston County School District is doing as it prepares for the AdvancEd accreditation process.

District schools, and the district as a whole, now are accredited through the South Carolina Department of Education. But the department also allows districts to seek accreditation through AdvancEd, a regional, external agency with a more rigorous evaluation process. District leaders say landing accreditation through AdvancEd could improve district schools, boost their reputation and allow the district to apply for certain grants it couldn’t apply for in the past. Sixty-three of the state’s more than 80 school districts have earned the accreditation, including several Lowcountry districts: Beaufort, Colleton, Dorchester 2, Dorchester 4 and Hampton 1.

According to the Pew Charitable Trusts, state and regional accreditors often look at different things. Generally, state accreditation is based on schools meeting targets set by the state in areas such as test performance and class size. Regional accreditation, such as AdvancEd, often takes a more holistic approach. Schools are evaluated on a host of factors including school administration, curriculum, facilities and board governance, in addition to student performance.

The district and its schools don’t need to be perfect to land the accreditation from AdvancEd. But they need to demonstrate that they have conducted a detailed analysis of where they are now and have a clear plan for ongoing improvement.

Districts and schools seeking AdvancEd accreditation must produce a self-evaluative report (also known as a School Quality Factors Diagnostic) before the accrediting team’s first visit. The team will be in CCSD schools from Sept. 23-26.

That report will include information gathered from “culture and climate” surveys and inventories completed by students, parents, teachers and other school staff. Information from parents will be gathered online, and will take parents only two or three minutes to complete. Schools will work with parents who don’t have computers at home to help them find ways to complete the surveys.

The report also will include information gathered from classroom observations in the schools. The observations will be conducted using a specific tool aimed at assessing student engagement. Specifically, the observations will consider whether the learning going on in classrooms is equitable, supportive, active, well-managed and includes a digital component.

The final School Quality Factors Diagnostic report, which will be completed by school principals, will analyze where the school falls on seven quality factors:

- **Clear direction:** The district or school can clearly communicate its direction, mission and goals.
- **Healthy culture:** The school creates opportunities in myriad ways for everyone in its community to be successful.
- **High expectations:** The school or district is committed to such expectations for everyone in the school community.
- **Impact of instruction:** Teachers create environments where students are successful and prepared for the next level.
- **Resource management:** The institutions demonstrate that they can plan, secure and allocate resources to meet the needs of every learner.
- **Efficacy of engagement:** District and school staff members demonstrate that they can engage students to improve learning.
- **Implementation capacity:** The district and its schools can consistently execute plans designed to improve effectiveness.

The AdvancEd team won’t visit all schools when it comes to Charleston County in September. And district leaders won’t know which schools will be visited until a few days before the visit, so all schools must be prepared. District leaders expect to learn by Sept. 26 whether the district has earned the accreditation.

## Graduates Fighting to Preserve the History of the Laing School – *continued from page 1*

### SHINING LIKE A BEACON

Ascue in November brought together a group of 20 association members who either graduated from Laing before 1970, when the Charleston County schools fully integrated, or who support the school and its history. Everybody gathered at the Greater Goodwill AME Church that day said the school was the center of their community, and they want its legacy to be preserved.

Thomas L. Goodwater, who graduated from Laing in 1970, said he lived only a two-minute ride from the white Moultrie High School. But he had to take the bus seven miles to Laing. And he remembers Moultrie students “bombing the bus” with bricks, rocks or whatever they could find along the road. “You never forget that,” Goodwater said. But that’s his motivation for getting involved in the association, he said. “It’s about making something constructive and positive out of all that.”

Ruth Frederica Richardson Jenkins, a 1959 graduate, said the school and community were intertwined and everybody kept an eye on the children and teenagers. “If you got in trouble — and there were no phones back then — somehow, when you got home, the message was there.”

All of the graduates said Laing was like a family. They not only learned about academic subjects and trades, but about morals and values as well. June Gilliard Dupree, who graduated in 1959, said, “Laing was a loving school. We had a lot of respect. No violence. No hatred.”

Willie Thompson Jr., who graduated in 1953, said, “At Laing, you stood at attention because you were somebody.” He also noted that he had many male teachers, in contrast to today where the majority of teachers are female. “We shined like a beacon,” he said.

### FEW RESOURCES, MUCH SUCCESS

Thompson was in the last class to graduate from the Laing School building near the intersection of King Street and Royall Avenue in Mount Pleasant. He said all of the students there were poor. And the school’s furnishings and books were hand-me-downs from the all-white Moultrie High School. “The books I read came from Moultrie and the seat I sat in came from Moultrie,” he said. But there was a sense of pride at Laing despite the students having to use second-hand materials, he said.

Charlotte Ascue Jenkins, who graduated in 1962, said she was inspired by her home economics teacher, but she wasn’t able to do anything in that field immediately after graduation. In 1962, the only work available to her in the Charleston area was housekeeping jobs that paid about \$15 per week. So she went to New York after graduation and stayed there for 15 years working as a doctor’s assistant. But she still carried a dream inspired by her home economics teacher.

So she came back and opened a catering business with her husband. Then they opened the popular Gullah Cuisine restaurant, which closed in 2014. She also is co-author of the cookbook “Gullah Cuisine: By Land and By Sea.”

“By the grace of God we were able to make it,” Jenkins said. “If we would have had resources, we would have done even better.”

All of the students gathered at Greater Goodwill AME had stories of success. Many excelled in the military, business, education and various other fields.

Roberta Huger Pinckney, from the Class of 1964, said her family was very poor. “I had to go through 10th grade without books,” she said. She had to borrow them from her cousins and friends when they weren’t using them.

But Laing gave her the foundation to do well. She was the only female in her class to pass an exam that would have allowed her to join the U.S. Air Force, she said. But she decided to attend college instead. And she retired as the chief executive officer of a local community health center. “We all excelled using second-, third- and fourth-hand books,” she said, and she attributes her success to Laing and her community.

Pinckney and many of the other Laing graduates said they wished the school district would have continued using the Six-Mile site for some kind of school. “Moultrie High School students can go back on the grounds. We have nothing,” she said.

### ONE HAND TIED

Michael Allen, a community partnership specialist for the National Park Service, which recently opened a Reconstruction Era National Monument in Beaufort County, said the students who attended the segregated Laing School entered the world with “one hand tied” behind their backs. But they accomplished a great deal, Allen said. “Imagine what they could have done with both hands.”

Allen, who grew up in Kingstree, is a supporter of the Laing School even though he never was a student there. He said the school is an important institution because it started during Reconstruction and has operated continuously. Reconstruction was about the transition from slavery to freedom, he said, and it also was about integrating African Americans into social, political, economic and labor systems. “Education is seen as the key vehicle for that transition.” And Reconstruction-era sites such as Laing, the Penn Center on St. Helena Island, the Avery Research Institute at the College of Charleston and Claflin University in Orangeburg must be preserved.

“And now it’s incumbent upon our school system to communicate this,” he said. When people drive past Laing’s Six-Mile site, they should honor and respect it, he said, especially those who were complicit in it being segregated and not receiving equal and sufficient resources. “This is in the

DNA of Charleston County and the Charleston County School District,” Allen said.

### INTEGRATION

The process of integrating schools in South Carolina, including the Laing School, was a slow one. Starting in 1965, select Laing students who had their family’s support began attending the white Moultrie High School. It was a lonely, often brutal process, but the students who volunteered to go to Moultrie said simply that somebody had to do it. Somebody had to be first.

Joanne Wright Howard was an active and involved student at Laing in 1965, when she agreed to be one of the first black students to enroll at Moultrie. She was a majorette, a cheerleader and she played basketball. “Some people were encouraged to go first,” she said, and she was one of them. “I sacrificed,” she said. “I went to a place I had never been. People didn’t want us there. They held their noses.”

She graduated from Moultrie in 1967, but she didn’t feel like she was part of either school. It was a lonely, sometimes frightening experience.

Alifax Wright Edwards left Laing for Moultrie as a freshman in 1965, after spending the previous few years at Laing. At the time, Laing served seventh- through 12th graders. “They didn’t want us (at Moultrie), even the teachers,” she said. They separated the black students from the rest of class and called them names, she said.

Lester W. Capers, who also graduated from Moultrie in 1967, was one of the first young black men to enroll there. He also said racist teachers made his years there difficult. And he was shocked by the new books and other resources he had access to as a Moultrie student. “I saw how much we were denied at Laing.”

Almost all of the Laing graduates have been volunteer tutors at some time during their adult lives, but they have done little at the new Laing Middle School of Science and Technology , Ascue said. The association is trying to form a strong Laing Leaders of Tomorrow group to tutor minority students. But few black students attend Laing Middle School of Science and Technology, a partial magnet school.

The association members also would like to see the history of Laing taught at the new middle school and for the school’s history to somehow be featured more prominently, she said.

And they hope the historical marker that Home Depot agreed to put on the Six-Mile site is enough for it to be remembered. Ascue said she also expects there to be a photograph of the school inside the store, and the names of the students who integrated Moultrie High school to be displayed somewhere on the site. “We have to keep the legacy alive.”

## LAING SCHOOL TIMELINE

The Laing School opened with about 50 students in the remains of the Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church. Cornelia Hancock, a Civil War nurse and Quaker from New Jersey, is credited with founding the school to serve former slaves and was its first principal. The school later was named for Henry M. Laing, treasurer of both the Friends Association for the Aid and Elevation of the Freedmen of Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania Abolition Society.

1866	1867	1868	1886	1894
	The school moved to a brick mansion, provided by the Freedmen’s Bureau, in Mount Pleasant’s Old Village.	The Freedman’s Bureau built a new, two-story school at the corner of King Street and Royall Avenue, on land donated by the town of Mount Pleasant.	An earthquake destroyed the school, but it was rebuilt on the same site.	The Pennsylvania Abolition Society became trustee of the school, which it deeded to Charleston County in 1940. It became the first accredited public school for African Americans in South Carolina.

## SIX-MILE SITE TIMELINE

The new Laing High School opened near the intersection of U.S. Highway 17 and Six Mile Road to serve black students in seventh-12th grades.

1953	1954	1970	1970-1974	1974	2009	2012
	The first of 17 classes of black students graduated.	The last of 17 classes of black students graduated.	The school building was used some of that time as the eighth-grade campus for the new Wando High School.	The building reopened as Laing Middle School.	Laing Middle School began its transition to Laing Middle School of Science and Technology, a partial magnet school, and the school moved to a transitional facility located at Wando South on Mathis Ferry Road.	Laing’s new facility opens on Bulrush Basket Lane two miles from its former site at Six Mile.



It’s time to bring equity to Charleston County schools – continued from page 1

In addition to bringing more talent to its most challenging schools, the district must explore and implement changes in the classroom that better facilitate learning among children of color and poverty. For instance, many of those children come to school not yet ready to learn. But, if they start school at three years old and have two capable teachers in every classroom they attend until they complete third grade, most of them will be at



“Meeting Street has given the district one excellent model, But we need to be able to scale it.”  
GERRITA POSTLEWAIT, SUPERINTENDENT

or near grade-level in both reading and math, she said. That model is used at the private Meeting Street Academy and the district is piloting it through a public-private partnership at Meeting Street Elementary @Brentwood.

Meeting Street has given the district one excellent model, Postlewait said. “But we need to be able to scale it.” That could prove challenging because such programs cost about \$3,000 more per child per year than tradition programs.

If the district could find and fund programs that better teach children who are not ready to learn when they come to school, it could reduce the number of children in special education programs, she said. Those programs are disproportionately filled with children of color and those who live in poverty, she said. “In special education, we find the fault lies somewhere in the child.” But in many cases, the fault really lies in a system that can’t meet children’s learning needs.

She also said the district needs to better gauge whether students are proficient in specific subject matter, instead of just making sure they put in the required amount of seat-time and earn an overall score of 60 percent. “We send them right on down the assembly line,” she said.

Postlewait also said the district must be careful about how it implements school-choice programs. “It is a powerful and marvelous tool,” she said. “But it’s not a tool if it’s used to re-segregate schools or if it’s used in a way that keeps children

from having access and opportunity.” That can happen because the curriculum from the school before the choice school didn’t adequately prepare the student for the next, more challenging program. Many students from more affluent families receive private tutoring and lessons that help land coveted spots in magnet schools. “The inequities in the system are so pervasive we almost don’t see them,” she said.

Postlewait told the Rotarians that they can help by demanding, from the outside, that the system change and become more equitable. They also can expect the district to keep its budget balanced, and to create budgets aligned with the district’s goals. The district not only needs to plan the budget, she said. “We need to budget the plan.”

They also can speak out in their roles as business leaders. “We need you to see our system as a talent supplier,” she said, and to hold the district accountable for graduating young people prepared to meet their needs. They also can offer apprenticeship opportunities so students can get work experience.

CCSD is going to fight to bring equity to its schools, Postlewait said. In its most recent strategic plan, equity is one of the core values. The plan has “a powerful recruit, retain and reward element” meant to level the playing field. But everybody has to work together, both inside and outside the district, to turn around the inequities. “It’s no one’s fault,” she said, but it’s everyone’s responsibility, especially mine.”

Expanded Technical and Career Education Headed to North Charleston – continued from page 1

Board members and district officials listened to many members of the community before making the final site decision. After the district announced in the spring its initial plan to build the CAS near North Charleston High, some community groups said they were opposed to that site. Some were concerned about the demolition of the 1940s-era Attaway-Heinsohn stadium, which they said had been an important part of the Park Circle community for decades. The 2014 referendum also included funds to build a new regional stadium to be shared by North Charleston high schools.

But the most controversial issue was the plight of Garrett Academy of Technology, a magnet technical high school in North Charleston’s Dorchester-Waylyn neighborhood. Now, about 400 students are enrolled in Garrett’s nine trade programs, which include cosmetology, auto mechanics and early childhood education. That’s down from more than 700 students several years ago.

Garrett supporters wanted the new CAS to be build adjacent to Garrett. They also wanted Garrett’s facilities to be upgraded. And they didn’t want the school to be closed and replaced by the CAS.

The school board hasn’t decided what will happen to Garrett Academy after the CAS opens in 2020. But, the Nov. 2 vote required that it be used for a CCSD school. The board didn’t, however, specify which grade levels the school would serve.

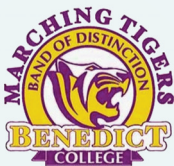
The board was going to make the final decision in September on a site for the CAS, but it voted instead to form a committee to consider the issue. The committee was comprised of the three school board members from North Charleston, city of North Charleston officials, and community members who had a stake in the future of Garrett and technical education in North Charleston.

That group included several people who supported building the CAS at Garrett, and the majority of members ultimately

voted in favor of recommending the new facility be built on the Garrett site. But there were others who were opposed to the Garrett site, including some residents of the surrounding community who were concerned about the traffic the facility would bring to the neighborhood.

Board member Cindy Bohn Coats from the Park Circle neighborhood, said both Garrett and North Charleston High currently serve fewer than 500 high school students, which forces them to have limited offerings. Bigger high schools have more resources, she said. It’s hard to fund a 500-student high school.

The group also considered building the CAS at Stall High School. But that proposal didn’t gain much traction among group members or other school board members largely because Stall, located on Ashley Phosphate Road, is a considerable distance from the other North Charleston high schools.



Benedict’s Marching Tigers Band of Distinction Impresses and Inspires at West Ashley High

West Ashley High School’s band program needed a spark of energy, so Principal Lee Runyon called in the Benedict College Marching Tigers Band of Distinction.

The popular band took to the field at half-time during the Oct. 20 Wildcats football game, putting on a show for the community and inspiring students who are in the band or who are considering joining it in the future. Earlier that day, the band marched in Burke High School’s Homecoming parade.

Donnie Newton, public relations coordinator at West Ashley High, said Runyon invited the band from Benedict College in Columbia because he hoped it would bring some life back to West Ashley’s band program. The number of students participating in the band has dropped a bit in recent years, he said.

Several factors likely contributed to the decline. Popular band director James Edward “Eddie” Shealy retired in 2014, after leading the Middleton High School and West Ashley High bands for 34 years. Shealy, who passed away Oct. 3, was widely known for having a lively band, being a beloved member of the West Ashley community and for bringing special-needs children into the band program. After Shealy left, the band had a couple different leaders, Newton said. It just didn’t have the consistent leadership it did under Shealy.

Participating in band also can be expensive. Students must cover the cost of their instruments as well as fees for uniforms, transportation and other costs. And there are so many other extra-curricular activities offered at West Ashley that compete with the band. Many students also are taking more Advanced Placement courses and simply have less time for extra-curricular activities.

School board member Kevin Hollingshead, a Benedict alumnus, suggested to Runyon that he reach out to the Benedict band after Runyon told him about the struggles the West Ashley band program was having. He thought the show the group put on at the Wildcats game was great, he said. “The audience loved it.” He also thinks a stronger connection between West



Benedict’s Marching Tigers Band of Distinction

Ashley High and Benedict will benefit both schools.

And both the director and assistant director of the Benedict band are graduates of Charleston County schools, he said. The Marching Tigers Band of Distinction is directed by McClellanville native H. Wade Johnson, a graduate of Lincoln High School. Ronald T. Green, the assistant director of bands at Benedict, is a Burke High School graduate.

Newton said the band’s performance at West Ashley High was a treat for the community. The group did a spectacular job and inspired students, he said. And Johnson, who had known Eddie Shealy for many years, made the performance a tribute to the long-time West Ashley band director. “Everyone was impressed with the caliber of this band on the field and off the field.”

Focus ON CCSD

- Focus on Charleston County School District is published for, by and about CCSD, the state of South Carolina’s premier school district where *Students are the Heart of our Work.*
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School Board approves CCSD’s Strategic Plan – continued from page 1

- Q: What are Superintendent Gerrita Postlewait’s priorities?**
- A: Dr. Postlewait has three main priorities for the next several years. Her first priority is to ensure that all students read at a third-grade level by the time they are in third grade. That’s an important indicator of academic success in future years. She also is committed to developing the most talented team of employees possible, to get and keep “the best and brightest” working for CCSD. And finally, she prioritizes equity, which simply means the district will be fair in the way it uses its resources by getting them to where they are most needed.
- Q: Why does the plan so often emphasize “every” child, “all” students and “every” school?**
- A: The district is committed to the academic success of all of its students, and to eliminating achievement gaps between groups of students. It also is committed to fairly and equitably allocating resources to every one of its schools, so all children have opportunities to succeed.
- Q: How can I learn more about the plan?**
- A: See CCSD’s website at: [www.ccsdschools.com/divisions/strat](http://www.ccsdschools.com/divisions/strat)