

WEST ASHLEY MISSION-CRITICAL ACTIONS

The CCSD District Administration has been tasked by the Board to:

Develop a comprehensive plan for the West Ashley schools to ensure that all students have high quality PK-12 without leaving the West Ashley area.

Working with community representatives, envision how to . . .

1. Improve the academic performance of the area's low-performing or under-performing elementary schools

This Mission-Critical Action should be: **ADVANCED** **MODIFIED** **ABANDONED**

Provide a brief explanation why:

The West Ashley Group believes whole-heartedly that placing significant focus on the area's elementary schools will require the biggest investment and offer the biggest return in terms of educational attainment, performance outcomes, and educational equity at the middle school and high school level. In short, investment in the early part of the educational pipeline will yield dividends for years to come. Intense focus on elementary education is the best use of available resources and will positively affect/touch all other mission critical action items.

IF CONSENSUS VIEW IS TO ADVANCE for Board consideration, provide any recommended actions, ideas, or feedback related to the Mission-Critical Action that represent the consensus views of the community-based team:

- Recruit and hire more teachers of color in elementary schools; Teacher race/ethnicity should proportionally reflect the diversity of the student population; Proactive efforts here will be key as well as partnerships with regional higher educational institutions
- Hire teachers that understand the local culture of our community (Gullah/Geechee in particular) and train those without this cultural understanding
- Invest resources into high quality best practice Pre-K programs at each of the elementary schools to assist in preparing to ensure children are "ready to learn"
- Provide under-/low-performing school reading coaches as necessary
- Redraw district lines to keep neighborhoods together (focus on creating neighborhood schools); families should not have to commute to realize high quality education for their children
- Decrease classes sizes to ensure more individual attention for students and/or ensure two teachers in each classroom
- Provide 3-year contracts for new principals or principals making improvement at low-/under-performing schools; 1-year contracts are disruptive as they do not allow leadership enough time to affect change and contracts should be in place to support transitions that need to happen due to poor performance
- Allow more time investment on reading and math in all classes at under-performing schools
- Hire a Parent Advocate/Family Navigator at each school in the district
- Give strong consideration to year-round school for all schools

IF CONSENSUS VIEW IS TO ADVANCE for Board consideration, provide any identified obstacles or additional work that should be considered before this Mission-Critical Action can be successfully implemented:

- The biggest obstacle to advancing this strategy is School Choice. School Choice takes human and financial capital away from neighborhood and community schools. School choice forces the constituency boards and the district to make unnatural and inappropriate decisions on attendance zones resulting in inequitable and manufactured learning environments. Schools "left behind" by School Choice erode, have poor parental and community involvement, and cannot retain top talent. Further, School Choice is only "a choice" for parents with the time and transportation resources to capitalize on choice. Finally, the lottery system creates a false sense of "choice," since families are not guaranteed a quality education for their children. By creating neighborhood schools that are ALL high quality and equitable, School Choice would not be necessary.

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2. Examine the feasibility of combining the two middle schools that currently serve West Ashley onto one campus to strengthen programs such as advanced academics, the arts, and STEM (science, technology, engineering and math)

This Mission-Critical Action should be: ADVANCED MODIFIED ABANDONED
Provide a brief explanation why:

IF CONSENSUS VIEW IS TO ADVANCE for Board consideration, provide any recommended actions, ideas, or feedback related to the Mission-Critical Action that represent the consensus views of the community-based team:

IF CONSENSUS VIEW IS TO ADVANCE for Board consideration, provide any identified obstacles or additional work that should be considered before this Mission-Critical Action can be successfully implemented:

IF CONSENSUS VIEW IS TO SUGGEST MODIFICATION for Board consideration, provide any suggested changes to the Mission-Critical Action that will better accomplish the stated goal:

- The overwhelming consensus view is that the two middle schools in West Ashley SHOULD NOT be put into one campus.
- The consensus is that the district did a poor job the last time they combined schools in West Ashley and this should not be repeated.
- The consensus of the group was that instead of combining the two schools, the district should make the equitable resource investment into West Ashley Middle school to provide more advanced academics including the arts and STEM education that currently exists at CE Williams.
- The consensus of the group was that West Ashley Middle deserves long-term quality leadership like those currently at CE Williams.
- The consensus of the group was fear that West Ashley Middle will be left behind.

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3. Provide training AND SUPPORT for ALL teachers operating in high-challenge settings

This Mission-Critical Action should be: ADVANCED MODIFIED ABANDONED

Provide a brief explanation why:

Teacher development is a critical part of providing a high-quality educational experience. This teacher development is even more critical in high-challenge environments. This is a modification of the Mission Critical Recommendation originally stated. The consensus of the West Ashley group is that ALL teachers need TRAINING AND SUPPORT in high challenge settings. The group felt strongly that placement of all responsibility on teachers was inappropriate.

IF CONSENSUS VIEW IS TO ADVANCE for Board consideration, provide any recommended actions, ideas, or feedback related to the Mission-Critical Action that represent the consensus views of the community-based team:

- Recruit and hire more teachers of color in elementary schools; Teacher race/ethnicity should proportionally reflect the diversity of the student population; Proactive efforts here will be key as well as partnerships with regional higher educational institutions
- Provide training to teachers so that they may offer culturally relevant education to their students (with particular focus on the Gullah/Geechee community)
- Provide conflict resolution and conflict de-escalation training for all teachers in CCSD schools
- Decrease classes sizes to ensure more individual attention for students and/or ensure two teachers in each classroom
- Clarify and reinforce school district policies that allow teachers the ability to manage the classroom environment, particularly when student conflict arises

IF CONSENSUS VIEW IS TO ADVANCE for Board consideration, provide any identified obstacles or additional work that should be considered before this Mission-Critical Action can be successfully implemented:

- It is consensus of the group that school discipline should no longer be managed by the constituent boards and that all discipline cases should be managed by appropriate CCSD administration.

IF CONSENSUS VIEW IS TO SUGGEST MODIFICATION for Board consideration, provide any suggested changes to the Mission-Critical Action that will better accomplish the stated goal:

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4. Change attendance lines as needed in order to give all schools the best chance for success

This Mission-Critical Action should be: **ADVANCED** **MODIFIED** **ABANDONED**

Provide a brief explanation why:

School attendance lines have a direct impact on the diversity and the inclusiveness of the educational experience. If not drawn appropriately, attendance lines can create racially and economically segregated schools that perpetuate inequity and diminish the chance for high educational outcomes for all students. Creation of neighborhood schools lends itself to greater parent/community connection, involvement, ownership, and accountability for their school's success.

IF CONSENSUS VIEW IS TO ADVANCE for Board consideration, provide any recommended actions, ideas, or feedback related to the Mission-Critical Action that represent the consensus views of the community-based team:

- Redraw district lines to keep neighborhoods together (focus on creating neighborhood schools)
- Hire a Parent Advocate/Family Navigator at each school in the district
- Eliminate school choice in Charleston County School District. School Choice advances inequity and segregation in our schools. Investment should be focused on making ALL schools high quality learning environments with quality programs.
- Invest equitably in the teachers and schools within high-quality neighborhood schools supported by "natural" attendance lines

IF CONSENSUS VIEW IS TO ADVANCE for Board consideration, provide any identified obstacles or additional work that should be considered before this Mission-Critical Action can be successfully implemented:

- The biggest obstacle to advancing this strategy is School Choice. School Choice takes human and financial capital away from neighborhood/community schools. School choice forces the constituency boards and the district to make unnatural and inappropriate decisions on attendance zones resulting in inequitable and manufactured learning environments. Schools "left behind" by School Choice erode, have poor parental and community involvement, and cannot retain top talent. Further, School Choice is only "a choice" for parents with the time and transportation resources to capitalize on choice. Finally, the lottery system creates a false sense of "choice," since families are not guaranteed a quality education for their children. By creating neighborhood schools that are ALL high quality and equitable, School Choice would not be necessary.
- The second biggest obstacle to advancing this strategy is the ability of the District Constituency Boards to create and set attendance lines

***Please note that the group spent some time discussing bussing. It was the belief that by eliminating School Choice, the district would experience some bussing relief, since students would attend schools proximate to their homes. It is possible some of West Ashley rush hour congestion would also be relieved.