

Education & Equity Webinar

October 26, 2020

Q&A

Both Brian Duffy and I committed to responding after the webinar to questions that had come in whose answers we couldn't get to. Unfortunately, following the close, we were informed that the Q&A section had been lost. We apologize.

What follows are the questions, paraphrased, that I recall having been asked and not answered as well as questions received via email before and after the webinar. If your question does not appear below, please re-ask it by emailing the question to info@thecharlestonforum.com and identify the panelist to whom it is addressed.

Thank you.

John C. Read

Moderator

Q: How do I learn more about the organization that is keeping its donors' names confidential and supporting a slate of candidates for CCSD?

A: That organization is called Charleston Coalition for Kids and you can visit their website at www.chskids.org

Q: The survey was very clear on the importance of parental involvement to education success. Why aren't effective programs like "2Gen" in more widespread use in our region?

A: Involving parents more effectively in their child's education and in school are essential to making further progress. Families facing challenging circumstances find this difficult; moreover, there is a history of mistrust in schools within many underserved neighborhoods.

The systemic issue that was discussed during the webinar is the seeming incapability for districts to fully implement even the most effective programs with fidelity. Unless this issue is solved with the institution of greater accountability, no program, however effective, can be expected to reform.

We understand that CCSD is considering the adoption of 2Gen or a similar program and we encourage them to do so with appropriate oversight for full implementation.

Q: What impact will single member districts in CCSD have on reform efforts

A: The General Assembly voted to convert the CCSD Board from one whose members are each voted on by the county as a whole to one where members represent specific districts, to take effect in November

2022. While constituent districts will have a stronger voice in Board matters, it's impossible to predict its effects on school reform.

Q: What are we waiting on? What stands in the way? An insufficiency of courage, perhaps. We have the exact system we've settled for! Why have we settled for so little for so long and so wrong?

A: There is every reason to believe that children and families have waited too long for a public education system free of racial bias. Systems reform is everyone's responsibility and it begins with electing trustees who believe the current system is unjust.

Q: Are the panelists in the forum familiar with the youth and education policy recommendations from "The Report on Racial Disparities in Charleston County, South Carolina, 2000-2015?"

If so, what are their thoughts on the implementation of these recommendations?

- Require all Charleston County School District Board members to formalize their commitment to diversity and racial equity in the delivery of public education in Charleston County. Formal statements should detail what their vision for diversity and racial equity is in the district and indicate their plans for implementation.
- Provide parents and families with comprehensive information about school and district performance on state and district report cards. In order to present a complete picture of how schools and districts are performing on other indicators that impact students' academic achievement and socioemotional development, we urge the Charleston County School District to also include the following:
 - Staff-to-student ratio for support staff (e.g. counselors and social workers);
 - The number of police officers assigned to schools;
 - The use of evidence-based restorative practices, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports frameworks, and other positive approaches;
 - Data on teacher recruitment, retention, and teacher absenteeism;
 - The school-level and district-wide poverty rates;
 - Access to extra-curricular activities;
 - Data indicating teacher and school leader diversity.

Youth/Education

- Establish summer employment programs for low-income teens that provide administrative/technical training and exposes them to professional skills and opportunities that can help them navigate their way out of poverty. Establish 529 College Savings Plans for low-income youth workers with a dollar-to-dollar match to use for college, vocational and/or technical training institutions.
- Invest in learning programs that go beyond the regular school day (including after school, extended learning time, internships, and summer learning).
- Expand the full-day, high-quality preschool program to all low-income pre-K children in the county.
- Reform school disciplinary procedures to emphasize service instead of punishment to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline.
- Include school climate and safety in the county's accountability system, and measure this indicator by using school discipline data and school climate surveys.
- Ensure Charleston County School District students involved in the juvenile justice system receive quality instruction and successfully transition back into the educational system through delivery of innovative twenty-first-century pedagogies that equip students with appropriate grade-level skills and competencies.
- Develop and implement effective strategies for addressing teacher quality and teacher shortages, with special emphasis on black teachers in general and black male teachers in particular. Look to programs such as Call Me MISTER* and create a formal pipeline between education departments and programs at historically black colleges and universities and the Charleston County School District through a memorandum of understanding.

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A: While the panel was tasked with addressing regional issues at the systems level and not those of any one district, most of them and the Moderator are very familiar with the Avery Report and its important recommendations. The discussion on school finances made clear that all felt more funding was necessary and in the case of CCSD many of the Avery recommendations would serve the purposes of greater equity in our schools and merit that funding.

Q: I am a special education teacher in CCSD at a school that qualifies as Title 1 and an Acceleration school. I have lived and worked in different cities around the country, and coming back to Charleston, I am shocked at how far behind we are. Speaking with teachers new to the area, and my own background knowledge, I've learned so many other places in this country are serving their students so much better. This is my 5th year with CCSD, and I've been compiling a list of questions about the status of education in Charleston. Here is what I have thus far:

- What efforts are being made to establish relationships between the local colleges/universities to recruit and train teachers?
- What efforts (higher pay/degree vouchers) are being made to retain teachers at a school? SC does not offer a stipend for NBCT anymore-why not? Other districts recruit and support teachers through the process so they can become more highly qualified, pay for the program, and offer a stipend.
- What efforts are being made to have SC History books rewritten to include all sides of our history?
- What efforts are being made to put more special education teachers and interventionists into Acceleration Schools so students performing below the 25th percentile are instructed in small groups with daily, high quality, research and evidence-based curriculum? I've been told that the over \$2 million is paying for consultants and managers. This seems like a misuse of funds. If we have well-performing schools in the area, why are we not looking at what they are doing right and implementing that at Acceleration schools? Schools need more teachers, not outside consultants.
- What efforts are being made to ensure schools are using research and evidence-based curriculums? Some schools do not have a reading comprehension or decoding curriculum, and many do not have anything to teach writing, so teachers pull worksheets/books from here and there.
- What efforts are being made to ensure schools are using evidence-based and best-practice strategies in daily instruction, norms, and routines? I see elementary schools departmentalizing- Why? The students lose learning time when lining up and waiting to walk from class to class. Students with unstable home lives are asked to make more transitions at the school during the day. What does the research say about what is the best scheduling method for elementary students to close the achievement gap?
- What efforts are being made to conduct, monitor, and measure anti-racist and implicit bias training in all adults that interact with children on a daily basis in the schools?
- What efforts are being made to ensure teachers use curriculum and introduce students to fiction and nonfiction texts that have characters that look like them and have similar characteristics?
- What efforts are being made to put all funds into public schools and not charter schools? Neighborhood schools should be funded well and with equity (given the resources that schools need to find success) so everyone that is zoned for that school wants to be there because of the high-quality teachers, instruction, and opportunities that are afforded the students.
- What efforts are being made to increase the quantity and consistency of Mental Health providers on school campuses? Many schools have a DMHS counselor for just 1-2 days a week, and there is a high turnover rate, disrupting services and progress for students.

- What efforts are being made in the DMHS to include parents in ongoing counseling as well as the children? This would be a best-practice and reflect true wrap-around service to our families.

A: While these questions (and concerns) are specific to one district, it is safe to say that they represent systemic issues that cut across the region and no doubt the country. In one way or another they are addressed to the ongoing challenges districts confront of insufficient funding, the challenges of implementing programs with fidelity, and of accountability or the lack of it. While the answers to these questions are beyond the experience of the panel, they are appropriate for district leaders and we call their attention to them.

Q: My concern focuses on political issues related to electing school boards:

1. It appears in this county that there are numerous districts (14?) operating somewhat independently and perhaps inequitably.

a. How does a voter discern which board changes negate or improve equity in education?

2. As voters we are asked to approve monetary inputs but often uninformed about effects of structural changes to reach educational equity.

a. Might this diverse group of distinguished panelists unite to lobby SC legislature to improve statewide outcomes?

b. Or without such unity might all SC counties and districts be competing for “influence” and perhaps continue to perpetuate preferential outcomes?

A: The first question appears to refer to the constituent districts within CCSD of which there are a total of 8. These constituent districts have little authority; the major decisions affecting schools are the responsibility of the CCSD School Board and Superintendent.

Regarding the second question, the panelists separately or together are not in a position to lobby for change but they as individuals are active supporters of reform at the district and state level. Other organizations that work collaboratively with the community on education equity in our region include the Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative (TCCC) www.tricountycradletocareer.org