

**For Immediate Release**  
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## Media Release

### **Charleston Shared Future Project Addresses Education System**

**Charleston, SC** – What might our education system and our community look like in 2035? For the past four months, a 30-member team from across Charleston County came together as part of the Shared Future project to co-create a set of four scenarios to answer that question.

[Office of Strategy and  
Communications](#)

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This diverse group bridges race, sectors, geography, politics, age, and roles. This Charleston Shared Future team took into account previous studies, like the [Clemson Study on Diversity and Inclusion](#), Post and Courier's "Minimally Adequate" series, The Avery Institute's Racial Disparity Study, the 1998 Harvard Study on Charleston's Education System, the recent Charleston County School District's (CCSD) strategic plan, and other relevant data and experiences.

After several months of work, the scenarios were shared with educators, CCSD parents and community members at the CCSD Board of Trustees meeting on January 28, 2019. The meeting was held in the Burke High School auditorium to accommodate the number of attendees.

The scenarios present four different stories about what the future of education might look like in 2035 in Charleston County and some possible paths to get to those endpoints.

In summary, they include:

-**1835:** A fixed point in time, with no movement forward

-**Sweetgrass Basket:** A slow and intensive process like that of making a basket. The sweetgrass must be processed before it is pliable enough to produce useful products.

-**Reconstruction:** The need to reconstruct a system that was designed not to benefit all.

-**Techtowne:** Technology drives the future.

The scenarios are not predictions, nor are they a vision, proposal, or plan. However, they are plausible - the events and actions in the scenarios make logical sense and could take place.

They are challenging as they offer a chance to notice blind spots and may present ideas or insights not considered before. They are relevant - they take into account what is happening and has happened in Charleston County.

Finally, they are clear - each scenario incorporates critical certainties - things known about 2035, and then uncertainties - things that could change over that period and cause different things to happen in each scenario, which is what makes the four scenarios distinctive and clear.

### **Community engagement**

The community will also have an opportunity to dive deeper into the scenarios presented, and ask questions about the Shared Future project in general at any of the Charleston Shared Future community conversation sessions being held Tuesday, January 29, 2019 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Scenario Team members will be present at each location. All adults are welcome, as well as students in grades 9-12.

### **Locations**

Ashley River Creative Arts School – 1841 Wallace School Rd, Charleston SC  
Stall High School – 3625 Ashley Phosphate Rd, N. Charleston, SC  
Wando High School – 1000 Warrior Way, Mt. Pleasant, SC  
St. Johns High School – 1518 Main Road, Johns Island, SC

One of the participants, Vanessa Brown, Principal of Baptist Hill Middle High School, said she hopes that this creates a sense of urgency in the Charleston community to examine the CCSD system and make drastic system changes and process.

“We have become so used to this being the way we do things, and we don’t understand that our system has some flaws,” Brown said. “Through this, I hope we create reaction (and cause action), and people will want to do things differently and make decisions that to impact our children now and impact our city – because we are Charleston.”

Eric Thome, Director of Venture South Charleston, also participated in the process. He hopes the scenarios will change the dialogue and how people think and talk about the future of education in Charleston.

“We know we have a segregated school district and we know we have failing schools,” Thome said. “Yet we don’t change. So we have to understand that this is a system that is failing our community. It is not a failed system. It is a system working exactly as designed.”

Local businessman and team member Craig Ascue, a local paint and body shop owner, also acknowledged that the local education system is broken.

"What we found was that it was set up for certain people to be successful and what we found was a lot of people ended up not being successful," said Ascue. "I hope the results will be that more people are intuned to what the Charleston County School system looks like."

Three high school students were also included in this Shared Future process.

"I hope this is not something thrown to the side after a while," said Early College High School Sophomore Kyra Freeman. "I hope people take the results we are bringing to them, and they use it to better our schools, our community, our kids and, our teachers."

Burke junior Anthony Brown has hope for the next steps of the process.

"I want the community to get involved. I don't want this to die off. I want this to keep going, so someone can solve this solution, Brown said. "Not as minorities, but as one Charleston. Because we are all Charlestonians, we are all South Carolinians.

Academic Magnet High School Junior Sully Gholson was impressed to see such a diverse group come together and put aside differences.

"It also helped me realize that there are students out there that do not have the same opportunities as I do.," said Gholson. "There are inequities in our district that need to be solved. But with this group, I truly believe we can make that happen."

What happens next belongs to the community. While CCSD represents a key part of the education system, Charleston County - its people and its organizations - are as critical to this effort as the school district is and will help decide and facilitate next steps.

Additional information on Charleston Shared Future can be found at [ccsdschools.com/about us/shared future project](https://ccsdschools.com/about-us/shared-future-project).

### **Scenario Team Members**

- Celina Anthony, Title I bilingual coordinator for CCSD
- Craig Ascue, business owner and former Board member of the Charleston County School District
- Jennifer Baez, group Leader for the School Choice Committee for the Diversity Task force for Charleston County Schools
- Barney Blakeney, a reporter for the Charleston Chronicle
- Anthony Brown, an eleventh-grade student at Burke High School

- Vanessa Brown, Principal at Baptist Hill Middle High School
- Mary Carmichael, founder and executive principal of Charleston Charter School for Math and Science
- Stephen Cofer-Shabica, Branch 3rd Vice President, and currently serves as Chairperson of the Education Committee, Charleston Branch NAACP
- Vanessa Denney, founding administrator at CCSD's Early College High School
- Michelle Faust, CCSD parent and Education Chair on the Johns Island Community Association
- Kyra Freeman, Sophomore at Early College High School
- Todd Garrett, attorney and Trustee on the Charleston County School Board and is Chair of the Audit & Finance Committee
- Kristopher "Sully" Gholson, Junior at Academic Magnet High School
- Lee Gill, Chief Diversity Officer and Special Assistant to the President for Inclusive Excellence at Clemson University
- Darrin Griffin, business owner, and a school advocate and basketball coach for Military Magnet Academy
- Natasha Jefferson, Director of Civic Engagement at Charleston RISE
- Don Kennedy, Chief Financial and Administrative Officer for Charleston County School District
- Kathleen King, Director of Alumni & Family Partnerships for Meeting Street Academy
- Linard McCloud, Director of Bands at Burke High School in Charleston
- Bill Moody, District 11 Councilmember on the Charleston City Council
- Mia Pace, CCSD Teacher of the Year on Special Assignment with Learning Services
- John Read, CEO for the Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative
- Nelson Rivers III, is Vice President of Religious Affairs and External Relations of the National Action Network (NAN), and Pastor of Charity Missionary Baptist Church
- Kevin Smith, principal of C.E. Williams Middle School for Creative Arts
- Benny Starr, entertainer and deft collaborator and community leader
- John Steinberger, business owner and publisher of news and commentary blog LowcountrySource.com
- Portia Stoney, Clemson Diversity and Inclusion and Shared Future Project administrative specialist for CCSD
- Eric Thome, CCSD parent, and director of VentureSouth Charleston
- Maurice Washington, business owner, and local and state political dignitary
- Fran Welch, Dean of the School of Education, Health, and Human Performance at the College of Charleston
- LeAnne Grillo, co-founder of REOS Partners
- Jacquie McLemore, a senior REOS Partners consultant with an expertise in cultural
- Adam Kahane, a managing director with Reos Partners and author of *Solving Tough Problems, Transformative Scenario Planning, Collaborating with the Enemy: How to Work With People You Don't Agree with or Like or Trust*
- Gerardo Marquez, a consultant with REOS Partners and co-founder of Integrity Leadership, a leadership program for immigrant women in Calgary, Alberta
- Christel Scholten, a managing director with REOS Partners specializing in convening, designing, and facilitating large-scale systems change processes

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### **About the Charleston County School District**

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is the second largest school system in South Carolina representing a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools that span 1,000 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves more than 50,000 students in 86 schools and specialized programs. With approximately 6,100 employees district-wide, CCSD is the fourth largest employer in the region.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, charter, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), and Montessori schools, and is divided into three Learning Communities. Options include specialized programs in science, engineering and mathematics; liberal arts; music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military and other public service enterprises.