

Charleston County Legislative Delegation, Education Committee Public Forum

September 6, 2016

Observer: Sarah Johnson

Attendees: SC House Representatives: David Mack, Wendell Gilliard, Mary Tinkler, Robert Brown, Chip Limehouse

Panelists: Gerrita Postlewait (CCSD), Dot Scott (NAACP), Rev. Joseph Darby (NAACP), Jon Butzon (former leader of Education Network, a defunct advocacy group)

Opening remarks by David Mack – What SC legislation can help public education in CCSD? What are the solutions? There will be another public forum before January.

Dr. Postlewait – She described the history of public education and how it was shaped. The current assembly-line style of education does not work. She talked about a shift to personalized learning. CCSD is working now to identify where kids are.

Dot Scott – NAACP has a national moratorium on new charter schools. She does not want CCSD to go back to segregated schools. Traditional public schools need to be supported. We need to replicate what works. From legislators, she asks for additional resources.

Joe Darby - Talked about the history of segregated schools and the effect of school choice on public education. He stressed the importance of strengthening traditional schools and halting school choice efforts that lead to segregated schools.

Jon Butzon – He said that race needs to be front and center in the discussion because Charleston is a Tale of Two Cities – wealthy white students and poor black and brown students. SC has no accountability system because state test scores do not come back until after school starts. He said we have a problem with teacher effectiveness, and that too many teachers are imposters. He asked – Do we have the will to educate all? And do we know how? He answered the second question with a “no.”

Wendell Gilliard – He said the two-tiered school system we have is by design. We need to strengthen our traditional public schools. Before we have social progress, we must have economic justice first. If college doesn't work out, students need to have something to fall back on.

Chip Limehouse – He does not see “doom and gloom,” but instead opportunities. He talked about opportunities with high tech manufacturing companies like Boeing and Volvo. He said that he was educated in CCSD and had no problem learning.

Robert Brown – These problems in public education are not new. We need to take action. He asked GP what action was being taken, what was CCSD’s priority.

Mary Tinkler – She asked GP what resources are needed.

Dr. Gerrita Postlewait – Focus is on outcomes. CCSD is creating a new accountability system to measure and report student achievement. The state accountability system is useless. They need to be able to identify teachers that can show growth. Which teacher are working (being effective)? (She didn’t really answer the question about what resources are needed.)

Others who spoke:

Michael Miller – He advocated for two teachers per classroom, and would like the state Teacher Loan Forgiveness plan altered so that 1st year teachers were not leading at-risk classrooms, but assisting more effective teachers.

Cindy Coats – She supported having on the job training for teachers instead of putting new teachers in the classroom alone. She said getting state test scores back sooner, in July, would help them plan for the next school year.

Janet Segal – talked about the importance of early childhood education and the Begin with Books program.