



Charleston Shared Future

A Community Scenario Project on the Future of Education in Charleston County

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

On June 30 and again on July 1, Charleston Shared Future (CSF) invited members of the Lowcountry community to meet and share their views as to how our school leaders can best engage the community in the use of new Federal funds (ESSER) to innovate and address inequities in our schools.

In general, we heard ESSER funding should:

- Be used for systemic changes that provide benefit to the marginalized and those that need it most
- Consider mental health and offer resources for students and teachers
- Cover pandemic learning loss and accelerate learning going forward with improved technology access
- Partner with other funds and efforts that care for students year-round and throughout the day

Also, we heard that the community (students, families, and community leadership) expects to be involved through:

- Ongoing, consistent and results-focused communication through various and multiple forms
- Tailored communication and events that meet people where they are in geography, culture, language, format, tech, etc.

CSF invites you to review a more detailed summary of what the participants said below and opportunities to follow our organization to be involved in future Community Conversations.

Charleston Shared Future Community Forum Questions

Question 1: Utilizing ESSER Funds, what changes are needed to reform schools and look at systemic solutions?

Systemic Changes

- Take a systemic, not programmatic approach
- Address the structural barriers inside CCSD that prevent programs from being implemented with fidelity, successfully and sustained for the long-term
- Hire top-notch school leaders
- Replicate things that are working
- Focus on Early Childhood Education and full time Early Childhood classes
- Consider using a curriculum that aligns with SC readiness
- Allocate the majority of the funds to schools that need it the most!
- Consider more system efforts to transition kids from daycare to kindergarten

Academic Needs – Students & Teachers

- Accelerate student learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic loss
- Provide additional Academics, especially for the kids that fall behind in the following areas: Social, Emotional, and Mental Health

- Hire caring professionals to address the trauma experienced by teachers and students this past year. Teachers can't do their jobs if they are not trauma informed
- Provide full-time guidance and mental health counselors are needed at each school, engage Big Brothers/Big Sisters or Volunteers)
- Provide additional assistance and resources for non-English speaking families
- Offer more positions for needier schools and rural areas
- Offer professional development training for all teachers on individualized and differential teaching in middle school
- Offer Tri-County Cradle to Career or CCSD Safe Schools Annual Trauma Informed Care Training

Community School, Extended Day Programs, & Summer School

- Address student learning loss (i.e., more afterschool tutorial or enrichment programs, summer school learning programs, tutoring, system-wide Kaleidoscope throughout the year) among students, including low-income students, students with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities
- Utilize "Community Schools' model with community partnerships
 - Engage Creative Minds merged with Yes Carolina to get entrepreneurship and the arts blended into the school-day, after school, and during the summer
 - Pay after school staff to work after school programs
- Add Restorative Practice Trainings to reduce behavior issues

Wrap-Around Services

- Using an equity lens, identify the issues and provide wrap-around services to the most challenged schools, i.e., support basic needs (hunger, health, housing) that prevent children from being ready to learn
- Address the barriers that prevent these basic needs from being met, in conjunction with COVID funds available to counties and cities
- Think about the whole child and what we can do to support kids and their interests everywhere

Student & Community Engagement

- Develop authentic engagement and tailor community engagement specifically for the various communities (answers should come from people in the community, rather than CCSD)
- Invite folks from the community to work with teachers to implement "passion projects" throughout the day
- Engage students and show them that everyone is treated equally; Allow them to have an active role in making their community better
- Solicit help from community organizations and utilize space available at neighborhood community centers and churches and solicit help from retired teachers
- Hire a facilitator to have discussions in rural communities
- Get a cross-section of voices

Post-Secondary & Apprenticeship Programs

- Consider sustainable career exploration and technology at the elementary level. Help kids identify their passion.

Internet Access

- Address technology needs including internet access in rural areas (Internet connectivity and hotspot access)

People & Programs

- Be cautious about using money for people or programs that cannot be sustained

Question 2: How should CCSD engage the community around using ESSER Funds?

Community Engagement, Surveys, & Inclusion

- Community engagement is not a one-and-done thing
- Meet families where they live; talk to parents at church and sports meetings or practices, summer programs, etc.
- Shift some power to the grassroots level
- Provide seats at the decision table for input from stakeholders
- Close the loop on survey input - look at what it says, what's been done, and ask why or why not
- Work harder for groups of people who have been marginalized
 - Find a way to connect with the people who don't attend meetings
 - Deliver information to folks in their own community - because people aren't connected to email, and they don't always read the newspaper
- Broadcast information on the local news channel
- Use everyday language that is easy to understand
- Provide forums for the Latinx community in their native tongue
- Provide resources for students with disabilities
- Bring people together in neighborhood meetings, so they have a sense of connection and sense of belonging
 - Serve food
 - Keep the meeting short and sweet (use sticky notes, dots)
- Share information via social media
- Public hearing with youth and families in targeted neighborhoods
- Allow students to lead conversations and have a voice
- Consider having local advocates and leaders facilitate wider conversations

Others

- Identify and address the root causes of distrust in schools
- Address safety concerns
- Identify needs and decide where the funds would be best used

Other Notes:

- Consider other monies coming into states and counties that could be used for similar purposes
- There is enough flexibility to do the right thing with those funds

The Charleston Shared Future journey began September 2018, when 30 people from Charleston County came together to co-create a set of four scenarios about the future of education in Charleston County. This diverse group bridges race, sectors, geography, politics, age, and roles. The team took into consideration 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 CCSD strategic plan, and other relevant data and experiences. The four scenarios were shared to the Board of Trustees on **January 28, 2019**. Project's goal is to increase community understanding and support for improved educational outcomes for Charleston County School District students **by 2035**. Note, community engagement was included in the language of the four scenarios.

CSF acknowledges that CCSD, as well as other school districts and entities faced great challenges because of the pandemic. Their production and operation activities were limited, and new issues were identified that contributed to the widening of the achievement gap. CSF encourages the CCSD School Board and Administrators to utilize this input, as well as others received, when decisions are made to utilize the incoming funds to address issues outlined in this document, as we recover from this difficult period.

For more information about CSF, visit us at:

Website - info@charlestonsharedfuture.org,

Linked In - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/charleston-shared-future-345716207>

Twitter - <https://twitter.com/CSF4Education>

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/Charleston-Shared-Future>