

District 9 Education Committee Report 2016-2017 School Year

Prepared by: Michelle Faust, Committee Chair
Prepared: May 10, 2017

Objective

Through a collaborative effort with CCSD and the Community, the mission of the District 9 (D9) Education Committee is to select a school model with proven results that can be implemented in an existing D9 Elementary School and is inclusive of all children living within the school attendance zone.

Scope

Provide a recommendation based on inputs from stakeholders to improve our existing D9 elementary schools from those currently attending and from families that live in D9 and attend school elsewhere.

Current D9 State at start of 2016-2017 School Year

Prospective parents research schools carefully and they look at test scores. Below is a listing of the statistics found in D9:

Angel Oak Elementary

- 540 out of 620 elementary schools in SC. Test scores are on the decline.
- Enrollment is the same as it was in 2008, but the population has increased dramatically.
- <https://www.schooldigger.com/go/SC/schools/0144000231/school.aspx>

Mount Zion Elementary

- 434 out of 620 elementary schools in SC
- <https://www.schooldigger.com/go/SC/schools/0144001404/school.aspx>

Frierson Elementary (Wadmalaw)

- 609 out of 620 elementary schools in SC
- <https://www.schooldigger.com/go/SC/schools/0144000225/school.aspx>

Haut Gap Middle

- 147 out of 295 middle schools in SC
- This school has improved dramatically since it became a magnet school.
- Parents avoid the elementary feeder schools
- <https://www.schooldigger.com/go/SC/schools/0144001215/school.aspx>

St. Johns High

- 176th of 225 High Schools in SC
- <https://www.schooldigger.com/go/SC/schools/0144000264/school.aspx>

Being in the bottom 15% in South Carolina is unacceptable, especially considering the South Carolina is [dead last](#) in education in the United States. Parents moving to Johns Island from around the world, due to employment at Boeing, the port, MUSC, and Volvo, are shocked by these numbers and immediately find other ways to educate their children.

The Facts about District 9 Children

- 2,400 children on Johns Island are enrolled in public schools
- 1,200 of the 2,400 children leave the district each day for better education. This does not include homeschool or private school students.
- 1,700 kids under the age of 5 live on Johns Island.

We need better schools, and we need them immediately.

CCSD Commitments

- 1.) Ensure the selection committee is diverse,
- 2.) Help explore school models,
- 3.) Hire a district project manager in support of this initiative.

Committee Members

The D9 Education Committee membership, formed November 2016:

- District 9 Board Member- Andrea Casey, Renea Bligen
- District 9 Community Member/Volunteer who resides in D9 zone – Michelle Faust
- District 9 Community Member/Volunteer who resides in D9 zone – Todd Gearhart
- D9 Parent who resides in D9 zone – Shannon Kennedy
- D9 Parent who resides in D9 zone with children outside of D9 – Nancy Bright
- Representative of Frierson Elementary School (parent, grandparent, SIC, PTA, teacher/staff) – Audrey Mack, Deborah Grant
- Representative of Mt. Zion Elementary School (parent, grandparent, SIC, PTA, teacher/staff)- Marisol Bailey
- Representative of Angel Oak Elementary School (parent, grandparent, SIC, PTA, teacher/staff) - Sharon Champaign
- District 9 Community Member/Volunteer who resides in D9 zone – Leon Green
- District 9 Community Member/Volunteer who resides in D9 zone – Amy Stone

D9 Education Committee



From left, Todd Gearhart, Michelle Faust (Chair), Sharon Champaign, Marisol Bailey, Audrey Mack, Nancy Bright, Renea Bligen, Shannon Kennedy, Andrea Casey, Leon Green (Vice Chair). Not pictured Amy Stone and Deborah Grant.

Early Committee Recommendations

Two requests from stakeholders consistently dominated discussion for elementary education in D9, expand access to early childhood education (no income barrier to enroll) and Spanish instruction for elementary students K-5. The committee requested both of these items to be in place in at least one elementary school in D9 at the start of the 2017-2018 school year prior to the completion of school tours and before the start date of the district project manager.

Help Explore School Models

The D9 Committee attended an overview event with New Tech Model on November 29, 2016.

As a committee, we elected to tour a charter school, not a new “model” within CCSD that many D9 families utilize school choice and commute instead of enrolling at their local school. The D9 members toured Orange Grove Charter on December 8, 2016 with the following takeaways:

- Although, intangible the school felt like a happy welcoming place where learning was occurring
- Teachers seemed happy to be a part of the school
- Very clean environment
- Diverse curriculum – Spanish, arts
- Committee members wanted to relocate this school to D9

The Orange Grove tour did not change the objective however, it did alter our path forward. The committee elected to tour all three D9 elementary schools. School tours were conducted on the following dates:

- Angel Oak Elementary: January 11, 2017
- Frierson Elementary: January 5, 2017
- Mt. Zion Elementary: February 9, 2017

District Project Manager

CCSD brought on Steve Larson as project manager beginning December 2016. Steven Larson accepted the position of Principal St. Johns High School in April 2017 in addition to serving as D9 Project Manager.

D9 Committee Recommendations

Raise Student Achievement

During individual tours of the schools and in committee discussions, we reviewed previous work by district task forces to identify Frierson as a School of Technology and Angel Oak Elementary as Arts Infused School. While we appreciated the hard work of previous efforts, the dialogue with parents and community indicated those labels were not enough to attract new families and give up a seat at a choice school to attend a D9 school. Further, the curriculum did not seem to align with the labels of the schools. There were 3 distinct and clear labels that were attractive to families with young children (age 5 and under):

- Montessori
- Math and Science and/or Engineering
- A traditional elementary school that feels like Orange Grove/Harborview

Additional Programs

The early recommendations of the committee were approved by CCSD Board for implementation at Angel Oak Elementary for the 2017-2018 school year: 3 year old fee based program, introduction to Spanish for 3 and 4 year olds, and Spanish Instructor K-5.

Give D9 Families Choices

The D9 Committee recommends for the 2018-2019 School CCSD implements a certified Montessori curriculum at a D9 elementary school and a Math and Science Curriculum at a separate elementary school within D9. In addition, children should attend a school that is the best fit for their learning style and the location of their home. With the implementation of diversity in the D9 Elementary portfolio, the committee recommends that CCSD removes zoning requirements and allow parents to choose any D9 elementary school based on the best fit for their individual child/children.

Today, the population growth in D9 is occurring on Johns Island while our neighbors on Wadmalaw are not seeing an significant increase in population therefore; there is a trend of declining enrollment at Frierson Elementary. Johns Island families are waitlisted to attend Montessori choice schools on James Island and/or downtown and School of Math and Science in West Ashley. The committee believes that an expanding the portfolio in D9 would dramatically increase enrollment at D9 elementary schools. Both Murray Lasaine Elementary and James Simons Schools indicate that student achievement data made significant changes utilizing the Montessori curriculum.

Development has been sparked by technology jobs moving into our area at Boeing, Volvo, and Daimler-Chrysler. Many parents wish to ensure that math and science curriculums are available in D9, the School of Math and Science in West Ashley attracts many D9 families.

Giving families a choice for the type of schools they wish to attend, without waiting for a lottery seat, will retain D9 children in our community schools. Fostering a network of parents, community, and education will help the entire community, and its children, succeed.

[Next Steps for Committee Members](#)

As the committee gathered and toured the schools, we see the potential for individual School Improvement Councils (SIC) to be the agent of change and improvement. Today, D9 schools do not have strong PTO/PTA in terms of numbers and although the individual SICs meet the minimum requirements state forth by the state, they are not diverse in membership and the intent and potential are not being realized.

The committee intends to disband with at least one member on each one of our D9 School Improvement Councils in the 2017-2018 school year. Just adding another member is not enough. Training will need to be completed to ensure that the individual improvements at the schools align with a cohesive and comprehensive plan for D9. To ensure that a plan is developed and monitored, the committee recommends the D9 Education Committee is augmented to become a D9 Steering Committee that meets at minimum of once per quarter to monitor the comprehensive plan. The objective is to have 80% of the D9 families attending local schools and a trend upward in student achievement across D9 by 2019.

Submitted by:

Michelle Faust
Michelle Faust Date
5/11/17

Nancy Bright
Nancy Bright Date
5/11/17

Leon Green
Leon Green Date
6-2-17

Andrea Casey
Andrea Casey Date
05/15/2017

Renea Bligen
Renea Bligen Date
5/11/17

Marisol Bailey
Marisol Bailey Date
5-11-17

Shannon Kennedy
Shannon Kennedy Date
5-11-17

Sharon Champaign
Sharon Champaign Date
5/11/17

Andrey Mack
Andrey Mack Date

Deborah Grant
Deborah Grant Date
5/11/2017

Amy Stone
Amy Stone Date
5/11/2017

Todd Gearhart
Todd Gearhart Date
5-12-2017

Note:

As documented on page 6 of this recommendation the committee members have indicated via their signature support of this recommendation. The signature page is intentionally missing one signature as representatives on the committee from Frierson Elementary were unable to reach a unanimous agreement to language contained in the recommendation. One member could not provide a signature unless it indicated that Frierson Elementary be the school targeted for a Montessori curriculum and one could not provide a signature if the recommendation was submitted as written, not targeting a specific school, allowing district leaders to determine the ideal location.

Discussions at numerous committee meetings and community listening sessions included dialogue that centered on Frierson becoming a certified Montessori curriculum. The recommendation for a Montessori school and a Math and Science School curriculums in D9 are supported unanimously, with the difference of opinion at the time of the recommendation submission, targeting specific locations.