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**The Quality Education Project Evaluations of the Consolidated School Board District Candidates**

*The November 6, 2018 election gives Charleston County voters the opportunity to elect candidates who will work on the major issues facing the quality of public education. As a research-based organization that seeks to work with communities that have been historically disenfranchised, the Quality Education Project (QEP) has identified the issues surrounding school choice, commitment to students of color, and effectiveness in enacting fundamental change as paramount concerns to our community.*

*This evaluation provides evaluations of the eleven school boards candidates campaigning for seats on the consolidated Charleston County School Board. These evaluations are based on QEP values to implement a quality education for all students within the public school system guided by principles of equity, access and excellence. This includes holding the school board and district accountable, participating in the democratic process, and working to keep our traditional public schools viable through high-quality curriculum, premier instruction, and democratic governance. This evaluation is not an endorsement, but research-based information based on our observations, questionnaires, and a school board forum hosted by QEP. Two organizations have provided endorsement of the candidates. The Charleston Coalition for Kids, an elite group which supports more school choice, charters and privatization, and Flip the Board, a local grassroots organization that seeks to elect new board members to revitalize the school board. The League of Women Voters have also posted information on their site, Vote411.org. This evaluation is intended to inform voters’ decision for the election on November 6 and to supplement this and other information available to voters.*

**Francis Marion Beylotte**

As a consolidated school board member, Francis Beylotte would be a strong advocate for investing in our traditional public schools in Charleston County. He views public education as a “public good” and would exercise strong leadership to increase public or community support for our schools. He is firmly against business models that stress efficiency for public schools and would use his position as a consolidated school board member to support school reform from below with an emphasis upon public guidance through strong PTAs, SICs, and popular input or support. Mr. Beylotte as a member of the board would fight for greater transparency as he believes CCSD does not communicate policies and plans effectively for schools to the public. Mr. Beylotte is firmly against school choice and charters as he believes these approaches hurt our traditional public schools and take away from them vital resources. He supports ending school choice and having “Buists, School of the Arts, and Academic Magnets in every neighborhood.” He firmly supports the NAACP moratorium on charters. As a board member, he has pledged to advocate for greater support for neighborhood schools as a path for the district to enhance or improve community-building.

**Cindy Bohn Coats –**A current Consolidated Board member for the North Area and the former board chair, Mrs. Coats brings years of experience as an elected official on the school board.

She brings a full commitment to her position, regularly attending public forums and meetings about public education outside of scheduled school board meetings and always willing to meet with constituents. Though committed to her position and having served since 2012, Mrs. Coats never taught or worked in a public (or private) school as an educator, administrator, or staff member.  As such, Mrs. Coats has regularly supported school choice and privatization initiatives such as the Meeting Street Academy as one effective way to improve education and meet the “unique” needs of all students in spite of research-based concerns for the growth of “choice” in Charleston County. She has also made difficult, oftentimes contentious decisions, including building the Center for Advanced Studies in her district, but not at Garrett High School, a school the community has petitioned the board to support for years. She also voted to build an advanced program at Trident Tech as opposed to investing in Burke High School. She does not always account for race or race-based research, or embrace race consciousness as a way to inform decision making on the board.

**Kate Darby** has served for the last four years as chair of the Charleston County School Board of Trustees and is a strong supporter of CCSD Superintendent Gerrita Postlewaite. Darby has never been a teacher or principal. She has a BS in Business from USC and has 30 years of experience in organizational development and nonprofits. She supports school choice and charters. As School Board chair, Darby has pursued her agenda of systemic education reform, but questions about that agenda, transparency, and yielding substantial authority to the superintendent have been raised repeatedly. Darby is aware of race and class issues in the district. She supports a redistribution of state funds to Title I schools, But she has voted to close a historically black school [Lincoln]. Darby has served on school improvement councils, She has been involved in various community organizations. However, Darby did not respond to the questionnaire sent by QEP to all school board candidates. Darby has been endorsed by the Charleston Coalition for Kids.

**Herbert Fielding**

Herbert Fielding comes from a politically active family. He has been a Veterans Employment Representative for the Dept. of Employment and Workforce and has been an investigator for the South Carolina Attorney General and He Charleston County Public Defenders Office. Mr. Fielding recognizes the acrimony seen on current board, and has had board experience in his previous employment that will work to his and the board’s benefit. He attended the QEP Forum, and completed the League of Women Voters questionnaire (vote411.org) though not the QEP questionnaire. He favors choice in the district, and recognizes the problems of our segregated schools. He recognizes the inadequacy of teacher compensation and would work to see it increased to attract and retain teachers. He would work to eliminate the cycle of poverty seen with the under resourced, with inadequate preparation for kindergarten. He will face a steep learning curve if elected but is willing to work to get and keep informed.

**Joyce Green**

Joyce Green has more than 30 years in executive management; her experience working with Boards is her greatest strength in this year’s CCSD Consolidated School Board race.

Ms. Green’s beliefs about using evaluation to summatively assess teacher performance, privatizing public schools, and focusing the Board’s role to governance alone are concerning. Given such, her ability to secure the passage of informed policy change and to stand independently on quality education initiatives is questionable. The greatest hindrance to Ms. Green’s ability to serve students and teachers on the School Board is her lack of experience advocating or working in K-12 education. Given this, it is suspect whether she would endorse rigorous academic and/or trade programs that would prepare students for college and/or career.

**Sarah Shad Johnson**

Sarah Johnson has served for the last few years as an elected official on the East Cooper Constituent School Board. She is one of the most qualified school board candidates running in this election cycle. Mrs. Johnso has most recently served as that board’s Chair person, where they have worked on re-drawing the attendance lines. Mrs. Johnson is a passionate advocate for public schools and believes that all students regardless of what school they attend or what part of Charleston County they attend school should have a fair chance and should receive needed resources to succeed. As it applies to Charleston County School District Sarah believes that Charter Schools and Choice Schools take resources from neighborhood schools. She is the Co-Founder of an online group called Charleston Area Voice for Education, she has advocated for Burns Elementary School, and is willing to consider community feedback. Mrs. Johnson is aware of class and cultural bias that exists in general. Mrs. Johnson is also passionate about facts based research and tackling problems through technical research as well as by taking input from all stake holders.

**Linda Mosley Lucas**

Linda Mosley Lucas has over 40 years in education as a speech clinician, counselor, parent educator, and District 4 constituent board member. She believes the teacher shortage and achievement gap are two of the most significant concerns facing CCSD. She contends inviting stakeholders to engage in conversations about how to improve the state of education in CCSD is one of the most critical things to student success. Although Ms. Lucas believes schools are not providing challenging courses to prepare them for college/career and that teachers need a voice in decision-making, she has publicly stated her support of Superintendent Gerrita Postlewait. She notes that providing and maintaining supports for CCSD’s lowest performing schools is needed to ensure student success long-term.

**Eric Mack**

Eric Mack has been a member of the consolidated school board for Charleston County since 2010 and represents West Ashley. He currently serves as the vice chair of the board. Rev. Mack’s focus in his own words is “full funding for K-12 education to create work ready communities.” He has been an advocate for job training centers throughout the district. Eric has worked closely with current board members to secure additional funding for school buildings on Johns Island and to establish a Montessori school program at Frierson on his native Wadmalaw Island. In recent candidate forums, Rev. Mack has shown an openness for school choice, privatization and charter models and has often aligned himself with approaches to education reform that are supported by groups with strong ties to the Charleston business community such as Charleston Coalition For Kids who have formally endorsed him. He is aligned with these status quo interests despite his background of being connected to the community as the head of an outreach ministry for the homeless at Bethany Baptists Church on Wadmalaw Island.

**Paul Padron**

Paul Padron has over 25 years of experience working as a school principal, teacher, and school administrator. Paul Padron brings a passion for students, parents, and teachers to all the school based initiatives that he pursues, including his pursuit to become a Charleston County School Board member. Mr. Padron supports school choice and charter schools, yet he believes that all schools should receive the resources they need to succeed and excel. Mr. Padron believes that there has been a lot of issues with Choice Schools in Charleston County. He also supports trade programs as well as college preparatory programs. Mr. Padron believes that many choice schools in Charleston County can be improved upon and recognizes that many schools within Charleston County should be more diverse. Mr. Padron also believes strongly in neighborhood schools and believes that minority schools should be treated equitably and more support and money should be put back into the classroom and into the schools.

**Vivian Pettigrew**

Vivian Pettigrew firmly believes in both federal and state government playing an active role in efforts to improve education. As a board member, she would clearly be an advocate for a strong public education system as she views it as having positive impacts on society. Given her background in business and finance, she does support the idea of public education being run like a business and views it as an extension of the marketplace. She would be a board member that would work actively to incorporate the surrounding community because she firmly believes that public or community support for education is paramount. She would exercise leadership on the consolidated school board to encourage partnerships with the surrounding community. In order to achieve school reform, she would advocate for joint efforts between district initiatives and public guidance such as SICs, PTAs, and popular input. She is a strong supporter of school improvement councils (SICs) and as a board member would work to see that Title 1 schools have functioning Title 1 councils as mandated by federal law. Ms. Pettigrew feels that many of the current local schools that are in high demand are not diverse enough. She is firmly against school choice and charters because she believes these approaches in both the short and long run weaken community-based schools.

**Jake Rambo**

Jake Rambo is a former school teacher and administrator, Mr. Rambo has logged over 16,000 hours in a classroom or school. His extensive background and training in education quantitatively sets Mr. Rambo apart from other school board candidates. Rambo demonstrates a strong commitment to honoring and valuing the voices of teachers and the fair treatment of teachers by the Charleston County School District. After he was transferred by the district based on skeptical information and an ambiguous decision making process, Mr. Rambo helped inspire and form important relationships with community organizations, teachers, and concerned parents that asked critical questions of a board often viewed as hostile or indifferent to the needs of teachers. His stance on school and privatization is dubious. Voicing support for quality education in any form it takes, including private, charter, magnet, or otherwise, Mr. Rambo embraces school choice and privatization as one effective way to improve education and meet the “unique” needs of all students in spite of research-based concerns for the growth of “choice” in Charleston County.