



**Charlottesville United  
for Public Education**

**Charlottesville  
United for  
Public  
Education  
May 2023  
Report**

Prepared by:

**Charlottesville United for  
Public Education  
Advisory Committee**

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**2023**

# About Us

Charlottesville United for Public Education is a coalition of parents, grandparents and community members committed to ensuring every child in Charlottesville City Schools receives a quality education. We advocate for student success from preschool to graduation through community engagement, family support and civic participation. As champions united for healthy students and schools, we center community voices and welcome all who are invested in making public education better in Charlottesville.





# Our Vision

Charlottesville City Schools will serve as a model for centering the needs of students and families through informed, strategic, transformative change that meets the needs of each child and the collective, as demonstrated by a closed achievement gap, record matriculation and strong school/home partnerships

# Our Mission

To advocate for public education that meets the needs of every child and family, while centering Black, Brown and other marginalized voices.



# Our Values

1. **Voices:** Centering, uplifting and amplifying the voices of those who are most marginalized.
2. **Youth:** Young people should be seen, heard, and listened to; their ideas thoughts and passions will help to guide our work.
3. **Educators:** We support all educators from bus drivers to teachers and paraprofessionals. Everyone employed by the school system works together to create a safe, effective learning environment.
4. **Collective Action:** Understanding that it takes all of us to change the ecosystem in which our schools exist, in order to create the best educational environment for all.
5. **Community of Care:** Through personal and communal relationships, we can heal students, families, educators, and community members by supporting their needs and creating a space of explicit belonging.
6. **Transformative Healing:** We seek to transform the way in which the school system is currently supported in order to bring forth healing from past harms through different ways of thinking and being.
7. **Growth:** We understand where we have been and where we are, and seek to create a fertile environment for hope and possibility that keeps us all focused on the assets of the community, while meeting the deficits head on.



# The Year in Review

## Reconfiguration

We successfully advocated for Buford and Walker reconfiguration, which included organizing public comment at City Council meetings, email campaigns and outreach to local media. CUPE member parents gave four public comments at City Council meetings and sent dozens of emails to Councilors. The City will break ground on the Buford renovation this summer and fully fund the complete remodel of the campus — not a subset of the buildings as initially proposed.

This will be the first major public school infrastructure project in the City in more than 50 years! About CUPE's efforts, Lisa Larson-Tores, Charlottesville City Schools School Board Chair, said, "We are so grateful for the collaboration and grassroots support around reconfiguration. A lot of effort and hours went into getting to YES for our students."



**PUBLIC SCHOOL MATTERS**

A new event series focusing on the education topics that are top of mind for Charlottesville families

RSVP for Zoom invite and to submit questions at:  
[charlottesvilleunited.org/events](http://charlottesvilleunited.org/events)

**Webinar on Buford Renovation + Transportation**






**October 12 at 7:30pm via Zoom**

How will the the "reconfiguration" timeline impact your student? What do the plans for Buford's renovation include? What's the latest and the next steps on transportation issues? How can we as families and community members committed to strong public schools weigh in?

We'll discuss these and more questions together!

**Charlottesville School Board 101: Q&A with Lisa Larson-Torres and Emily Dooley**



## Full-Time Staff



In 2022, we hired a community organizer! Sandra Aviles Poe has been hitting the streets to hear from constituents, families and community partners. She attended training at The Midwest Academy with a focus on organizing for social and racial justice, and she is putting what she learned into action. To date she has held or been a part of close to 80 meetings, liaised with more than 50 parents, guardians and other caring adults and even spoken with a class at Charlottesville High School. You can find her at every Walker/Buford PTO meeting, as well as school board and city council meetings, where she watches, takes notes and makes public comments. Sandra has forged strong partnerships with The Equity Center at UVA, The Community Solutions Law Clinic, and other UVA entities and has even been selected as an ambassador for the Charlottesville City Schools 2023-2029 Strategic Planning Committee, where she and others are working to establish an equitable foundation for the division.

**"I am committed to helping to build a school system that works for all."**

Sandra Aviles

# And...

- ✓ We hosted the first of our Public School Matters event series, to provide the school community much-needed clarity around the transportation challenges facing schools and families. The School Board Chair presented along with senior school administrative staff in a demonstration of partnership.
- ✓ Raised the public school system as a priority issue for the 2023 City Council race by surveying the candidates and publishing the results for voters and securing media coverage.
- ✓ Assembled an experienced advisory committee of 11, including several members of color and representation from local parents, equity advocates and community organizers.
- ✓ Held two strategic planning sessions, during which we organized into committees, aligned around our mission and vision and set three-month, six-month and one-year milestones.
- ✓ Helped recruit and support school board candidates for 2023.

Shaniece Bradford (ReadyKids; parent)  
Shymora Cooper (CCS parent)  
Nancy Deutsch (CCS parent)  
Marcelle Eldridge (CCS parent)  
Harold Folley (Legal Aid Justice Center)  
Robert Gray (The Uhuru Foundation; parent)  
Guinevere Higgins (CCS parent)  
Brian Johns (Virginia Organizing)  
Dr. Sherica Jones-Lewis (Equity Center at UVA)  
Karin Little (CCS parent)  
Chris Meyer (CCS parent)  
Arielle O'Shea (CCS parent)  
Annie Suttle (CCS parent)  
Frank Valdez (Legal Aid Justice Center)

**CUPE**  
**Advisory**  
**Committee**

# Looking Forward

Charlottesville City Schools serve a diverse population of 4200 students who speak 39 different languages, nearly half (45%) of whom are economically disadvantaged. We will continue to advocate for the fulfillment of promises related to the Buford renovation and an early childhood center at Walker, and for ongoing, deep investment in student success.

## What's next...

- Recruit additional supporters and partners.
- Develop parent leaders and peer engagers.
- Ensure parents, caregivers and students have a seat at the table for important education-related decisions.
- Ensure adequate educational investments at the local level.
- Establish, with community input, priorities for education advocacy, such as:
  - Building a high-quality preschool center at Walker.
  - Creating a long-term facilities plan for Charlottesville City Schools.
  - Adding aftercare and wraparound services.
  - Closing the achievement gap.
  - Mental health and emotional support.
  - Adequate transportation to and from school.
  - Special Education services.



## Get Involved!

We're looking for community members to join our committees, support our efforts financially and provide input for strategic initiatives. Your lived experience as a parent and member of the community is what qualifies you to join us. You can help by:

- Sharing what you feel CCS students need most, setting the direction and timeline for how we go about our work and priorities.
- Identifying people who can join this effort and being an ambassador within your network.
- Assisting with community events.
- Donating to support our work.

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