



A Publication of the Charter Institute at Erskine

The Institute Times

ESTD. 2024 | COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA | FEBRUARY 2026

THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TASK
FORCE: STRENGTHENING
INSTRUCTION THROUGH DATA-
DRIVEN GUIDANCE

CHARTER INSTITUTE AT ERSKINE
ANNOUNCES GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP WITH
THE KED NETWORK TO BENEFIT CHILDREN IN
SOUTH CAROLINA





Strengthening Accountability and Expanding Opportunity in South Carolina

With the 2026 legislative session in full swing, the Institute is continuing to connect with lawmakers to ensure that advocates for educational freedom have a seat at the table for the most impactful conversations.

Throughout the session, the Institute's Charter School Ambassadors are regularly meeting with legislators and sharing their experiences of how charter education has played a vital role in shaping their lives. Ambassadors recently had the opportunity to speak with Senator Ross Turner (Greenville), Senator Jason Elliott (Greenville), and Senator Michael Johnson (Fort Mill) during the School Choice Rally in January. These discussions reinforce the importance of elevating student voices in policy conversations and strengthened relationships between legislators and the students they serve.

The Institute was honored to host Congressman Ralph Norman to discuss challenges impacting education in South Carolina. Both Charter School Ambassadors and Institute school leaders joined the conversation to share their experiences and highlight the impact of public charter schools across the state. We appreciate Congressman Norman and his team for their eagerness to learn about the Institute's initiatives, specifically the Institute Leader's Cohort, and gain insight on charter schools through thoughtful discussion about the future of education in our state.

Senator Greg Hembree (Myrtle Beach), Chairman of the Senate Education Committee, secured unanimous Senate passage of Bill 454, the Charter School Accountability Act. This marks a significant step forward in strengthening oversight and transparency for charter schools across South Carolina. The legislation is designed to ensure that charter schools operate with clear performance standards, responsible financial management, and measurable academic outcomes, while still maintaining the flexibility that allows them to innovate. The bill now moves to the House of Representatives for further debate and potential amendments. The Institute has been a vocal supporter of this bill, and we thank the Senate for their support in strengthening the sector.

The Institute remains committed to working with lawmakers to advance policies that expand opportunity, strengthen accountability, and ensure every South Carolina student has access to a high quality education.

The School Improvement Task Force: Strengthening Instruction Through Data-Driven Guidance

This year, the Institute is prioritizing school improvement to ensure that every Institute school is bringing the highest-quality education possible to the children of South Carolina by achieving the highest performance ratings in each region of the state.

The Institute's ten-member School Improvement Task Force, composed of internal and external experts, has already conducted four, multi-day, onsite diagnostic reviews of targeted schools to identify key growth areas. Following the reviews, the team will provide targeted support, ongoing monitoring, and data-driven guidance to ensure measurable benchmarks are achieved within 18 months.

External Task Force Partners:

Dr. Quantina Haggwood has 28 years of experience in education and currently serves as an Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership at the University of South Carolina. Her career includes executive leadership roles in school improvement, early childhood and elementary education, as well as service as a principal, assistant principal, and classroom teacher.

Dr. DeeDee Washington has 35 years of experience in education, specializing in leadership development and instructional coaching. She has served as an Assistant Professor of Graduate Studies at Anderson University, Chief of Instruction and Academics in multiple districts, and as a principal, assistant principal, and classroom teacher.

Dr. Walter Clark has 30 years of experience in education and currently coordinates professional development through the Institute for District Administrators and the School Leadership Executive Institute. His background includes roles as a principal, assistant principal, and classroom teacher.

Dr. Henderson Lewis has over 25 years of experience focused on leadership and school transformation. He served as Superintendent of Schools in New Orleans, a charter school leader, school board member, assistant professor, and classroom teacher. Dr. Lewis joined the taskforce after connecting with the Institute Leader's Cohort in New Orleans, where he shared his innovative strategies to revitalize the state's education after Hurricane Katrina.

Dr. Christopher Blair has over 25 years of experience in district and school leadership. His roles include superintendent, chief academic officer, deputy chief of school leadership, curriculum director, and classroom teacher.

Over the past two months, the School Improvement Task Force kicked off data meetings with leadership and began diagnostic reviews for target schools. Discussion is focused on reviewing student data, identifying key trends, and pinpointing targeted opportunities for growth, all with a shared focus on Moving the Needle for student achievement.



Royal Live Oaks Senior Earns Prestigious Scholarship

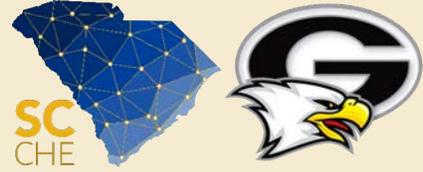
Congratulations to Jhoelle Osbourne, a senior at Royal Live Oaks Academy of the Arts and Sciences in Hardeeville, for being named one of just twenty-one public school students statewide to receive a scholarship from the South Carolina Association of Title I Administrators. Her personal experience, academic achievement, involvement in extracurricular activities, and strong letters of recommendation all contributed to this well-earned honor. We are excited to see what she accomplishes next!



Gray Collegiate Academy Goes Above and Beyond in FAFSA Completion

Gray Collegiate Academy earned the Early Bird Award for the FAFSA (Free application for Federal Student Aid) First Challenge from the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education. This award recognizes Gray Collegiate due to their high school having the highest number of FAFSA applications completed by February 1.

FAFSA is an annual form to apply for federal, state and institutional financial aid for college or career school. This initiative aims to increase FAFSA completion across South Carolina and celebrate schools that go above and beyond in promoting college and career readiness. Last year, Gray Collegiate received a 100% graduation rate on the State Report Card and currently has a 97.1% College or Career Readiness rating, ranking in the Top 1% of schools in the state. Congratulations to Gray Collegiate Academy for leading the way and helping students take an important step toward their future!



A Crowned Achievement: Charter School Ambassador Wins Big

Congratulations to Charter School Ambassador Emerson Hendrix for winning Miss Independence and Best Interview at the Miss Patriot Pageant! Miss Hendrix represented American Leadership Academy Lexington with confidence, poise and grace. Her outstanding achievement continues to demonstrate how Charter Ambassadors are producing excellence in schools across the state.



Charter Institute at Erskine Announces Global Partnership with The KED Network to Benefit Children in South Carolina



In January of 2026, The Charter Institute at Erskine (the Institute) created an historic formal international partnership with the Kunskapsskolan Network (KED), a global community of more than 100 schools across Sweden, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, India, and the Middle East. The international partnership connects the Institute to a worldwide network of innovative schools that emphasize personalized learning and student-centered education, while advancing a particular focus on excellence in mathematics.

With a shared belief in personalized education, this new partnership creates a dynamic exchange between the Institute and KED schools in Sweden, the UK, the Netherlands, India, and Saudi Arabia. Through this collaboration, educators will share instructional practices, research, and resources to strengthen outcomes for students both locally and globally.



In April, KED educators and researchers from around the world will visit Institute charter school classrooms to learn alongside South Carolina educators. Institute leaders will also engage directly with KED schools abroad. This exchange will give educators the chance to learn how certain school cultures affect learning outcomes, while also identifying new strategies to improve educational outcomes for students in South Carolina and in KED schools globally.

“KED schools put a primary emphasis on school and student culture. This approach is time proven to drive positive academic outcomes for children,” said Superintendent and CEO of the Charter Institute at Erskine, Cameron Runyan. “Too often in the United States, the emphasis is on outcomes without addressing the underlying cultural imperatives that make positive outcomes possible. KED re-orient that approach and the results speak for themselves.”

The Kunskapsskolan schools are among the highest-performing public schools of choice in Sweden. The success of the KED Program can be judged not only by students’ performance, but also by the expansion of KED schools across international boundaries and their competition on a global scale.



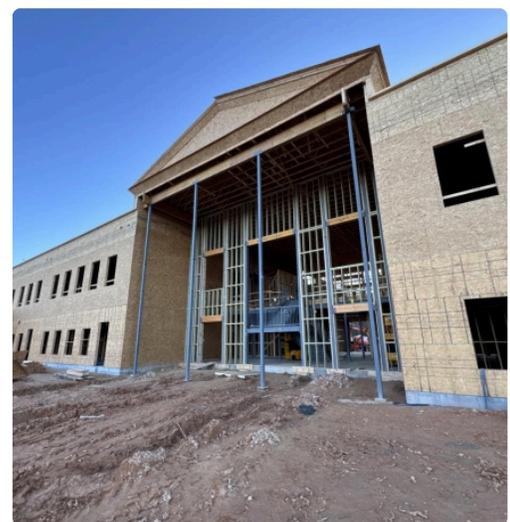
Pipeline Schools Update

As the summer approaches, a number of the Institute's pipeline schools are gaining momentum in their local communities. American Leadership Academy Blythewood, Legacy Traditional Schools - Columbia, and Libertas Academy Woodruff will open as new schools of choice in South Carolina this fall.

American Leadership Academy is making a big impression in the Blythewood community. The school is building strong connections with families and local partners through community engagement that continues to grow as more families learn about the school's academic programs and culture. Multiple Meet the Director events and Information Sessions drew close to 150 people each this past month. Parent interest and enrollment applications are steadily increasing as the facility prepares to serve almost 3,000 students. For more information, please visit www.alaschools.org/sc/blythewood-k-12.

Legacy Traditional Schools - Columbia celebrated the official start of construction on their new facility in October. The school has continued to gain strong support from the Northeast Columbia community. Enrollment has been steadily increasing, driven by the dedication and leadership of Dr. Lauren Prochak and the Legacy Traditional Schools South Carolina team. Family meetings, Parent Information Nights, and seasonal events have helped foster meaningful connections among families. For more information, please visit www.southcarolina.legacytraditional.org/columbia.

After celebrating the groundbreaking ceremony in October, construction at Libertas Academy Woodruff has continued to move forward at a rapid pace. The impressive progress on campus reflects the impact of the partnership with the City of Woodruff, which has played an important role in advancing the 70,000-square-foot facility project smoothly and efficiently. As the building takes form, interest from families continues to grow, with tours now available for prospective parents. Open enrollment remains available through March 15, 2026. For more information, please visit www.libertaswoodruff.education.



Originally published in the Post and Courier on February 5, 2026

The Post and Courier

School Choice Helped Me Thrive

By Lilly Wilson

School choice is often discussed in terms of programs, policies, and numbers. For students like me, it is personal. Behind every decision is a student, a family, and a future shaped by access to the right educational environment.

I began my academic career in a traditional in-person school where I made progress but struggled to fully engage. I was hesitant to ask questions, unsure how to advocate for myself, and often felt my learning style did not align with the classroom environment. I did not yet realize what was missing: a personalized education designed around how I learn best.

The pandemic forced a change. When I transitioned to online charter learning, my family and I discovered virtual education was not just an alternative—it was the right choice for me. Online learning allowed me to focus, stay motivated, and take ownership of my education. I managed my time, followed a flexible schedule, and pursued leadership through clubs and activities. Learning became engaging, exciting, and personalized.

School choice was also about safety. My mother and I live with autoimmune diseases, and attending school in person posed serious health risks. Virtual education provided both security and high-quality learning.

At Cyber Academy of South Carolina, I thrived. I will graduate in 2028 with my high school diploma and an Associate's degree through dual enrollment. I serve in leadership roles, participate in honor societies, and represent my school as a Charter Institute at Erskine *Charter School Ambassador*.

School choice protects students' futures.



NATIONAL
SchoolChoice
WEEK

A Bold Build Begins at Harrisburg Global Academy

Harrisburg Global Academy (HGA) officially broke ground on Wednesday, February 18, on its permanent campus in Indian Land, SC. This event was a major milestone for the new public charter school and the local community it will serve. The new campus is designed to support HGA's mission to focus on differentiation to improve outcomes for each individual student. The school will deliver high-quality instruction with an emphasis on Spanish language development and STEM education.

Leadership, community members, and local supporters gathered at 1774 Harrisburg Road to celebrate the start of construction on the new three-story facility. The building will house all classrooms and laboratories, along with a combined café and gymnasium. The world class facility will provide a centralized and modern learning environment for students.

“This groundbreaking represents more than the start of construction. It reflects the vision and commitment of a community that believes in expanding educational opportunity for families in the greater Fort Mill and Indian Land community,” said Jennifer Lucas, Chief Academic Officer of Alliance Education Services. “We are excited to see this permanent home take shape and to provide a space where all students can thrive academically and develop leadership skills they need for the future.”

Harrisburg Global Academy is scheduled to open in Fall 2026, initially serving grades K–6 and expanding to grades K–8 at full enrollment. As a tuition-free, public charter school, HGA is committed to providing families with an innovative educational choice in Lancaster County.

For more information, please visit @HarrisburgGlobalAcademy on Facebook.



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A Message from Superintendent Runyan

As an Institute family, we walk with one another both in times of joy and also during seasons of tragedy and hurt. Today, we are asking for your support for the family of a dear friend and school leader, Ms. Deirdre McCullough. Recently, Ms. McCullough's oldest daughter tragically lost her husband, and she is now facing the unimaginable task of caring for their three children, aged 3, 5 and 8, on her own.

If you would like to help, contributions can be sent for the family's benefit to **@erskinecharters** on Venmo. Thank you in advance for your support.

Charter Institute at Erskine...

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