**QEP Statement on the Racist Comments of Andrea Pruitt**

This past week, Andrea Pruitt, the spouse of Andy Pruitt, the Director of Communications for CCSD, posted racist and racially inappropriate messages on social media, contrasting students at Burke High School who were attending school without air conditioning to “kids in Africa [who] walk across mountain ranges, barefoot in hundred degree heat dodging herds of elephants and lions to get to school.” She claimed the situation was a “first world problem” and “instead of blowing your top, grab some bottled water and bring it to school.”

Not only did Mrs. Pruitt’s statement lack any type of understanding of the social and political realities of the continent of Africa, the fact that she drew on racist stereotypes to discourage concerned teachers, students, parents, and advocates from complaining about a lack of air conditioning was inherently racist and harmful.

While Mrs. Pruitt is not employed by the district, her use of social media and her intimate relationship with a CCSD administrator to advocate a position related to the governance of CCSD is highly problematic. Such callous and careless statements perpetuate a racist culture surrounding the governance of our schools.

This statement proves once again the findings of the Avery Research Center’s racial disparities report and the recent Clemson diversity report (which cost taxpayers $135,000 and merely confirms the findings of the Avery Research Center). These reports have iterated what many teachers, students, parents, and advocates already know – our schools are segregated and racism continues to denigrate the quality of education children receive in Charleston County.

The Quality Education Project (QEP) finds the tepid response issued by CCSD to be inadequate given the seriousness of the situation. QEP strongly feels the superintendent and the Charleston County School Board should publicly recognize in a more thorough manner that someone close to the administration of schools issued a racist statement on social media and that such statements perpetuate a racist culture for which CCSD has been widely criticized. QEP also feels that the Superintendent and the Charleston County School Board should explain how they plan to address this situation (or what they have already done to address it) and how they intend to eradicate the racist culture that adversely impacts the education of all children in Charleston County.