Slide 1:

I am a proud Charlottean. My family has deep roots here. One grandfather ran a pawn shop on S. Tryon, another grandfather was the founding minister of Trinity Presbyterian Church on Providence Road. My parents both attended Myers Park high school, my siblings and I attended South Mecklenburg.

Slide 2:

My daughter will be part of the CMS graduating class of 2032.

I share this because this topic is deeply personal to me. We researchers love to tout our objectivity, and objectivity is a difficult task with work like this. At a public forum a few months ago I was asked if I thought Charlotte could be the next St. Louis or Baltimore. I think my love for our community shaded my response. I responded that I think our communities are different. But, after looking at the data, I'm not so convinced.

Slide 3:

This graphic is pulled directly from an article about School Segregation in Ferguson. The author focused on a quote from Michael Brown's mom just days after his death where she talked about how hard it was to get a black man to graduate.

A mother is grieving for her son, and her statement is about the difficulty of black men graduating in her community.

But her comment is understandable when you look at school achievement data from her son's district.

There are over 20 districts in St. Louis County. This chart represents two. The dark blue bars represent the white students in Clayton, a majority white district close to Normandy school district, where Michael Brown graduated from.

The light blue bars show the proficiency of black students in Clayton.

Like many districts, there is a large achievement gap between black and white students.

The little green bars show the proficiency of students in Normandy. The key says Black Normandy students, but all students in Normandy are black, so that text really isn't needed. It is a hypersegregated district of poverty.

Slide 4:

We know that residential segregation is strongly correlated with schooling outcomes. So this data isn't a surprise.

St. Louis is one of the most racially segregated areas in the country.

Segregation negatively impacts achievement, and long-term outcomes of students. And St. Louis' segregation dot map is stark.

Slide 5:

This map shows the concentration of Black students in St. Louis County districts.

St. Louis City has 43,000 students

Rockwood School District has 25,000 students

The smaller districts have a few thousand students each.

So essentially, this group of districts serves the same amount of students in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, around 170,000 school-age children.

So here's a piece of trivia for everyone. How many school districts did our county have in 1958?

Yes, 4. White county, White city, Black county, Black city

Without decisions made by forward thinking civic leaders and voters, through a referendum, that consolidated our 4 districts in 1 in 1959, this could be Mecklenburg County.

Instead of 1 district, we could be like many counties around the country who have 20-30 districts in the same area as our 1 large country-wide district.

As my Presbyterian Minister grandfather used to say, "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

We could have a district like Normandy in our county.

Slide 6:

Now we turn to our data.

Like Clayton, the majority white district, we too have significant gaps between white and black students.

Slide 7:

Our residential segregation map isn't as stark as St. Louis'. But, it's still glaring.

You can overly this map and map any outcome, and the map generally stays the same.

I'm sure you have heard it referred to as the crescent of poverty and the wedge of wealth.

Slide 8:

The next few maps I'm going to show you are all from the Quality of Life Explorer, a free online interactive research tool that is the product of a collaboration between UNC Charlotte, the city, and county.

This shows Births to adolescents. Darker the area, the more the births.

Slide 9:

Residential foreclosures, again, darker the area, the more foreclosures.

The crescent is visible

Slide 10:

Energy consumption. Darker the color, higher the consumption.

Sorry, I couldn't resist this one. I grew up in the South Charlotte, so I feel like I can poke some fun.

Slide 11:

Household income.

Slide 12:

Black County residents

Slide 13:

And, this is the one that keeps me up at night. This is almost an exact overlay of the racial and socioeconomic composition of our county.

The darker the color, the higher the proficiency.

Like St. Louis, our children's neighborhood is becoming their academic destiny.

Slide 14:

So now we return to these little green bars. I want to draw attention to the difference in English scores. 95% proficiency for white students in Clayton, 62% for Black Clayton students, and 34% for Normandy students.

Slide 15:

Our bars are similar. This is also proficiency data, but unlike the other data you have seen, this data looks at student proficiency, by school-level composition. This is 3rd grade reading proficiency.

The dark blue bar is an average of the 10 most racially isolated white schools in the districts (more than 72% of students are white).

The light blue bar is an average of the 10 most racially balanced schools in the districts (white students comprise around 30% of student body),

and the little green bar is the average 3rd grade proficiency of the 10 most racially isolated non-white schools in the district.

These are the hypersegrated schools in our district. The Normandy schools. There are so few white students, that we can't report white proficiency.

This data appears straightforward. Predominantly White schools are higher performing for all students. Racially balanced schools do okay, and hypersegregated schools are low performing. But, any data at the aggregate level can be misleading.

Slide 16:

This slide uses the same data. Instead of looking at students at the district level, this looks at groups of students within schools that have different racial composition.

There is no achievement gap in the racially isolated non-white school. That is because there are too few white students to include.

The black/white achievement gap is substantial in other schools, but the gap is smallest in the racially balanced schools.

You might notice that we have almost the same ratio here as when we compare Clayton and Normandy. 90% of white students are proficient, around 60% of black students (whether they are in racially isolated white schools or racially balanced schools) and around 30% of students are proficient when they are in hypersegregated schools.

These data demonstrate that we have Normandy schools in our district, they are just hidden within the averages.

Slide 17:

When you add gender into this analysis, another picture emerges.

If you look at the aggregate, the gender differences look benign. Females tend to be higher achieving across the board.

But when you add race, significant differences emerge, note the 12 point gap between black females and black males.

Slide 18:

When you look specifically at the intersection of all these differences, they compound.

This data doesn't show proficiency, it shows achievement gaps. -- Race by Gender by school level racial composition.

Quick Translation, racially isolated white schools exacerbate achievement gaps. Particularly for black males.

Slide 19:

Just to reiterate. This is not St. Louis. This is Charlotte. our data is similar.

Because we are 1 district, and not 20 or 30 independent districts, our data masks the poor outcomes of the students being served within the hypersegregated schools in our community.

We have Clayton Schools AND Normandy Schools in our district. While this is a challenge, this is an incredible opportunity. Unlike St. Louis county, we have the ability to have diverse schools because of our countywide district.

A preponderence of evidence demonstrates that racially and socio-economically segregated schools harm children. And by harming children and limiting the potential of children, segregated schools harm communities.

Segregated schools are disproportionately characterized by concentrated educational disadvantage, including: inadequate facilities, less access to rigorous coursework, particularly STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) coursework, less access to extracurricular activities, poor teacher quality, lower academic performance, lower high school graduation rates and lower college completion rates.

The outcomes are clear, Segregated schools don't work, yet the majority of school improvement strategies are based on making segregated schools work better.

There are a handful of schools, some in our community, that are segregated schools of poverty and high-performing, but they are rare and difficult to scale.

Slide 20:

While segregation and isolation harms children. The literature is clear that diverse schools benefit all children. Yes, **all** children. My white, middle class child, will benefit.

Slide 21:

There are also non-academic benefits.

Perhaps the most important is that graduates of diverse schools are more likely to work and live in integrated environments. Therefore, stopping the cycle of segregation.

Slide 22:

While the literature is clear that desegregated schools do not harm any group of children, **there are disproportionate benefits to poor children and children of color.**

Here I have highlighted the work of Rucker Johnson, a Berkeley economist. UNC Charlotte is bringing him to town in November, and everyone should come and hear him speak.

He uses large national datasets to look at long-term outcomes of graduates of desegregated schools. His work has found that school desegregation significantly increased both educational and occupational attainments, college quality, adult earnings, reduced the probability of incarceration, and improved adult health status.

His work quantified the individual impact of desegregation. He found that

- 5 years of integrated schools increased the earnings of black adults by 25%.

- The effect on health of a five-year exposure to school desegregation is equivalent to being 7 years younger

Slide 23:

The height of desegregation efforts in our country coincided with the period of the most dramatic narrowing of the black-white achievement gap ever recorded. Scholars do not attribute this simply to desegregation as it was likely due to several initiatives enacted in the 60s and 70s. Such gains have been lost in the past twenty years.

new evidence from the Stanford economist Sean Reardon shows that the income achievement gap is now nearly twice as large as the black-white achievement gap.

50 years ago, this was almost the reverse.

This means that while racial segregation is important, poverty matters. And any effort to improve school quality, should focus on avoiding hyper segregated schools of poverty.

And our community's demographics make this challenging, but not impossible.

(Income achievement gap is defined in his work as the average achievement difference between a child at the 90th percentile of the family income distribution and a child from a family at the 10th percentile)

Slide 24:

I want to be clear, I do not think the literature supports a return to a countywide desegregation plan like that mandated under *Swann*.

There are serious challenges inherent in desegregated schooling. Research is clear that desegregation is not a silver bullet.

But, it appears to work better than anything else we've tried.

In many ways for our community, desegregation was a rejected success.

Slide 25:

Our dramatic imbalance of race and socio-economic status is new.

And, Our children are increasingly isolated.

And this matters. Mainly because **School effect trumps family effect.**

the racial and poverty composition of schools affects student outcomes, NET of student and family influences.

For White children this matters because America is browning, and white students can only learn cultural competencies by learning alongside people who are not white. Our workplaces are not all white.

Nationally, white students are the most racially isolated.

Slide 26:

Our imbalance is new, and has occurred in the past 15 years.

Each dot represents a school that is 80% or more FRL and 80% or more students of color.

Slide 27:

When I was going through school, my schools were typically 50ish% white and 40% Black—there was a very small Latino or Asian population at that time.

Now we are living in what some have called a technicolor period. There are 175 languages spoken by CMS students in their homes. The proportion of CMS students who are white is half what it was when I was in school in the '80s and '90s. These changes aren't because of white flight or private school enrollment. This shift is because of shifting birthrates and people moving here.

Slide 28:

The number of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch has risen, which isn't surprising given the increase in poverty rates our community has seen since 2000.

Such demographics are certainly challenging, but as you can see above, we have the numbers, and therefore the opportunity, to reduce and possibly eliminate hypersegregated schools of poverty in our district.

Slide 29:

Rates of imbalance are helpful in making comparisons because such rates take into effect a districts population.

Of the ten largest districts in NC, we are now the most imbalanced by race and the most imbalanced by socio-economic status.

Slide 30:

Our district was not always this way.

This change is particularly stark when compared with Wake County. Whereas Charlotte-Mecklenburg adopted a choice-based student assignment plan in the 1990s, Wake County has taken a different path, and uses a **voluntary** student assignment plan to prevent isolation. There is a great book titled, "Why There are No Bad Schools in Raleigh." And this is largely because Wake County does not have any racially or economically isolated schools.

Slide 31:

In contrast, our isolation worsens each year.

Though we were once considered a national model for desegregation, we are now close to reaching levels of segregation that existed prior to Swann.

Slide 32:

The number of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch has risen, which isn't surprising given the increase in poverty rates our community has seen since 2000.

Such demographics are certainly challenging, but as you can see above, we have the numbers, and therefore the opportunity, to reduce and possibly eliminate hypersegregated schools of poverty in our district.

Slide 33:

You might have noticed that this is the first time I have used the word busing in this presentation.

That's because this conversation isn't about busing. We bussed to segregate. We bussed to desegregate. And we bus more now, than we did at the height of desegregation in 1984.

These data are from the Department of Public Instruction. This is the number of miles driven by school busses in CMS, divided by the average daily membership, annually.

The conversation clearly isn't about cost savings associated with not busing for desegregation. There aren't any. We now bus for choice.

You will notice that busing actually increased following the end of the mandatory desegregation plan and the start of the neighborhood based plan in 2002. This largely has to do with the increased use of magnet schools in the district, particularly county-wide magnet schools that have large transportation costs.

Slide 34:

Some families in our community have an array of schooling choices.

Around 1 in 4 schools in CMS are partial or full magnets. Our magnet schools are the highest performing and most diverse schools in the district.

In 2014-2015, more than 30000 students were served by private schools and charter schools in Mecklenburg County.

In 2011, the General Assembly eliminated a 100-school maximum for Charter Schools in NC. Since that time, Mecklenburg County has seen one of the fastest Charter school expansions in the state. Mecklenburg had 13 Charter schools in 2012, this year we have 25.

Slide 35:

These choices are changing over time. The market share for CMS has stayed fairly steady. Fewer families are choosing private schools, but more families are choosing charter schools.

Charter school enrollment has increased 585% in the past 15 years.

Charter schools are some of the most segregated schools in the state.

(In 2012, of 13 schools in our county, 70% of charter schools were segregated, 5 were more than 80% white. 4 schools were more than 90% black.)

 The cumulative impact of these choices means that thousands of families are choosing school options that further isolate their children.

Slide 36:

So now in our community, we have those who were the children of segregation, some who are in the room right now. We have the children of desegregation, including myself. And now, we have the children of choice. I use this word with a great deal of irony, because the children who are in the hyper-segregated schools in our district, the Normandy schools, the schools where I spent the majority of my career, they have no choice.

While there are benefits to diverse schools, perhaps the greatest reason to advocate for diverse schools is to avoid the harm that occurs with isolation.

Overcoming the accumulated disadvantage that occurs with hyper-segregation is expensive.

Right now our school improvement strategy has been to use extra resources to compensate for the challenges that come with segregation. B**ut funding our way out of segregation does not have a strong record of success.**

Slide 37:

This is a scatterplot, and it shows the relationship between students who are proficient, and free/reduced lunch status.

There is a strong negative relationship. This means that it is possible to predict a child's proficiency, with a good level of accuracy, based on their free/reduced lunch status.

Slide 38:

This scatterplot that shows the relationship between per pupil expenditure and students qualifying for free/reduced lunch.

There is a moderate positive relationship. This means that schools that have a high level of students who qualify for free/reduced lunch status receive more money, per pupil.

Slide 39:

This is a scatterplot that shows the relationship between student who are proficient and per pupil expenditure.

There is a strong negative relationship. This means that schools that have high per pupil expenditure have low performance.

This series of scatterplots shows us what the literature and anecdotal evidence has shown us, we cannot fund our way out of hypersegregation. This is not a problem money can solve. Money is necessary, but insufficient.

Slide 40:

Student assignment in 2016 brings an opportunity for our community. We can take a good look at the research, the literature, and the inputs and outcomes of schools in our community, and we can make choices.

We can choose to avoid isolation.

This choice doesn't come with a prescription.

There are hundreds of districts across the United States that have a voluntary student assignment plan that prioritizes diversity. These communities have chosen to avoid isolation.

Each district does this in a different way. No plan is the same. Our neighbors 3 hours up 85 choose to use a controlled choice plan that relies heavily on magnet schools, school siting, and busing. Montgomery County, MD, one of the most diverse and highest performing schools districts in the US does not use busing at all. Their community came together decades ago and instituted housing policies that supported their community and their schools. Decades later, these policies have supported a vibrant economy and diverse high-performing schools.

There are countless models to learn from and options yet to be imagined.

Slide 41:

Everyone in this room has choices.

First, Share this story and this data.

Second, Support and encourage people in the arena. Support our district. Our leaders in CMS are making difficult decisions each day in an increasingly complex fiscal and political environment. CMS remains one of the highest performing urban districts in the nation. Always keep in mind that this issue is a community issue, not a school issue.

Third, Advocate for policies that avoid isolation

Fourth, Focus on the most obvious of individual choices. Seek out diverse schools for your children. They exist. Or make one. My daughter will attend diverse schools K-12th grade.

Lastly, Vote. Never underestimate the power of our democracy. Votes matter.

Slide 42:

All of our choices matter.

Thank you.