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Don't Blink. A Nation Proud of Its Schools is Closer Than You Think.

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I'm not an avid fan of Kenny Chesney. He warned me—"don't blink"—and I didn't listen; I blinked and the Network grew up. NTAC 2016, which was a bit like having a "family meeting" around the dining room table with about 2000 family members, opened my eyes in more than one way.

One of the most profound and proud moments was a convening of all of the South Carolina schools in the Network, hosted by our state partner, the [Riley](https://riley.furman.edu/)

[Institute at Furman University \(https://riley.furman.edu/\)](https://riley.furman.edu/).

Courtenay Nantz, Project Director for the US DOE Investing in Innovation Development Grant that helped position the first two NTN schools in the state, captured the moment best: "It was so exciting, especially when I think back to our very first NTAC in 2012, to be in a room filled with 100+ South Carolina New Tech leaders, facilitators, and administrators! We are all working

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mon goal, and this fall will see 10 New

stricts in our state. This wouldn't have happened without the strong partnerships between the schools, the New Tech Network, KnowledgeWorks, and the Riley Institute, embracing the challenge of preparing our students for success in careers and in life."

As I reflect on the growth of the South Carolina Network between NTAC 2012 and NTAC 2016, I am struck by how far we have come from "two schools and a dream" in 2012. That dream, of a robust, vibrant, active network of schools learning from and collaborating with one another from all points of the state to improve student learning, became reality. The excited chatter and warm reconnecting was a powerful reminder that dreams matter.

In a short time, South Carolina has become a place where New Tech schools come to learn. From hosting our largest professional learning convening to date last January to hosting our [Leadership Summit](#)

(<http://www.newtechnetwork.org/engage/events/leadership-summit-fall-0>) this November, our South Carolina schools are a shining example of how a commitment to adult learning is having an impact on student accomplishment. Trust me friends, [a nation proud of its public schools](#) (<http://www.newtechnetwork.org/blog/ambitious-plan-make-nation-proud-its-public-schools>) is closer than you think...so don't blink.



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