September 30, 2021

White & Story LLC 3614 Landmark Drive Columbia, SC 29204

Dear Trustees of School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties,

Please accept this letter of interest, the attached resume, and letters of recommendation as my application for the position of Superintendent of School District Five of Lexington & Richland Counties. My objective as Superintendent is to establish, implement, and lead an educational system designed to prepare the students to meet the economic, social, and educational needs of our community. As interim superintendent, I have worked tirelessly to unify the School District Five community through a single vision. With a united voice, the employees of our community decided our vision was to "Love and Grow Our Students." I am excited about the opportunity to lead the school district in accomplishing this vision through the alignment of vision and mission. I am excited about the opportunity to engage our community to strengthen the educational outcomes of our children.

As principal of Chapin High School, I have exhibited leadership in the areas student achievement, teacher development, educational policy & practice, management, and school culture. My experience as an educator is unique. I have served on the faculty in two very different public-school settings—a high poverty, low achievement school and a low poverty high achievement school. The lessons learned in these two schools provide confidence in my ability to meet varied educational and operational needs of School District Five. As an executive coach at a high poverty, rural high school, I created systems and procedures for the administrative team which resulted in a 3% increase in graduation rates during a pandemic school year. I have a passion for coaching school leaders. As an adjunct professor at the University of South Carolina, I was awarded the 2020 College of Education Adjunct Professor of the Year. I am most proud of the school programs and the award-winning school culture that has brought many awards to Chapin High School. I seek the opportunity to bring these results to all schools for all families in your school district.

With this experience, I intend to focus staff development efforts on meeting the individual needs of twenty-first century learners. District Five has a tradition of excellence, and I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss my educational philosophy, qualifications and plans to provide excellence for all students.

Sincerely.

Akil E. Ross, Sr., Ed.D.

Akil E. Ross

Educational Background

	A CALL DAY OF THE PARTY OF THE	Major Contraction
12 Unive	ersity of South Carolina	Curriculum Studies
09 South	Carolina State University	Educational Administration
05 Unive	ersity of South Carolina	Educational Administration
02 Duke	University	Political Science
	University	University of South Carolina South Carolina State University University of South Carolina

Professional Experience		
2018-present	Education Consultant, HeartEd LLC Interim Superintendent of School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties (July 1, 2021 – present) Executive Coach for Marlboro County High School Administrative Team (2020 – 2021 School Year)	
2018-present	Adjunct Professor, University of South Carolina EDLP 700 Introduction to Educational Administration EDLP 701 School Leadership	
7/2018-12/2018	Director of Secondary Education, School District Five of Lexington & Richland Counties	
2010-2018	Principal, Chapin High School, SC	
2005-2010	Assistant Principal, Chapin High School, SC	
2002-2005	Social Studies Teacher, Eau Claire High School, SC	
Honors April 2002	Rockefeller Brothers (Woodrow Wilson) Fund Fellow for Aspiring Teachers of Color	
June 2011	Superintendent's Award- Exemplary Leadership	

October 2017	SCASA State Principal of the Year
March 2017	The State 20 Under 40, Class of 2017
January 2018	Midlands 50 Most Influential, Business Monthly Columbia
October 2018	NASSP National Principal of the Year
Fall 2018	Outstanding Black Alumnus Award
Spring 2020	UofSC College of Education Adjunct Professor of the Year

Certification - Leadership Professional

Current Status:

Social Studies, Secondary Principal, Secondary Supervisor, Superintendent

Relevant Professional Experience

2015 – 2018	At-Large Member, Executive Committee of the South Carolina High School League
2017 - present	Palmetto's Finest Selection Committee Member
2017- 2020	Faculty Member of the Center for Executive Education Leadership (CEEL)
2016- 2017	Chair, District 7770 Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA)
2017	State Department Tapping Executive Educators
2020 - 2021	Governor's appointment to the accelerateSC taskforce

Publications

Blog Post

Ross, A. (April 2018). Are your students life ready? National Association for Secondary School Principals. https://blog.nassp.org/2018/04/19/are-your-students-life-ready/

Book

Ross, A. (2019). Empowering the heart, Reviving & renewing today's education. Chapin, SC: Youthlight Inc.



September 29, 2021

Dear District Five of Lexington & Richland Counties Board of Members,

It is my distinct privilege and honor to write this letter of recommendation for Dr. Akil Ross for the position of Superintendent of District Five of Lexington & Richland Counties. Dr. Ross is an incredible leader as he was named 2018 NASSP National Principal of the Year as he closed the achievement gap plus focused on the social and emotional learning of the students by coining the phrase "a thousand passions, one heartbeat." As an inspirational leader, he genuinely cared about the students, the staff, the teachers, and the community. In addition to impacting District Five, Dr. Ross was recognized by the University of South Carolina College of Education with the Outstanding Black Alumnus Award for his contributions to the entire field of education.

As a professor and the Program Coordinator in Educational Leadership and Policies at USC, I am responsible for training and preparing future principals and superintendents in the state. Dr. Ross's contributions as an affiliate professor in the program at USC has been so valuable as he was instrumental in assisting the program through the national accreditation process and by bringing a practical perspective to the preparation programs. Dr. Ross's courses are the cornerstones of the program as he lays the foundation for school leadership as he teaches the students to reflect and to grow from their shortcomings as administrative interns. On Dr. Ross's course evaluations, he always receives the highest score possible, and students comment that he has inspired them and helped them to grow as leaders. At USC, he was recognized as an outstanding professor that he won the Adjunct Professor Award in 2019.

I value Dr. Ross's opinion and knowledge as he has been a thought partner for me. He has helped to build the best principal and superintendent preparation program in South Carolina. He is a visionary which is so necessary in leadership as no one has lead through a pandemic before.

As a parent in Lexington Five, I firmly believe that Dr. Ross possesses the qualities and characteristics needed to bring this hurt community together. The entire school district needs healing and even though there is no road map to pulling everyone together, Dr. Ross has that unique ability to make each faction feel heard and valued. I highly recommend Dr. Akil Ross as Superintendent.

Sincerely,

Suzy Hardie, PhD

Educational Leadership and Policies Professor



Mayor Barry A. Walker, Sr.

September 29, 2021

To the Trustees of School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties:

I am honored to provide a letter of recommendation for Dr. Akil Ross. When citizens expressed their concerns with me and the Irmo Town Council about the supervision of children in the community and the increase in juvenile criminal incidents, I made the decision to find a positive solution. Instead of rounding up young people and putting them into the Juvenile Justice system, I partnered with Dr. Akil Ross and created a Youth Zone Program in the Irmo community.

The program Dr. Ross created in Irmo has quickly become a positive way to help reach kids in our community. Those kids were wasting time after school and causing trouble for residents in Irmo's Beacon Hill and other areas close to the Harbison Garden Apartments. Since the program began several months ago, juvenile crime in those area have been drastically reduced.

Dr. Akil Ross founded the HeartEd Youth Zone and partnered with Rev. Alonzo Johnson of Universal Outreach Church, Harbison Community Association, Harbison Garden Apartments (Wishrock Management) and the Town of Irmo. He efforts have made real the promise that "It takes a village to raise a child". The Youth Zone formula originated with Dr. Akil Ross and his HeartEd Youth Zone nonprofit organization. Being the former principal of Chapin High School and the 2018 National Principal of the Year, Dr. Ross attributes his home, his elementary school, and a recreational center for teaching him how to face early adversity and obstacles in his life. The Youth Zone program is the vehicle the Town of Irmo used to begin driving the children living at the Harbison Garden Apartments to after school activities. In July 2020, there were eight students enrolled in the program. Today, 80 students are eligible to attend free of charge with continued growth expected.

Currently, all children living within the Irmo Youth Zone area can attend for free. The innovative community solutions that Dr. Ross provided the Town of Irmo is exactly what School District Five needs to meet the school and community challenges we have today. Again, I recommend Dr. Akil Ross as the next superintendent of Scholl District Five of Lexington Richland School District 5.

Sincerely,

Barry A. vvalker, Sr.

Mayor of Irmo



MARLBORO COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

951 Fayetteville Avenue Extension Bennettsville, SC 29512 Office Telephone (843) 479-5900 FAX (843) 479-5916 School Website: mhs.marlboro.k12.sc.us

September 29, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter of reference for one, Dr. Akil Ross, candidate for superintendent for the Lexington Richland 5 School District. I have known Dr. Ross for a little over a year, and in that time I have grown to respect him as a man of integrity, as a compassionate leader, and as a mentor. He is an effective communicator who is down to earth and treats everyone with respect and equality.

As a tirst-year principal, in a district with one high school, during a new school year, in a different state, and in the midst of a pandemic, it was tough to navigate through these unchartered waters alone. After meeting Dr. Ross I quickly learned that I would not have to face this new experience without help. I also learned that Dr. Ross was an experienced, highly intelligent educator who was willing to step in and get his hands dirty, so to speak. Dr. Ross' support went beyond words and was reflected in his willingness to come into the building and work alongside me. Dr. Ross helped me improve the practices and procedures for teaching and learning, align curriculum and classroom practices, improve practices for data collection and interpretation, and refocus our mission on student-centered differentiation at Marlboro County High School.

I feel that Dr. Ross will be an asset to the Lexington Richland 5 School District, because he is committed to aiding in educational growth. Based on what he was able to do for Marlboro County High School in just one year, he would definitely be capable of transforming an entire district through the life of his contract. Dr. Ross is truly a transformational leader who works to understand and meet the needs of the students, staff, and community that he serves.

I strongly recommend Dr. Akil Ross to be considered for the superintendent position for the Lexington Richland 5 School District. He is an educational leader who will consider the needs of all stakeholders when making decisions and will act with best practices and best interests in mind.

If you have any questions or concems, please feel free to contact me at 843-409-3302.

Sincerely

Dr. Jamane A. Watson

Principal, Marlboro County High School

(843) 479-5900

VISION

The School District of Marlboro County will partner with all stakeholders to develop responsible citizens, lifelong learners and global leaders.

MISSION

The mission of Marlboro County School District is to provide a quality education and enable all students to achieve their highest potential.

Emily E. Berry



Dear School District Five Trustees.

It is with great pleasure that I call your attention to and recommend Dr. Akil Ross as Superintendent of School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties. I have known and worked with Dr. Ross for 7 years and cherish our professional and collaborative relationship.

Dr. Ross has demonstrated effective leadership throughout his career. Recognized for his can-do attitude that anticipates and overcomes any challenges, he created a fellowship of care and concern for students, teachers, parents and stakeholders that went beyond the brick and mortar of Chapin High School. Dr. Ross quickly became an inspiration to those around him with his consistent display and high degree of integrity, responsibility, passion, and compassion for everyone in his path. It was no surprise to anyone when he was recognized nationally, for his impact had become exponential.

As placement chair at Chapin, we often collaborated on students who were the most difficult to teach. Dr. Ross did far more than I can list in this letter to ensure our school environment was one of understanding, empathy and inclusion. He was instrumental in the creation of "The Haven", a safe and stable environment providing at-risk students with comprehensive services. His persuasive efforts recruiting committed parents, community members, staff and administration helped to create and furnish a physical space that was quiet, calm, comfortable and safe. Providing consistent access to trusted and dedicated mentors gave students latitude to not only succeed, but to thrive. Dr. Ross can solve a wide variety of puzzling situations and problems. He understands how to get things done in the world. Most importantly, he accomplishes both by nurturing and empowering those around him.

Serving as a board member for Dr. Ross's HeartEd Youth Zone has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. As a champion of all children and lover of a challenge, Dr. Ross has successfully opened an afterschool program for underprivileged children in our community. HeartEd Youth Zone supports the childrens' academic and social development in an effort to create a future where every child is enabled and equipped to contribute their talents to the world around us. No task is too small for Dr. Ross to see his vision come to life! Organizing cook-outs in affordable housing communities, knocking on doors, engaging and informing families of available opportunities, or meeting with construction crews to create study hall rooms and furniture all require what he has tenfold...determination, the ability to listen and really hear, a willingness to fight for what he believes is best for children, a humble heart, and an incredible ability to see what is uniquely wonderful about everyone he encounters.

Dr. Ross would be a phenomenal asset to any educational organization or institution of his choice, as he possesses the essential traits of a highly effective leader. His positive and enthusiastic personality make him a perfect ambassador for teachers, staff and students in all schools. He builds relationships and demonstrates commitment to every corner of District 5. He continues to be what *every* district needs in a superintendent...an advocate for the love, success and care of all stakeholders. I am happy to give him my wholehearted endorsement and highest recommendation.

Sincerely,

Emily E. Berry
Placement Chair

Chapin High School