

New D3 Early Education Center & Family Development Center

Community Response Summary

January 12, 2023

On January 12, 2023, a community meeting was held at the old James Island Middle School campus (proposed future site of the Early Education Center project). The purpose of the meeting was to inform the community about the status of the project and to receive community input for the future school. There were a total of 64 in attendance and everyone was offered the opportunity to provide comments and feedback. We received a total of 21 comment cards and emails. A synopsis of those comments are listed in this summary.

Summary of Community Comments

1. Grade level configuration concerns were expressed mostly related to Kindergarten being included in the Early Learning Center. Many teachers did not want to leave their current school. (14 comments)

Response:

CCSD was targeting the inclusion of Early Head Start through Kindergarten, as established at its first Early Education and Family Center in North Charleston, in order to better align education for our early learners. In light of comments from Kindergarten teachers and parents, we are re-assessing options for James Island.

2. Mid-year opening was a concern due to the difficulty of transitioning students and staff mid-year even if the building is ready to occupy. (6 comments)

Response:

The new D3 Early Learning & Family Development Center school opening date is August 2026. It was shared during the community meeting that since we have started the solicitation process 6 months in advance of schedule, we could potentially accommodate a mid-year opening and wanted to get public feedback. The public did not favor a mid-year opening. The opening date remains August 2026.

3. Adding more space for special needs areas such as therapy services and space for additional faculty within the design of the new facility were provided. (3 comments)

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Response:

Early school experiences are critical for all children to be successful learners. Children enrolled in early learning programs benefit from a variety of school experiences which lead to increased understanding of the world around them. One benefit for all children in early learning programs is an opportunity to receive differentiated instruction based on each child's individual needs and learning style. When data supports that a student may have a suspected disability, each school has a Child Find obligation to evaluate and if appropriate identify students who may require specialized services. Within the D3 attendance zone, CCSD has a continuum of services for children who require specialized instruction. Services include: itinerant, specialized programming (PIC-Preschool Intervention Classroom and CD Blend), as well as related services. Related service providers are allocated to schools/areas based on the service needs. We have related service providers assigned to all constituent districts. Depending on the caseload size, some providers are assigned to multiple locations. Some of our Speech-Language Pathologists have caseloads large enough in one location to warrant being there full-time. The Department of Exceptional Children reviews needs on an ongoing basis as caseloads tend to fluctuate.

4. Traffic concerns referenced the additional school location on James Island and that increasing more traffic as well as noting parents with travel issues not being able to budget another stop. (2 comments)

Response:

A traffic analysis will be performed as a standard process and requirement for building new schools. The results of the analysis will determine the traffic improvements to the area. CCSD Transportation Services is actively engaged in evaluating and helping to mitigate any need for additional bus routes to assist with parents' transportation concerns.

5. One comment requested collaboration between the CCSD Early Learning and existing ECE (licensed childcare centers).

Response:

Families have a choice when it comes to the early childhood programming that best meets the needs of their child. CCSD understands that the majority of Kindergarten students have attended early childhood programs. The goal for the D3 Early Childhood center would be to explore partnerships with local childcare providers around teacher training and community resources that may be part of the center.

6. One comment on programs like D20's daycare option for teachers and a sliding scale for the center.

Response:

Providing a fee-based program for the children of employee's could be explored depending on the demand and availability of space in this Early Childhood Center.

General Comments/Question

7. Expand more threes (e.g. Early Head Start)

Response:

In CCSD, the Head Start grant serves predominantly 3K students and Early Head Start serves children 6 weeks through 36 months. Recently, Congress approved expansion funds for Head Start grantees. Once more information is available, CCSD will investigate the feasibility of expanding Head Start in James Island and other parts of the district. Beyond Head Start and Montessori, funding and space would determine the feasibility of expanding learning opportunities for additional three year olds in District 3.

8. Early Learning Free of Charge

Response:

Early Head Start, Head Start and Child Development programs are offered free of charge to participating families.

9. What are the certification requirements for teachers?

Response:

- a. *Child Development-South Carolina Teacher Certificate in Early Childhood Education or Early Childhood Special Education*
- b. *Preschool Intervention Classroom Teacher-South Carolina Teacher certificate Early Childhood Special Education*
- c. *Head Start-Work toward or obtained a South Carolina Teacher Certificate in Early Childhood Education*
- d. *Early Head Start-Must have 1 year of work experience with groups of children in a childcare environment and possess one of the following:*
 - *Infant Toddler Child Development Associate Credential (CDA)*
 - *60 college credit hours*
 - *Associate degree*

10. What are the prospective credentials for leadership?

Response:

All elementary principals have to have elementary principal certification. Experience and interest in working with young children and their families would be critical. We would certainly keep in mind that this position would be for an early childhood center and keep that in mind when we progress through the hiring process for this position.

11. Harbor View Bus Loop will be improved as a result of move students from the building to the new center.

Response:

The bus loop at Harbor View, James Island Elementary, and Stiles Point Elementary will improve when moving a number of students from the current school to the future new Early Learning Center. Currently, there are 2 Child Development (CD) classes at Harbor View, 4 CD and 2 Head Start classes at James Island ES, and 2 CD classes at Stiles Point ES; which totals 184 students moving to the future new ELC. This impact would reduce the current car rider line at the existing schools.

12. Concerns with moving Harbor View Kindergarten teachers to the new facility.

Response:

We are continuing to have conversations about which kindergarten classes will be moved over to the Early Learning Center, if any.