

**For Immediate Release**

May 5, 2023

**Contact:**

Andy Pruitt 843-937-6583

## Media Release

### **EL Education curriculum brings learning to life and boosts SC READY scores**

#### Office of Communications

---

**Donald R. Kennedy, Sr.**  
Superintendent of Schools

**Anita Huggins**  
Deputy Superintendent

**Vanessa Denney, M.Ed.**  
Interim Executive Director of  
Communications

**Charleston, SC** – In August 2021, elementary and middle schools in Charleston County School District's (CCSD) [Acceleration Schools Learning Community](#) implemented EL Education, a reading curriculum designed to engage students, get them reading at grade level, and fully prepare them for the following school year. These schools, part of a multi-year initiative designed to help Charleston County students thrive, provided teachers with multi-day training on the new curriculum, practices, and standards. Teachers also received ongoing resources and one-on-one support to implement the new, high-quality coursework in their elementary and middle school classrooms.

Implementation of the EL curriculum led to gains on SC READY test scores. English Language Arts results improved by 7.5% from 13.8% in 2021 to 21.3% in 2022. With those impressive results spurred by the success of EL, 10 additional Charleston County schools implemented EL into their curriculum in January 2022. Now, the majority of elementary and middle schools in CCSD are using the EL coursework.

"I saw first-hand how this curriculum can help students fall in love with reading and writing and leave them feeling confident in their abilities," said Alexandra Balcom, fourth grade teacher at Chicora Elementary School. "With Acceleration Schools leading the charge on high-level, high-achievement curriculum, the schools will continue to offer students the world-class education they deserve that will prepare them for the next grade level and beyond."

The EL curriculum is designed to immerse students beyond simply reading a text and answering questions on a test. The program seeks to engage learners and teach them additional skills, including conversation, critical thinking, public speaking, and more - competencies they can implement into other subjects and the real world.

Since the implementation of EL, teachers have seen more student engagement with lessons and an increase in subject mastery.

“As a result of using the EL curriculum, I am proud to say that I am a classroom facilitator rather than the main speaker,” said Erin Carrino, fourth grade teacher at W.B. Goodwin Elementary School. “I ask questions and guide students as they become active participants and leaders in their learning.”

“Initially, my students gave significant pushback, tears were shed, and there was a lot of negative self-talk,” added Balcom. “However, due to the format consistency, students began to feel confident and comfortable. I watched a student go from refusing to take the Mid-Unit 1 Assessment to calling himself the ‘persevere king.’ EL is designed to [challenge students] in a way that yields success.”

EL was selected as Acceleration Schools’ curriculum thanks in part to its high rating on [EdReports](#), rigorous coursework, and impressive results in other schools. It operates on a module, hourly lesson system, and each unit builds off prior units to help students confidently approach new tasks using the foundational knowledge they developed.

Each grade participates in a module that focuses on reading texts. Kindergarten through second grade participates in an additional Skills Block, which focuses on foundational skills for reading and comprehension—baseline skills to support students as they enter the next grade level. All Block is for the third through fifth graders, which offers greater independence for students to master what they learned in the text and encourages them to look beyond the text and dig deeper into the content, what it means, and their interpretation. At the end of each module, students participate in a performance task, taking their understanding of the text to the next level. Students are asked to rewrite a scene in a story, write and present a poem, imagine and describe a toy, or complete other assignments that take their learning beyond the text.

“The way EL has positively impacted my students is something I never thought possible in such a short time,” noted Anna Grillo, third grade teacher at W.B. Goodwin Elementary School. “With the implementation of EL, students are thriving learners, community members, and leaders. Not only is the curriculum for reading and writing, but it incorporates science and social studies and even social-emotional learning.”

To further support the EL curriculum and bring students beyond the reading, Acceleration Schools invited experts to speak to students about the topics they are reading. When second-graders read about pollinators, a beekeeper talked to the students about bees, and local weatherman, Rob Fowler, dropped in to talk about weather when the class was learning about weather patterns. These engaging visits spark interest in what students are reading and inspire them to see how their lessons apply in the real world, further broadening their horizons to the opportunities available to them.

Balcom summed up her experience with the curriculum by explaining students are experiencing what it means to be a supportive person and how to ask for help.

“They think they are building their reading, speaking, and writing fluency skills, and that is true,” Balcom said. “But they are also learning how to speak kindly to each other, how to advocate for themselves and ask for help without fear of judgment, how to be independent and take responsibility for their education. This curriculum stretches far beyond academics, it serves as a way for teachers to create a positive classroom environment, and subconsciously, students are learning and practicing skills they will need for the rest of their lives to be successful members of our community.”

As schools across the district continue to implement the EL curriculum, CCSD is confident they will see continued success in students’ achievement levels thanks to the more engaging and challenging curriculum.

For more information, please contact the Office of Communications at (843) 937-6303 or visit the EL curriculum [section of the district website](#).

###

#### **About the Charleston County School District**

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is a nationally accredited school district committed to providing equitable and quality educational opportunities for all of its students. CCSD is the second-largest school system in South Carolina and represents a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools spanning 1,300 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves approximately 49,000 students in 88 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools. Options include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military.