

**For Immediate Release**  
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# Statement

## Update on Virtual Academy

Office of Strategy and  
Communications

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We are providing this statement as a response to misunderstandings that may exist related to Charleston County School District's (CCSD) Virtual Academy, scheduled to begin for students on the first day of school, September 8, 2020.

CCSD is not eliminating its Virtual Academy.

Instead, the refined Virtual Academy model responds to requests from students, families, and schools as well as allows for a stronger connection between at-home learning and classroom instruction. In partnership with principals and teachers, CCSD leaders are working to ensure that both Virtual Academy and "temporary remote" learning are the least disruptive, most effective, and best educational options for serving students remotely/virtually.

We had an overwhelming number of families across the district enroll in the Virtual Academy. These families are concerned about the current virus levels and wanted a remote option for their children. At the middle and high school levels, some of the courses in the Virtual Academy will be delivered in an asynchronous (pre-recorded) manner. This is an independent model of learning – mirroring virtual models across the country. In this mode, it is difficult to offer students a diversity of classes. At the elementary level, we had planned for a blend of live instruction (via Zoom) and independent learning – which is what we are planning for temporary remote.

As a result of nearly 12,000 CCSD families opting for the Virtual Academy, and in collaboration with groups of school leaders and other stakeholders, CCSD is in the process of transitioning its Virtual Academies from being housed centrally to being at least partially located in home schools. This plan will work to serve interested CCSD students and families in various ways:

- 1) Students will have the opportunity to interact online with their grade level peers;
- 2) Students and families will have the opportunity to build relationships with school-based faculty and staff;

- 3) Students' social, emotional, and unique learning needs will be addressed by teachers and school staff; and
- 4) Students may have more opportunities for electives.

Importantly, the transition from a more centralized Virtual Academy approach also affords home schools the opportunity to retain staff onsite versus deploying them elsewhere to deliver instruction.

CCSD students will continue to have the opportunity to learn remotely via the Virtual Academy for a quarter (elementary/middle); a semester (high); and/or for the entire school year if families prefer that option. More asynchronous in nature, online courses offered via SC Virtual, Florida Virtual, and/or Edgenuity, will also be available based on families' preferences, students' learning pathways and needs, as well as schools' scheduling options.

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

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is a nationally-accredited school district that is 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 more than 50,000 students in 87 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.