



**Charleston County School of the Arts**  
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## Media Release

### SOA Earns Prestigious Blue Ribbon School Honor

**Charleston, SC (November 17, 2025)** – For the first time in school history, Charleston County School of the Arts (SOA) is a South Carolina *Blue Ribbon School*. State Superintendent of Education Ellen Weaver and Governor Henry McMaster recognized SOA and five other South Carolina schools last week at the Statehouse for earning the 2025 *Blue Ribbon School* honor.

*Blue Ribbon Schools* are selected for leadership in academic excellence and for making measurable progress in closing achievement gaps among students.

SOA becomes the 14<sup>th</sup> school from Charleston County School District (CCSD) to receive this distinction. The district's countywide arts magnet school opened its doors in 1995 and currently serves 1120 students.

"Attaining this award is a result of the combined efforts of the entire School of the Arts family," explained Principal Dr. Shannon Cook. "This recognition is only possible through the tireless work and passion of our exceptional students, the unwavering support of their parents, and the commitment of our faculty and staff. Our unique blend of rigorous academics and intensive arts instruction sets us apart and empowers our students to not just succeed, but to make an impact. It is an honor we all share."

According to Cook, they have a supportive educational environment at SOA where the arts are prioritized and celebrated while maintaining high academic standards. Students are engaged by both academic and artistic challenges, enabling them to develop their talents, pursue their goals, and prepare for the future.

Students at SOA are as diverse as the county itself; they arrive from all across the region, representing varied socioeconomic, cultural, and academic backgrounds. Despite these differences they thrive in the school's incredibly rich artistic and academic environment. This unique, nurturing atmosphere allows every student to achieve success and reach their full potential, regardless of their background or previous academic achievements.

"Being named a *Blue Ribbon School* is one of the highest honors a school in America can receive," said CCSD Superintendent Anita Huggins. "This recognition affirms what we already know about Charleston County School of the Arts: excellence is who they are. Their commitment to exceptional teaching, high achievement, and a culture where students thrive academically and artistically is extraordinary. We are incredibly proud of SOA and grateful to the teachers, students, families, and staff who made this achievement possible."

The U.S. Department of Education began the National Blue Ribbon Schools program more than 40 years ago to recognize public and private schools for overall academic excellence or

progress in closing achievement gaps. Public schools are nominated based on their overall performance by the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE).

For the full list of schools and more about the *Blue Ribbon Schools*, visit the [SCDE's website](#). To learn more about SOA, contact Dr. Shannon Cook at (843) 529-4990.

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#### **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 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 51,000 students in 90 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse portfolio of educational options and specialized programs delivered to the students of CCSD through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools and programs. Rich educational opportunities for students include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; military; dual credit; and many more.