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Media Release

Charleston County School District Announces **Peninsula Promise: A Community-Driven Vision to** **Expand Access and Opportunity for All Peninsula** **Students**

Charleston, SC (January 29, 2026) - Today, Charleston County School District (CCSD) Superintendent Anita Huggins unveiled the *Peninsula Promise*, a comprehensive initiative designed to expand access to high-quality educational experiences for every child living on the historic Charleston Peninsula. The *Peninsula Promise* is the result of extensive community engagement over the past two years, with particular focus during December and January when more than 400 community members met directly with Superintendent Huggins, participated in community engagement sessions, and/or provided feedback through online surveys.

Rooted in partnership and innovation, the *Peninsula Promise* builds on existing strengths while charting a unified, community-informed path forward to ensure students thrive academically, socially, and creatively.

“As a community, we must ensure that every child, regardless of background, zip code, or circumstance, has access to exceptional learning opportunities,” said Superintendent Huggins. “The *Peninsula Promise* reflects what we heard from families, educators, students, and partners. It’s about honoring where we’ve been and working together to create pathways to success for all of our students.”

Expanding Early Learning Opportunities

A cornerstone of the *Peninsula Promise* is the introduction of Universal Pre-K for 3- and 4-year-olds, beginning with a comprehensive Early Learning & Child Development Center located at Charleston Progressive Academy in August 2026. This effort reflects CCSD’s commitment to early learning access, a priority consistently discussed by families and community members throughout recent engagement sessions.

Decades of research demonstrate that high-quality early childhood education significantly improves kindergarten readiness, closes early achievement gaps, and leads to stronger academic and social outcomes over time. The expansion of early learning seats will be paired with intentional staffing models and developmentally appropriate ratios to ensure high-quality instruction and individualized support. By expanding early childhood seats on the Peninsula first, CCSD will ensure children enter kindergarten with strong foundations in literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional development, positioning them for long-term success.

Supporting Families Through a New Resource Hub

CCSD will also launch a Family Learning & Resource Center in August 2026 at Burke High School, as well as Mary Ford Early Learning & Family Center in North Charleston, dedicated

support hubs for Charleston’s families. The centers will provide parent education workshops; access to community-based resources; support for GEDs and work-based certifications in partnership with Trident Technical College; workforce readiness; and individualized guidance to help families navigate educational pathways for both parents and children. The center will be supported by staff and community partners to ensure families receive consistent, high-quality assistance. The center will also convene community partners for family-focused events, strengthening connections between schools, families, and service providers.

More Suited Space, More Opportunity: Simmons-Pinckney Middle School to Mitchell Campus

As part of the *Peninsula Promise*, CCSD plans to repurpose the Julian Mitchell campus beginning in August 2026 to better align facilities, enrollment, and staffing in support of long-term student success on the Peninsula. Due to sustained under-enrollment, continuing to operate Mitchell as an elementary school limits programming and staffing stability. Repurposing the campus allows the district to use the facility more effectively to expand programming, strengthen student supports, and ensure access to a comprehensive middle school program.

To support this transition, CCSD will work with the Board of Trustees to re-establish attendance lines for students who attend Mitchell following opportunities for public input. Once approved by the Board, students would attend another downtown elementary school, either Sanders-Clyde Elementary School or Memminger Elementary School, both of which offer strong academic programs, dedicated staff, and supportive school communities.

Additional information, including timelines and next steps for families and staff, will be shared as plans are finalized.

Intentional Career Pathways from Simmons-Pinckney Middle School to Burke High School

As part of the *Peninsula Promise*, CCSD is expanding career exploration at Simmons-Pinckney Middle School to prepare students for future pathways at Burke High School. New programming will expose students to high-demand technical fields, applied learning, and real-world problem solving aligned with Burke’s enhanced offerings. This early exposure helps students build confidence, identify interests, and enter high school better prepared for advanced academic and career opportunities.

Arts for All: Linard McCloud Cultural Arts Collective

The *Peninsula Promise* includes the creation of the Linard McCloud Cultural Arts Collective in August 2026, an arts-infused extension of Simmons-Pinckney Middle and Burke High Schools, named in honor of Mr. Linard H. McCloud, a distinguished Burke High School alumnus and longtime music educator of **nearly 50 years** whose leadership has shaped arts education and mentorship for generations of Charleston students. This initiative will build on the city’s rich cultural heritage and longstanding arts traditions by offering enhanced instruction in dance, music, theatre, drawing, and visual arts within a partial magnet environment at Simmons-Pinckney and Burke. Students will also benefit from exposure to artists-in-residence, cultural practitioners, and community-based arts experiences that deepen learning and real-world engagement. A specialized School Choice window will open from March 1 through April 1 to allow non-zoned students to apply if interested.

Strengthening High School Pathways at Burke High School

The *Peninsula Promise* elevates the high school experience by expanding opportunities in August 2026 at the historic Burke High School as described below:

Partnership with the American College of the Building Arts (ACBA)

CCSD is proud to announce a new collaboration with the American College of the Building Arts (ACBA), the only institution of its kind in the United States. ACBA offers specialized programs in Architectural Carpentry, Blacksmithing, Classical Architecture and Design, Architectural Stone Carving, Plaster, and Timber Framing. Developing these skills prepares students for high-demand careers rooted in Charleston's preservation, construction, and design industries. This partnership will provide students with early exposure to preservation careers, craftsmanship, and applied design pathways. A specialized School Choice window will open from March 1 through April 1, allowing non-zoned students to apply if interested.

Expanded Career and Technical Programming

As part of this work, CCSD is taking a student-centered, data-informed approach to expanding career and technical programming at Burke High School. The district is using Individual Graduation Plan data to better understand student interest in additional career and technical pathways, with early feedback indicating interest in applied, hands-on fields such as cosmetology and barbering. Student input will be considered alongside labor market data, industry partnerships, and capacity considerations to guide future program development.

These opportunities will intentionally build upon Burke High School's existing Career and Technical Education offerings, which currently include the following: Army JROTC; Business Information Management and General Management; Digital Publication Design; Image Editing; Foundations of Animation; Entrepreneurship; Health Science Technology, Medical Terminology, Health Science I, Health Science II, and Health Science Clinical Study; Culinary Arts and Culinary Arts Management I and II; and Building Construction, including safety practices, hand and power tools, blueprints, masonry, flooring, roofing, electrical systems, and construction equipment, with sequenced coursework from Building Construction I–IV. Additional CTE pathways currently available at Burke include Fundamentals of Web Page Design and Development, PLTW Introduction to Engineering Design, and PLTW Principles of Engineering.

Advanced Academic Opportunities with the College of Charleston

Through a strengthened partnership with the College of Charleston and the addition of 30 new seats reserved for students enrolled at Burke, students in the Scholars Academy on Burke's campus will gain expanded access to additional Advanced Placement and dual credit coursework with the potential to enter college two years ahead. This partnership will also allow eligible students to study on the College of Charleston campus during their senior year, providing an authentic college experience while accelerating postsecondary readiness.

A Unified Vision for Peninsula Students

The *Peninsula Promise* reflects CCSD's commitment to inclusive excellence, ensuring that every student, from preschool through high school graduation, has access to high-quality pathways and the support needed to succeed in school and beyond.

"We are building on Charleston's legacy of educational excellence," Superintendent Huggins said. "With the *Peninsula Promise*, we're unlocking new opportunities for families, honoring our community's strengths, and ensuring that every student feels seen, supported, and prepared for the future."

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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.