



Charleston County School District
Office of Communications
 75 Calhoun St.,
 Charleston, SC 29401
 (843) 937-6303

Media Release

CCSD Middle School Musicians Earn Historic Honors **in Inaugural SCBDA All-State Middle School Jazz** **Ensemble**

Charleston, SC (March 3, 2026) — Four talented middle school musicians from Charleston County School District (CCSD) earned seats in the first-ever South Carolina Band Directors Association (SCBDA) All-State Middle School Jazz Ensemble, marking a historic achievement for the district and its band programs.

Twelve middle schools across South Carolina are represented in the inaugural ensemble, with three CCSD schools combining to have four students earn this honor:

- 1st Alto Sax: Ma'Khai Mikell, Charleston County School of the Arts (SOA)
- Baritone Sax: Porter Stokes, Camp Road Middle School
- 1st Trumpet: Chase Kahalehoe, Laing Middle School
- 3rd Trombone: Liam Harman, Laing Middle School

“I’m excited to be the first baritone saxophone in this ensemble, meet other people, and play jazz music with people who are just as excited about this type of music as I am,” Stokes said.

The students’ band directors include Alice Aldredge (SOA), Chloe Spitzer and Jake Henjes (Camp Road), and Mr. Adam Vernon-Young and Mr. Justin Clarkson (Laing).

“These students have demonstrated exceptional musicianship, discipline, and dedication to their craft,” said Spitzer. “Being selected for such a limited ensemble is a remarkable accomplishment.”

The SCBDA provides a variety of audition-based ensembles for top-performing band students throughout the year, including Region Honor Band, All-State Honor Band, and All-State Jazz Band. Since 1998, the All-State Jazz Band has been offered exclusively for high school students. This year, SCBDA expanded the prestigious opportunity by launching its first middle school jazz ensemble.

Students auditioning for the middle school jazz band prepared scales, a jazz solo, and improvisation. While all SCBDA ensembles are highly competitive, jazz bands are especially selective. Using a traditional big band format—two alto saxophones, two tenor saxophones, one baritone saxophone, four trombones, four trumpets, drum set, vibraphone, auxiliary percussion, and bass guitar—only 17 students statewide are chosen.

The middle school jazz ensemble, along with two high school jazz bands, will rehearse March 5–7, 2026, at Charleston Southern University. Performances begin at 11:30 a.m. on Saturday, March 7, in Lightsey Chapel on the CSU campus.

CCSD will also be well represented at the high school level, with nine students selected for the two SCBDA All-State High School Jazz Bands from Wando High School, Lucy Beckham High School, and SOA. Their directors include Wando High School's Bobby Lambert, Lainie Radecke, Leslie Phillips of Lucy Beckham High School, and Dustin King from SOA.

The selection highlights the strength of CCSD's music programs and the continued excellence of its student musicians across the district.

For more information, please contact the district's Office of Communications at (843) 937-6583.

###

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.