Charleston County schools recognized for enrollment growth amid national decline

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CHARLESTON COUNTY, S.C. (WCSC) — The Charleston County School District has been named in a recently released report as one of just eleven large urban districts in the country to see enrollment growth over the last eight years.

The report, from the Council of the Great City Schools, found enrollment across the nation's largest urban school districts fell an average of 13.3 percent during that period. Charleston County School District grew by 2.7 percent over the same timeframe.

What the data shows

"The Council of the Great City Schools' member districts are prioritizing support for classroom instruction, even as they work to adjust district resources in response to declining enrollment," Council Executive Director Ray Hart said in a statement. "Recent data indicates that changes in student enrollment, driven by declining birth rates and other factors, are affecting school districts nationwide. However, a few of our districts are experiencing growth in enrollment due to shifts in the population across the country. The Council's research plays a crucial role in helping our urban school districts identify and benchmark their enrollment trends, plan for future needs, assess their progress, and make informed decisions based on those trends."

Superintendent Anita Huggins said the recognition reflects a broader concern about public education nationally.

"This is a national trend, and it saddens me that as a nation more and more students are leaving our public schools, because I believe in the power of public education," Huggins said. "It is a moral necessity and it's our obligation to make sure that students are educated and that they leave all of our systems nationwide ready to be successful contributing members of society."

Staffing and academic growth

Alongside enrollment gains, the district has increased its teacher workforce by 20 percent over the last eight years. Huggins said the district enters the new school year with no teacher vacancies.

“We have no vacancies, particularly here as we embark on a new school year. We are incredibly pleased about where we are positioned as a school district,” Huggins said.

The report also highlighted the district’s growth in mathematics between 2019 and 2025, noting that the district exceeded national performance benchmarks and outpaced national growth patterns in the subject.

Huggins credits that progress to educators and school leaders, along with a weighted student funding model that directs more resources to students with greater needs — including students in poverty, multilingual learners, and students with special needs.

Priorities for the new school year

With the school year starting in two weeks, Huggins said special education, wraparound student services, and high-quality instruction will be among the district’s top priorities.

“Ensuring that every neighborhood school, every neighborhood school, is a place where every parent wants to send his or her child,” Huggins said.

The district is also working to expand 24/7 mental health services for students, employees, and families in the coming weeks.