



Charleston County School District
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Media Release

Charleston County Economic Development Invests \$2 Million in North Charleston Universal Pre-K Expansion

Historic investment will expand access to high-quality early learning while supporting working families and the region's workforce

Charleston, SC (September 29, 2026) – Charleston County Economic Development is investing \$2.025 million in Charleston County School District's expansion of Universal Pre-K in North Charleston, a major partnership designed to support young children, working families, and the region's workforce.

Through the partnership, funding donated will help create at least 229 new Pre-K seats in North Charleston. The investment builds on CCSD's launch of its first Universal Pre-K program at Charleston Progressive Academy on the Charleston Peninsula this school year and marks the next major step in the district's plan to expand access to early learning across Charleston County.

This investment recognizes that access to early childhood education has an impact far beyond the classroom. For many families, reliable, high-quality Pre-K can help parents and caregivers to enter the workforce, work additional hours, remain employed, or pursue education and training. Those workforce impacts will be among the outcomes evaluated as the initiative moves forward.

"We are so grateful for CCED coming alongside us with this historic investment," said CCSD Superintendent Anita Huggins. "Universal Pre-K gives our youngest learners a strong start, but we know its impact reaches the entire family. This partnership will open doors for hundreds of children while giving parents and guardians greater opportunities to work, learn, and build a stronger future for their families. We are incredibly grateful to Charleston County Economic Development for believing in this work and investing alongside us."

The partnership represents an innovative approach to workforce development and recognizes that access to affordable, high-quality early learning is essential infrastructure for supporting a growing economy.



Charleston County
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Anita W. Huggins, M.Ed., Superintendent of Schools
 Sully Witte, Public Information Officer

“Childcare is a workforce issue, an economic development issue, and a family issue,” said CCSD Chief Financial Officer Daniel Prentice. “This investment allows us to address all three at once. By bringing public education and economic development together, we can use our resources in a way that directly benefits our children today while helping more parents participate fully in our local economy.”

As the expansion moves forward, CCSD and its partners will measure not only the number of new seats created and filled, but also the broader impact on participating families, including employment, work hours, education and training opportunities, prior childcare costs, and barriers families face in accessing early learning.

“I commend Charleston County Economic Development for recognizing that some of the most significant barriers to workforce participation begin outside the workplace,” said Charleston County Council Chairman Joe Boykin. “This investment demonstrates the forward-thinking approach needed to support working families and strengthen our economy.”

“The strongest economies are built long before a person’s first day on the job,” added CCED Executive Director Merle Johnson. “They begin when children have the opportunity to learn and when parents have the support they need to participate fully in the workforce. This investment is not simply about creating additional Pre-K seats; it is about removing a barrier for families and strengthening our workforce and economy for generations to come.”

The North Charleston Universal Pre-K expansion is part of CCSD’s broader commitment to increasing access to high-quality early learning opportunities across Charleston County. This school year, CCSD opened its first Universal Pre-K program on the Peninsula at Charleston Progressive Academy.

Plans are already underway to expand Universal Pre-K next school year to additional communities, including North Charleston, East Cooper, James Island, Johns Island, and West Ashley with new opportunities planned at North Charleston Elementary, Jennie Moore Elementary, Laurel Hill Primary, James Island Elementary, and Hunley Park Elementary. The continued expansion will give more children a strong start while helping CCSD better understand the impact of Pre-K access on families, workforce participation, and student outcomes.

“This is bigger than adding classrooms,” Huggins said. “It is about what becomes possible for a child, a parent, and ultimately an entire community when we remove a barrier and create an opportunity.”

For more information, please contact the Office of Communications at (843) 937-6303.

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is a nationally accredited school district dedicated to ensuring every student has access to a high-quality education and the support needed to thrive. As South Carolina’s second-largest school system, CCSD serves more than 50,000 students across 91 schools and specialized programs throughout 1,300 square miles of coastal communities, representing a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools.

Under the leadership of Superintendent Anita Huggins, CCSD is focused on accelerating student achievement, expanding opportunities, and preparing every student for success in college, career, and life. Recent district accomplishments include record-high academic performance on state assessments, increasing graduation rates, and significant gains in college and career readiness, reflecting the district’s commitment to continuous

improvement and educational excellence. Through the Peninsula Promise, CCSD is also expanding access to early learning, college and career pathways, arts, and family support services to create seamless opportunities for students living on the historic Charleston Peninsula.

CCSD offers a diverse and expanding portfolio of educational choices, including neighborhood, magnet, charter, Montessori, and International Baccalaureate (IB) schools and programs. Students have access to rich learning experiences in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); visual and performing arts; world languages; military and leadership programs; career and technical education; dual enrollment and early college opportunities; and other innovative pathways designed to meet a wide range of interests and aspirations.

Working in partnership with families, community organizations, higher education institutions, and industry leaders, CCSD remains committed to creating equitable opportunities, fostering student success, and ensuring that every graduate is prepared to contribute and compete in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

