

**For Immediate Release**

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# Media Release

## **CCSD's Vision 2027: Where all students read on grade level by grade 5**

Office of Communications

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### *Goals and guardrails recently established to ensure success*

**Charleston, SC** – Superintendent Don Kennedy looks back on his childhood with great admiration for his parents who instilled in him the importance of education and work ethic.

His parents grew up in the 1930s in rural Fairfield County, north of Columbia, SC. During their marriage, they struggled financially as they raised eight children. Those struggles were due in large part to the lack of educational opportunities for black children. His mother attended school in a one-room building run by her church. Public school was not available to her or to children of color; in fact, educational opportunities, in general, were few and far between.

Knowing the opportunity that education provided, Kennedy's parents were adamant that all eight of their children graduate high school and attend college.

All eight children lived their parents' dream; in fact, the Kennedy children were the first generation of the family to do so.

A college education changed not only the trajectory of Kennedy's life but also that of his children and grandchildren.

"The life I have been able to live and provide for my family was unimaginable to me as a child," Kennedy explained. "The vision my parents had for me and my siblings unleashed the untapped potential in me and many generations of Kennedys. *Vision 2027* is what I view as a way to unleash untapped potential in the children of the Charleston County School District."

[Vision 2027](#) will ensure that all students read on their grade level by the time they leave elementary school, producing life-changing outcomes for CCSD students.

"If we can help children reach their potential to read well, we will also positively impact math, science, social studies, and other areas necessary for their long-term success," said Kennedy.

The [goals and guardrails](#) developed over months of engagement with the community and the Board of Trustees will be used as the path toward achieving *Vision 2027*. The strategies to meet each goal drive CCSD's plans to spend remaining federal ESSER funds earmarked for learning loss suffered during COVID-19.

"Many of our students were struggling readers before the pandemic," said Kennedy. "According to the 2022 South Carolina school report card, only 53.3 percent of our students are meeting or exceeding grade level expectations [on the SC READY English Language Arts test]. We want to build a system where our students are prepared academically so they can enter the next grade successfully, graduate high school on time, and enter college or obtain a good-paying job after leaving CCSD."

Kennedy explained that reading on grade level is essential so that students are able to comprehend and understand what they are reading. [Research shows](#) that students who leave elementary school reading on grade level are four times more likely to graduate from high school on time and are prepared to enter post-secondary plans.

For students living in poverty and children of color, the percentages reading on grade level are much worse. Seventy-seven percent of CCSD's African-American students and 70 percent of Hispanic students read below grade level.

"These percentages have to improve significantly," said Kennedy. "If they do, these students' lives and the lives of their families will be impacted far into the future. I know how hard this work will be. We need the commitment of every teacher, student, parent, and administrator to begin the steady process to bring about change. CCSD cannot truly succeed until all students read well."

To achieve this ambitious goal, Kennedy created an Office of Literacy-Based Learning to focus on the District's work around literacy. Throughout the school year, the roll-out will continue with a core curriculum along with training in [LETRS](#) (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) for PreK-3rd grade teachers. Additionally, targeted intervention options will be available to all schools for students who need additional support.

For more information, 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 committed to providing equitable and quality educational opportunities for all of 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 49,000 students in 88 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools. Options include programs in science,

technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military.