

1. What do you consider the three most important challenges facing the district, and how would you address them?

Academic Achievement and Opportunity: Continue improving student achievement while closing gaps through a coherent K–12 curriculum, strong literacy and mathematics instruction, pre-K programs, and career and college pathways. The board must set measurable goals and monitor results. Targeted funding supports research-based interventions for students in poverty (46.8%), students with disabilities (11.5%), and multilingual learners (13.7%). Schools regularly review data, while teachers work in professional learning communities to determine effective interventions for teaching and learning. Each school's 90-day plan focuses resources and strategies on the educational needs of its students.

Recruiting and Retaining Excellent Educators: Provide competitive compensation, supportive working conditions, mentoring, professional development, and strong pipelines for hard-to-fill positions. Increased teacher compensation helped ensure all classrooms were staffed at the beginning of the school year and saved more than \$500,000 in substitute costs during the first semester of FY25. The launching of the Learning Leaders Program develops 26 teachers who open their classrooms as learning laboratories where colleagues can observe effective instructional practices. The district also recognizes outstanding educators throughout the year through Teacher of the Year awards, board recognition, the annual gala, and the Charleston Educators Symposium.

Fiscal Responsibility, Facilities and Operations: Strengthen transparency, procurement controls, and independent oversight while responsibly maintaining and modernizing schools. Long-range planning, strong audits, and public input and reporting should ensure resources are used effectively and support student outcomes. The district recently earned the GFOA Distinguished Budget for aligning student outcomes with district goals and priorities. Building on community support for the accomplishments of previous capital programs, voters are being asked to consider a one-cent sales tax for the Phase VI Capital Program to fund new schools, renovations, expansions, repairs, and technology infrastructure.

2. How would you assess Anita Huggins' performance as superintendent?

Superintendent Anita Huggins provides strong, dedicated and inspiring leadership to the district along with a professional senior staff. I chaired the committee to develop the board's superintendent evaluation process, which measures educational leadership, district operations, fiscal management, and board/community relations. In her 2025 evaluation, the board rated her performance Exemplary, with 30.89 of 33 possible points. Since then, CCSD continues to achieve academic results, while maintaining a strong focus on fiscal and operational accountability. My responsibility as a board member is to support and recognize effective leadership while continuing to ask questions, monitor results, and hold the superintendent accountable for student outcomes.

3. What should the district do to narrow the achievement gap, and how much improvement do you believe is realistic to expect?

As a board, we've set ambitious, measurable goals for the next five years, recognizing that persistent achievement gaps do not disappear in one year. It's encouraging that progress is occurring: since 2021, Black students' SC READY performance increased 23.7 percentage points in ELA and 14 points in Math. We should build on that progress through early childhood programs, high-quality curriculum and instruction, school-

based interventions, effective teachers, tutoring, attendance initiatives, and targeted resources. I expect improvement every year among the school and student groups. The goal should be clear: we help every student achieve to their highest level.

4. What is your opinion of the district's weighted student funding formula, and how much do you think its implementation has affected the district's score on statewide report cards?

I support weighted student funding (WSF) because this resource supports student needs and outcomes. For FY27, CCSD provided additional funding based on students in poverty (46.8%), students with disabilities (11.5%), and multilingual learners (13.7%), with investments tied to measurable academic strategies. The academic gains among these student groups are encouraging; WSF is one contributor to that progress. However, I would not attribute report-card improvements to WSF alone. Statewide report cards reflect many factors, including teacher qualifications, student progress, graduation rates, school improvement, student safety, school climate, and other data. We should continue evaluating the district's WSF based on student outcomes.

5. Will you commit to meeting in secret only when the law requires it, even if your attorney prefers you to meet behind closed doors? Please elaborate.

I strongly support conducting the public's business in public. South Carolina law allows executive sessions. I follow CCSD policy BE for specific purposes: student actions, personnel matters, contract and sale of property negotiations, legal advice, security matters, and investigations of criminal conduct. No formal action, vote, or polling of its members may be taken in executive session. Legal counsel advises the board, but ultimately board members are responsible for making their own governance decisions. It should be standard practice for the board's discussions, decisions, and votes to occur publicly with opportunities for public comments.

6. Some school board members have expressed interest in more authority over district contracts and business decisions. What is your opinion on that?

The board should provide strong oversight of district contracts and business decisions without becoming a purchasing department. Our responsibility is to establish procurement policies, approve required expenditures, monitor major contracts and capital projects, review audits, ask questions, and hold the superintendent accountable. Administration should manage day-to-day purchasing and contracting operations according to board policies. Recent contracting concerns show the need for strong internal controls, transparency, and independent audits. I support strengthening oversight while maintaining clear roles: the board governs, monitors, and holds leadership accountable; the superintendent and staff manage district operations.

7. Will you be voting to extend the district's 1-percent sales tax to continue funding school capital projects? Why or why not?

YES, I intend to vote to extend the one-cent sales tax. As a board, we placed it on the ballot for voters to decide. The one-cent sales tax funds school construction, renovations, capital maintenance, and technology. The proposed Phase VI program continues that work from 2029–2034. Our school district has ongoing facility and maintenance needs, including aging buildings, early-childhood facilities, and educational spaces for current programs. I believe taxpayers deserve a prioritized project list along with strong oversight, independent audits, and public reporting. Capital planning with oversight protects taxpayers while ensuring students and educators have safe, effective, well-maintained schools.

8. How can the school board better work together and avoid the rancor and factionalism we've seen in the past four years, or is that just the inherent result of differences of opinion?

Differences of opinion are healthy; thoughtful disagreement is part of good governance. The board can improve by keeping students at the center, respecting differing viewpoints, strengthening norms for discussion, sharing leadership, and operating transparently. Retreats and work sessions provide opportunities for honest conversations before making decisions. Regular board self-evaluation also improves effectiveness. I encourage us to consistently ask: How does this affect students? What does the evidence tell us? Does it align with our strategic plan and policies? What does it cost? What does our community think? Those questions help keep governance focused on education rather than personalities or politics.

9. Why should voters elect you instead of other candidates? Please be specific about your own accomplishments and what differentiates you from the other candidates.

I have decades of experience in public education—as a teachers, district curriculum leader, principal, school volunteer, parent and board member. On the board, I chaired the committee to develop the superintendent evaluation process, unanimously approved by the board, to establish accountability for academic, operational, and fiscal performance. I have supported classroom resources and interventions for students with greater needs, competitive employee compensation, early-childhood facilities, and community engagement while monitoring student achievement. My experiences—from the classroom and school leadership to district governance—provides a broad understanding of how board decisions affect students, educators, schools, and the community.