



For Immediate Release

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Media Release

Riding for Focus: St. James-Santee using mountain bikes to achieve academic success

**St. James-Santee Elementary
Middle School**

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McClellanville, SC – Research says that students who exercise and remain physically active throughout the day are more motivated and engaged. They tend to do better in the classroom, too. Educators at St. James-Santee Elementary-Middle School are ensuring that their students have every opportunity to do just that.

St. James-Santee [received](#) a fleet of 26 mountain bikes from The Outride cycling program last summer. The school was chosen as a recipient of the foundation's grant for Fall 2019.

The program integrates cycling into the physical education curriculum as a means to help students achieve academic, health, and social success. At St. James-Santee, there is a heavy focus on increasing programs and options that focus on encouraging healthy lifestyles and physical activities.

Audra Pinckney attended an in-person training session hosted by The Specialized Foundation staff to ensure success as new schools integrate the program into their classrooms this fall. Pinckney is the instructional coach at St. James-Santee and is excited about the program's potential benefits to learning.

"The specialized biking curriculum addresses issues of focus, depression, struggles at school, etc.," said Pinckney. "We use the curriculum in a personal way. I say, 'if you are having a hard time, today can you outride your struggles'. This really motivates the students. By the time they 'outride their struggles' the students are laughing and smiling and ready to tackle the day."

In addition to the mental and academic benefits, the curriculum teaches the students basic bike safety. The students are responsible for making sure their bike is safe to ride by conducting the basic ABC bike check (air, brakes, chain and cranks). They each have their own helmet and they're learning how to reach their target heart rate and how to check it.

"We sometimes take for granted that a student knows how to ride a bike," said Pinckney. "In some cases they don't. So this is a great way to provide them with a new experience."

Daily lessons send students peddling through various obstacle courses. There are days when the lessons center on riding etiquette, decision making, and best practices. The students are learning about eye contact with vehicular drivers and who might have the right-of-way.

What started as beginner lessons inside the gymnasium, to riding around the parking lot and then on the nearby trails, will culminate into a final lesson of road readiness. At the end of each school year, local law enforcement will join students on their final trek.

The bikes are built to last five or more years. Pinckney plans to add to the fleet annually so as to increase the number of students she can reach through the program.

"The kids love it," said Pinckney. "They have learned so much and some have had an opportunity they probably would have never gotten."

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is the second largest school system in South Carolina representing a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools spanning 1,300 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves more than 50,000 students in 86 schools and specialized programs. With approximately 6,100 employees district-wide, CCSD is the fourth largest employer in the region.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, charter, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), and Montessori schools, and is divided into three Learning Communities. Options include specialized programs in science, engineering and mathematics; liberal arts; music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military and other public service enterprises.