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Media Release

CCSD staff going the extra mile in the face of COVID-19 crisis

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Charleston, SC — Shutting down 87 schools and programs that serve 50,000 thousand students while at the same time preparing and delivering two weeks-worth of lessons for those 50,000 students in those schools and programs in the span of 72 hours would seem like an impossible task. But not for the educators of Charleston County School District.

As soon as Governor Henry McMaster gave the order on Sunday afternoon that public school systems were going to be closed through March 31, 2020, many of the district's 3,500 teachers began to create 10-day work plans and other ideas that would keep students engaged during the extended shutdown. In fact, many schools began sending home packets this past weekend.

"I was ecstatic at how our teachers didn't bat an eye [when we got the news]," said Simmons-Pinckney Principal Nate Nelson. "We got in on Monday and created quality assignments. As a school community, we pulled together to get what they needed. Although this was (and is) a crisis, our teachers' professionalism shined through, proving how critical they are for the success and well-being of our community."

There was a massive coordinated effort at the district level as well. On Thursday, March 12, the State Department of Education required school districts to submit a closure plan in eight days. That plan had to include details on how academic instruction would continue during a multi-week closure. Leaders from the Learning Services Division, in coordination with principals, lead teachers, and instructional coaches, had the plan submitted by Sunday night.

"This was a Herculean effort across the board," Chief Academic Officer Karolyn Belcher explained. "So many details had to be accounted for, such as meeting state guidelines and regulations, determining the digital platforms for delivering instruction and interaction, making sure devices could be secured for students, accumulating worksheets that provided appropriate instruction, and the distribution of all the materials. I am beyond impressed in the coordination and communication from the school level and district level."

Staff members throughout CCSD embraced the challenge; many of the schools organized pick-up events and delivery plans so that by Tuesday, tens of thousands

of packets and more than 10,000 devices were sent home. The passion, creativity, and energy of teachers, support staff, and administrators were on display in every corner of the county.

"Having hundreds of parents showing up for packets and instructions kind of felt like a back-to-school event, but in reverse," noted Elizabeth Nicodin, Oakland Elementary School's principal. "It was bittersweet, of course, because we knew we were saying good-bye to our kids and families for a while. At the same time, the hand-off went smoothly; it was impressive to see our staff and families unite to do what's best for children."

Of course, the work has only just begun. Teachers and administrators are maintaining office hours every day from their homes. They are answering questions and engaging students and parents directly through technology to provide instruction, encouragement, and fun.

"Our focus facilitator, Traci Alter recorded herself reading *The Pigeon Wants a Puppy* by Mo Willems," said Mary Ford Elementary School's teacher-librarian, Katherine Freligh. "We then uploaded the video onto our school-wide communication platform for all to see. What made the read-aloud even more fun was that Traci had her own dog, Finn as a special guest during the story. We hope that everything we're doing will not only continue the learning and academic growth but will also help us to build even stronger relationships with our students."

If the need arises, teachers, administrators, and District leaders are ready to do whatever takes to continue to provide educational opportunities, and more, for students and families throughout the county. The Office of Nutrition Services is providing thousands of Grab & Go meals daily at 17 school sites and more than 30 bus drop-off locations. The Office of Student Transportation has coordinated with the State Department of Education to provide buses with WiFi service at 10 schools, and the Information Technology Department has increased WiFi service at 11 more schools and facilities so that students and parents can set up outside the building and use their CCSD-issued devices for schoolwork.

Teachers and administrators in the District also wanted to pass on they are extremely impressed with the way the parents and guardians have responded to the adversity. They have answered the call when it came to picking up packets and devices and doing whatever they can to support their kids and their learning at home. This has and will continue to be a full community effort.

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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 87 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.