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Contact:

Andy Pruitt, 843-937-6583

Media Release

CCSD teachers' voice heard through surveys

Office of Communications

Anita W. Huggins, M.Ed.
Superintendent of Schools

Vanessa L. Denney, M.Ed.
Interim Executive Director of
Communications

Charleston, SC – Charleston County School District (CCSD) teachers were given two ways to provide feedback on working conditions and teacher retention last fall. More than 2,400 teachers and assistants responded to a CCSD Teacher Compensation Task Force's survey in November, the latest effort by the school district to increase teacher voices in decision-making. Districtwide, 56 percent of teachers and 67 percent of classroom assistants took part in the CCSD survey.

The second survey was recently administered by the Charleston Teacher Alliance (CTA).

Through the survey feedback, teachers put compensation, benefits, and school climate as the top factors influencing their decision to remain in the classroom. Respondents said influencers in deciding to stay or seek employment with CCSD were compensation, benefits, and school climate/admin support. Almost 50 percent of responders shared that compensation was the most impactful retention piece.

The CTA survey results revealed some overlap with the CCSD survey, such as increasing salary to match cost of living, protecting unencumbered planning time for teachers, increasing behavioral management strategies, and reducing teacher workload on non-instructional tasks. The CTA survey also shed light on a few additional topics, such as empowering teachers in the management of Professional Learning Community meetings, revisiting the timeline and structure for mandated training in the SafeSchools program, and providing ample time for teachers to adjust to changes in technology and technology access.

"It's absolutely essential to listen to teachers and respond to their concerns," said Jody Stallings Director of the Charleston Teacher Alliance. "We can't reach our students when there are too many unnecessary impediments between them and us."

Erin Young, a Project Officer in CCSD's Division of Human Resources, helped to coordinate the district's effort. She said the goal was to get input on opportunities and potential solutions surrounding retention and compensation for teachers and teacher assistants.

"We wanted to hear directly from educators on what motivates them to remain with CCSD," Young said. "Their responses illustrate how we can grow as an employer and how we can continue to retain and attract top talent for our students."

Feedback from the surveys includes:

- Responders would like to see continued work on increasing salary-based compensation and leave benefits.
- The resounding feedback from the survey is that teachers would like the professional development days, traditionally scheduled at the start of the school year, to be reconsidered. Respondents suggested moving Professional Development to days in the summer and throughout the school year so they have unencumbered time to prepare their classrooms and review curriculum for the start of the year.
- Teacher assistants indicated they would like the district to focus on compensation and leave, targeted professional development, increased inclusion in communication and collaboration, and continued development in degree and certification pathways.

Summaries of both surveys' responses have been shared with CCSD leadership and will be used in planning efforts to address issues important to those working at the classroom level.

"We read every response for every open-ended question, multiple times, and then started putting it together in a format where it can be shared effectively. We are making those words count with actionable next steps," Young said.

Chief Human Resources Officer Bill Briggman said the survey feedback is being used with several ongoing efforts including:

- Ongoing teacher listening sessions with the Teacher Compensation Task Force and Division of Human Resources;
- Increased departmental collaboration on initiatives and representation from teachers and diverse stakeholders involved in the decision-making process;
- Recommended changes for compensation and benefits/leave being discussed as part of the 2024-25 budget;
- A legislative advocacy subgroup formed to help employees who would like to learn how to effectively advocate for positive change at the state and local level;
- A professional development cross-functional team formed earlier this year to analyze scheduling, content, and effectiveness.

"It is vital to the integrity of the survey process that our participants know that we are actively listening and their feedback is making a difference," Young said.

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 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 50,000 students in 88 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse portfolio of educational options and specialized programs delivered to the students of CCSD through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools and programs. Rich educational opportunities for students include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; military; dual credit; and many more.