

For Immediate Release

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Media Release



Michelle Simmons
Chief Academic Officer

Office of Communications

Anita W. Huggins, M.Ed.
Acting Superintendent

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

Michelle Simmons selected as CCSD Chief Academic Officer; Huggins grants three-year contract

Charleston, SC – Charleston County School District (CCSD) is delighted to announce Michelle Simmons as Chief Academic Officer. Simmons has served as the district's Interim Chief Academic Officer (CAO) since July 2022. Prior to her role as Interim CAO, Simmons served as the Associate Superintendent of the Elementary Learning Community. She has served the students and families of CCSD for the past 25 years.

Simmons came to CCSD as an elementary school teacher at Mary Ford Elementary School (now Mary Ford Early Learning and Family Center) in 1998. While at Mary Ford, Simmons served as an instructional leader of students with varying abilities and needs for four years before being promoted to lead teacher. As lead teacher, Simmons assisted the principal with the daily operation and management of the school in addition to providing professional development and instructional support to staff.

In 2003, Simmons joined the administration at nearby W.B. Goodwin Elementary School as assistant principal. In this role, Simmons assisted with the daily operation and management of the school while also supporting the implementation of the school's vision, goals, and programs.

A standout in her field, it was not long before Simmons was promoted to the position of principal at [the former] C.C. Blaney Elementary in Hollywood, SC, in 2007. At Blaney, Simmons served as the manager and supervisor of a rural elementary program with approximately 250 students. She spent three years serving at Blaney before accepting the principal position at Stono Park Elementary in West Ashley. At both C.C. Blaney and Stono Park Elementary, Simmons led alongside talented teachers to increase each school's respective report card ratings.

Outstanding leadership skills coupled with a proven track record of success, Simmons was tapped to become the district's Interim Director of Elementary Schools in 2018. In this position, Simmons oversaw 15 elementary schools and principals around the county for six months before being promoted to supervise all elementary schools and elementary principals as the Executive Director of Elementary Schools. For the next two years as Executive Director, Simmons supported unsatisfactory rated schools and helped improve their status on the state report card as well as helped lead the district's Mission Critical efforts to restructure magnet programs to increase access and diversity.

Simmons was named Associate Superintendent of Elementary Schools in 2020 where she managed and supervised over 38 schools and saw academic growth in 60% (Reading) and 70% (Math) of her schools.

"Michelle is an outstanding individual, educator, and leader," said Acting Superintendent Anita Huggins. "Words do not adequately describe her commitment and dedication to our craft, and to our nearly 50,000 students and their families. I am truly humbled to work with and alongside her and could not be more thrilled to permanently welcome Ms. Simmons to this role."

An experienced educator and leader in her field, Simmons has been the recipient of several awards and honors throughout the years. She was named Mary Ford's Teacher of the Year (2000) and CCSD's Star Principal of the Year (2014) and served as a CCSD Principal Mentor (2015-2018). She was selected as a member of Rand's American School Leader Panel, served as a presenter at the NWEA Conference, and was the recipient of the 2018 School Leadership Executive Institute Inez Tenenbaum Award. In addition to her accolades, Simmons has participated in several state, local, and national trainings, including the School Leadership Executive Institute (2017-2018), the AASA National Principal Supervisor Academy (2018-2019), and the University of Virginia Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education (2019-2020).

Simmons earned a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from South Carolina State University and a Master of Education in Elementary Administration and Supervision from The Citadel. She also holds an Education Specialist degree from The Citadel. Simmons is actively pursuing a doctoral degree in Education Leadership at Charleston Southern University

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.