



**Edith L. Frierson Elementary
School**

Eric Gallien, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Anita W. Huggins M.Ed.
Deputy Superintendent

Jennifer Swearingen, Ph.D.
Interim Associate Superintendent of the
Elementary Learning Community

Latrice Smalls
Interim Principal

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Contact:
Latrice Smalls, 843-559-1182

Media Release

Frierson students learn about Gullah Geechee heritage

Wadmalaw, SC - October is Gullah Geechee Awareness Month and Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Month in the four states of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor; North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida.

The recognition enables students in Charleston County School District (CCSD) to learn more about Gullah Geechee culture and history. At Edith L. Frierson Elementary School, scholars are studying everything from literature in the Gullah bible, the four food groups (food ways), sweetgrass baskets (the arts), culture and language (spoken Gullah).

"When hunnah laa'n, hunnah grow" (when you learn, you grow)," said Principal Latrice Smalls. "This is our school's theme for the 23-24 school year. Therefore, celebrating the Gullah Geechee culture is definitely going to teach our scholars a lot and they will definitely grow by learning where they came from."

The Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor was established by federal legislation in 2006. It is the only National Heritage Area that promotes the living history of an African-American population, and the Alliance of National Heritage Areas is established through the National Park Service to encourage heritage development in the areas of natural resource conservation, historic preservation, community revitalization, economic development, recreation enhancement, the arts, folk life, education and interpretation.

Teacher librarian Lynn Kramer is working with Frierson teachers to extend the Gullah Geechee lessons from the library to the classroom. This school-wide participation has allowed students the opportunity to grow okra in the school garden and study the food contributions enslaved Africans brought to the South.

The Gullah language has been of great interest to students of the Sea Island school who are familiar with the language.

Fifth grader Kamden Bailey said studying the culture of his ancestors made him feel welcome at school because his classmates can learn and understand different backgrounds.

Laurence Curnell, also a fifth grader said learning about the Gullah bible from the New Testament was interesting. He especially enjoyed learning about the Gullah food groups. Claassmate Taytum Dreher, their classmate enjoyed trying the Charleston Gold Rice grown locally on Edisto Island. Kramer prepared it for students to taste while studying the crop and how it is grown.

Frierson Elementary students are taught Gullah understanding in their library class weekly in October.

"We begin with teaching the Gullah language, discussing linguist Lorenzo Dow Turner, and practicing the Gullah language," said Kramer. "We talk of the five foods brought from West Africa and the convergence of corn and tomatoes with those foods. We discuss the differences in the African American experiences in the midlands of South Carolina to the coastal regions. Additionally, we look at okra in our garden and taste Charleston gold rice and Benne Wafers."

As a follow-up, students discuss storytelling and cultural practices of the Gullah people. The final project is an oral presentation and students will write their own ghost stories with Gullah influences.

For more information, contact Principal Latrice Smalls at (843) 559-1182.

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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.