



For Immediate Release

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Media Release

Pulse of CCSD – Creating bonds with colleagues the secret to Jacqueline Townsend’s success as an educator

North Charleston, SC – Jacqueline Townsend has been an educator for over 30 years. Twenty-seven of those have been with Charleston County School District (CCSD) where she intentionally has chosen to serve in Title I schools.

Townsend began her career with CCSD in 1997 at the former R.D. Schroder Middle School in Hollywood. When the school closed ten years later, Townsend transferred to Morningside Middle School as an instructional coach and in 2015, she decided to return to the classroom as a sixth grade science teacher.

“Title I schools are where the most help is needed,” said Townsend. “I had a calling to be here and I will stay here because someone has to. If not me then who?”

Friend and colleague LaShawna Harris, CCSD’s Director of Instructional Programs, began her service in education with Townsend at Schroder in 1998.

“She took me under her wing and guided me through my first years of teaching,” said Harris. “Ms. Townsend displayed tough love and dedication for the students we served. She taught me the importance of showing up every day and having high expectations for my students. Without her, I would not have made it through those years.”

It is not just the calling that keeps Townsend at Morningside. The joy she derives from being with her colleagues, the students and their families is what drives her. Townsend is now teaching the children of some of her former students and those connections serve to strengthen those bonds.

Townsend’s teaching career began after she graduated from Winthrop University with a bachelor of science in Biology. She worked at the Naval Weapons Station in the Nuclear Propulsion Program as a training specialist. When the shipyard closed in 1995, the government offered funding for higher education opportunities to

Morningside Middle School

Eric Gallien, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Anita Huggins, M.Ed.
Deputy Superintendent

Jacqueline Haynes
Associate Superintendent of
Acceleration Schools

George White
Interim Principal

employees who would be displaced. Townsend earned her master's in Teaching from The Citadel and became certified as a secondary educator. That set her course for a long tenure with CCSD where she earned the title of (school) Teacher of the Year three times.

"I began my service in education with Ms. Townsend at R.D. Schroder Middle School in 1998," said Harris. "She took me under her wing and guided me through my first years of teaching. Ms. Townsend displayed tough love and dedication for the students we served. She taught me the importance of showing up every day and having high expectations for my students. Without her, I would not have made it through those years. Over the years, she has remained dedicated to providing love and support to her students and colleagues. She deserves this honor, and I am grateful to call her my sister and serve alongside her."

Connecting with teammates

"At Schroder and here at Morningside, it has always been important to me to connect with my colleagues," said Townsend. "We are a family and we have to work together to support each other in our personal and professional lives. We have to attend each other's events, or be there for each other when someone is feeling vulnerable."

Townsend is a proud and dedicated member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated. The sorority was founded on the principles of scholarship, service, sisterhood, and finer womanhood. Townsend lives by the belief that relationships with colleagues are more than just forming friendships; it is about promoting cohesiveness within the group and giving back. A prime example of that is when her colleagues and administrators wrapped Townsend and her family in love and prayer after the tragic death of her young granddaughter.

Her sorority participates with the March of Dimes and Townsend now marches in memory of her granddaughter, Imani Ava.

"As grade-level chairperson, I feel it is my duty to build comradery," said Townsend. "It's much easier on harder days to come to work knowing your coworkers will support you."

Townsend still keeps in touch with her team from Schroder and attends monthly luncheons with everyone to catch up. At Morningside, she has created a group chat so coworkers can weigh in, ask for support, and share. Colleagues from all grade levels at Morningside get together after hours as well.

"The kids bring it, no matter what, every single day," said Townsend. "We have to be here for each other and believe in the idea that the support we may need one day, will be there. Good teammates make life easier. I love these people. It is so important to be there for each other."

"If it wasn't for my faith and the support of my work family, I don't know how I would have gotten through it," said Townsend. "I don't know where I would be without God in general. I know what He can do because I have seen it. So when I come here every day I want to give 100 percent and pour into my students, like the Lord does for me."

Pouring into my students

Most educators will say that their favorite part of teaching is when a student has that "Ahha" moment. That is also the case for Townsend who loves when a child understands a concept.

"You can tell when that lightbulb comes on," said Townsend. "It's a special moment."

Townsend has seen first-hand how COVID-19 changed teaching. She noted that students were behind on even the most simple of things, such as handwriting. Townsend added that social media and technology have negatively influenced academics.

"To counteract all of those things, I've intentionally created a safe environment in my classroom where bullying and name-calling are prohibited," said Townsend. "I have a zero-tolerance policy for any type of misbehavior, but especially for being unkind.

Townsend's no-nonsense approach to enforcing good behavior is legendary. It is the first thing her former students think of when they hear her name. Behaving and bringing proper materials to class is in the advice outgoing sixth graders give to the students coming in behind them.

"I have the students write a letter to my future sixth graders to prepare them for my class," said Townsend. "In almost every letter, they tell the rising sixth grader to not forget their notebook and to never be disrespectful. It's comical to see what they have written, but what they write is true."

Townsend may be a disciplinarian but she is also a resource for her students and their families, as is the school itself. She is proud of the fact that Morningside offers wrap-around services that cover basic needs and all things academics.

"Our teachers are very loving and they care about these kids," said Townsend. "They come in early and stay late. They solicit community partners to invest in our children. These teachers will do just about anything they can to see student success. It's all about giving it your all."

Townsend and her husband attended Baptist Hill High School together and their three, highly successful adult children are products of CCSD. That is why it is

particularly important to Townsend to pour into the very educational community that poured into her family.

“Over the years, she has remained dedicated to providing love and support to her students and colleagues,” added Harris. “She deserves this honor, and I am grateful to call her my sister and serve alongside her.”

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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 of 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; and military; dual credit; and many more.