



**For Immediate Release**

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## Media Release

### Springfield Elementary School

**Donald R. Kennedy, Sr.**  
Superintendent of Schools

**Anita Huggins**  
Deputy Superintendent

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

**Megan Williams**  
Principal



## **Springfield's Spencer Quinlan named 2023 Top Five Teacher of the Year Finalist**

**Charleston, S.C.** – The ability to impact young lives is what ultimately influenced [Spencer Quinlan](#) to become a teacher. She has fond memories of her own education, particularly having her own mother as her Physical Education teacher.

"I grew up in an education system with highly effective teachers and extremely positive learning experiences," said Quinlan. "I was taught at a very young age to respect teachers not only as individuals but for the work that they do. Only now can I truly say that I understand the length and breadth of what that means."

Additionally, Quinlan was a nanny to four young children who she cared for through their developmental years. That unique experience showed her first-hand the impact she could have on a young person's life.

"Watching their excitement when they learned to craft or sing along to the songs we practiced really struck me," said Quinlan. "I was awed by how impressionable they were. Younger kids want to learn."

Quinlan is a second-grade teacher at Springfield Elementary School where she has taught for 11 years. It has brought her a tremendous amount of joy to work with a team of colleagues that she considers family.

"Principal Williams has created a culture where all teachers and all staff work hard to develop meaningful relationships with their students and families," said Quinlan. "The students show their appreciation for us with an abundance of hugs and smiles. You can feel their excitement to learn. It lets me know that they appreciate me as a person and that motivates me more than ever to be here."

### **Leading with her heart**

Principal Megan Williams described Quinlan as an outstanding teacher.

"She holds her students to high expectations and provides unending support to ensure all students meet those expectations," said Williams. "She is a hard worker and very dedicated to the school and its successes."

Quinlan considers her greatest contribution to education to be her heart.

"I could say time, I could say effort, I could say talents, but they all derive from the same place and that is my true love for teaching," said Quinlan.

Quinlan came to Springfield as a substitute teacher on the last day of school. She was assigned to a kindergarten class and struck up an in-depth conversation with the teacher about how special Springfield is.

"The teacher was telling me about how much she loved the school and how her colleagues felt the same way," said Quinlan. "Families do not often transition in and out of the school and neither does the staff. The core faculty that I started with are still here and I think that speaks volumes to how special this school is to everyone."

Connecting with families and the community is a passion for Quinlan which is further ignited by Williams' effort to innovatively engage with agencies that can provide resources and support.

"We have to fight for our kids," said Quinlan. "As a Top Five Teacher of the Year Finalist, I will use this platform to continue to communicate with families and work hard to build a bridge of trust and respect between home and school."

Quinlan strives to help the community by instilling the qualities of respect, empathy, acceptance, compassion, grit, and confidence into each and every student that enters and leaves her classroom.

"My past students exhibit these qualities and pass them on to their siblings and peers," said Quinlan. "Their families see the difference it makes when they are implemented and positively see the impact they have in the home. This unique dynamic creates a circle of community and service that well-exceeds their time in my classroom and positively impacts this community and others they may enter for a lifetime."

Quinlan believes that if a parent sees their child's teacher and school as advocates for their child's success, the parent will find it easier to work collaboratively and acknowledge the shared responsibility for their child's educational growth.

"When a student truly believes that coming to school matters to everyone there, they will make an effort that they may have otherwise not made," explained Quinlan. "Families will support this effort when they trust their child is being respected and taken care of while at school. It truly takes a village to create a lifelong learning community."

Quinlan hopes to build an ecosystem around supporting students by donating alarm clocks to combat absenteeism and hopes to host tutoring or homework nights at schools across the district and provide free community resources as needed. The school's parent advocate is an amazing resource, Quinlan explained and she wants to help further her efforts.

"There are so many problems that our children are dealing with or are exposed to that we can't see on the surface," said Quinlan. "We have to get families and students to confide in us their vulnerabilities so that we can help them. I know I speak for my colleagues when I say we come from a place of wanting to help, never a place of judgment."

### **Accountability**

As a teacher in a Title 1 school, Quinlan demonstrates a desire to close the achievement gap by getting to know her students' academic, emotional, and social needs. She works hard to meet each student where they are, and she structures her lessons to meet their needs. She has very high expectations and always pushes her students to go above and beyond in their learning.

"I believe that every child has the ability to learn and it is my honor to tap into that amazing ability and empower their minds," said Quinlan. "The motivation to be and do my best is not always there but the two factors that push me to do my very best for these students, day in and day out, year after year, are my discipline and determination."

Quinlan reminds her students that they are the only obstacle to the path to success.

"I teach them the power of positive self-talk and show them by leading by example that each day can be an improvement on the day before," said Quinlan. "I find one of my biggest strengths as an educator is to recognize my student's talents and go above and beyond to help them develop these talents so that they are able to thrive in whatever career path they choose."

Quinlan teaches her students that they have to hold themselves accountable so that they can be proud of themselves when they leave the classroom. She holds herself to that same standard as well, which is why she is so honored to have been chosen as a Teacher of the Year finalist.

“It is a big honor to be nominated at the school level and to be chosen as a finalist at the district level makes me feel motivated, determined, and validated,” said Quinlan. “It is a victory in a lot of ways. It is a win not just for me, but for my husband and two children, my students, and my team at work. We are all a family and we are in this together. I want my colleagues to share in this honor because they are a part of it.”

For more information, contact Megan Williams at (843) 763-1538 or the District’s 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 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 49,000 students in 88 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools. Options include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), music and other creative and performing arts, career and technical preparation programs, and military.