

For Immediate Release

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Media Release

CCSD earns first ever Partnership District Award

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Charleston, SC – Charleston County School District (CCSD) earned a 2022 Partnership District Award from the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University. This is the first time CCSD has received the award. The district was recognized for making excellent progress in strengthening its leadership on partnerships and for guiding schools to develop goal-linked programs of family and community engagement.

“The professional development series for Title I Parent Advisory Council board members and parent leaders presented information that increased parents’ knowledge of their own learning style as well as how to best support their students academically, behaviorally, and socio-emotionally,” said Rosa Fulmore, Title I Parent and Family Engagement Coordinator, NNPS District Facilitator. “They also learned about Robert’s Rules of Order, Title I guidelines, Parents’ Right to Know, family engagement policies, and advocating for their children.”

CCSD, a member of NNPS since 2017, described specific leadership structures, processes, and activities that help schools organize more effective and equitable programs of family and community engagement for student success in school. NNPS requires evidence of key program components including teamwork, clear goals, well-designed and well-implemented plans, direct facilitation of school-based Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs), evaluation of progress, and network connections.

“Charleston County School District is conducting evidence-based strategies to help schools become welcoming places that engage all parents and the community in ways that improve student attendance, behavior, achievement, health, graduation rates, postsecondary plans, and other outcomes,” said Dr. Joyce L. Epstein, Director of NNPS. “Even during the COVID-19 crisis, CCSD continued to work with schools on communicating with all students’ families in productive ways.”

CCSD's district-level family engagement activity "Learning & Growing Through Professional Development" emphasized the district's belief that parents are essential partners in supporting the overall well-being of students and the ongoing connection between home and school.

Fulmore explained that the professional development sessions for the Title I Parenting Team (school-based parenting staff) focused on best practices for family engagement, while also highlighting the resources available in our district and community. The Title I Parenting Team learned from each other by sharing information and details about their parenting events and activities. Book study discussions were facilitated by team members and provided an opportunity to share perspectives on supporting students and families.

Additionally, Chicora Elementary School and Ladson Elementary School earned Partnership School Awards. These award-winning programs and others, including North Charleston Elementary School, C.E. Williams Middle School – North Campus, and Morningside Middle School, have activities in Promising Partnership Practices 2022.

Ladson and Chicora were recognized for making excellent progress in strengthening and sustaining a comprehensive program of school, family, and community partnerships.

Ladson's award-winning activity "The Poetry Café" included students, parents, business partners, and the Charleston County Sheriff's Office.

Vanessa Smith, the Family Advocate at Ladson, said the project ties into the district's Pillar III (Wraparound Services) which supports Vision 2027 – all students reading on grade level by grade 5. Wraparound services in schools are designed to give children the support they need throughout the school day, whether the support is academic, social, or behavioral. The Wraparound team at each school exists to serve the whole child and family.

Reviewers praised Ladson's activity for its attention to the diversity of students and families in the school and community and the inclusion of multiple languages and translations. One reviewer gave the application "100 points," a rare score on the many factors considered on the One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships, teamwork, family engagement, support from colleagues, and program design and development.

"The purpose of 'The Poetry Café' is to encourage reading at home and explore the path of emotion, sensitivity, and imaginative expression in order to express awareness and self-worth, as well as shaping the human inner self," said Smith. "It allows us to brace ourselves while allowing us to understand and empathize with one another. Poetry is worthy of asking questions, which allows individuals to view things in a different way while incorporating a diversity of voices and ways of thinking."

Ladson Elementary is a diverse school where students speak at least three different languages. Smith communicated and collaborated with the Hispanic and Portuguese parents about the poems they would recite in their own languages. During the event, the English-translated versions of the poems were provided for the audience to follow during the presentations.

Chicora's award-winning activity, "Cops and Pops," was recognized for creative design, good planning, and its clear focus on student learning and success. Judges were impressed with the strong teamwork evident in their One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships. They were pleased to see that the school built a strong program structure beyond isolated activities.

Tammy Dunmeyer, the parent advocate for Chicora, stated that the program's main objective is to emphasize the Acceleration Schools' vision of meeting the academic, social, and cultural needs of students, families, and the community in order to foster and support the development of the whole child and the whole family.

"I looked and listened every day to see what students needed and wanted to be more successful in school and life in general," said Dunmeyer. "Our male students were afraid of the police. Some told me their fathers were also afraid. These same students were struggling academically when it came to reading. What better way to increase and improve interest in reading along with improved comprehension skills, community partnerships, and adult and child bonding?"

North Charleston Police Chief Reggie Burgess immediately supported the idea, and the school established a structure.

Dunmeyer chose a book that related to the community Chicora serves and during every session, the students, their male role models, and the police officers were sharing their personal stories as they related to the book.

"I want to aid in decreasing the 82 percent of our Black and Brown students who aren't reading on grade level," said Dunmeyer. "Chicora and all other recognized schools will continue to strengthen its program of school, family, and community partnerships in the 2022-23 school year to help all students succeed at high levels."

Read about NNPS at www.partnershipschools.org. For more information, contact the CCSD's Communications Office 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.