

For Immediate Release

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Media Release

Division of Strategy and
Communications

Donald R. Kennedy, Sr.
Superintendent of Schools

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Chief of Staff



Michelle Simmons
Interim Chief Academic Officer

Elementary schools leader to serve as Interim CAO

Charleston, SC – Charleston County School District (CCSD) is proud to announce Michelle Simmons as Interim Chief Academic Officer. Simmons currently serves as the district’s Associate Superintendent of Elementary Learning. She has served in CCSD for the past 24 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 daily operation and management of the school in addition to providing professional development and instruction 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.

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 would take all Unsatisfactory rated schools and improve their status on the state report card, as well as help 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 has managed and supervised over 38 schools and seen academic growth in 60% (Reading) and 70% (Math) of her schools over the past year alone.

"With Ms. Simmons' extensive experience as an educator, administrator, and leader, I know she will bring the leadership, skills, knowledge, and perspective needed to successfully lead our Learning Services division as Chief Academic Officer," said Superintendent Don Kennedy. "We are excited to welcome her to this role where she can continue positively impacting the students of CCSD."

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.

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).

For more information, contact the Division of Strategy and Communications at (843) 937-6303.

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD), a nationally-accredited school district, is the second largest school system in South Carolina representing a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools spanning 1,300 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves more than 49,000 students in 87 schools and specialized programs. With approximately 6,100 employees district-wide, CCSD is the fourth largest employer in the region.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, charter, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), and Montessori schools, and is divided into three Learning Communities. Options include specialized programs in science, engineering and mathematics; liberal arts; music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military and other public service enterprises.