

For Immediate Release

November 4, 2021

Contact:

James Dallas - (843) 889-9411



Media Release

Pulse of CCSD – Lisa Fryar ensures academic support program enriches students in every way

E.B. Ellington Elementary School

Gerrita Postlewait, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Cynthia Ambrose
Deputy Superintendent of Learning Services

Michelle Simmons
Executive Director of Elementary School Learning Committee

James Dallas
Principal

Charleston, SC – Learning does not stop when the afternoon school bell rings – especially at E.B. Ellington Elementary School. Almost 100 students have been selected to participate in the 21st Century Community Learning Center, operated by Charleston County School District’s (CCSD) Office of Expanded Learning.

Funded through grants, the program supports academic enrichment through after-school opportunities for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty schools. Lisa Fryar is the program coordinator at Ellington, but to the students, staff and families at the school, she is so much more.

“Lisa Fryar is truly a dedicated Site Coordinator that goes above and beyond to serve the students as well as the community,” said Harold Sanders (Program Officer for 21st Century). “She is a valuable asset to our 21st Century team.”

Principal James Dallas agreed

“Being a product of this community, Lisa has a “pulse” on the needs of our students and families,” said Dallas. “She always delivers more than expected.”

Having been raised in the Lowcountry, Fryar is no stranger to CCSD schools. She attended Minnie Hughes Elementary School, the former Schroder Middle School and Baptist Hill High School. She is a native to the very community she serves and has known many of the Ellington families her entire life.

“It’s a unique relationship that has enabled me to have a great rapport with my students and their families,” said Fryar. “It’s special to be connected through community ties and it’s special for me to be able to serve my community by working with children.”

District ties

Fryar had every intention of owning her own daycare after graduating from Webster University with a degree in organizational management.

"I have always had a passion for working with children, just as I have done for the last 23 years," said Fryar. "Other opportunities arose that allowed me to work in various areas of childcare and eventually landed me back in Charleston with CCSD."

Thirteen years ago Fryar returned to the Lowcountry to work at the former C.C. Blaney Elementary School. When that campus closed she transferred to Ellington.

Fryar comes from a long line of educators and leaders. Her father was a judge for 21 years. Her mother was a teacher at Minnie Hughes for 34 years. Several siblings are retired educators - others serve in the military or are business owners. All six children are CCSD graduates, Fryar brags.

Facilitating this program at Ellington makes Fryar feel as if she fell right in line with her family's career choices. She is also grateful to have been selected to serve at Ellington.

"It truly is a neighborhood school," said Fryar. "I felt welcomed by the staff and the community when I came here in 2009. I could not ask to be in a better environment for students and families."

21st Century

Academics and educational supports have come a long way in recent years and Fryar has seen first-hand the success of the 21st Century program at Ellington.

"It's a STEM-based tutorial program that is held after school and geared towards students who need extra help," said Fryar. "The curriculum is an extension of the school day and is based on MAP and state tests.

There is also an enrichment component that is crucial to incentivizing the students.

The vendors that participate in providing enrichment bring karate, robotics, performing arts, and crafts such as sweetgrass basket making. Activities are provided by organizations such as V Bricks, Charleston County Parks and Recreation, Dance Express, African Drummers and Dancers. Educational field trips are also a highlight of the program.

Also included in the program are Parent Literacy Night, student performances, virtual learning, extended community services, community outreach, and morning sessions. CCSD's Office of Nutrition Services provides, breakfast, snacks and supper. Transportation is also provided in the afternoons.

Fryar explained that curriculum is taught by certified teachers who connect with the school's classroom teachers throughout the day to check on students, and see how the program can support teachers.

The structure of 21st Century is designed to be collaborative, Fryar explained so that students get the assistance that they need to excel in their classroom.

"The one-on-one, small group setting really has helped to improve their scores," said Fryar. "We monitor their fall and spring scores to see how effective the work is and the data proves the success of this program."

21st Century is in 11 CCSD schools under the leadership of Jason Sakran, Director of Expanded Learning.

According to Sakran, Fryar's leadership over the Ellington program has been nothing short of exceptional.

"She builds great relations with school based staff and parents and of course our students," said Sakran.

Fryar's relationships with the families she and her team serves are tight. That is evident in the overwhelming percent of parent participation, she explained. The parent survey's also reveal how pleased families are with the program and their children's academic improvement.

"Our parent participation is amazing," said Fryar. "They are literally just a phone call away and always responsive."

Fryar said that is also the reason the program is so successful at Ellington is her staff.

"They have been with me since day one," said Fryar. "They will do anything I ask or suggest. They're just always right there for me."

21st Century boasts six certified teachers, two counselors and certified substitute teachers who are on call. Each individual is vital to the success of the students who attend.

"It helps too when you have an administrator like Principal Dallas who supports the program 100 percent," said Fryar. "He utilizes the 21 Century students for whole. School performances and PTA meetings. He engages with them and ensures the program has everything we need to make the students successful."

Dallas is in his third year as principal of the school and provides whatever supports Fryar needs to help the program function.

That's because Dallas believes unconditionally in Fryar.

"Lisa is very particular about everything she does," said Dallas. "Excellence is written all over anything that she touches."

"There is never a time he has said no," said Fryar. "He is 100 percent for the children. He is innovative and wants to expose our rural students to experiences outside of their everyday lives. He too has a passion for children and will do whatever it takes to meet the needs of the children so they can reach their goals."

Fryar witnesses a lot of aha moments, and those mean an awful lot to her. What drives her though, it the knowledge that she is making a difference one step at a time.

"I am passionate about the children's success, not just academically, but personally," said Fryar. "I care about their wellbeing – the whole child. I develop special bonds with these students and their families."

Fryar's office stays full with student seeking her out for attention or a little extra love. She likes it that way because she is fine with keeping her babies close.

Ellington and 21st Century are near and dear to my heart," said Fryar. "We're reaching these students at an early age (K-5) which is so important to preparing them for the next level in life. We're preparing them academically and emotionally for a society that extends far beyond school. We're preparing them for opportunities they don't even know exists yet. But they will find those opportunities and they will be ready because of their experiences here."

Fryar also goes from classroom to classroom checking on her students, filling in for teachers when needed.

"I have a hard time saying no," said Fryar. "I love to see everyone happy so if I can make someone smile by helping them in some way, I'll do it. That's what makes my day."

When not people pleasing and living out her passion at school, Fryar is a loved and trusted event and wedding planner who has made countless dreams come true over the last 16 years.

She also enjoys the company of her three grown children and seven grandchildren.

"They're all very supportive of me," said Fryar. "Like my family at Ellington, my immediate family is very close-knit."

"Mrs. Fryar has a deep affection for the students at Ellington, added Dallas. "Growing up here in the community she understands the plight endured by the children and consequently, goes above and beyond to expose them to something different and unique."

###

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.