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Contact:

Erica Taylor 843-937-6303

Media Release

District student engagement teams successful in reaching remote students

Strategy and Communications
Division

Gerrita Postlewait, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Erica S. Taylor
Chief of Staff

Charleston, SC – The Department of Alternative Programs and Services continues to partner with schools across Charleston County School District (CCSD) to reach remote learning students who are having trouble engaging.

“We were really worried about them,” said Jennifer Coker, Executive Director of Alternative Programs (DAP). “We created groups with individuals across all departments to go one by one down the list, starting with the schools that had the highest percentage of kids learning remotely.”

The teams have done everything from updating parent contact information to actual home visits. Those one-on-one conversations allowed school officials to discuss the barriers students were facing with remote learning and offer the needed support and solutions.

“The question was what can we do to support you to make sure your child is attending,” said Coker.

Supports include everything from enrollment in community Learning Pods, providing MiFi devices, food, housing, and school supplies.

“We learned that many families were simply having technology issues or needed school supplies,” said Coker. “Housing and food are big problems as well and if a family is struggling with that, then school is not going to be a priority.”

The success rate, after providing the necessary supports, was overwhelming, Coker explained. The effort began in the first semester with primarily North Charleston schools, and 207 families (241 students) were reached. Twenty-eight students returned to in-person learning and that number continues to grow, according to Coker.

"We want students to return to the classroom but in some cases, it is just not possible," said Coker. "Many of these students and families had concerns about COVID-19 or had someone living in the home that is at risk. So we understand the need to stay home. We also understand that remote learning can be a challenge so we wanted to show our families that we are here to assist in any way that we can."

Talecia Drayton, Prevention and Intervention Coordinator for DAP said the collaborative effort identified barriers and concerns with students and their families.

"This endeavor is a great way for us to collect data, connect with families, and connect families to district and community resources in an effort to help increase student engagement," said Drayton.

DAP Director Dr. Shavonna Coakley said that as a district employee and parent to three CCSD scholars, who are all remotely attending school this year, she was grateful to be a part of this work.

"My insight into what is happening within the homes comes from the lens of knowing what most parents are feeling and the struggles our scholars are experiencing in balancing school, home, and life," said Coakley. "Therefore, I am able to establish the connection needed to ensure the success of the scholar(s)."

According to Celina Anthony, Senior Instructional Program Consultant in CCSD's Department of Federal Programs the students, their parents, and in some cases their grandparents, were appreciative of the effort.

"It was a pleasure to serve in the NCHS student engagement team under Dr. Kala Goodwine's leadership," said Anthony. "I contacted many Hispanic families whose children were learning virtually. Several were failing in one or more subjects and did not participate in many of the zoom lessons. We spoke to parents regarding students' failing grades and their lack of participation in the Zoom lessons. We asked them if there was anything that the school could do to help them improve their grades. Also, we asked the parents if they have other needs that we can assist them with, such as food and clothing."

Anthony said she was not surprised when North Charleston High School (NCHS) families said Mr. Darby, the school principal, visited them the other day.

"It was evident that the school was making a great effort to help students not only succeed academically but emotionally," said Anthony.

"This pandemic has reminded us all that it truly takes a village," said Deer Park Middle School Principal Shanitra Deas. "Being able to provide our families with resources to not only to be successful in school, but also meet basic needs brings

our district's motto to life. We can't do everything students and communities deserve, but students and communities deserve all we can do."

Coker said that meeting with the families was a great way to form relationships so that when there is a question or a family needs help, they know who to contact.

[Morningside Middle School](#) Principal Michael White took a team out just before Christmas break.

"The students were fascinated and smiling when they saw me come to their front door," said White. "The ones we were able to talk to were excited to talk to us. Parents and guardians were better able to paint the picture for us as to what was going on at home so we could intervene with encouragement or resources."

White said his team continues to conduct the outreach quarterly, not just to address absenteeism, but to identify and provide wrap-around services to families in need.

"It is important that we be intentional in all we do as educators and administrators at Morningside," said White. "It is important for schools like ours to be intentional and more than just lip service."

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) is a nationally-accredited school district that is 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 more than 50,000 students in 87 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.