

**For Immediate Release**

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# Media Release

## **Five urban schools awarded \$100K Farm to School Grant**

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**Charleston, SC** – Charleston County School District (CCSD) has been awarded a grant from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to offer Farm to School programs at five schools. It is the first Farm to School grant awarded to CCSD.

The district is excited to partner with a group of innovative community organizations. Partners include The Green Heart Project, a local non-profit that provides Farm to School education throughout the Charleston area; Fresh Future Farm, a nonprofit urban farm, grocery store, and event space in the Chicora/Cherokee neighborhood of North Charleston; and GrowFood Carolina, a project of the Coastal Conservation League.

The grant will support the USDA Farm to School objective of improving access to local foods in five eligible schools - Chicora Elementary, Mitchell Elementary, Sanders-Clyde Elementary, Meeting Street Elementary at Brentwood, and Meeting Street Elementary at Burns - through a comprehensive program that includes school gardens, farm field trips, local food procurement, and agricultural education efforts.

"Any project or partnership our department undertakes must impact student wellness," said Walter Campbell, CCSD's Executive Director of Nutrition Services. "Our partnership with The Green Heart Project not only impacts students' wellbeing - it provides hands on, engaging learning for our students."

"Students are more likely to try healthy food when they have the opportunity to grow it and cook it themselves, which makes them more likely to maintain healthy diets as they grow older," said Jesse Blom, Executive Director of The Green Heart Project. "We are proud to be part of a committed group of community partners to provide these hands-on, formative experiences for students."

The partner schools are all Title I schools located in a historically industrial and low-income area known as "The Neck," spanning the upper peninsula of

the City of Charleston and into the City of North Charleston. Many students and their families who attend the selected schools face a combination of educational, economic, and health challenges, making the need for investment in children's health both important and urgent.

"Our West African ancestors thrived on diets filled with produce and livestock they raised for themselves," said Germaine Jenkins from Fresh Future Farm. "Our work at the Farm celebrates their agricultural ingenuity in a STEM friendly manner."

"Our students love being part of something that can change their lives and help change the community," said Campbell. "While they are in the garden, they are learning math skills (by measuring and weighing), they are improving their reading skills (by exploring books on how food grows), they are learning life and communication skills by working hand and hand with their peers. This is a win for our students."

There will be five areas of activity supported by the grant:

- **School garden education** - Students will participate in hands-on lessons on all the steps of the agricultural process, from seeding to harvesting. Students will use the produce they grow during culinary lessons, where they learn about nutrition, how to prepare healthy recipes, and build cooking skills. Lessons are aligned with academic standards and teach social-emotional skills.
- **Farm field trips** - Students will visit local farms, including Joseph Fields Farm on Johns Island, allowing students to investigate where their food comes from and draw important connections between how food is produced and their own food consumption.
- **History, Culture & Farming Field Day** - Students will participate in a field day featuring a partnership between Fresh Future Farm and the Slave Dwelling Project, a nonprofit organization promoting a truthful and inclusive narrative of American history.
- **Harvest Dinner** - Students and their families will be invited to a celebratory and community-building springtime event highlighting the faces of the local Farm to School movement — students, their family members, school staff, nonprofit organizations, local business sponsors, volunteers, and community supporters.
- **Farm to Cafeteria** - Students will be introduced to healthy food in their school cafeterias through this initiative, which includes three main components: the Harvest of the Month program; sourcing SC grown produce in cafeterias; and implementing cafeteria taste-tests.

"Above the facade of the old Charleston High on Rutledge Avenue, there is a quote – 'Enter to learn, leave to serve'," added Campbell. "Our students are both learning and serving their community, and they will carry these skills with them long after their time at CCSD."

USDA administers 15 [nutrition assistance programs](#) that leverage American's agricultural abundance to ensure children and low-income individuals and families have nutritious food to eat. Visit the USDA website for more information about Farm to School grant awards: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/2020-farm-school-grant-awardees>.

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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 50,000 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.