Laing Middle School

Anita W. Huggins M.Ed.
Superintendent of Schools

Joseph Williams, Ph.D.
Associate Superintendent of Middle Schools

James Whitehair
Principal

For Immediate Release
June 3, 2024

Contact:
James Whitehair, 843-849-2819

Media Release

Laing participates in Pathway to Employment Lunch Program

Mount Pleasant, SC – Laing Middle School participated in a pilot program this school year in partnership called Pathway to Employment. Eighth grader Rodricuz McNight was the first student involved and not only successfully completed the program but stole the heart of Terri Chavez, Nutrition Services Manager, and her entire team.

The program was initiated by the team at Laing to encourage students who may have a passion for culinary arts and want to explore it before high school.

McKnight is in Ally Brown's Low Incidence class. He started volunteering with Chavez' team and quickly earned the title "Sous Chef" at the beginning of the school year two days and progressed to three days a week.

"McKnight is generally with us for an hour and a half and helps wash and count fruit. He also helps check-in, date, and put away food orders as a way to learn about food rotation."

"He also helps us prep certain dishes and make chicken sandwiches and burgers," said Chavez. "He has also gotten to help us with general cleaning, too. We try to work with him on his numbers and memory and he is a pleasure to work with."

McKnight said his favorite part of the work is learning all the aspects of food service.

"I also like helping Ms. Terri," said McKnight. "I'm learning about what goes on behind the scenes."

The cafeteria produces 120 breakfasts and 500 lunches a day, as well as daily a la carte options. Chavez said that takes a lot of effort and the extra help offered by McKnight is appreciated.

"I do have some students who are interested in the culinary field and I am hoping to develop a program that will give students an opportunity to get a glimpse into the working world of food and beverage," said Chavez. "My hope is to work with Wando's culinary department and and have training students be able to spend a day observing their program all while getting some practical experience."

Under the leadership of Chavez, McKnight learned about handling product, credits, disposal of food, sanitation of workstations, and so much more.

After his pathway to employment shift, McKnight and Chavez took an early lunch which gave them an opportunity to chat and get to know each other.

"It was a mentorship opportunity that I could not turn down," said Chavez. "I do believe I will cry when he graduates middle school. He is such a pleasure to be around and work with. He always has a smile on his face and wants to work hard."

Brown said the program has improved McKnight's confidence.

"Rodricuz is a leader in class," said Brown. "He is thoughtful and kind to everyone. He is proactive, aware of the classroom schedule, and reminds his peers who thrive on routine. He assists with transitions and is able to assist classmates when needed. We are so proud he took on a 'job' with Ms. Terri in the cafeteria and helps prep food on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays."

McKnight, who is popular among the staff and student body said he is going to miss his cafeteria team but looks forward to going to Wando High School where he hopes to play football.

"I will try and find a way to come back and see Ms. Terri next year so I can say 'hi' to everyone," he added.

For more information, contact Principal Jay Whitehair at (843) 849-2819.

###

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 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 50,000 students in 88 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse portfolio of educational options and specialized programs delivered to the students of CCSD through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools and programs. Rich educational opportunities for students include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; military; dual credit; and many more.