



For Immediate Release

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Media Release

Burke Students Gain Valuable Experiences During Black History Month

Burke High School

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Charleston, SC - Burke High School students enrolled in African American Studies and AP (Advanced Placement) Language courses visited both the International African American Museum (IAAM) and the Gaillard Center in February as a way to gain supplemental educational opportunities during Black History Month. Instructional Coach Michele Johnson facilitated both experiences.

According to Johnson, during the trip to the IAAM on February 7, students were extremely engaged and asked thoughtful questions to Imani Perry, author of *Black in Blues: How a Color Tells the Story of My People*, about the multiple thematic layers connected to the color blue and African American Culture. After receiving signed copies of her most recent book, the students toured the museum.

"This field trip was eye-opening and educational," said senior Jaha Brown. "Author Imani Perry spoke about her incredible book, and I enjoyed a tour of the museum. Given today's society, I believe this trip was especially significant. We must learn about our culture's history from a young age so we can continue to share our stories. Overall, I truly appreciated this opportunity and the knowledge I gained from it."

"What I learned while on our trip is that it can take more than one year to write a book and it's ok to be frustrated while writing," added senior Cameron Simmons. "Sometimes you don't know the correct words to use. Also, during our time at the museum, I learned so much about Charleston's culture and history. I didn't have time to see everything. I would definitely like to go back again soon."

Johnson explained that students felt that the overall experience was invaluable and are seeking greater opportunities. One of those opportunities came later in the month (February 25) when students from the same classes went to the Gaillard Center to see the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater perform. Students, parents, and teachers had the opportunity to indulge in the arts and history behind Alvin Ailey before arriving. They also met John Taylor, costume designer for Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre and graduate of Burke High School.

"The performance was amazing," said English Language Arts teacher Cassie Keene. "It was infinitely inspiring, thought-provoking, and heartrending all at once. I will carry it with me always."

The month-long series of opportunities ended with a literacy night at Burke that highlighted literacy as advocacy. The evening involved student interpretations of literacy through dance and spoken word, an array of multiple displays from authentic newspaper articles on local issues, and free books and literature on all topics necessary for students to thrive.

"When someone asks why we had a literacy night as our culminating event, I tell them literacy as advocacy and being informed to make decisions are the most important tools right now," explained Johnson. "The truth is, I got mine so you can get yours. And when you get it, it's my turn to show you how to keep it so you can help me keep what I have left! You see, literacy is reciprocal, it's the recipe - it is reciprocity."

The literacy event ended with a panel discussion from Dr. Tamara Butler of the Avery Research Center, Dr. Charity Brady (Project Lit Chapter Leader), Kandis Nesmith of McGraw-Hill and Achieve 3000, Christy James (CCSD's Library and Media Services Coordinator), and author Rian Jenkins.

For more information, please contact Michele Johnson at michele_johnson@charleston.k12.sc.us.

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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.