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Contact:
Andy Pruitt, 843-937-6583

Media Release

Office of
Communications

Anita W. Huggins, M.Ed.
Superintendent of Schools

Michelle A. Mills
Associate of Communications

2025 Teacher of the Year Finalist Profile - Charleston Charter School for Math and Science's Herron hopes to use partnerships with local agencies to expand learning opportunities

Charleston, SC – Shaped by curiosity and a love for the natural world, Crystal Herron's path to teaching unfolded as she discovered the power of connecting scholars to real-world science. With a marine science degree, Herron envisioned a career in research and conservation. Still, every role she took, from leading marine field programs at Grice Marine Lab to developing K-12 environmental education programs with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Forest Service, pulled her further into the world of education. These experiences reinforced her belief that learning should be immersive, hands-on, and deeply tied to scholars' communities.

As a Top Five Finalist for Teacher of the Year, Herron, of Charleston Charter School for Math and Science, hopes to use her platform to expand learning opportunities by utilizing local agencies and community partners. The idea is to expand hands-on learning. She believes that education should be a partnership between schools and the community, where scholars engage with the world beyond the classroom in ways that foster responsibility, collaboration, and a sense of belonging.

“For me, this humbling recognition is an opportunity for me to bring attention and recognition to everything that got me here to this point,” said Herron. “I don’t teach alone. Beyond my work with scholars, I am dedicated to serving my colleagues and strengthening education across Charleston County. My colleagues at school and our community partners are so vital to my success as an educator. The ability to bring in experts or expose students to learning environments outside of the classroom goes hand-in-hand with the required curriculum.”

Herron said her greatest contribution to education is bridging the gap between school and the real world, giving scholars a space where they don’t just prepare for the future, they step into it.

“I will continue to advocate for education that is engaging, relevant, and community-driven, ensuring every scholar in Charleston County sees themselves as a capable and valuable part of their world,” Herron explained. “Scholars don’t just need access to information, they need opportunities to use it in ways that challenge and inspire them. Schools should work with businesses, scientists, engineers, and civic leaders, not just to expose scholars to new ideas, but to actively involve them in solving real-world problems.”

Herron said that the best education doesn’t happen in isolation.

“Schools and communities should not be separate - they should be deeply connected,” added Herron. “If we want scholars to see education as more than a task to complete, we must make learning a process of discovery, not just absorption. They disengage when learning feels like a series of assignments and thrive when it feels like an adventure.”

As a spokesperson for the teaching profession, Herron said her message is simple: investing in teachers and schools means investing in communities.

“A thriving education system builds a thriving workforce, a more informed society, and a stronger future,.” said Herron. “The leaders, innovators, and problem-solvers of tomorrow are sitting in today’s classrooms. The more we connect scholars with real-world experiences, mentors, and opportunities, the better prepared they will be to step into those roles.”

For more information, contact the Office of 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 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.