



For Immediate Release

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Media Release

Pinehurst students unveil poetry book

Pinehurst Elementary School

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Charleston, SC - Pinehurst Elementary School students embarked on an exciting book project this year, culminating in a professionally published work. On May 19, 2025, Pinehurst students proudly unveiled Portraits: Our Untold Stories to parents, families, and community partners.

According to Welieides Moreira La Porte, Trilingual Family Service Advocate at Pinehurst, this project is a testament to the hard work and creativity of students, teachers, and staff.

This bilingual (Spanish & English) poetry book showcases the stories of all fifth graders at Pinehurst, celebrating their unique experiences and strengthening family connections. A yearlong writing project based on George Ella Lyon's "I Am From" framework, it includes student-written short stories and reflections inspired by their families to honor diversity and create a lasting keepsake.

"Portraits was truly an incredible and transformative experience," said Principal Paul Pallagi. "The project celebrated the diverse backgrounds, cultures, and personal journeys of our students, highlighting not only their triumphs but also the challenges they've overcome. At our school, where 77 percent of our students are multilingual learners, this project proves that when we remove barriers, our students can create work that is powerful, moving, and beyond words."

Students crafted their pieces during clubs, guided by librarians, teachers, and parent volunteers, Eva Ojeda and Merlybirth Garcia Alvarez, alongside individual sessions with La Porte, which provided personalized support.

"Of all the projects I've led, this one holds a special place in my heart," said La Porte. "It challenged me, reshaped me, and ultimately rebuilt me through many sleepless nights of reflection. At the unveiling, educators, communities, and families experienced the deeply moving testimonies of students and teachers who brought Portraits: Our Untold Stories to life. This remarkable book captures powerful, heartfelt narratives straight from the perspective of a fifth grader."

Pallagi said he was deeply moved by what the students produced.

"I've shared laughs, tears, and heartfelt conversations with them, moments I never imagined possible," added Pallagi. "This project reminded me that language is not a limitation; every child has a meaningful story to share. I'm already looking forward to continuing this incredible work with future students."

During Pinehurst's Book Signing Night event, guests were welcomed with refreshments and special performances, including Calev Harrold from Charleston County School of Arts on trumpet and a beautiful presentation by the Pinehurst choral group. Students then had the unique opportunity to sign the book for their parents, embracing the moment as professional authors.

The students' excitement was overwhelming, many were in tears as they received the books. Some hugged them tightly, kissed them, and held them as if they were the most precious gifts of their lives.

"As I listened to their testimonies, I witnessed a profound transformation: they felt heard, they felt important, they felt smart," added La Porte. "When I sat with each student individually, my heart broke as many admitted, 'I don't have a dream or a purpose.' But through heartfelt conversations, something beautiful happened when they walked away, as they carried not just a book, but a dream and a renewed sense of purpose."

The essence of this book is captured in three powerful action verbs: listen, believe, and do. More than just words, they are a call to action and an invitation to engage, to uplift, to transform, La Porte explained.

"I am incredibly proud of our students for having the courage to share their stories out loud," La Porte said. "I am also deeply grateful to the parents for their unwavering support and collaboration, helping their students navigate this journey with confidence. Together, parents and the school create a community built on growth, understanding, and collaboration."

For more information, contact Principal Paul Pallagi at (843) 824-8728.

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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.

