

Focus ON CCSD

News for, by and about Charleston County School District,
the state of South Carolina's premier school district where *Students are the Heart of Our Work.*

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CCSD hosts Call Me MiSTER Tour



MiSTERS WORKED WITH STUDENTS



COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON MiSTERS AND SC STATE STUDENTS



MiSTERS FROM CLAFLIN UNIVERSITY PARTICIPATED
IN THE CCSD TOUR



DEER PARK ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL
RICARDO ROBINSON



GOODWIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER
MARVAE PAYTON COMPLETED THE CALL ME
MiSTER PROGRAM AND HOSTED CURRENT
PARTICIPANTS IN HIS CLASS RECENTLY

CCSD's Office of Human Resources and the Teacher Recruitment Office hosted its annual Call Me MiSTER Bus Tour Friday, September 20, 2019. During each school visit, Call Me MiSTERS from Claflin, Clemson, Coastal Carolina, College of Charleston, and South Carolina State had the opportunity to walk and talk with staff members while seeing CCSD students in action at various school locations throughout the district.

As CCSD looks for ways to combat challenges within the field of education, the Call Me MiSTER Program is an essential component of teacher leadership. This year Charleston County students are benefitting from the leadership of twelve Call Me MiSTER Alumni Educators. The goal is to recruit many more MiSTERS to the CCSD family.

"We hired four new Call Me MiSTERS for the 2019-2020 school year," said Bill Briggman, Chief Human Resource Officer. "Registration has exceeded our expectations and were excited to welcome our future CCSD educators."

The mission of the Call Me MiSTER® (acronym for Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models) Initiative is to increase the pool of available teachers from a broader more diverse background particularly among the State's lowest-performing elementary schools. Student participants are largely selected from among underserved, socio-economically disadvantaged and educationally at-risk communities.

The project provides:

- Tuition assistance through Loan Forgiveness programs for admitted students pursuing approved programs of study in teacher education at participating colleges
- An academic support system to help assure their success
- A cohort system for social and cultural support
- Assistance with job placement

Julian Dinkins of Coastal Carolina University's father was not only an educator but a mentor to his students and he aspired them to excel. Dinkins was determined to follow in his footsteps.

"It was a great experience walking into the classroom looking at the students see a black male role model, who is dressed up and not playing sports," said Dinkins. "They were seeing someone who was above the norm. So it was good to see them and shake their hands."

Claflin University student Marcus Burgiss II comes from a family of educators. He knew early on that he would go into the profession.

"There's a quote one of my former teachers told me; 'To teach is to touch a life forever'," said Burgiss. "That really stuck with me because you never forget your teachers."



A HANDS ON APPROACH IS CRUCIAL TO THE PROGRAM

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A SPIRALED MANDALA



JAMES SIMONS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TURNED 100 YEARS OLD

In the Whorl of Time Centennial celebrations for James Simons planned

The week of September 9-13, 2019 marked 100 years since James Simons Elementary School opened its doors. A pivotal part of Charleston’s rich history, school leaders say James Simons has always been a place that represents hope, family, and community.

For example, it was one of the first schools in Charleston to desegregate. Five years ago, the first African-American children to desegregate a Charleston school, Oveta Glover and Barbara Ford Morrison returned to James Simons to officially dedicate the new building.

The new building was renovated to include the original, historical staircase that goes out to Moultrie Street, once again paying homage to the roots of James Simons.

Alumni and present students of James Simons alike have been very proud of the history there. This school has always honored the past while looking to the future.

To mark the centennial of James Simons, students, parents, teachers, and community members have planned several events to celebrate this historical milestone.

The school has recently partnered with conNECKtedTOO, a group of artists, educators, activists working with and for TINY Businesses, to create a spiraled mandala *In the Whorl of Time*, that is being showcased in the historical entrance of the school.

The 1200 pieces have been created under the leadership of artist Sonia Osio and educator Pamella Gibbs. Students and educators have been working on these pieces for the past year. The individual mandalas were created by classes at James Simons as well as a school in Ecuador and another school in Georgia. This collaborative effort came together to represent 1919-2019, the historical timeline of the school, race relationships, field trips to neighborhood TINY businesses by the middle school

entrepreneurship class, family stories, and wishes for the future.

“Our school’s history is something that should be celebrated and honored,” said Principal Chris Ryan. “School is a place where hope is fostered and dreams are realized. We have to see ourselves as part of something bigger than ourselves and this exhibit gives us the opportunity to do so.”

James Simons is inviting families and community members into the school for tours during our regularly scheduled school tours on the first and third Wednesday of every month.

“*In the Whorl of Time* is an example of a vision being realized and is a gift to our school, our community, and most importantly to our students in so many ways,” Ryan added.

If you are interested in touring James Simons, please contact Michelle Kraft michelle_kraft@charleston.k12.sc.us.

Additionally James Simons alumni will be invited as special guests to be interviewed by current students October 15-16, 2019. Interested alumni should contact Jennifer Savage jennifer_savage@charleston.k12.sc.us.

The goal is to foster intergenerational conversations and to build community. Students will have the opportunity to create authentic informative writing samples as they capture first-hand accounts of their school’s history.

The Centennial Celebration will culminate in May with the performance *James Simons Through the Decades* by Lauren Martin and the school’s music students.

If you are interested in learning more about James Simons’s Centennial Celebration, check out We Are James Simons Centennial on Facebook.



Laing promotes National Library Card Sign Up

Laing Middle School partnered with Charleston County Public Library (CCPL) to promote National Library Card Sign Up Month. Melissa Tunstall, Young Adult Services Manger from the Wando Mount Pleasant Library, spoke to Laing sixth-graders about CCPL's programming and services as well as bringing applications for students to sign up for their own card.

PINCKNEY PARTICIPATES IN ANNUAL Rock Your School event

On September 19, 2019 Charles Pinckney Elementary School participated in the nationwide Rock Your School event with over 50,000 other Edurockstars.

This event is sponsored by Get Your Teach On, an organization that holds a national conference each summer. This past June seven teachers from Pinckney had the opportunity to attend and learn about student engagement and creating community in the school.

The theme this year was MAGIC and teachers integrated magical lessons into their curriculum. Students were greeted by the Oceanside Collegiate Academy football team, Wando Volleyball team, Wando cheerleaders, and the Pinckney staff dressed as magicians.

Throughout the day students participated in a variety of engaging educational lessons. Some examples included Breakouts, art infused writing, and STEM activities.



Jeff Blankenship named principal of Wando Center for Advanced Studies



JEFF BLANKENSHIP

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is excited to announce the selection of Jeff Blankenship as the principal of the Center for Advanced Studies (CAS) at Wando High School. In this role, Blankenship will drive the development, planning, preparation, and execution of the CAS program east of the Cooper. Blankenship has served as an associate principal of Wando for the last two years.

As principal of Wando's CAS, Blankenship will spearhead the overall direction, coordination, and evaluation of the CAS, ensuring alignment of the CAS's development with the district's strategic plan.

Blankenship will be responsible for the creation and management of a master schedule which will serve Lucy Beckham High School and Wando, as well as all communication, public relations, and development of relationships with post-secondary and industry partners.

Additionally, he will develop programs of study, recruit and hire highly-qualified staff, and develop professional development for middle and high guidance counselors within the Constituent District 1 and 2 zone.

Blankenship will work to implement work-based learning opportunities, integrate common skills currently in high demand into programming, and establish educational, administrative, and career counseling services at the center.

He will also create and manage the CAS's budget, coordinate all transportation logistics with feeder schools, facilitate CTE Center Accreditation, and oversee the safety and security of all students and staff on campus.

Before his appointment as associate principal of Wando in 2017, Blankenship served as assistant principal at Wando for seven years.

"Jeff will be entering the CAS with almost 20 years of teaching and administrative educational experience, including direct supervision of the Career and Technology Education department throughout Wando and the Center for Advanced Studies. His knowledge, skills, and abilities, combined with his technical and tactical competence, will ensure that future generations of CAS graduates will be college and career ready in the high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand jobs of the 21st century global economy."

RICH GORDON – CTE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STUDENTS PERFORM TRIAL RUN FOR BITTY & BEAU'S

West Ashley High School job coach, Kristi Andrews, and Career Readiness teacher Erica Schuler had students do a trial run for their new school-based business, Bitty & Beau's coffee cart! They taught students each step and how to deliver extraordinary customer service! They did GREAT! #CCSD #Bitty&Beau's



District alumni come full circle as employees of CCSD

Long before Charleston County School District (CCSD) school buses had cameras or radios for school bus drivers to communicate with dispatch, buses were driven by high school students.

It was a nation-wide trend and a way for teenagers to earn money.

The job was a coveted and highly sought after position. It was also a celebrated one in which drivers from each school were highlighted in their yearbook.

The U.S. Labor Department eventually announced in February of 1988 that 17-year-olds must stop driving school buses in North and South Carolina.

Under exemptions that had been renewed annually by the Labor Department, the two states had been allowed to hire 16-and 17-year-old bus drivers. The department ended the states' use of 16-year-old drivers in December of 1987. It was all to tighten up enforcement of the rules of child labor.

At the time, South Carolina had 6,000 school bus drivers, of whom 1,200 were 17 years old. Students who were employed as drivers were put through a selection and training process, after which they were tested and certified by the state department of education. Requirements and training varied from state to state.

The way it was

Several James Island High classmates, who are now also employed by CCSD look back fondly on those days. In the late 1980's, these students earned an average of \$50 a week driving school buses for CCSD.

Libby Smalls-Tisdale grew up on James Island. She walked through a pathway leading to EME Apartments with older siblings, where they caught the school bus.

They had to trudge through rain and cold to catch the bus and often arrived at school or at home soaked to the bone. When she learned there was an opportunity to drive a bus, rather than wait on one, she jumped at the opportunity. When she found out she could get paid for it, she was even more thrilled.

Smalls-Tisdale enrolled in a two-day session to learn how to drive stick-shift. She passed the written exam but had some trouble with the driving portion.

"It was challenging for a female because there was no one to help me practice," said Smalls-Tisdale. "It was scary the first time. I kept messing up the clutch and there was an elderly man grading me and he started fussing and told me to park the bus and get out of the driver's seat. He showed me how to do it again so I just watched and kept practicing in my head."

Smalls-Tisdale went back a second time, determined to pass. She did it and was soon assigned a route near her home. She knew the kids on the route and their parents, which made the transition from being a rider to a driver much easier.

Also in her favor, was the fact that the bus she was assigned, #3099, was an automatic. She ran two routes, an elementary school route, and a high school route.

Her mother was happy with the arrangement as well. Smalls-Tisdale was able to park the bus in the yard, so her own school day was not interrupted by logistics.

As kids do, a handful of the bus riders acted out on occasion. One particular high school girl was jealous of Smalls-Tisdale because she wanted that particular route (since she lived in that area). She continuously criticized Smalls-Tisdale's driving. Eventually she got upset and pulled the bus over.

"We exchanged words," said Smalls-Tisdale. "That's the first time I ever stood up to anyone. It was a day of reckoning, but we eventually moved past it."

Her life came full circle when she came to work at CCSD at Camp Road Middle School (James Island Middle School) for ten years as a student data clerk. She retired but later returned to the workforce again as an employee in the District's Office of Strategy



Mrs. Libby Smalls-Tisdale



STUDENT BUS DRIVERS (TOP)
SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS YEARBOOK PICTURE
(BOTTOM)



NEIL GRANT

and Communications.

During her time with CCSD she has run into old classmates who also work for the district such as recently retired Neil Grant (CCSD Maintenance), and Cami Fissel (Camp Road Middle School). Not only did they all go to James Island High School in the 1980s, they were all bus drivers, too.

Grant drove the bus for four years and ran three routes. He liked the idea of driving a bus because he could park the bus in the yard and jump on in the morning when it was time to start the route. Grant also liked having first period free and an early out so he could run the route on time.

"It was a really good experience for me," said Grant. "It taught me to deal with people when they get out of line. In my case, if the kids acted out, I just pulled the bus over."

Like Smalls-Tisdale, everyone knew Grant on his route.

"We all grew up together and we were either friends or family or both," said Grant.

In addition to driving three routes, he picked up extra money driving kids on field trips during his senior year. He also held down a part-time job at Piggly Wiggly during his high school years.

Driving a school bus was a lot of responsibility, Grant said.

"You had to keep up your grades just like you would if you played sports," said Grant. "Then, of course, you had the responsibility of ensuring the safety of all of those students."

By the time he graduated in 1984 he handed over his bus, #2695, to the late Rodney Hamilton who was also a former CCSD employee.

Grant worked for CCSD for 30 years and considers it "coming full circle."

His classmate Cami Fissel drove for three years.

"The first time I ever drove over the Cooper River Bridge I was taking elementary school kids to Palmetto Park for a field trip," said Fissel. "I was driving a bus with a clutch and no power steering - at age the age 16."

It started out as a joke between friends, Fissel explained. "These two guys in my class heard about the job and said, 'We'll go if you go.'"

At only \$2.84 an hour, it was a little nerve wracking because drivers did not have a radio and if you broke down you'd better

hope there was a house nearby so you could use the phone, she added.

"I loved it," said Fissel. "It was a lot of responsibility for a 16-year-old."

The first female bus driver for the District was Jo Anne Daquigan. She works for the District as a Senior Administrative Support Specialist in the Office of Assessment and Evaluation.

She was only a substitute driver but it was a milestone for the young girl.

When Daquigan was a first-grader at Stiles Point Elementary School her brother was a senior at James Island High School. He drove a bus for part of that year and he paid Daquigan a dime to sweep out his bus.

"When I was in 11th grade at Fort Johnson High School and after I turned 18, I went to my Assistant Principal, Mr. Washington (who later became the principal at St. John's High School) and asked him if I could drive a bus," said Daquigan. "I will never forget the smile on his face and his words were 'really'? He signed the paper and I went to class."

Daquigan had never driven a vehicle with a clutch before but she knew the mechanics.

"The bus instructor said I was the first girl to drive a bus, so I thought that was pretty cool," added Daquigan. "It was a basic driving test and the best thing other than passing was the bus didn't start in first gear, but second, so there wasn't the threat of stalling out."

Today CCSD serves 22,000 bus riders out of a student population of 50,000. According to Jeff Scott, Executive Director of Transportation, it takes 370 buses to service the students.

"There is one bus per route," said Scott. "Bus runs are home to school and school to home. Most buses run two routes in the morning and two in the afternoon, which totals over 1350 bus runs a day."

Scott said that the training of bus drivers today is more comprehensive.

"All school bus drivers must obtain a Commercial Driver's License, receive a week's worth of classroom training from the South Carolina State Department of Education and receive at least 10 hours of behind the wheel training with an instructor," said Scott. "Only then can the driver receive certification, from the State, to drive. The training process normally takes a month from beginning to end."

WE SEE YOU

School Resource Officers are often the first thing students see every day when they arrive at school. They serve as more than just a law enforcement officer, they are a friend, a mentor and sometimes a parental figure.

We see these men and women show kindness and compassion to the most vulnerable members of our society. So, in appreciation of their service to Charleston County School District scholars, we honor them for what they do – for it so profoundly

impacts every individual in the school communities where they so selflessly serve.

To nominate your school resource officer, please email sully_witte@charleston.k12.sc.us.

Focus ON CCSD

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Gerrita Postlewait, *Superintendent of Schools*
Erica Taylor, *Chief of Staff*
Sully Witte, *Communications Officer*

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Paula Wilson

Senior Police Officer
Mount Pleasant Police Department
Moultrie Middle School

What brought you into this work?

Growing up I always had a desire to help people. That is what brought me into police work.

What makes the position of School Resource Office unique?

I am able to work with the same group of students on a daily basis. This enables me to build trust and rapport with students. Having the opportunity to interact with students in a positive school setting brings about a kind of understanding of law enforcement that helps break down barriers.

What makes the school community you serve so special?

The students, teachers, staff, and parents make the school community so special. I am fortunate to work with an amazing group of people every day. I like being able to support the school staff and students in so many ways.

What is your favorite part of the day?

There is not one specific part of the day that is my favorite. I especially like greeting the students in the morning and interacting with the special education students.