

For Immediate Release

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Media Release

Multiple CCSD schools using art display to increase cultural awareness

Division of Strategy and Communications

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Charleston, SC – School staff members throughout Charleston County School District are providing students with an opportunity to “see” the world by bringing the world to the school through an art display. Angel Oak Elementary, James Island Elementary, and Memminger Elementary partnered with the Besharat Art Foundation Museum/Gallery to display “The Faces of Innocence” exhibit featuring the photography of Steve McCurry.

Starting in March, students at Angel Oak were asked to view and study images of children around the world in their hallways using Harvard Project Zero’s Artful Thinking strategies to promote higher order thinking, global and cultural awareness, empathy, and compassion. Angel Oak Elementary is arts-integrated school, so this initiative aligns with the school’s overall approach.

“The exhibit is a powerful reminder each day that there is so much to discover about our world,” explained Angel Oak Elementary Principal Judith Condon. “Our students are connecting with the images academically, socially and emotionally. They are describing, analyzing, interpreting, evaluating, writing about the images, exploring the countries the images are from and are having rich conversations about each one. They relate so well to the images because they, too, are children. It is really amazing to watch the learning process. Our hallways are now centers of learning”.

The images will change as new work is curated by the Besharat Art Foundation, an organization committed to sharing art with schools to teach children.

Right before the school year ended, images from the “Faces of Innocence” were placed in the hallways at James Island Elementary. Principal Jonetta Gregory thanked the school’s art teacher, Suzanne Baranoski, for her work to bring the gallery to the building. They believe this program can unite as human beings, focusing on young children who can observe these large photographs and help further develop a more profound sense of empathy and sympathy.

"At our school, the students see other children their ages throughout our halls and can notice that while they may be dressed differently, be in seemingly unusual environments, and have different hair and skin, they are all still children like themselves," added Gregory. "The comments, writing, and artwork our students made are proof this meaningful program is having an effect on our school community. We are honored to be a part of the Besharat Foundation."

The photos for this display are visible in the main hallway and atrium area at Memminger Elementary. Principal Dottie Brown explained this gallery has a special meaning for their school community.

"The international faces in the gallery are beyond beautiful and will enhance our International Baccalaureate units of study," said Brown "We have also dedicated our gallery to Mrs. Annette Mani, who was a long-time volunteer here at Memminger and recently passed away. We will be placing a plaque in her honor in the entrance near the gallery."

The images are donated by the Besharat Art Foundation at no cost to the schools.

For more information about the displays in CCSD elementary schools, contact the Division of Strategy and Communications at (843) 937-6303. To learn more about the Besharat Foundation and gallery, visit <https://besharatfoundation.org>.

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is a nationally-accredited school district that is committed to providing equitable and quality educational opportunities for all of 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 more than 50,000 students in 87 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools. Options include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military.