

**Immediate Release**

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**Contact:**

Erica Taylor 843-937-6303

## Media Release

### **Buist Academy Named National Blue Ribbon School for Stellar Achievement**

Office of Strategy and  
Communications

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Gerrita Postlewait, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

Erica S. Taylor  
Chief Officer

**CHARLESTON, S.C.** - Students, teachers, and school leaders were over the moon when they learned Thursday that Buist Academy for Advanced Studies had been named a National Blue Ribbon School, a prestigious national honor from the U.S. Department of Education.

Principal Shawntay White said Buist landed the award because it is a continuously high-achieving school.

"It's a huge honor and we're humbled to be recognized," White commented. "It validates the good things we're doing."

The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes public and private elementary, middle, and high schools based on their overall academic excellence or their progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups.

Buist will celebrate Friday with cupcakes at lunchtime.

On a tour of the downtown academic magnet school, White pointed out the colorful bulletin boards in the hallways highlighting this year's space theme "Out of This World." Having an annual theme that students, teachers and parents can embrace is one of the many ways Buist works to form a strong community, she said. That community feeling is important in helping students learn.

"It's the people and the children and the support we receive from our families" that makes the school unique and a success," said White.

Buist, which serves nearly 500 children in kindergarten through eighth-grade, was established in 1985. The school provides a rigorous curriculum emphasizing language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and foreign languages. All students begin French or Spanish in kindergarten, and then continue to study the language until graduation.

In 2007, Buist became an authorized International Baccalaureate World School for the Primary Years Programme and in 2010, the school was fully authorized as a

Middle Years Programme. IB is a rigorous academic program that emphasizes global, creative and critical thinking.

Buist is a countywide school, and students are selected by a lottery process. Students also must receive a score of at least the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile on an admissions assessment.

Sherlonda Adkins, whose daughter Kayla Adkins is a fifth-grader at Buist, said the award is "a huge deal."

Adkins, whose other daughter graduated from Buist and now is a senior at the district's Academic Magnet High School, also serves on the School Improvement Council and the district's parent advisory cabinet. She said sometimes parents of children who don't attend Buist ask her if being at a school with such a rigorous curriculum stresses out her child. But her experience is the opposite.

"They're not little robots stressed beyond their capacity," Adkins explained. "They come home happy because they are challenged and excited about learning. One of the amazing things about Buist is that the students cover advanced material and have fun at the same time."

Adkins said her family also has experience with private schools, but she prefers Buist. Private schools can isolate children from the world, but at Buist, the school and her children feel connected to the community.

She also appreciates Buist being a relatively small school, where she is able to get to know other parents.

"All the kids in a grade know each other, and I've been friends with the same parents since (my daughter was in) first grade," added Adkins.

That matters because at a magnet school, students don't live in the same neighborhood around the school. The parent connections helped Adkins and her children to stay connected outside of school hours and during the summer.

Karrie Loonie, the school's guidance counselor for kindergarten through fourth grade, said she also was drawn to work at the school because of the community feeling.

"There's just a feeling of trust," said Loonie, who completed the application for the National Blue Ribbon Program and also serves as chair of the School Improvement Council.

White said State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman nominated Buist for the award; White was happy about that because she had been trying to bring more positive recognition to the school.

"We want to show people we are an exceptional school inside and out," White stated.

For more about this honor for Buist Academy, contact Charleston County School District's Office of Strategy and Communications at (843) 937-6303 or [communications@charleston.k12.sc.us](mailto:communications@charleston.k12.sc.us).

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#### **About the Charleston County School District**

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is the second largest school system in South Carolina representing a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools that span 1,000 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves more than 50,000 students in 86 schools and specialized programs. With approximately 6,100 employees district-wide, CCSD is the fourth largest employer in the region.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, charter, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), and Montessori schools, and is divided into three Learning Communities. Options include specialized programs in science, engineering and mathematics; liberal arts; music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military and other public service enterprises.