

For Immediate Release
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Media Release

North Charleston High School Students Mentor Their Elementary Counterparts

Mount Pleasant, SC – Rachel Etchason’s third-grade students at North Charleston Elementary School (NCES) read on a wide range of levels. Some read above grade-level, while some struggle just a little. One student is from Honduras and doesn’t speak or read English yet. He’s been in Etchason’s class for just three months. However, he’s extremely proficient in his native language.

Extra reading help is bringing everyone up to speed thanks to the AP English students at North Charleston High School (NCHS). They’ve partnered with the elementary students as pen pals to help make reading and writing on and above grade-level more easily obtainable.

NCHS English teacher Mev McIntosh noticed through the years that reading and communication were large issues within the school community and wanted to improve that by reaching the younger students.

In addition to writing letters to each other, the high school students come in and conduct a lesson and then split off for one-on-one time where they read with their pen pal, go over goals, and discuss ways to improve.

“My students discussed ways of giving back to their community while at the same time focusing on instruction and curriculum,” said McIntosh. “After brainstorming, they created this pen pal program complete with goals for the students. They are unofficial mentors encouraging goal setting and achievement.”

“It’s been an amazing opportunity for my students to see older kids from their neighborhood take time out of their busy schedules to come help them,” said Etchason. “My students look up to these kids. They’ve got all eyes on them.”

The student from Honduras was partnered with a Spanish speaking student and is thriving. He’s also slowly learning his English words.

The partnership is in its infancy. Etchason hopes to see it not only continue, but expand to other classes within NCES.

Office of Strategy and
Communications

Gerrita Postlewait, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

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Chief of Staff

"There's not enough light shed on these kids in North Charleston," said Etchason. "The kids have a lot of great things going on and a lot of great things happening in their schools. This pen pal program is just one of many things."

Third-grader Lamarion Hardaway said he's learning things he did not know before.

"It's fun, and my pen pal likes the same things as me," said Hardaway. "He really helps me."

McIntosh said the program addresses the need to give back and strengthens community relationships. She hopes the elementary school students will one day pass that on.

"I've seen growth in my high school students," said McIntosh. "I've seen their leadership skills improve and I am certain they're getting the bigger picture."

Senior Arthur Gibson enjoys helping the younger students meet and exceed their goals.

"I had a tutor when I was younger, and I wanted to do the same for other students," said Gibson. "My tutor inspired me to do great, and it feels great to be a role model for these kids."

McIntosh will host the elementary students at the high school May 28 for an end of the year roundup.

To learn more about the pen pal program at North Charleston High School, contact the Office of Strategy and Communications at 843-937-6303.

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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 spanning 1,300 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.