



For Immediate Release

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Media Release

Burns Student Accepted into Gifted and Talented Strings Program

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North Charleston, SC – Edmund A. Burns Elementary School fifth-grade student Patricia Johnson is the first student in the history of the school to be accepted into the Charleston County School District (CCSD) Gifted and Talented Strings Program as a violinist, making her eligible to advance to the CCSD Preparatory District Orchestra. This is her first year at Burns, but she is not new to the district's strings program.

Johnson fell in love with the violin while at Malcom C. Hursey Elementary School last year under the instruction of strings teacher Samantha Clark.

"She was always excited to play by herself and show off new skills," said Clark. "Patricia is always ready to learn and has a positive attitude. I was so happy to hear that she made it into district orchestra."

The 11-year-old said she enjoys music and felt a natural connection to the violin.

"I enjoy strings because I get to learn new things while having fun," said Johnson. "I really would like to become a professional musician. I want to play in orchestras around the world."

Sharese Pearson-Bush, M.A, M.Ed., is Johnson's current strings instructor. She transferred to CCSD to rebuild and establish strings instruction in low socio-economic areas. Her transfer to CCSD was an effort to challenge herself. Her mission is to recruit and retain minority students in orchestra.

"It's important for several reasons," said Pearson-Bush. "Music education builds community and family in the classroom. The students bond with their classmates and build discipline, literacy and social skills they may not get in other academic areas."

In addition to the 22 students she instructs at Burns, she also teaches 50 orchestra students and numerous music appreciation students at Northwoods Middle School.

Classes at Burns are held just twice a week.

"I saw an extra spark in Patricia," said Pearson-Bush. "She is an overachiever who takes her instrument home every night to practice posture and finger placement. She asks lots of questions and comes to me on my planning period for extra tutoring."

For the Gifted and Talented audition, Johnson learned to play *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*. She also had to complete sight reading on material she had never seen.

Pearson-Bush grew up in North Carolina where there are well-established orchestra and band programs in the local schools. She followed in her brother's footsteps to join Strings and began playing the cello in fifth-grade. The orchestra teacher saw a spark in Pearson-Bush that motivated her to audition and perform in county, regional, and state orchestras. While in middle school, Pearson-Bush performed with professional symphonies and joined the school band playing a variety of instruments.

Pearson-Bush is also an Adjunct Professor of Applied Cello and Bass Instruction at Charleston Southern University. She sits side by side with one of her cello students in the Summerville Orchestra. She wants the same success for Johnson.

"I just keep telling her, 'we can do this'," said Pearson-Bush. "I wanted her to build pride not only in herself but in what she can do as part of an orchestra."

Johnson is a stellar student who follows rules and procedures and goes the extra mile to help out her fellow students.

"She gives her all every day when she comes to my class," said Pearson-Bush. "I hope she attends a middle school that offers orchestra."

District Orchestra Coordinator Bridgette B. Brooks, M.S. said the opportunity Johnson earned would allow her the opportunity to play at a higher level and prepare her for auditions across the region.

"It opens up opportunities all around," said Brooks. "These students can advance to other orchestras and earn scholarships. It provides students with that push they need to develop their playing skills further and see where they can take themselves."

Johnson's favorite song is *Mary Had a Little Lamb* which she is learning to perfect.

"You can do any song with a violin and you can make a career out of it," said Johnson. "Maybe I'll even write my own music one day."

For more information on District Orchestra contact Coordinator Bridgette B. Brooks at Bridgette_Brooks@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.