



For Immediate Release

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Media Release

Students at Burns Connect with Chess

**Edmund A. Burns
Elementary School**

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North Charleston, SC – Students at Edmund A. Burns Elementary School are being taught to “think before they move” and it’s not through traditional classroom instruction.

What started as a way to mentor and engage students who were sent to in-school suspension has turned into a school-wide extracurricular activity.

Student Concern Specialist Leon Peacock turned chess into a “positive influence initiative” that has improved behavior and engagement considerably, he said.

Students in grades third through fifth now trickle into the “Chess Room” daily for light competition over breakfast, lunch, and recess.

“Students want something they can connect with and chess has a social aspect to it,” said Principal Marvin Taylor said. “It also offers Mr. Peacock and other adults a chance to sit and talk with the students and mentor them. It’s far more than a game.”

It’s also helped to develop a positive school culture since part of teaching the basics of chess is about discipline. Peacock explained that along with doing what’s right to win the game, students are being taught to do what’s right day in and day out.

“If you make a move, there are consequences – it’s the same as in life or class,” said Peacock. “It could be a good or bad consequence, but there will be a consequence and students are connecting with that.”

Data and staff observations recorded since the program began just over two years ago indicate behavior improvements among the students. Peacock calls that a success. Through the first few months of last year, there were 46 referrals for out of school suspension and 70 for in-school suspension. In the same timeframe of this school year, there have been 13 referrals in both categories.

“Chess is just another avenue to use to reach students socially and academically and help those who struggle,” Peacock stated. “Chess is fun, and we’re seeing the students look forward to coming to school.”

Peacock has seen parent buy-in. To encourage it, he has hand-made and donated several chess boards to students to take home and play with their family members and friends in the community.

Peacock's goal is to create a competitive travel team with the top-tier students but also to create a community chess initiative where students can go out into the neighborhood and play with their peers and older adults willing to mentor and cultivate fellowship. Peacock said tournaments lock kids in.

"We need more resources to take it to that competitive level," added Peacock. "Volunteers, donations of space and funding will help expand the program. In the meantime, as long as an adult will sit down with a child they have a chance. I'd like to get some community volunteers to create 'Chess Day' at their facilities and really do this city-wide."

To offer facility space, funding, or to learn more about volunteering, contact Leon Peacock at 843-460-8697. For more about the chess program, watch the Stories of CCSD feature on [YouTube](#).

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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.