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Teacher Residency Program Named Finalist for Dick and Tunky Riley WhatWorksSC Award

[Staff Report From Charleston CEO](#)

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Charleston County School District's Summer Teacher Residency program is one of three finalists for the 2018 Dick and Tunky Riley WhatWorksSC Award. The annual award, presented by the Riley Institute and South Carolina Future Minds, celebrates promising education initiatives for improving the lives of students across South Carolina.

The District's Summer Teacher Residency is a program designed to recruit and retain highly effective teachers in high-needs schools.

"Summer Residency gives both master and emerging educators an opportunity to build relationships that last beyond the summer, gain instructional knowledge, and reflect on best teaching practices in a positive and supportive environment," said Kirsten Williman a Master Teacher at Chicora Elementary School.

A committee of corporate leaders and education experts selected finalists from more than 100 entries in the Riley Institute's WhatWorksSC Clearinghouse – a repository of resources that includes policy papers written by state leaders, case studies, and initiatives that explore and exemplify key strategies for improving South Carolina's public schools.

As a finalist, CCSD's Summer Residency will receive a small cash award and will be recognized at the WhatWorksSC celebration luncheon on Tuesday, October 30, 2018 at 12:30 p.m. at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center.

The winner of the award will be announced at the celebration by former Governor of South Carolina and United States Secretary of Education Dick Riley. The award is named for Secretary Riley and his late wife, Ann "Tunky" Riley, a dedicated teacher and passionate advocate for quality public education.

In June 2017, CCSD implemented Summer Residency to provide targeted, enhanced professional learning for novice teachers, to promote teacher leadership for master practitioners, and to continue student learning through the summer. This learning lab paired experienced teachers from schools throughout the district with teachers who were about to start or recently started teaching in high-needs schools.

"The real crux of the residency program is that we are focusing on teachers and teacher leaders as a means to promote

professional growth,” explained Kevin Eakes, who helped lead the program in its first two years of existence and is now at the College of Charleston’s School of Education, Health, & Human Performance. “The master teachers collaborated with novice teachers to find creative ways to make learning come alive for the students and still teach the same skills all students have to learn.

“A key benefit of the program is that of course emerging educators grow, but it provides an opportunity for master teachers to hone their craft.”

Each morning, teaching teams co-taught with a focus on culturally responsive instructional practices and innovative learning approaches that include adaptive and personalized digital content. In the afternoon, students participated in enrichment activities through CCSD’s EPIC Program in partnership with Charleston Promise Neighborhood, allowing teacher teams to plan and reflect on the day’s outcomes. These teachers collaboratively developed and implemented a summer learning program for K-5 students at high-poverty schools.

Students from Sanders-Clyde Elementary School participated in the first year and in 2018 the students were from Chicora Elementary School and Mary Ford Elementary School. The first summer there were 75 students and most recently the program hosted 120 students. CCSD’s Office of Nutritional Services also partnered to provide their Seamless Summer Feeding Program to the students offering breakfast, lunch and two snacks every day.

Betty McKenzie, a master teacher at Carolina Park Elementary said that in her more than 25 years in education, programs meeting the needs of children, novice teachers, and mentor teachers have not really existed.

“Previous programs have focused on the needs of children and not teachers. Teacher residency addresses student and teacher needs. Teacher residency provides children with quality instruction in a small group setting with two teachers. All adults involved in the program are motivated to be involved with the children. Novice teachers have the opportunity to put practice and practical knowledge to work,” she said.

McKenzie added that novice teachers have access to a wide variety of mentor teachers with different skill sets to share. The variety of skills every teacher brings to the program builds up not just novice teachers, but mentors as well. Teachers from across the district work together to build a shared sense of purpose and understanding in our diverse county.

“At the end of summer residency, I left with a renewed hope for the younger generation of teachers due to their enthusiasm, skills, love of children and their desire to learn,” explained McKenzie. “The small class size allowed for effective, targeted instruction for children. I can honestly say that I consider the teacher residency program to be the best professional learning experience of my career.”

As part of the program, teachers worked to promote a culturally responsive instructional practice that encouraged student agency, provide opportunities for professional learning for teachers to support recruitment and retention, to build capacity to differentiate learning across the district for educators and students, and to accelerate student achievement.

“I have never seen first-year teachers at Chicora be as successful and confident as those who participated in the Residency Program over the summer,” Elizabeth Blackman, a master teacher at Chicora Elementary School said.

The program was highly effective in increasing student achievement; it gave novice teachers the tools, strategies, and habits of mind for challenges in high needs schools; and provided leadership and mentoring opportunities for our district’s highly effective master teachers.

Eakes said that the days consisted of co-teaching and then intimate deep dives into the successes, challenges and

many creative question and answer sessions.

“I am delighted to honor and celebrate the effectiveness of these passionate individuals and their programs,” said Secretary Riley. “The finalists this year show that there are dedicated individuals working every day to improve the lives of students in South Carolina.”

“The teacher residency is an incredible opportunity because it connects novice teachers with a network of highly experienced, qualified, and happy to share master teachers. This has been an invaluable resource and experience for me. The most useful professional development I have ever experienced,” said Caroline Taylor, an emerging educator at Mary Ford Elementary School.

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