

SPOTLIGHT ONE

A Publication of Richland County School District One



2023-2024 Fall/Winter Edition
Celebrate Our Successes • Get Involved • Stay Connected



RICHLAND COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT ONE

factsheet

BY THE NUMBERS

10th
LARGEST DISTRICT IN SC




22,167
STUDENTS



52
SCHOOLS AND
SPECIAL CENTERS



480
SQUARE MILES



4,011
EMPLOYEES



Our Mission

We are Richland One, a leader in transforming lives through education, empowering all students to achieve their potential and dreams.

Points of Pride

- First District in South Carolina to Offer All 16 Nationally Recognized Career Clusters
- First High School CDL Program in South Carolina; One of Only Six Nationwide
- First Certified Pre-Apprenticeship Program in South Carolina
- All Schools Named National Healthy Schools Award Winners
- Designated a Purple Star School District for Support of Military Families
- Home of South Carolina's Only Challenger Learning Center
- Diverse and Unique Magnet Programs include Montessori, Language Immersion, Virtual School Programs, Career Magnets, Medical Magnet Academy, Health Sciences Magnet, and Middle College
- Richland One's Class of 2023 Graduates Earned Nearly \$77 million in Scholarship Money, Exceeding Last Year's Total by \$3 million
- In 2023, Richland One had the Highest Number of Students Earn the South Carolina Seal of Biliteracy in the District's History
- Two Richland One High Schools Were Ranked Among the "Best High Schools" in the Nation by U.S. News & World Report for 2023-2024
- National Excellence in Financial Reporting Awards for 35 Consecutive Years



Our Website
richlandone.org



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THE RICHLAND ONE STORY PODCAST

**COMING
JANUARY 2024**



RICHLAND ONE
ENGAGE • EDUCATE • EMPOWER

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE



We are proud of the accomplishments that have been made so far this school year in Richland One. As we continue to work together to create even greater options and opportunities for our students, we believe it's important to celebrate our successes.

The Richland One story is a great story and miracles are happening in classrooms across the district every day. SpotlightOne is one of the ways we tell the Richland One story and keep our stakeholders informed. In this Fall/Winter edition, we highlight some of our many Points of Pride from the first half of the 2023-2024 school year. To read more of our Points of Pride, please go to our website (RichlandOne.org).

What we always want to see is continued improvement in all areas as we prepare our students for college and careers. To achieve that goal, not only do we need our parents to be engaged in their children's education, we also need support from the community. We are calling for even more community members to get involved by volunteering in our schools. Inside this publication, you'll read about our R1 CHAMPS initiative (page 14) and learn about other ways you can volunteer and share your time and talents, such as by serving as a mentor, a tutor or a Lunch Buddy.

We want everyone to stay connected to what's happening in Richland One throughout the school year. Along with reading SpotlightOne and visiting our website, please follow us on Facebook, Instagram and X (formerly known as Twitter); watch RITV on Spectrum cable channel 1303 and RITV On Demand on our website; and be on the lookout for information about our new podcast.

As we start a new calendar year and begin our second semester, I want to extend my appreciation to our students, staff and community partners for their hard work and for staying focused on our mission. We look forward to a strong finish to the 2023-2024 school year for Team One!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature of Craig Witherspoon in black ink.

Craig Witherspoon, Ed.D.
Superintendent

#TeamOne #OneTeam

MISSION

We are Richland One, a leader in transforming lives through education, empowering all students to achieve their potential and dreams.

BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS



Commissioner Dr. Aaron Bishop
Chairman
Election District 1
Term expires in 2026



Commissioner Angela Clyburn
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Term expires in 2024



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Commissioner Tamika Myers
At-Large Member
Term expires in 2024



Commissioner Barbara Weston
At-Large Member
Term expires in 2026

POINTS OF PRIDE

STUDENT LEARNING GAINS

- **Kindergarten:** Richland One is outperforming the state in the percentage of students enrolling in kindergarten ready to learn and surpassing the state in three of the four subcategories of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (social foundation, language/literacy and math).
- **First-Graders and Second-Graders:** Richland One is outperforming the state in the percentage of first-graders and second-graders who are on track for success in ELA and math, and surpassing the state in all four subcategories.
- **Algebra I:** Richland One's Algebra I EOCEP (End-of-Course Examination Program) pass rate increased by 7.1% in 2023, compared to 2022.
- **Dual-Credit Courses:** Between 2021 and 2022, Richland One student enrollment in dual-credit courses increased by 34.7%, and our 2023 student enrollment in dual-credit courses is on track to exceed the 2022 number by another 50%.
- **College and Career Readiness:** Between 2021 and 2023, Richland One's College and Career Readiness (CCR) rate among graduates has increased by 11.1%. The CCR rate among graduates increased by 0.5% in 2023, compared to 2022.

SC READY Perfect Scores

Fifty-six Richland One students were honored for having perfect scores in math, science or both subject areas in the Spring 2023 administration of SC READY (South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Assessments). Students in grades 3-8 statewide took the SC READY English language arts and math assessments, and students in grades 4 and 6 statewide took the SC READY science assessment.

POINTS OF PRIDE



Power Forward Kickoff

The Darla Moore School of Business at the University of South Carolina held a fall kickoff event for the Dominion Energy Power Forward High School Pipeline Program. Students from Richland One and Richland Two were selected to participate in the program. The goal is to spark students' interest in business and provide them with information about the opportunities and resources available at the Darla Moore School of Business. Students will receive career mentoring and they will engage in field studies, conferences and other activities designed to empower them for success inside and outside the classroom.



National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists

Six Dreher High School students were named semifinalists in the 2024 National Merit Scholarship Program, which recognizes academically talented high school seniors across the country. Over 16,000 semifinalists are competing for 7,140 National Merit Scholarships worth nearly \$28 million. The scholarships will be offered in the spring. Pictured are (top row) Lena Trask-Trafton, Aidan Dong and Jeremiah Trimble; and (bottom row) Naja Weinkle, Larrabee Ellenberg and Charlotte Peavy.

College Board AP Honor Roll

Two Richland One high schools were named to College Board's 2023 AP School Honor Roll. The recognition program celebrates schools whose AP programs have "done outstanding work to welcome students into AP courses and support them on the path to college success." The AP School Honor Roll offers four levels of distinction: bronze, silver, gold and platinum. A.C. Flora High School earned the silver recognition. Dreher High School earned the bronze recognition.



Coca-Cola Scholar Semifinalist

W.J. Keenan High School senior Jadann Hill was named a 2024 Coca-Cola Scholar semifinalist. The Coca-Cola Scholars Program is the largest corporate-sponsored, achievement-based scholarship program in the United States. Jadann was one of 1,514 students from across the country named a semifinalist based on academic excellence, leadership and service demonstrated in school and community activities. Of the semifinalists, 150 will be named Coca-Cola Scholars and receive \$20,000 scholarships.



QuestBridge Scholarship

Dreher High School senior Tyra Helper has been awarded a QuestBridge National College Match Scholarship to Rice University in Houston, Texas. The full-ride, four-year scholarship – which covers the costs of tuition and fees, housing and food, books and supplies, and travel expenses – is valued at over \$200,000. The scholarship program "connects high-achieving high school seniors from low-income backgrounds with full four-year scholarships to 50 of the nation's best colleges." One of the top 10 students in Dreher's senior class, Tyra is among 2,242 recipients of the scholarship from the across the U.S.

POINTS OF PRIDE



National Banner Unified Champion School

A.C. Flora High School was named a National Banner Unified Champion School by the Special Olympics. The school was one of three high schools in South Carolina to receive the designation this year. Richland One is a Unified Champion School District, which means that all Richland One schools are engaged in activities with Special Olympics to support an inclusive and collaborative school climate. Unified Champion Schools, like A.C. Flora, that demonstrate commitment to inclusion by meeting 10 standards of excellence receive national banner recognition.

America's Healthiest Schools

Forty-eight Richland One schools are among the 781 schools nationwide to be named as America's Healthiest Schools for the 2022-2023 school year. Richland One has more award winners than any other school district in South Carolina. The recognition, awarded by Alliance for a Healthier Generation, a leading children's health organization, honors schools' dedication to supporting the health and well-being of students, staff and families.



Health and PE State Award Winners

Rachel Fobare, the physical education department chair at Lower Richland High School and lead health education teacher for Richland One, was named the 2023 Health Education Professional of the Year by the South Carolina Association for the Advancement of Health Education (SCAAHE). Stephen Duerr, physical education teacher at Rosewood Elementary School and Richland One's lead elementary physical education teacher, was named the 2023 Elementary Physical Education Teacher of the Year by the South Carolina Association for Physical Education and Sport.



Football Player of the Year

C.A. Johnson High School senior Caleb Pearson was named the 2023 Richland County High School Football Player of the Year by the Richland County Recreation Commission. Caleb played quarterback and running back on offense and had 2,382 total yards and 28 touchdowns. On defense, he had 50 tackles and two interceptions. Caleb was selected for the award, which includes a \$2,000 scholarship, by a panel of voters from Columbia media outlets along with the 17 head football coaches from each high school in Richland County. This is the second consecutive year a Richland One football player has won the award.

POINTS OF PRIDE



Army JROTC Drill Team Champions

Lower Richland High School's Army JROTC drill team won first place overall in the Palmetto State Drill Championship (armed division) for the second year in a row. The drill team will compete in the regional competition at Fort Liberty, North Carolina in March 2024. This is the third consecutive year the cadets will be participating in the regional competition. In September, the drill team won first place overall in the Greater Midlands Drill Competition. Last school year, the team competed in the National High School Drill Team Championship.

Arts Honors & Awards

- Forty Richland One art students received honors and awards in the 2023 South Carolina State Fair Art Competition. Richland One students competed in the 2-D, 3-D and photography divisions. Jackson Timberlake, a sixth-grade student at Hand Middle School, received "Best in Show" for the middle school photography division. Sarah Campbell Brown, a senior at A.C. Flora High School, received "Best in Show" for the high school 3-D division. Six students received first-place awards for their individual grade level divisions.
- Twenty-five Richland One orchestra students earned a spot in the South Carolina Music Educators Association's (SCMEA) Midlands Region Orchestra. These students are eligible to audition for the South Carolina All-State Orchestra.
- Dreher High School senior Emmi Lee (pictured at right) was selected for the Broadway Dreams 2023 Showcase in New York City. Emmi was selected for the New York City showcase after an intense audition process in Charlotte, North Carolina in front of music faculty and casting directors, earning her a place among the top 5% of Broadway Dreams participants from around the world.
- W.J. Keenan High School's Marching Keenan Raider Rubber Band (pictured at right) has been invited to perform in the 2024 National Memorial Day Parade in Washington, D.C. The Marching Keenan Raider Rubber Band was the only high school band in Columbia invited to perform. Congressman James Clyburn's office nominated W.J. Keenan's band, as well as three other South Carolina high school bands.
- Six Richland One high school students were selected for the South Carolina Music Educators Association's (SCMEA) All-State Chorus. Students auditioned for the chorus by preparing a song selected by the SCMEA and sight-singing a different piece. Five students from Dreher High School and one student from A.C. Flora High School were chosen for the All-State Chorus.



POINTS OF PRIDE



Environmental Education Grant

Brockman Elementary School was awarded a \$1,000 grant by the Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (RSWCD). The money will help support the school's hands-on environmental education initiative. Brockman students will grow vegetables and sprouts using a Farmstand hydroponics growing system. This allows plants to grow using a water-based nutrient solution rather than soil. The students will transform their harvest into salads for their classroom and community. They will use a traveling kitchen island to prepare and cook vegetables and greens.



Heyward Career and Technology Center's 50th Anniversary

Current and former students and staff at Heyward Career and Technology Center celebrated the school's 50th anniversary with a scholarship gala held in partnership with the Heyward Education Foundation. Heyward was established in 1973 as the Columbia Vocational School, before it was renamed Lynhaven Career Center and later renamed Heyward Career and Technology Center. Congressman James Clyburn (pictured at left with Heyward Principal Craig Washington) was the keynote speaker at the gala. During the event, distinguished Heyward alumni were presented awards recognizing their achievements.



NFL Honors Ceremony

The Lower Richland Alumni Foundation and the Lower Richland Community Cares Project L.E.A.D. initiative unveiled nine plaques honoring nine Lower Richland High School alumni who went on to coach or play in the NFL. The plaques were installed at The Stadium at Lower Richland. Honorees recognized during the ceremony included Pro Football Hall of Famer Richard Seymour (pictured at left with former Lower Richland Principal Titus Duren).

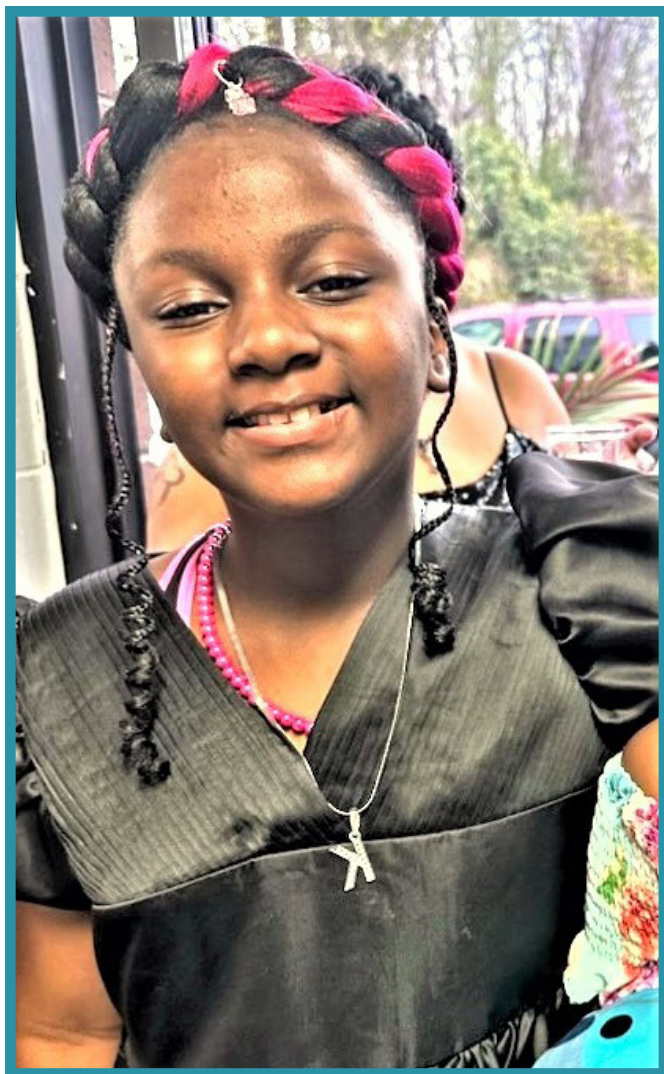
National Partnership Awards

Richland One earned a 2023 Partnership District Award from the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University. This is the sixth time the district has been recognized for making excellent progress in strengthening its leadership of partnerships and for guiding schools to develop goal-oriented programs for family and community engagement. Columbia High School also received a 2023 Partnership School Award from NNPS for its All Roads Lead Home initiative.

To read more of our Points of Pride, go to www.RichlandOne.org.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Sixth-Grader Kassydi Jones Brings Comfort to Families Affected by Gun Violence



Kassydi Jones remembers her father, Kwame Jones, as being fun-loving and goofy. The two would dance together and he would take her to his job. Tragedy hit Kassydi and her family in February 2018 when her father was killed in a shooting. Kassydi was in kindergarten at the time.

“Our whole family was struggling after my dad died,” said Kassydi, who is now a sixth-grader at Crayton Middle School.

“Keep going. Keep praying. At the end of the day, your family is here for you and you need to be there for yourself.”

While she was grieving, Kassydi found comfort through stuffed bears and she would ask family members for one every time they went shopping. She would hold the bears when she thought about her father. Kassydi’s mother, Sanovia Jones, would do everything she could to remind her daughter of her dad. She would share pictures and videos of him and take Kassydi out on Father’s Day.

“I was doing things her father would do with her,” said Jones. “She doesn’t have her actual father around, so I’m giving her extra love and will be there for her any way I can.”

As she got older, Kassydi wanted more people to know what children go through when they lose a loved one to gun violence. She held her first Kass Bears Ball in February 2023 to help others who went through similar tragedies. Attendees wore formal attire with sneakers.

Before the event, Kassydi and her mother asked community members to donate stuffed bears, blankets and journals that were given to children who attended. They collected 800 bears, 700 journals and 200 blankets.

“The word of mouth about what we were doing really spread. People were calling my hairstylist, wanting to bring bears into the salon. I’d put flyers and donation boxes in stores and shoppers would donate bears. The support has been phenomenal,” said Jones.

Their efforts to help other families didn’t stop after the Kass Bears Ball. Kassydi and her mother have been traveling across the Midlands, delivering bears to families who lost loved ones to gun violence. The two recently started making stuffed bears at Build-a-Bear Workshop to give to children and mothers who lose young children. They would dress up the bear in clothes from the store and put in the recorded voice of the deceased loved one.

“A family member’s voice is one you don’t want to forget. I put Kwame’s voice in the Build-a-Bear I made for Kassydi after he died using a video of him laughing. When she would push the bear’s heart-beat, she’d hear his voice,” said Jones.

Kassydi says if her father was alive today, he would be proud of what she’s done to help others. “My dad would say ‘That’s my baby, right there!’”

Her advice for those who have lost a loved one to gun violence is for them to take care of themselves.

“Keep going. Keep praying. At the end of the day, your family is here for you and you need to be there for yourself,” Kassydi said.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Senior Kaden Bagley Provides Hope, Encouragement for Other Young Amputees



A.C. Flora High School senior Kaden Bagley loves playing basketball and was a member of the school's lacrosse team, but a tubing accident on Lake Murray in May 2021 changed his life. Kaden lost his right leg and had to get a prosthetic and, because of what he had heard from others, he was uneasy about getting one himself.

"I spoke with a bunch of other amputees who said they had problems with their prosthetics. They didn't fit right. It would hurt and break on them," he said.

Kaden and his family traveled to Orlando, Florida for his prosthetic. Kaden was able to walk again within a day of receiving it, thanks to physical therapy.

For Kaden, the mental recovery process was just as important as the physical process. He says many amputees tend to close themselves away from the world and stop doing the things they love. During his recovery, Kaden met a double amputee who wrestled and ran. Kaden says the man would win all of his wrestling matches and run faster than others, even though he was in running blades. He influenced Kaden to keep going.

"The man helped make my recovery so much faster. His motivation can push an amputee to excel. Without him, I would have been miserable," Kaden said.

The Jordan Thomas Foundation helps cover the cost of prostheses for children and teens, and the organization helps families connect with others living with limb loss. When he was first introduced to the organization, Kaden was determined to go back to playing lacrosse. However, friends he met through the foundation convinced him to try a new sport: wheelchair basketball.

"Just because you are have amputation doesn't mean everything is closed off. Something else might open up that you may never consider."

"At first, I didn't want to do or even watch wheelchair basketball. But once I tried it out, it was the most fun I ever had," Kaden said.

Kaden plays for the Charlotte Rollin' Hornets varsity team, which is associated with the National Wheelchair Basketball Association (NWBA). During his first year playing, his team won the 2022 NWBA National Championship in the varsity division.

"When I play wheelchair basketball, I feel like I'm on an equal playing field. No one on my team, or anyone I meet through the Jordan Thomas Foundation, feels limited by their amputation," he said.

In November 2023, Kaden reached a major highlight in his wheelchair basketball career by signing to play for the University of Alabama's men's wheelchair basketball team.

"I am excited but nervous at the same time because I never thought I would get to a moment like this in my life. Being recruited by different D1 colleges has been a cool experience," he said.

Kaden also helps other amputees connect with one another through his 5Kaden Run/Walk. The annual event gives back to the Jordan Thomas Foundation and brings together amputees from across the area. His first event last year raised \$112,000. This year's 5Kaden, which took place in April, raised more than \$115,000.

"The Jordan Thomas Foundation has done so much for me and allowed me to do everything I wanted," Kaden said. "I want other kids who are amputees or received prostheses to know they're not alone."

When kids and teens feel worried they may never get to walk or play their favorite sport again, Kaden tells them not to focus on the doors that have closed in front of them. Instead, they should focus on the doors that open behind them.



Kaden Bagley and his mother, Elizabeth Bagley

STAFF SPOTLIGHT



RICHLAND ONE TEACHER OF THE YEAR **Kavon Barger - A.J. Lewis Greenview Elementary School**

Kavon Barger, a second-grade teacher at A.J. Lewis Greenview Elementary School, always wants to be there for his students in and outside the classroom.

"I skipped out on my birthday dinner with friends this year to attend my students' play. The kids were so excited to see me there. It's so important for me to foster those relationships and make sure they're supported and loved," said Barger, who is Richland One's 2023-2024 Teacher of the Year.

Barger says forming those relationships is especially true for boys who may not have father figures at home. He grew up in Greenville without a father figure present. His mother worked as a manager for a manufacturing company, supporting him and his two siblings.

"I know what growing up without a father figure is like, and that pushed me to pursue a career where I can help children," said Barger.

He didn't originally plan to become a teacher when he enrolled in the University of South Carolina. He considered becoming a family lawyer, a pediatrician or a child psychologist before deciding to become a teacher his junior year. During his time at USC, Barger worked at a preschool on campus.

"When I worked at the preschool, I recognized the direct impact I could have on children in the classroom. It really sparked me," he said.

Barger joined the A.J. Lewis Greenview staff in 2018 as a kindergarten instructional assistant. One of the things he noticed during his first year was how the neighborhood surrounding the school is a tight-knit community that's extremely supportive. Some students at the school have relatives who attended when they were younger.

"A student in the class I was working in during my first year came into the classroom, and his mother was right behind him. My teacher told the mother, 'I know that's not you. Lord, you got a baby now.' I love seeing these students attend the schools their parents went to," said Barger.

After receiving his master's degree from Columbia College, Barger became a second-grade teacher in the 2020-2021 school year. However, the COVID-19 pandemic made his transition from

instructional assistant to teacher more difficult.

"I was worried because I was a first-year teacher doing my lessons virtually, but that time taught me some new things about being a teacher and I learned to adjust," he said. "When my students and I got back to the classroom, we were really able to go into overdrive with learning and catch up on things we may have missed during virtual lessons."

When he's teaching, Barger tries to make learning as fun as possible while also catering to the way in which each individual student learns. During one class, he had his students record a rap about geometry. One student, however, was not interested in participating.

"I asked the student what was going on. He told me he didn't want to do it and performing wasn't his thing, so I made that student the class DJ and he was so happy about playing the music, he smiled the whole time," said Barger.

Last school year, Barger taught third grade. The difference between teaching second and third grades, Barger says, is that third-grade students try to act more grown up, while still wanting the attention they received the year before.

"Third grade is a very interesting time in students' lives because they're trying to mature, but they still have those moments where they want to be loved like a second-grader," he said.

Barger sees himself as a big brother to his students and wants to serve as an example for how successful they can be in the future with enough support. "I want to be the person they can come to whenever they need me," he said.

Barger says choosing to teach in Richland One was the best decision he ever made.

"I don't want to go anywhere else right now. I hope I can stay at Greenview and in Richland One for a long time," he said.

For information about teaching opportunities in Richland One, go to www.richlandone.org/careers.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT



RICHLAND ONE CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR **Cheslyn Jackson - Office of Financial Services**

When Richland One employees and families have financial questions and they're unsure with whom to speak about a matter, Cheslyn Jackson guides them in the right direction.

"I love when someone comes to me and they're stressed out because they can't figure something out," she said. "I tell them 'Okay, that's not a problem. Let me see what I can do.' Usually, it's something that's not that big of a deal on my end. I love the fact that I can relieve somebody's stress."

Jackson, the executive assistant in Richland One's Office of Financial Services and the district's 2023-2024 Classified Employee of the Year, loves to help people. She learned that through her previous experience in banking. Jackson graduated from Winthrop University in 2009 with a major in biology, but she took a job as a bank teller after college.

"I had always been surrounded by the financial industry because my parents were bankers," Jackson said. "When I was working in banking, I loved assisting the loan officers and communicating with customers. I felt like I would excel in a position where I can assist someone with their day to day operations."

After living in Rock Hill for 10 years, the Irmo native joined Richland One in 2016.

"I wanted to work for a school district because I have two children of my own and I wanted to be more involved in education," Jackson said.

She says she relied on employees within and outside her department during her first year in Richland One, helping her get used to working for a school district.

"I came from a very different environment when I started. The employees here really helped me

get on my feet," she said. "I was asking other executive assistants for help and they were willing to help me."

Richland One's Office of Financial Services includes accounting, payroll, procurement services and budget services. Jackson's job is to serve as the liaison between the chief financial officer and employees in Financial Services.

"I'm the main person who helps communicate the needs of our CFO and the needs of the employees in Financial Services," she said. "I keep a good rapport with everyone. They're very comfortable with me."

One of the things Jackson's co-workers in Financial Services rely on her for is making sure they're in compliance with district policy.

"I'm very knowledgeable about the policies for our department and our district. I want to make sure my co-workers are following them," she said.

Jackson says she never expected to win the award, but she says she's excited to represent Financial Services as Richland One's Classified Employee of the Year.

"I'm really happy to know that, as the Classified Employee of the Year, more people will get to see what my department does. I'm representing my whole team," said Jackson. "Financial Services wants to help everyone, from our employees to our families. I want to show how hard we work to achieve that."

**For information about classified employment opportunities in Richland One,
go to www.richlandone.org/careers.**

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



R1 CHAMPS volunteer Chris Brayboy talks with students while walking down the hall at St. Andrews Middle School.

R1 CHAMPS Volunteers Provide Additional Role Models for Richland One Students

Chris Brayboy has been volunteering in Richland One since 2006 by coaching football at St. Andrews Middle and Columbia High schools, but he always wanted to do more than just coach when it came to volunteering. When he heard about R1 CHAMPS, he says it was the perfect opportunity to try something new.

"I'm really glad that opportunity opened up. I stepped right into it," said Brayboy, whose three sons graduated from Columbia High.

R1 CHAMPS (Caring Hearts Making Positive Shifts) volunteers provide an additional adult presence and an "extra set of eyes" on campuses during the school day. They greet students at the beginning of the day and assist staff during dismissal; monitor the halls during class changes and help ensure that students report to their classes on time; and assist staff during school assemblies and special events. Volunteers come from different backgrounds and walks of life.

Brayboy was assigned to St. Andrews, a school he was already familiar with through his time coaching. He said one day he saw a student sitting by himself in the cafeteria. The student told him that other students were picking on him. After talking with school counselors about the issue, Brayboy sat with the student every day at lunch.

"I would sit by the student and ask him how his day was going. Before the year was over, more students were sitting by him and he wasn't eating lunch alone anymore," said Brayboy.

The goal of R1 CHAMPS is to place more positive role models on school campuses and help staff empower, inspire and encourage students to achieve their full potential.

"Some students don't get the care they need at home. By encouraging them and letting them know that you care, you're making sure they're staying on track in life," said Wayne K. Adams, a 1974 graduate of Lower Richland High School, who returned to his alma mater as an R1 CHAMPS volunteer.

Adams says one day while walking in the halls, he came across a student who was feeling down. The student shared with him that he was dealing with some personal issues at home. Adams gave him advice and encouragement on how to handle those things.

"After that, the student and I kept talking throughout the school year. I listened to him and encouraged him to keep going. When I saw him at graduation, he gave me a hug and told me how much he appreciated me," said Adams.

Brayboy and Adams both say they decided to continue as R1 CHAMPS volunteers this school year because they enjoy working with children and feel good when they make a difference in a student's life.

"As an R1 CHAMPS volunteer, you're able to show students that you care and respect them just by walking through the halls or cafeteria," said Brayboy.

If you are interested in becoming an R1 CHAMPS volunteer, contact Kerry Abel, Richland One's coordinator of dropout prevention and mentoring services, at (803) 231-7182, (803) 553-0072 or kerry.abel@richlandone.org.

Get Involved ... Volunteer!

Along with R1 CHAMPS, Richland One offers many other opportunities for parents and community members to volunteer in our schools, including:

Mentors: The Richland One Mentoring Initiative is a district-based mentoring program designed to provide mentoring services to male students.

Lunch Buddies: Lunch Buddy volunteers are matched one-on-one with a student to share lunch, fun and friendship twice a month throughout the school year. Lunch Buddies are typically from businesses or organizations with 15 or more people.

Tutors: Tutors work under the direction of a teacher with students one-on-one or in small groups who need additional academic support. Tutors typically commit between two and four hours a month throughout the school year.

Classroom Volunteers: Classroom volunteers provide support to teachers and work under their supervision to reinforce basic skills with individual students or small groups.

School Support Volunteers: School support volunteers assist with non-instructional programs and activities. School support volunteers may: chaperone field trips, provide clerical support, do special projects or monitor hallways and serve on a committee.

Library Helpers: Library helpers check in/out and renew library books and materials, answer and transfer telephone calls, sort items for shelving and assist in keeping the library neat and clean.

Cafeteria Helper: Cafeteria helpers assist with serving breakfast or lunch as well as perform other kitchen duties including sweeping and mopping.

Hall Monitor: Hall monitors help supervise students and their activities outside the classroom. This includes hallways, cafeterias, locker rooms, school grounds, playgrounds and street crossings. Hall monitors help maintain order and report students whose behavior is unsafe or disruptive.

CONTACT INFORMATION

R1 CHAMPS and Mentors

Kerry Abel, Coordinator of Dropout Prevention and Mentoring Services

Phone: (803) 231-7182 or (803) 553-0072

Email: Kerry.abel@richlandone.org

Volunteers

David Jackson, Volunteer Coordinator

Phone: (803) 231-7144

Email: David.jackson@richlandone.org

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



W.A. Perry Middle School Celebrates 20-Year Partnership with Trinity Episcopal Cathedral

Trinity Episcopal Cathedral became interested in partnering with a local school in 2002 when its Canon for Outreach suggested the idea. Discussions about which school they should partner with led them to W.A. Perry Middle School.

At the time, the school was looking for community partners to support its Club Excel afterschool program by helping to organize enrichment activities, like sports and cooking. That's when parishioners stepped in, and the partnership officially began in 2003.

"Our goals and journeys just collided together. We were meant to love and serve at W.A. Perry," said Betty Gregory, an active volunteer who's been involved since the beginning.

Gregory says consistency has been key to keeping the partnership going and helping students succeed.

"The students know we'll be there for them. You just sense that connection. What I love about being a part of this partnership is that you truly build relationships," she said.

Dr. Robin Coletrain has been the principal at W.A. Perry since 2015. Early on, she was told to keep the partnership between W.A. Perry and Trinity alive.

"The partnership had already been in place for 12 years when I started. I was told how important this was to the school and Richland One. Part of my job as principal is to maintain that partnership and help it grow," said Dr. Coletrain.

In the eight years since Dr. Coletrain started at W.A. Perry, she says the partnership has grown significantly through innovation. The school has been able to provide backpacks full of food for 25-50 students to have to eat during the weekends. Pop-up shops were set up for families to get groceries. The school and church partnered with Food Lion to give away turkeys during the holidays. A new food pantry at W.A. Perry opened at the start of this school year. More enrichment clubs have been added at the school.

Trinity volunteers consistently meet with Dr. Coletrain and other W.A. Perry staff members to see how the partnership can benefit students. In one meeting, school counselor Jameka Young suggested having students participate in Richland One's Summer SOAR programs at the Challenger Learning Center. This past summer, the church sponsored 15 W.A. Perry students to attend programs there.

"W.A. Perry is so woven into the fabric of Trinity on many levels. There are many ways Trinity has supported people, on and off campus," said Gregory.

Trinity has also been supporting W.A. Perry's staff members, organizing recognition breakfasts and holding gift card raffles at the end of the year. Dr. Coletrain says the church's support for staff members was extremely significant when Richland One was transitioning back to in-person learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Volunteers helped us in the library. They helped get computers ready to go. There was just a wide range of needs that Trinity stepped in to fill," she said.

Gregory and Dr. Coletrain agree the partnership is one of faith, love and family. They believe it will continue for years to come and that it will provide more resources on campus for families in need.

"This partnership has gotten stronger and stronger each year. Our goal is to always be a presence and listen to the needs of the school," said Gregory.

If you are interested in volunteering as part of the partnership with Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, contact W.A. Perry Middle School at (803) 256-6347. If you would like to establish a partnership with a Richland One school, call the Office of Strategic Partnerships and Extended-Day Programs at (803) 231-6842.



ThriveRichland



ThriveRichland Helping Parents, Child Care Centers Get Children Ready for School

ThriveRichland is a comprehensive birth-to-five model established in Richland One to ensure children are academically, socially and emotionally ready for school. There are three areas of focus: high-quality professional learning and support, family wellness and engagement, and the development of Vince Ford Early Learning Center.

ThriveRichland programs include:

- Weekly playgroups where each child receives a free book for participating
- Bilingual playgroups for Spanish-speaking families where each child receives a free book for participating
- Monthly Parent Education and Support (P.E.A.S.) Network parenting workshops with free resources
- Home visitation for children prenatal through kindergarten using the Parents as Teachers curriculum
- Director's Forum for child care directors within the Richland One footprint
- Intensive coaching cohort for pre-kindergarten teachers
- Professional development opportunities on Saturdays that provide free SC Endeavors training hours for child care workers employed at centers within Richland One
- Partnership with Midlands Technical College for Richland One instructional assistants and child care teachers employed at centers within the Richland One footprint with an opportunity to earn \$1,000
- Free transportation offered to playgroups and events for families!

Benefits of participating in ThriveRichland programs and events include:

- Priority placement in Richland One traditional 3K and 4K classroom slots
- Individualized support for families and children
- Opportunities for children to engage in social-emotional, language and problem-solving activities with children their age
- Building children's at-home libraries with free books provided at events
- Occasions for parents to connect with other parents of children birth to five years old
- Learning about child development and how to begin preparing for kindergarten

2023-2024 Playgroup Schedule

- **Westminster Presbyterian Church** (1715 Broad River Road, Columbia, SC 29210) - Playgroups are held every Wednesday at 3 p.m.
- **C.R. Neal Dream Center** (2441 Atlas Road, Columbia, SC 29209) - Bilingual playgroups are held on the first and third Thursdays at 6 p.m. English-speaking playgroups are held on the second and fourth Thursdays at 6 p.m. Playgroups for all children and families are held every first Saturday at 12 p.m.



For more information, contact ThriveRichland Coordinator Dr. Cassandra Legette at (803) 231-7174 or thrivrichland@richlandone.org.

ADULT EDUCATION SPOTLIGHT

Richland One Adult Education Graduate Angela Odom Sees Brighter Future After Earning GED

Angela Odom had her first child at 16 years old. She struggled with balancing motherhood and high school, causing her to drop out in 12th grade. Angela worked at a call center for six years before becoming a health care receptionist. After breaking her foot in a car accident, she realized she needed to go back to school.

"I really enjoyed the health care environment, but my co-workers with high school diplomas and college degrees were making more money than me," Angela said. "I couldn't make enough money and truly provide for my children because I didn't have my high school diploma."

Angela enrolled in Richland One Adult Education in September 2022. The students in her class were diverse, ranging from 17-year-olds to a woman old enough to be Angela's grandmother.

"It was inspiring for me to see that woman come to class every day and just try. It's shaped me into the person I am now," Angela said.

Ali De La Cruz, Angela's teacher and the level three GED instructor at Richland One Adult Education, takes an individualized approach when it comes to teaching and helping her students study for the four tests they need to pass to receive a GED – language arts, math, science and social studies.



"Every student is at a different level when it comes to each subject. What I do is work with each student on an individual basis," said De La Cruz. "I can see what they're doing, make assignments for them and schedule online practice tests. If they need extra help, I'll park myself at their desk and we'll work through the lessons together. I want each student to work on exactly what they need."

In December 2022, Angela said she was so worried about failing one of the four tests that she stopped coming to classes. De La Cruz stepped in and convinced her not to give up. She said Angela passed every practice test she took. Every time De La Cruz asked if she was ready to take the real tests, Angela would say yes. Angela passed all four of her tests by April.

Angela was selected to speak at Adult Education's graduation ceremony in May and she thought about her four kids throughout her speech. Angela said she wishes someone would've pushed her to succeed in school when she was younger, like she does with her children. After earning her GED, Angela enrolled at Fortis College, where she is studying health care.

"I went back to school and now I've opened a lot of doors I couldn't open before," she said.

Richland One Adult Education Programs and Courses

- **Career Readiness Certificate** – This certificate is a workforce education and development tool, comprised of three assessments: applied mathematics, location information and reading for information. The assessments provide a customized credential that shows that learners/jobseekers have mastered the skills and are ready for work. The credential level is determined by the lowest score across all three tests.
- **High School Diploma via Edgenuity** – A diploma student must be considered at least a junior in high school with a minimum of 12 credits. TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) results and evaluation of transcripts determine eligibility for the diploma program. Students must successfully complete the current diploma requirements set by the State of South Carolina to receive their diploma. They also must have access to a computer and internet.
- **English as a Second Language** – This program is designed for students who want to develop their ability to understand, speak, read and write English. Classes are offered for beginning, high beginning, intermediate and advanced levels.
- **High School Equivalency Diploma (GED) Test Preparation** – Classes include group and individual instruction to help prepare students to pass the GED test. All students must take a placement test before they can start classes.
- **Self-Improvement Classes** – These are classes for adults who want to refresh their reading, writing and math skills, including adults who are trying to pass the ParaPro test or upgrade their WIN certificate.
- **Adult Literacy Classes** – These classes are designed to meet the needs of adults with limited reading, writing, spelling and mathematical skills. Students receive direct instruction.

For more information about programs and courses offered at Richland One Adult Education, call (803) 343-2935.

Richland One Adult Education Coordinator Dr. Marva Coates Wins State Award



Richland One Adult Education Program Coordinator Dr. Marva Coates was named the 2024 South Carolina Adult Education Director of the Year by the South Carolina Association of School Administrators (SCASA).

The award is given to an adult education director with five or more years of experience. Nominations are made by SCASA members. Dr. Coates (pictured with Richland One Superintendent Dr. Craig Witherspoon) accepted the award during the association's Adult Education 2023 Fall Training/Celebrating Success Luncheon at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center.

"It is indeed an honor to be selected as SCASA's Adult Education Director of the Year. I am truly humbled by being nominated for this prestigious award. I will represent Richland One well," said Dr. Coates, who will be recognized at the State House in the spring.

Dr. Coates has been working in Richland One for 40 years. She started as an instructional assistant at C.A. Johnson High School in 1983. Also during her tenure in the district, Dr. Coates has been an English teacher at W.J. Keenan High School, a lead teacher, a curriculum resource teacher and an assistant principal at the former C.R. Neal and Five Points Communities in Schools, and principal at Olympia Learning Center. She became the program coordinator for Richland One Adult Education in 2011.

MAGNET PROGRAMS SPOTLIGHT

New BLAST Magnet Programs Sparking Students' Interests in STEM

When the district launched three new magnet programs in August, Richland One earned the distinction of being the first school district in South Carolina to have a K-12 aerospace pathway.

The new BLAST (Building Lasting Aerospace and STEM Trajectories) magnet programs are offered at Watkins-Nance Elementary School, W.A. Perry Middle School and Columbia High School. BLAST is funded by a \$14.9 million Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) grant awarded to the district in 2022 from the U.S. Department of Education.

Richland One is using the grant funds over a five-year period to implement school-within-a-school aerospace magnet programs at Watkins-Nance and W.A. Perry, and a school-within-a-school national defense-themed magnet program at Columbia High.

At Watkins-Nance, the 80 students in kindergarten to fifth grade who are enrolled in the program attend the magnet program classes twice a week. The classes are taught by two aerospace teachers and follow a Project Lead the Way trajectory, focusing on activity-based, project-based and problem-based learning with real-world applications.

"These students will have experiences they won't get in any other school district," said Dr. Teresa Turner, Richland One's MSAP project director. "You will be mentored by an actual pilot, go inside planes and work with an engineer."

On one particular day, students in a third-grade class were tasked with building a bookshelf using plastic cups and index cards. The students broke out into teams of two or three. They started out by drawing their design for the bookshelf before deciding whose bookshelf was the best in their group. The students then started building their bookshelves. The goal of this exercise was to teach students how to solve problems and work as a team.

Third-grader Fabian Kee enrolled in the magnet program because he likes science. His group's bookshelf was able to hold two books before it fell apart.

"Right now, we're learning how to build things. In this activity, we were tasked with building a bookshelf that was sturdy and strong," he said.

In addition to the classes, the aerospace teachers communicate with other teachers to bridge in lessons students learned in traditional classes.

Students in the elementary aerospace magnet program can move on to the middle school aerospace program at W.A. Perry and, eventually, the high school national defense-themed magnet program at Columbia High. In the middle school magnet program, students participate in Project Lead the Way courses that align with those offered at the high school level.

The high school national defense-themed magnet program has four

academies: pre-engineering, biomedical, cybersecurity and aerospace. In each of the academies, students can take dual enrollment courses through local colleges and universities such as Midlands Technical College and the University of South Carolina. They'll also have opportunities for internships and externships through program partners such as the Celebrate Freedom Foundation, Fort Jackson, Shaw Air Force Base and the Columbia Metropolitan Airport.

"When these students leave high school, they will be more than prepared to go straight into the workforce, enlist in the military or go to college," said Dr. Turner. "The more that students are interacting and working with people who are already in the field, the more motivation they're going to have to go after STEM jobs after high school and college."



MAGNET CHOICE PROGRAMS ENROLLMENT

Richland One is now accepting applications for its 2024-2025 magnet choice programs, which include BLAST (Building Lasting Aerospace and STEM Trajectories) aerospace and national defense, Montessori, language immersion, Medical Magnet Academy, Health Sciences Magnet, Richland One Middle College, career magnets and virtual school programs for students in grades K-5 and 6-12.

The application deadline is January 31, 2024. For more information about our magnet choice programs and to access the application portal, go to www.RichlandOne.org/choice.

KEY DATES

January 1-31	National Mentoring Month
January 1-31	School Board Appreciation Month
January 3	Teacher Workday (no school for students)
January 8	Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten Registration Begin
January 12	Professional Development Day (early release for students)
January 15	Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday (student/staff holiday)
January 20	R1 Certified and Classified Career Fair, Eau Claire High School, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
January 31	Application Deadline for Magnet Choice Programs (RichlandOne.org/choice)
February 1-29	Career and Technical Education (CTE) Month
February 5-9	National School Counseling Week
February 8	Superintendent's State of the District Address, W.J. Keenan High School, 6 p.m.
February 16	Professional Development/Instructional planning (no school for students)
February 17	National School Resource Officer Appreciation Day
February 19	President's Day Holiday (student/staff holiday)
February 22	School Bus Driver Appreciation Day
March 1-31	Youth Art Month
March 1-31	Music in Our Schools Month
March 3-9	National School Social Work Week
March 4-8	National School Breakfast Week
March 15	Teacher Workday (no school for students)
March 28	Parent-Teacher Conferences (early release for students)
March 29-April 5	Spring Break
April 1-30	Month of the Military Child
April 4	School Librarian Appreciation Day
April 1-5	National Assistant Principals Week
April 13	R1 Teacher Career Fair, Eau Claire High School, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
April 13	Richland One Hall of Fame Induction Gala, Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center; red carpet reception at 5 p.m., program at 6 p.m.
April 23	National School Bus Drivers Appreciation Day
April 24	National Administrative Professionals Day
April 26	Professional Development (early release for students)
May 1-31	Mental Health Awareness Month
May 3	National School Lunch Hero Day
May 4	SOAR Summer Learning Celebration, Dreher High School, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
May 7	National Teacher Day
May 8	National School Nurse Day
May 27	Memorial Day (student/staff holiday)
May 30-June 1	High School Graduation Ceremonies
May 31	Last Day for District Child Care Programs and Athletics Tutorial Programs
May 31	Last Day of School for Students (early release day for students)

Pre-Kindergarten Registration

Registration for Richland One's free, full-day pre-kindergarten programs for three- and four-year-old children opens January 8.

Richland One's pre-K programs provide developmentally-appropriate teaching and learning opportunities that help prepare children for kindergarten. Students must be 3 or 4 years old by September 1, 2024 to enroll in pre-K for the 2024-2025 school year.

Round 1 registration will be held January 8-February 9. Parent information sessions will be held February 14-15. Screenings will be conducted February 21, February 24, February 28 and March 6. Round 1 acceptance will be March 15.

Space is limited, so parents are urged to register their children as soon as possible. For more information, go to www.richlandone.org/4K or contact the Office of School Readiness and Pre-Kindergarten Programs at (803) 799-9494 or 4K@richlandone.org.

Free Financial Aid 101 Webinars

The Richland One School Counseling Services Office and the American College Planning Association are sponsoring free Financial Aid 101 webinars for parents of Richland One high school seniors.

Rob Mendenall, a certified college planning specialist with The College Funding Center of South Carolina, will be the presenter. Workshop topics will include the importance of completing the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) regardless of your family's income.

The live webinars will be held on the following dates:

- January 9 at 7 p.m.
- January 11 at noon
- January 16 at noon
- January 18 at 7 p.m.
- January 23 at 7 p.m.
- January 25 at noon
- January 30 at noon
- February 1 at 7 p.m.

Register for any of the webinars at www.cfsc.com.



R1 High School Graduations

May 30 - Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center
Richland One Middle College - 11 A.M.

May 31 - Colonial Life Arena
C.A. Johnson - 8 A.M.
W.J. Keenan - 11 A.M.
Columbia - 2 P.M.
Dreher - 5 P.M.

June 1 - Colonial Life Arena
A.C. Flora - 8 A.M.
Eau Claire - 11 A.M.
Lower Richland - 2 P.M.

**Graduation livestreams
at RichlandOne.org**

To view the full 2023-2024 Richland One Academic Calendar, visit our website at www.richlandone.org and click on the Calendars link.
Note: Event dates are subject to change.



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