
NEWS RELEASE



SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PICKENS COUNTY • 1348 GRIFFIN MILL ROAD • EASLEY, SC 29640-6997

Contact Person: John Eby, Public Information Specialist
Telephone Number: Office: 864-397-1045
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CENTRAL ELEMENTARY, MCKISSICK ELEMENTARY SELECTED AS MAGNET SITES

Central Elementary School and McKissick Elementary School are set to become theme-based magnet schools in the 2018-2019 school year as part of the School District of Pickens County's *Breakthrough in School Choice* Initiative. The SDPC board of trustees has given approval to administration to move forward with the planning process for Central and McKissick to be the first schools to undergo transformative change through the initiative.

"We have four goals for the Breakthrough in School Choice initiative," said Dr. Danny Merck, SDPC superintendent. "First, we want to offer parents and/or guardians greater school choice opportunities based on student's interests and abilities. Second, we want to promote academic excellence around theme-based learning experiences. We also want to improve diversity—specifically socio-economic diversity. While it may not have been the intention when attendance lines were drawn, over the years we have come to see significant differences in the poverty levels between different school communities. Finally, we want to address school capacity concerns through school choice."

In December, the SDPC administration will present the school board with a plan for a theme-based magnet program for both schools. The plans will be based on the [National Magnet School Standards of Excellence](#). The selection of Central and McKissick as sites for the magnet programs was influenced by feedback gained through the district-wide School Choice Survey taken by parents, community, and staff members over the summer. Other considerations such as location, enrollment, and school capacity were taken into account during the selection process. Summer survey results, as well as additional school-based surveys to be conducted in September, will influence the design of the magnet programs. SDPC administrators will meet with stakeholder groups from the Central and McKissick staff and communities between now and December to ensure that parents, teachers, and businesses have an active role in the selection of a theme and the development of the magnet programs.

Char Burgner, a Pickens County resident, has been hired as a consultant to assist the district with the *Breakthrough in School Choice Plan*. During Mrs. Burgner experience as a teacher and district administrator in the Brazosport Independent School District near Houston, Texas, she oversaw technology, curriculum, instruction and staff development. Under her leadership, BISSD became the first education winner of the Texas Quality Award, which is granted for strategic planning and alignment to performance excellence quality criteria and operational efficiency. Mrs. Burgner is working with Dr. Barbara Nesbitt, SDPC Executive Director of Technology, and other senior leadership team members on a comprehensive PreK-12 School Choice Plan for SDPC. In addition to her expertise in technology, Dr. Nesbitt also has experience as the district's former Coordinator of Elementary and Early Childhood Education. This long-range plan will identify magnet school pathways, honor our neighborhood community schools, and highlight the innovative programs already taking place in existing school choice options. Mrs. Burgner will focus specifically on the McKissick Breakthrough, while Dr. Nesbitt will focus on the Central Breakthrough.

“Char and Barbara have been instrumental in the breakthrough process, and we are blessed as a community to have leaders with their experience ready to contribute to this initiative,” Merck said. “I’m very confident that the changes that emerge will have a huge impact on not only the two magnet schools, but the entire district. This is the beginning of something great.”

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