

OFFICIAL STATEMENT

May 18, 2017

Charleston County School District's Response Ashley River Creative Arts Elementary School Incident

We thank everyone for their patience and understanding when it comes to the release of information about the incident at Ashley River Creative Arts Elementary School (ARCAES) on Tuesday.

We ask everyone to keep in mind it is our responsibility to respect the privacy and wishes of the family affected by the incident. We are so thankful to report the child is on the road to making a full recovery. The school and the District will continue to do everything we can to support the family going forward.

Regarding the incident itself, we can report the student was discovered in the retention pond by staff who were supervising recess on the playground at the time. We are actively investigating how the student was able to get on the other side of the locked fence, which is nearly six feet high. The Charleston Police Department did an initial investigation on site that day; however, it is not a criminal matter and the school district is fully in charge of the investigation.

A school staff member who discovered the child, pulled the child from the pond, and immediately initiated CPR. The school nurse took over when she arrived on the scene. A responding Charleston Police Department officer was the last individual to provide CPR before EMS responders transported the child to the hospital.

An automated call from the school was sent out to all ARCAES parents at 11:55 a.m. on Tuesday, and a letter to all ARCAES parents was sent home via email and letter form, following dismissal at 3:30 p.m. Principal Cathie Middleton also called the parents of every student that was on the playground at the time of the incident during the course of the school day, and met with school staff following the completion of dismissal.

Support from the CCSD crisis team, Coastal Crisis Chaplaincy, and Charleston County mobile crisis team was provided immediately following the event. ARCAES staff, students and families will continue to receive support as requested.

We will not identify the student, in any detail, out of respect for the family and in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

A question we have been asked is why there is a retention pond on the ARCAES campus. The reason there is a retention pond is there is a regulatory requirement to manage storm water runoff. Management of runoff provides for reduction of erosion and flooding, and collection of contaminants from pavement, all of which are benefits to the environment. There are approximately 50 retention ponds on school sites throughout the district.

We are proud of the school staff who worked quickly and extremely well with law enforcement and emergency responders. We are extremely thankful for the leadership of Principal Middleton, and the support her staff provided. Principal Middleton also extends her thanks to the community, and to school and district staff who were involved in the response to this incident.

We hope that everyone in the school community will continue to keep the student and the student's family in your thoughts and prayers. We also ask that you continue to respect their privacy, and allow the members of the Ashley River Creative Arts community a chance to support one another privately as well.