



School District of Williamsburg County

"Imagine Greatness"

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Dr. Kelvin Wymbs, Superintendent

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"The Game Changer:" Teacher Preparation Program Addressing the Teacher Shortage

Williamsburg County School District has changed "the game" in terms of teacher recruitment, certification, and retention. Superintendent Dr. Kelvin Wymbs and the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction, Mr. Michael White, immediately worked to implement on-site teacher training and support as a part of their winning strategy to ensure student academic growth. A huge part of their strategy was ensuring that all teacher candidates became a part of an established South Carolina certification program such as Carolina CAP or Teachers for Tomorrow, and then providing the second layer of support where all teacher candidates are a part of the mandatory "Game Changer Program."

Along with the district's Secondary Literacy Coordinator, Mrs. Angela Fred, the team came up with the winning approach by using methods that were already proving to be fruitful, such as mandatory teacher assessment (Praxis) preparation sessions and having teachers grouped by content to have reflective and content building conversations. The leadership team wanted all of these components to be re-imagined to accommodate the needs of Williamsburg County School District, a very rural district. The outcomes have been extremely positive.

Mr. White stated, *"All teachers are required to become a part of one of the alternative certification programs that are approved by the state of South Carolina.*

However, that is where the line is drawn between Williamsburg's outlook and approaches and other districts. We focus upon fostering a collaborative personalized approach that has allowed us to produce a highly efficacious system in which we grow our own."

"I've been totally impressed by the work of Ms. Fred in recruiting teachers to Williamsburg County! We have to really think outside of the box because young people are for the most part, not going into teacher education programs in vast abundance," stated Dr. Wymbs as he reflected on the positive changes that he sees in the faculty both in classroom instruction and morale.

1. Teachers are provided ongoing support in the classroom to ensure that they understand standards-based instruction and research-based strategies for teaching.
2. Teachers are provided high-quality content support that provides the tools for self-study in the content area for which they are teaching.
3. Teachers have three levels of support built-in to the system: a school-level coach, a district-level support person who only supports teachers who are going through the alternative

certification route, and the team led by Mrs. Angela Fred that supports them in Praxis preparation for the content exam and the Principles of Learning and Teaching exam.

4. Teachers have the opportunity to be reimbursed for the cost of the Praxis assessment after obtaining a passing score.

Because the team also recognizes the need to expand the pool of minority male teacher candidates, recruitment efforts were strongly geared toward males who graduated from college with strong content knowledge in their field(s) of study by evidence of grade point averages and feedback from professors/and or former teachers. Because of the leadership team's efforts, the number of male teachers has increased exponentially. All schools in the district have at least two male teachers in classrooms.

Mr. Avery Cooper, a U.S. History and Constitution teacher at Kingstree High School, was instrumental in motivating one of the initial groups of participants. He says the following about the program: *"Participating in a Praxis and teacher preparation cohort was a transformative experience for me as it provided a sense of community and camaraderie among like-minded individuals who shared a passion for learning. Through collaborative discussions and shared goals, I not only gained valuable knowledge but also formed meaningful connections that continue to enrich my personal and academic journey."*

Mr. Cooper was able to successfully navigate all of the resources that were provided by the program, and he successfully passed his content area assessment.

Novette Stewart, an early childhood teacher at Hemingway Elementary School states, *"The Game Changer Program has been beneficial to me as I worked diligently to gain teacher certification. The program offers great test-taking tools to help those who are in pursuit of gaining their teacher certification. Mrs. Rush-Fred and her staff are very persistent and dedicated to what they have been assigned to do. If you follow the plan that they have set forth you will be successful. I am a testament that if you adhere to the plan and follow the steps that the program offers, you too can be successful. Also, the Carolina Collaborative for Alternative Certification Preparation, also known as Carolina CAP, has been a great support as well. The program offers strategies on teaching that can be implemented inside of the classroom, as well as a coach who will work alongside you. The Game Changer Program is just that, a game changer, Williamsburg County School District is offering "GREAT" opportunities for many. I am grateful for the opportunity afforded to me."*

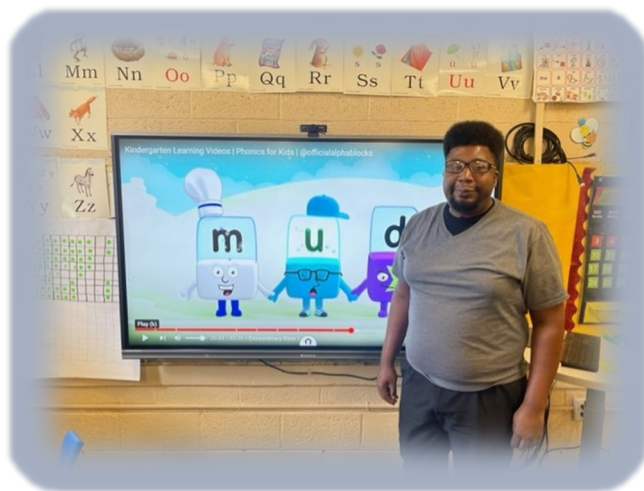
The Game Changer program immerses teachers in pedagogy (research-based teaching models and strategies) and provides them with an intense level of support. These teachers are congratulated for their hard work.

One teacher who taught English I Honors at C. E. Murray Middle School last year had student scores on local assessments improve by double digits. He attributes this to his time in "The Game Changer" program. He scored in the top 5% of national scorers on the High School English Praxis exam, 5039. He states, *"I had Mrs. Fred and so many talented teachers of English. At Clemson, I did not major in English, but I did take several English-based courses. I can truly say that knowing good teaching, being allowed to teach and use research-based strategies, and bringing in my own personality and ways to engage students made a difference. All of my students increased their local assessment scores from the beginning to the end of the year. I am proud of them."*

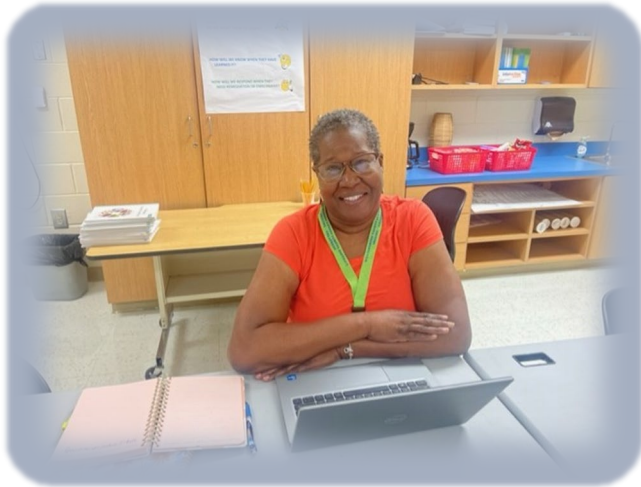
W.M. Anderson Primary educator, Mr. Tawan Wilson, states, *“The teaching skills and test preparation sessions with Mrs. Fred and her team have had a major impact on me as a Special Educator. The “Game Changer Program” has prepared me to be successful in passing the Praxis Special Education Test. The process has increased my knowledge as well as my well-being in how to manage my multicategory special education classroom, helping my students progress in their academic and daily living curriculums. Another thing the program did was allow me to work directly with others in the Special Education field; this definitely made the teacher and test preparation sessions phenomenal! It allowed us as Special educators to collaborate by sharing our experiences, knowledge from our college programs, and how to be effective in our practices in the classroom. I am thankful for the opportunity that Mrs. Fred and the Williamsburg County School District have afforded me to learn more as I work in a field that I am very passionate about! The opportunity has empowered me to be more proficient now, and I can only grow in knowledge and skills throughout my educational future.”*

“One of the most impressive features of Ms. Fred’s program has been the exceptional number of qualified African-American males that she has enrolled in our Grow Your Own Program, it is truly A Game Changer!” Dr. Kelvin Wymbs, Superintendent

“The “Grow Your Own” model is a novel approach that will allow us to ensure that our scholars are exposed to high-quality instructional practices and practitioners for years to come. Any model that allows us to leverage the amazing human capital that we have in our very own “backyard” is a model that I am excited about. This approach has allowed us to create a safe, conducive, and nurturing environment for hundreds of scholars across the district who would have previously had to be served using some other alternative medium. Likewise, we have committed to adopting and implementing scaffolded curriculum K-8 across the district which supports our new teachers and veteran teachers alike. The grow-your-own approach is just another example of WCSD imagining greatness and bringing it to reality!” Mr. Michael White, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning



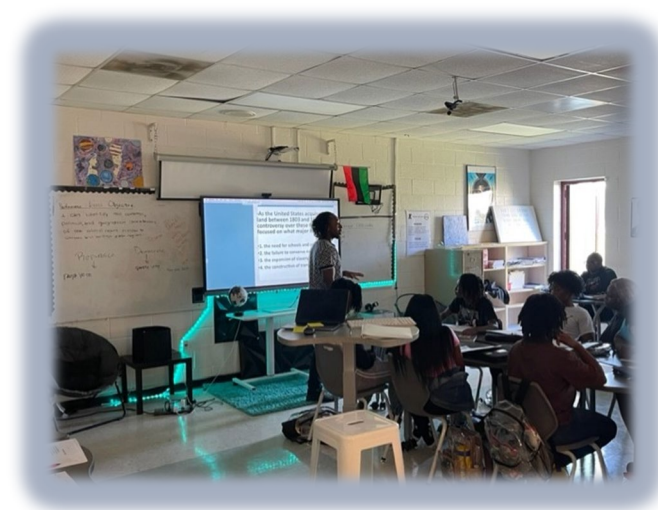
Mr. Tawan Wilson, W.M. Anderson Primary School



Ms. Novette Stewart, Hemingway Elementary School



Mr. Wallace Mack, C.E. Murray Elementary Middle School



Mr. Avery Cooper, Kingstree High School

