

A Reflection of Clarendon School District

A look back into Clarendon School District One's (CSD1) history reveals that, in 1947, some courageous African-American parents petitioned the status quo in this school district (formerly Clarendon District 22 during the era of segregation) for funding to maintain and operate segregated schools. The case was dismissed in 1948; however, the parents were not deterred. They solicited help from the local NAACP and the case was refiled in 1950 in federal court in Charleston, South Carolina. The case is known as *Briggs v. Elliott*. As Attorney Thurgood Marshall argued the case before U.S. District Judge J. Waites Waring, he stated that the objective of the suit changed from equalization of schools to the abolition of segregation in South Carolina's public schools.

Several years later, the Supreme Court convened to hear five desegregation cases under the heading of *Brown et al v. Board of Education*. The U.S. Supreme Court reached a unanimous decision to abolish segregation in the nation's public schools by ruling that Separate but Equal was unconstitutional. This step taken by Summerton parents in Clarendon School District 22, in 1948, now Clarendon School District One, ultimately resulted in the abolishment of segregated public schools across the country.

A segment of the community prides itself on the fact the community is home for the civil rights movement for education. Another segment of the community elects not to acknowledge the historic significance of the community. Thus, there is not universal support for the district from the community.

Things are beginning to change for CSD1. Two summers ago, (2015 and 2016) Engaging Creative Minds successfully implemented Summer STEAM. This initiative was financially supported with 100% funding from the South Carolina Arts Commission.

The STEAM framework will prove successful in a diverse challenged rural high poverty area when implemented properly with a talented staff, specifically, in CSD1. STEAM is not a new initiative, however, it is new in some high poverty school districts. Clarendon School District One can easily be the "poster child" for poverty. The district would not have been able to provide the summer STEAM experiences for the students save the partnership with Engaging Creative Minds and the South Carolina Arts Commission. Approximately 26% of the students live in extreme poverty. The poverty index for CSD1 is above 90%. All of the students qualify for free or reduced school meals. The district is exceptionally rural. Clarendon County covers 649 square miles with approximately 60 residents per square mile as compared to the state average of 153.9 residents per square mile. During the current school year, 2016-2017, approximately 94% of the students in CSD1 are African American, 3.8% Caucasian, 1.3% are Hispanic and .9% other.

The educational level throughout Clarendon County is quite challenging. Of the county's adults 25 years of age and older, over 24% lacks a high school diploma. The state average is 16.4%. There is research based evidence from the National Summer Learning Association which reflects that every summer, low-income youth lose two to three months in reading while their higher-income peer make modest gains. On the average, most youth lose about two months of math skills in the summer. These losses add up and have a profound impact on student achievement. Specifically, by fifth grade, summer reading loss can leave low-income students 2 ½ to 3 years behind their peers.

The students in grades 6th-8th in CSC1 have had the good fortune of being the benefactors of unconditional support from Engaging Creative Minds and the South Carolina Arts Commission which afforded them an abundance of enriched experiences and opportunities through six weeks of an

exceptional STEAM program. The district staff who worked in the six week summer STEAM Program was ecstatic about working in the program and working with the students. The staff members talked about how the techniques used during the summer program could easily be implemented during the regular school term. Additionally, the students were eager to attend the camp every day. Some high school students and local college students were paid to work in the summer program. Based upon my observations, I really believed if the students did not need the monetary support, they would have worked without compensation. The information below reflects and supports the benefits of the successful STEAM Summer Program:

Overview

One method that Clarendon School District One utilizes in monitoring the academic progress of its students is through quarterly benchmark assessments. Each assessment is aligned to the district’s pacing guides in math, science, social studies and English/language arts. For the purpose of conducting a comparative analysis, comprehensive results in science will be examined. The rationale for conducting a limited analysis for this core content area is based on two premises. First, unlike math and English/language arts, the cyclical review and adoption of new standards in science and social studies standards for the tested period of 2014-2016 did not occur.

Secondly, given the nature of the six-week campus and its emphasis on science, technology, engineering, the arts, and math, a comparative analysis only in science should be examined. This decision is more logical given the quantity and quality of instructional time and engaging teaching practices provided in this particular academic area.

Understanding the Data

It should be noted that the assessment data represents a compilation of standards taught during each academic year. Further, as a point of reference, assessment data collected over the two-year cycle does not track individual students, but is the median for a particular class and grade. Finally, no data is collected for third graders because of their participation in the summer reading camp. More importantly, similar to the State, benchmark assessments in science and social studies are not administered to third graders.

Grade	2014-2015 Comprehensive Benchmark Results	2015-2016 Comprehensive Benchmark Results	Gain/ Loss
4 th	53.5%	61.5%	+8.0%
5 th	36.7%	51.1%	+14.4%
6 th	41.5%	50.0%	+8.5%

Although this is one data source, other data collection tools (i.e. surveys, interviews, observations) substantiate the assumption that the summer STEAM camp positively impacted the academic gains of its participants. Significantly, not only are gains evident as seen above, but are sustained.