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OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT

For Immediate Release

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Colleton County School District addresses state school report cards

November 30, 2018 (Walterboro, SC): On Thursday, November 29, 2018, the South Carolina Department of Education released school report cards for elementary, middle, and high schools throughout the state. These school ratings were determined by standardized test scores, improvement of standardized test scores from prior years, the progress of English Learners measured by a standardized test, and student responses on a survey.

As a district, we believe in the value of tracking student success to guide us in our continuous improvement journey. Dr. Franklin Foster, superintendent, stated, "I do not believe the state report cards accurately measure the performance of our students, teachers and administrators." This statement is supported by the fact that prior to the unofficial release of report cards to districts, seven of our nine schools receiving ratings had ratings that were more reflective of their performance. With the official release, the ratings of our schools showed a less favorable rating for some of our schools. The major discrepancy was due to errors found in the data file measuring the School Quality metric. This data file was provided by AdvancED, a national accrediting organization. The points for this metric are based on the survey administered to students in grades three through twelve. For example, three of our schools previously earned between five and seven points on this metric, which resulted in a higher overall rating. However, due to the errors discovered in the file, these schools earned zero to one point resulting in a lower overall rating. Also, the policy decision to unfairly account for schools that chose not to participate in the survey affected all schools throughout the state and particularly those in our district.

With the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) signed into law in 2015, the new accountability system measures schools using up to seven metrics and does not align with the previous

accountability system, which only focused on student achievement measures. Dr. Foster feels the system sets higher expectations for student success focusing on their preparedness for college and careers, but expressed concerns about discrepancies in the data, decisions made in predetermining ways schools would be rated in each category, and the unresolved issues with the report cards.

With the new accountability system, ratings use the terms Excellent, Good, Average, Below Average and Unsatisfactory to describe each metric and to determine the overall school rating. The chart below indicates the overall ratings earned for each school in the district.

School	Rating
Bells Elementary	Unsatisfactory
Cottageville Elementary	Below Average
Forest Hills Elementary	Unsatisfactory
Hendersonville Elementary	Unsatisfactory
Northside Elementary	Below Average
Colleton County Middle School	Unsatisfactory
Colleton County High School	Average

Dr. Foster cautions stakeholders not to look only at the overall rating, but to look at the ratings for individual metrics. The district had bright spots in its performance in separate metrics, such as the progress of our English Learners in the elementary schools, the student progress at Cottageville Elementary School, and the academic achievement for Preparing for Success at Northside Elementary School. Additionally, the bright spots at Colleton County High School include the overall rating, the on-time graduation rate of 85%, and the percentage of students found college or career ready. In addition to the metrics that received a rating, the report card contains other vital information that is not rated such as school safety, classroom environment and financial data.

Dr. Foster said, "While we acknowledge these bright spots, the district recognizes that there is still work to be done to ensure the continued success of our students, teachers and administrators." As part of our continuous improvement journey, we will develop a plan to provide differentiated support for schools, enhance our focus on data analysis, continue to focus on those best practices to support student learning, and collaborate with stakeholders on areas that need improvement.

Additionally, Dr. Foster welcomes all stakeholders to visit our schools to see the great things happening in the district. He encourages all stakeholders to join him in sharing their concerns about the new accountability system with the State Department of Education, the Education Oversight Committee and state legislators to assist in addressing the challenges.