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November 22, 2024

Dear CPS Staff and Families,

We are writing to share an important update regarding the leadership of Columbia Public Schools.

Dr. Brian Yearwood has decided to retire and step down from his role as superintendent to spend more time with his family in Texas. The Board of Education has unanimously agreed to accept his retirement.

To support a smooth and successful transition, former Superintendent Dr. Chris Belcher has agreed to serve as interim superintendent through the remainder of the school year. Dr. Belcher led Columbia Public Schools for five years prior to his retirement in 2014 and brings a wealth of experience and a strong commitment to our students and school community.

Our shared mission to provide an exceptional education for all students remains at the heart of everything we do. With the support of Dr. Belcher and our talented staff, and our parents and students, we are confident in our ability to maintain the high standards our community expects and deserves.

Please see below the personal message from Dr. Yearwood shared with CPS staff:

*Dear CPS Staff and Families:*

*After careful consideration and deep reflection, I will be transitioning from my role as Superintendent of Columbia Public Schools, effective Friday, November 22, 2024. I will continue serving in an advisory capacity during the transition period to support the district to ensure a smooth handover. My retirement will be effective December 31, 2024, at which point I will step away to return to Texas to explore opportunities closer to family.*

*Serving as Superintendent of Columbia Public Schools has been the honor of my lifetime. Together, we have faced challenges, celebrated victories, and pursued an unwavering commitment to excellence for the scholars, staff, and community we serve. These accomplishments are a testament to the extraordinary individuals who make up this district.*

*I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Board of Education for its trust and support during my time as Superintendent. I will remain committed to collaborating with you in ensuring that Columbia Public Schools remains on its current trajectory of growth and innovation.*

*As I prepare to transition from this role, my focus will remain on serving the needs of the district, offering my full support to the incoming leadership, and contributing to the stability and progress that Columbia Public Schools deserves. I am confident that this district will*

*continue to flourish, driven by the collective passion and determination of its educators, staff, and community.*

*While this chapter of my career comes to a close, I carry with me an abiding respect for the remarkable scholars, families, and colleagues who have enriched my life during my time in Columbia. The relationships I have built here and the memories we have created together will remain close to my heart.*

*I continue to be inspired by the resilience and vision of this district. I leave knowing that Columbia Public Schools is poised for even greater achievements, and I will continue to be its staunchest advocate from afar.*

*Thank you for allowing me to serve this incredible district. It has been a privilege beyond measure, and I look forward to seeing all the bright futures that Columbia Public Schools will continue to shape.*

*With deepest respect and appreciation,*

*Dr. Brian Yearwood*

The Board of Education will keep you updated as we move forward with the search for our next superintendent. We are committed to identifying the district's next leader as we work together to help each of our students achieve at the highest levels.

Thank you for your dedication and support during this time of transition.

Sincerely,

The Columbia Board of Education