



**AIKEN COUNTY**  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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For Immediate Release

## Future AIS STUDENTS GET FIRST GLANCE AT NEW SCHOOL, BUILD BRAND & MEET PRINCIPAL

The hallways were full of excited chatter as rising fifth- and sixth-grade students and their families toured the site of the future Aiken Intermediate School (AIS) Tuesday night, during Meet the Principal, Drop-In- event that allowed a first glance of the building and an opportunity to hear from Denise McCray, the school's newly named principal.

AIS, a unique learning environment dedicated solely to meeting the needs of six-grade learners, will open this fall for the 2019-2020 school year. The school will be located at 101 Gator Lane, the current site of Aiken Middle School, and will serve students transitioning from Area 1 elementary schools, including Aiken Elementary, Chukker Creek, East Aiken School of the Arts, J.D. Lever, Millbrook, North Aiken, and a number from Oakwood Windsor.

Aiken County Public School District Superintendent Dr. Sean Alford welcomed the crowd of students and families and recognized parents, community, school and district leaders who are serving on the school's Planning Committee. Alford thanked them for their time and continued involvement and dedication to ensure all Area 1 students have the best possible experience in sixth grade, honoring the committee with a plaque that will remain in the new school.

"Sixth grade can be a tough time for students as they move from the more nurturing surroundings of their elementary school to the independence of a secondary learning environment," stated Dr. Alford. "The Planning Committee has done extensive work to design a school to meet the unique needs of those students and families."

There was much excitement and naturally the slightest bit of apprehension by a few students who will be transitioning from elementary school to middle school and become the school's first class of students.

Student volunteers from Aiken Middle School, Kennedy Middle School and Schofield Middle school, along with a member of the Planning Committee, led tours showcasing the layout of the building and visiting the impressive exploratory classrooms and expansive opportunities that will be available to students, including World Language, Strings/Orchestra, Dance, Theatre, Business/Technology, Art, Band, and Music/Chorus.

Students participated in a branding exercise hosted by Alison South Marketing Group, and took the first steps to creating a new logo and mascot for the school. Students were also encouraged to share ideas about what clubs they hope to see next year, and interact with AIS teachers.

Currently, the school is 70% staffed, with an intentional balance of educators from schools throughout the District, with the majority from Aiken, Kennedy and Schofield Middle Schools.

“Teachers that will be here have chosen to be here,” mentioned Kelley Kirkland, currently a teacher at Kennedy Middle who has elected to transition to the Intermediate School. “Sixth grade is a magical time for students,” she continued. “It’s so exciting that this entire school and program is being designed just for them.”

AIS teachers will “Team Teach,” meaning educators in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies will be located as core subject teams in wings throughout the school, creating smaller communities of educators and learners and a “small” school feel.

“This staff will be dedicated to helping students thrive in their education,” Principal McCray stated to families. “Our focus will be on the whole child, their health, their wellness, and their safety, as we work together as a single grade level team to prepare students transitioning from an elementary school environment for success in a secondary one.”

For additional information on Aiken Intermediate School, please visit [acpsd.net/ais](http://acpsd.net/ais).