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County Public Schools

NewsRelease

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS
600 SE Third Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301
754-321-2300
browardschools.com

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CONTACTS: Kathy Koch, Chief, Office of Communications, Broward County Public Schools, 754-321-2300
Kirk Englehardt, Vice President, Marketing and Communications,
Community Foundation of Broward, 954-761-9503

BCPS and the Community Foundation of Broward Mark First Year Success in Transforming the Middle School Learning Experience

Broward County Public Schools (BCPS), in partnership with the Community Foundation of Broward (Foundation), has made great progress, marking the first year of transforming the middle school learning experience. Thanks to the generous support of the Foundation, the District prepares to enter the second year of the Reimagining Middle Grades *School is Cool* initiative, re-launched in the 2018/19 school year.

The Foundation has awarded the second \$1 million of a \$3 million grant – \$1 million per year over three years – for the 2019/20 school year. The *School is Cool* program, which began in 2013, entered an exciting new phase strengthened by the historic \$3 million grant - which represents the largest grant the Foundation has awarded to date. The District is matching the amount, creating a combined total contribution of \$6 million to double the impact of this critically important program.

In its first year, the program focused on improving students' social and emotional health, closing the achievement gap, and building a connection between schools and communities for low-performing and at-risk students at 10 District middle schools. The grant also extended the school year by providing students with a wide variety of life experiences during the summer. An eight-day summer camp, free to families, allows students to explore different subjects, meet new friends and earn a half-credit in fine arts that counts toward their high school graduation requirement.

"This partnership furthers the District and the Foundation's strategic efforts to close the achievement gap and increase high school graduation rates by focusing on middle grades success," said BCPS Superintendent Robert W. Runcie. "Thanks to the Foundation's generous support, our students are exploring exciting courses and enjoying electives in robotics, computer science, music, art, debate and yoga, for which they may not otherwise have access."

The first-year match made by the District was used to fund additional support positions at school sites, including counselors and community liaisons who reached out to help students deal with the day-to-day challenges they faced to improve attendance, behavior and course performance – a strategy called the ABCs. The goal was to engage students in acquiring the social competencies, problem-solving skills and academic competencies needed for a successfully transition from elementary school to middle school, and from middle school to high school.

"The Foundation knows middle school success is the key to improving Broward's high school graduation rate, and we're proud to partner with Broward Schools on this critical community issue," said Linda Carter, President/CEO of the Community Foundation of Broward. "The *School is Cool* program changes lives and will have a positive impact on Broward that will last for generations. This historic grant was made possible by more than 30 local philanthropists with endowed charitable Funds at the Foundation, who have boldly put their fingerprints on Broward's future."

– More –

Students, teachers and administrators have played an integral role throughout the development of the *School is Cool* initiative. Students have expressed excitement in the increased elective options and enjoyment in improved relationships with their peers and adults. Teachers have shared how the new experiences have created a shift in students' mindset. Administrators have noted the positive impact on the culture in their schools evidenced by the teamwork and collaboration, and have enjoyed supporting teachers who have embraced the new approach. Most important, quarterly reports gauge the continued progress students are making in improving their attendance, behavior and course grades.

Participating middle schools include: Apollo Middle School, Attucks Middle School, Crystal Lakes Middle School, Lauderdale Lakes Middle School, New Renaissance Middle School, New River Middle School, Nova Middle School, Parkway Middle School, Silver Lakes Middle School and Sunrise Middle School. If successful at the end of the three-year grant period, the *School is Cool* initiative will be implemented at all BCPS middle schools.

This initiative is made possible by support from the following Funds at the Community Foundation of Broward: Mary and Alex Mackenzie Community Impact Fund, Mary N. Porter Community Impact Fund, The Allen Family Fund for Children, Broward's Tribute to Children Fund, The Sherman "Red" Crise and Evelyn R. Crise Memorial Fund, The Huizenga Fund for Children, James and Lynn LaBate Family Fund, Lawrence A. Sanders Fund to Promote Literacy, Jim Moran Children's Fund, Sheriff Nick Navarro Fund, Robert O. Powell Family Fund, Margaret and Cato Roach Tribute Fund, Patricia Lee Rutherford Fund for Children, Sun Sentinel Literacy Fund, Charles and Ruth Taylor Fund, Anna Bloeser Fund, Donald C. Grobmyer-Fund, David and Francie Horvitz Family Fund, Edwin A. and Jane N. Huston Fund, Herschell and Margo Lewis Fund, Jan Moran Unrestricted Fund, Norman R. and Ruth Rales Fund, Kathleen Kinney Slappey Fund, LaVere G. and Mabel R. White Fund, The Rumbaugh Fund, Jack Belt Memorial Fund, Vista Healthplan Children's Health Fund, Fred and Mary Ruffner Fund, William G. Roy, Sr. Fund, Frank D. and Anita M. Butler Endowment Fund, Community Impact Fund and Margaret Garrison via Discretionary Community Fund.

To learn more about the Reimagining Middle Grades *School Is Cool* initiative, visit browardschools.com/middlegrades and follow @reimagine_bcps on Twitter.

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ABOUT BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

"Committed to educating all students to reach their highest potential."

Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) is the sixth-largest school district in the nation and the second-largest in the state of Florida. BCPS is Florida's first fully accredited school system since 1962. BCPS has more than 271,500 students and approximately 175,000 adult students in 234 schools, centers and technical colleges, and 88 charter schools. BCPS serves a diverse student population, with students representing 204 different countries and 191 different languages. Connect with BCPS: visit the website at browardschools.com, follow BCPS on Twitter @browardschools and Facebook at facebook.com/browardschools, and download the free BCPS mobile app.

ABOUT COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF BROWARD:

Founded in 1984, Community Foundation of Broward helps families, individuals, and corporations create personalized charitable funds that deliver game-changing philanthropic impact. 453 charitable Funds represent more than \$197 million in assets, distributing more than \$100 million in grants to create BOLD change in Broward over the past 34 years. The Community Foundation provides leadership on community solutions, and foster philanthropy that connects people who care with causes that matter – which empowers visionaries, innovators and doers to create the change they want to see in the community – and BE BOND. To learn more, visit www.cfbroward.org.