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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions Funds Innovative Learning at Jackson Middle School, Inspiring and Engaging Students and Teachers

AIKEN, S.C. – May 1, 2017 – Learning in middle school in this day and age isn't like it was when today's adults once sat at classroom desks. Teachers are now facilitating the learning process while students take on more responsibility to investigate and explore options and information leading to discovery. And Aiken County's Jackson Middle School is blazing new academic trails to further improve comprehension and retention through tools like Project Lead the Way (PLTW).

PLTW is a comprehensive program schools can implement, which includes innovative curriculum for students and highly progressive professional development for teachers. Schools can purchase PLTW classes on a wide range of topics, the more rigorous and complex the class the higher the cost.

"Jackson Middle School has purchased the Science and Technology class, funded by Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS)," said Kishni Neville, STEM Coordinator, Jackson Middle School, Jackson, S.C. "Using the materials and information provided through this class, our seventh and eighth graders explore principles of applied chemistry, Nano technology and physics. It's a semester-long class."



Jackson Middle School 8th grade students Lelandra Jarvis (left) and Erica Childers work together to assemble a robotic arm, part of the Project Lead the Way initiative recently funded by SRNS to further enhance the science, technology, engineering and math program at this progressive school.

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Specifically, the funding provided by SRNS through Aiken County's Public Education Partners (PEP) organization has paid for the PLTW teacher registration and professional development, as well as, all the materials, including software, for the Science and Technology class at Jackson Middle.

"They're building robotic arms to better understand the properties of physics and creating real blue prints as a part of the unit involving floor design," said Neville. "The PLTW program is giving our students a completely new perspective and is generating interest in areas of education, like physics and chemistry, subjects a large percentage of our student population often struggle with. It's definitely working."

Neville explained that the Engineering Design Process, a relatively new academic philosophy at Jackson Middle, is an important element of nearly all their instruction. "We're teaching our students how to evaluate, process and learn as an engineer would in the real world when faced with a challenge or a need to understand and implement a new concept. This is a foundational principal to our approach to learning and Project Lead the Way affords us the time and structure needed to teach the Engineering Design Process in our daily lives," said Neville.

According to Neville the building of the robotic arms and creating blue prints for innovative new homes is an introductory part of the PLTW Science and Technology class before moving into other sections involving more complex material. "We want them to walk before they run," added Neville. "This gives them the terminology and science-based principles needed to build a foundation used to ensure the success of the class for each student."

Jackson Middle School's Engineering Design Process is based on the "Four Cs" of 21st century education: communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity. Neville explained that these represent the soft skills so highly valued by today's employers. "And these are skills that the Jackson student will have that most middle school students will not," explained Neville. "The Project Lead the Way Science and Technology class is a direct teaching tool. We want to use this course to challenge our students to make changes around the world."

To date, Jackson Middle School has received approximately \$4,000 from Savannah River Nuclear Solutions in support of this high impact education program.

"We are so thankful," said Neville. "We could not have taken this important step forward without the financial help received from Savannah River Nuclear Solutions."

The U.S. Department of Energy provides a variety of science and literacy outreach programs at the Savannah River Site (SRS) through their primary contractor Savannah River Nuclear

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Solutions. The goal of these outreach programs is to enhance interest in science, mathematics, engineering and technology and to support improvements in education in the Central Savannah River Area by using the unique resources available at SRS.

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions is a Fluor-led company whose members are Fluor Federal Services, Newport News Nuclear and Honeywell, responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy's Savannah River Site, including the Savannah River National Laboratory, located near Aiken, South Carolina.

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