

Whale Branch Early College High School Wins 2020 Pacesetter Award

School honored for ensuring students receive support to graduate college and career ready

June 30, 2020 — Whale Branch Early College High School in Seabrook, South Carolina, is the winner of a 2020 Gene Bottoms Pacesetter School Award from the Southern Regional Education Board. The award will be presented on July 6, 2021, at the Making Schools Work Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, due to the cancellation of the 2020 conference in New Orleans, Louisiana. Whale Branch was recognized as the first [SREB Ready Certified School, Platinum Level](#), in July 2018.

Pacesetter School Awards recognize schools that are implementing one of SREB's Making Schools Work school improvement frameworks and are achieving success in meeting bold goals related to increases in student graduation rates, readiness for college and careers, and credential attainment.

Whale Branch implements [High Schools That Work](#), SREB's school improvement design for high schools. Affectionately known as Warrior Nation after the school's mascot, the school takes a student-centered, data-driven approach to decision-making.

By putting the student at the center of every decision, Whale Branch has implemented strategies and processes to ensure student success. Data is collected to determine what students know and can do by assessing them before, during and after lessons. This allows teachers to conference with students one-on-one if corrective instruction is needed. Whale Branch also uses the Response to Intervention process to identify students who are struggling or need targeted interventions to help them succeed.

The school declared war on mediocrity by implementing "Warrior Time," an advisory and extra help period. Students who do not meet criteria in a particular class return to that class for extra help until they have no missing assignments and tardies and have earned a grade of 85 in the class.

Students also use an ABC Check-in Google form every four weeks after progress report cards are issued to reflect on their absences, behavior and grades. Students use the data to take corrective actions, and the school uses the data to distribute resources to assist each student. Thanks to practices like these, Whale Branch was rated Good on the 2019 state report card — just three points shy of an Excellent rating.

SREB's [Making Schools Work Conference](#) is held annually and provides educators with opportunities to participate in professional development, network with colleagues from across the country and build school and district leadership capacity.

The Southern Regional Education Board works with states and educators to improve education at every level, from early childhood through postsecondary education. Learn more about SREB at sreb.org.

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