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Contact: Christine Clemente:

Communications & Community Engagement Supervisor
cclemente@bayportcu.org or 757.873.4076

Teacher Retention Improves in Newport News Public Schools through Accelerating Change Together (ACT) Grant

NEWPORT NEWS, March 17, 2026 – In classrooms across Newport News, new teachers are finding the support they need to thrive thanks to the Accelerating Change Together (ACT) Grant—a dynamic partnership between the BayPort Foundation, Ferguson, Newport News Shipbuilding (a division of HII), and Virginia Natural Gas. In December 2024, the \$500,000 grant was awarded to the Newport News Education Foundation (NNEF) to strengthen the Newport News Public Schools (NNPS) New Teacher Institute (NTI), the division’s expanded teacher support strategy.

With nearly 30% of NNPS classroom teachers in their first three years of service, the division is confronting nationwide education workforce trends, including increased retirements, declining enrollment in teacher preparation programs, and greater demand for alternative licensure pathways. In response, NNPS has strengthened and expanded its NTI program to better support and retain new educators.

The NTI is a two-year program that welcomes new educators into the NNPS school division through mentorship, training, and community engagement. With ACT Grant support, the NTI set an ambitious goal to reduce turnover among novice teachers—those with five years of experience or less—by 20%. After just one year, the results were impressive. Baseline data from 2023–2024 showed a novice teacher turnover rate of 36%. By the 2024–2025 school year, that rate dropped dramatically to 16%, demonstrating the program’s immediate and transformative impact on teacher retention.

“We are truly grateful to BayPort, Ferguson, Newport News Shipbuilding, and Virginia Natural Gas for their investment in our new teacher institute. The ACT Grant funds provide essential training, support, and resources for new educators, enhancing their effectiveness in the classroom and boosting retention,” said Dr. Michele Mitchell, Superintendent of Newport News Public Schools.

The ACT Grant contributions committee expressed that supporting this institute is vital for developing a strong and sustainable educational system. By investing in teachers, the program helps create better opportunities for students across Virginia’s workforce.

In the first year of a three-year, step-down grant, NNPS invested in professional development that delivers “just-in-time” support and job-embedded learning aligned to each teachers’ grade levels and subject areas. The program’s success is made possible by dedicated substitute coverage allowing teachers to engage in full-day training and coaching. The NTI also offers targeted professional development, including the innovative iTeach licensure pathway to support new educators’ success.

The ACT Grant initiative was launched in 2022, with the first recipient being the Virginia Beach Education Foundation and Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS), which received funding for a new two-year, half-day Advanced Technology Center Renewable Energy Technologies program. For additional information on the ACT Grant, please visit actgrant.org.

About BayPort Foundation

BayPort Foundation is the charitable arm of BayPort Credit Union, headquartered in Newport News, Virginia and was established to extend the credit union’s philosophy of “people helping people.” The Foundation is an extension of the credit



union's charitable giving. BayPort Credit Union commits more than half a million dollars in annual corporate donations and pays all the Foundation's overhead to ensure that 100% of the Foundation donations support its mission. For more information, visit bayportfoundation.org.

About Ferguson

Ferguson (NYSE: FERG; LSE: FERG) is the largest value-added distributor serving the water and air specialized professional in our \$340B residential and non-residential North American construction market. We help make our customers' complex projects simple, successful and sustainable by providing expertise and a wide range of products and services from plumbing, HVAC, appliances, and lighting to PVF, water and wastewater solutions, and more. Headquartered in Newport News, Va., Ferguson has sales of \$30.8 billion (FY25) and approximately 35,000 associates in over 1,700 locations. For more information, please visit corporate.ferguson.com.

About HII

HII is America's largest shipbuilder, delivering the world's most powerful ships and all-domain mission technologies, including unmanned systems, to U.S. and allied defense customers. HII is the largest producer of unmanned underwater vehicles for the U.S. Navy and the world. With a more than 140-year history of advancing U.S. national security, HII builds and integrates defense capabilities extending from the core fleet to C6ISR, AI/ML, EW and synthetic training. Headquartered in Virginia, HII's workforce is 44,000 strong. For more information, please visit HII.com

About Virginia Natural Gas

Virginia Natural Gas is one of four natural gas distribution companies of Southern Company Gas, a wholly owned subsidiary of Southern Company (NYSE: SO). Virginia Natural Gas provides natural gas service to nearly 300,000 customers in southeast Virginia. Named a Top Workplace in 2024, Virginia Natural Gas also has been recognized as one of the safest, most reliable and customer-focused natural gas service providers and is consistently ranked in the top quartile for customer satisfaction by J.D. Power and Associates. For more information, visit virginianaturalgas.com.

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