

Focus ON CCSD

News for, by and about Charleston County School District,
the state of South Carolina's premier school district where *Students are the Heart of Our Work.*

Volume 2 | Edition 5 | May 2019



JAYUNTAY WILLIAMS NAMED DISTRICT TEACHER OF THE YEAR



CCSD Superintendent Dr. Gerrita Postlewait and District Teacher of the Year Jayuntay Williams

Jayuntay Williams, a math teacher at West Ashley Middle - Advanced Studies Magnet, was beyond shocked when his name was called this evening in front of hundreds of his colleagues, the Charleston County School District Board of Trustees, leadership, district partners, and sponsors at the annual Teacher of the Year (TOY) Celebration Dinner.

Selected from over 80 school-based TOY's, Williams will help lead the CCSD Teacher of the Year Roundtable during the 2019-2020 school year. He will also receive a one-year lease to drive a BMW thanks to Rick Hendrick of Charleston.

The seven-year teacher is humbled by the honor of representing his colleagues as the overall winner.

"I want to be a representative to the students and educators," said Williams. "I hope I make the students as proud as they have made me."

Williams follows 2018 honoree, Stephanie Haecherl of Maimie P. Whitesides Elementary School, on the acclaimed list of CCSD

Teachers of the Year.

Williams and other five finalists were selected through a multi-step process that began with a review of their applications by the outgoing Teacher of the Year Roundtable. Once the finalists were chosen, each of the five teachers gave a tour of their school to a panel of judges, provided a model lesson to be critiqued, and participated in a thorough interview process.

Finalists for 2019 CCSD Teacher of the Year included runner-up Melissa Reese (Murray-LaSaine Elementary School), Erin Bua (James B. Edwards Elementary School), Jamie Costner (Laing Middle School), and Shantia Wilder (Chicora Elementary School).

West Ashley ASM Principal Brant E. Glover is excited that Williams will have a bigger platform

"This will allow him to showcase his style of teaching across the district and the state," said Glover. "I know he is eager and hopefully he can make some waves and make changes."

Becoming an educator

Williams was driven as a young boy to work hard, and that hard work paid off. He was the Valedictorian of his high school class in Denmark, SC. He credits that to the support and motivation that came from his parents.

He lives his passion everyday by teaching students the connection between hard work and achieving goals.

Also, Williams' participation in the Call Me M.I.S.T.E.R program is what he said was most influential in him finishing his undergraduate work in education.

Call Me M.I.S.T.E.R. (Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models) is an initiative to increase the pool of available teachers from a broader and more diverse background, particularly among the state's lowest performing elementary schools.

Through the program at Claflin University, he participated in teacher education undergraduate programs that lead to teaching licensure and job placement.

Williams will be the featured guest at Educators' Night at the RiverDogs' game on May 17, 2019 at Joseph P. Riley, Jr. Park. Before the game, Williams will take a ride in the BMW and toss the ceremonial first pitch.

"I want to be a representative to the students and educators. I hope I make the students as proud as they have made me."

JAYUNTAY WILLIAMS
CHARLESTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT TEACHER OF THE YEAR



▲ Jayuntay Williams

Melissa Reese ▶
Named Runner Up
(third from left)



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CHARLESTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Teachers of the Year

A.C. CORCORAN ELEMENTARY
Miriam Hood-Riley

ACADEMIC MAGNET HIGH
Carol Hurt

ANGEL OAK ELEMENTARY
Jillian Bruton

ASHLEY RIVER CREATIVE ARTS ELEMENTARY
Jennifer Waldron

BAPTIST HILL MIDDLE-HIGH
Bowling Bailey

BELLE HALL ELEMENTARY
Elizabeth Murray

BUIST ACADEMY
Christopher Garner

BURKE HIGH
Micah Brown

C.E. WILLIAMS MIDDLE
Jake Jones

CAMP ROAD MIDDLE
Jessi Kaasa

CAROLINA PARK ELEMENTARY
Samantha Shealy

CHARLES PINCKNEY ELEMENTARY
Stacey Lewis

CHARLESTON CHARTER FOR MATH AND SCIENCE
Meredith Temples

CHARLESTON COUNTY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS
Alea McKinley

CHARLESTON DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY
Juanita Seabrook

CHARLESTON PROGRESSIVE ACADEMY
Helen Muhammad

CHICORA ELEMENTARY
Shantia Wilder

DANIEL JENKINS ACADEMY
Jaime Thompson

DEER PARK MIDDLE
Alana Lewis

DRAYTON HALL ELEMENTARY
Jeanne Livingston

E.B. ELLINGTON ELEMENTARY
Jessica Ross

EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL
Jennifer Houston

EDITH L. FRIERSON ELEMENTARY
Deborah Barrineau

EDMUND A. BURNS ELEMENTARY
Ashley Perry

ESOL DEPARTMENT
Madeline McMillan

GARRETT ACADEMY OF TECHNOLOGY
Bridget Anderson

GIFTED AND TALENTED
Catheryne Porter

GREG MATHIS CHARTER HIGH
Narda Young

HARBOR VIEW ELEMENTARY
Erica Janowicz

HAUT GAP MIDDLE
Krista Begley

HUNLEY PARK ELEMENTARY
Lisa Cowan

JAMES B. EDWARDS ELEMENTARY
Erin Bua

JAMES ISLAND CHARTER HIGH
Lorne Gerard Walker

JAMES ISLAND ELEMENTARY
Holly Kirby

JAMES SIMONS ELEMENTARY
Jessica Wilson

JANE EDWARDS ELEMENTARY
Katelyn Siggelkow-Goodale

JENNIE MOORE ELEMENTARY
Tricia Scanga

JERRY ZUCKER MIDDLE
Shnickqua Mustipher

JULIAN MITCHELL ELEMENTARY
Amanda Nagy

LADSON ELEMENTARY
Angela Broughton

LAING MIDDLE
James Costner

LAMBS ELEMENTARY
Clair Forsberg

LAUREL HILL PRIMARY
Jamie Rogers

LIBERTY HILL ACADEMY
Milini Grant Deas

MALCOLM C. HURSEY ELEMENTARY
Leeann Sullivan

MAMIE P. WHITESIDES ELEMENTARY
Laura Akin

MARY FORD ELEMENTARY
Janet Moody

MATILDA F. DUNSTON PRIMARY
Lauren Williams

MEETING STREET ACADEMY AT BRENTWOOD
Alison Perez

MEMMINGER ELEMENTARY
Amber Inabinet

MIDLAND PARK PRIMARY
Katrina Wilson

MILITARY MAGNET ACADEMY
Victoria Kettula

MINNIE HUGHES ELEMENTARY
Andriette Dent

MORNINGSIDE MIDDLE
Quansetrenia Roberts

MOULTRIE MIDDLE
Michelle Nichols

MT. PLEASANT ACADEMY
Kathleen Meyer

MT. ZION ELEMENTARY
Eleanor Whaley

MURRAY-LASAINE ELEMENTARY
Melissa Reese

NORTH CHARLESTON CREATIVE ARTS ELEMENTARY
Bianca Brown-Whaley

NORTH CHARLESTON ELEMENTARY
Erika Lerro

NORTH CHARLESTON HIGH
Melanie McGrath

NORTHWOODS MIDDLE
Tonya Lawson

OAKLAND ELEMENTARY
Latasha Singleton

PEPPERHILL ELEMENTARY
Melissa Doyle

PINEHURST ELEMENTARY
Lauren Roche

PRESTIGE PREPARATORY ACADEMY
Jackie Fickling

R.B. STALL HIGH
Danielle Rhoads

SANDERS-CLYDE ELEMENTARY
Jasmine Aye

SPRINGFIELD ELEMENTARY
Brittany Bendt

ST. ANDREW'S SCHOOL OF MATH AND SCIENCE
ELEMENTARY
Kevin Forse

ST. JAMES-SANTEE ELEMENTARY-MIDDLE
Anderia Blanchard

ST. JOHN'S HIGH
Leigh Taylor

STILES POINT ELEMENTARY
Gerrie Martin

STONO PARK ELEMENTARY
Joanne Benson

SULLIVAN'S ISLAND ELEMENTARY
Caroline Rambo

THOMAS C. CARIO MIDDLE
Richard Morvin

W. B. GOODWIN ELEMENTARY
Kelly Clements

WANDO HIGH
Patrick Martin

WEST ASHLEY HIGH
Mollie Soto

WEST ASHLEY MIDDLE ADVANCED STUDIES
MAGNET
Jayuntay Williams

ADDITIONAL HONOREES

Going the Extra Mile Award
Samuel Duncan

S.C. State Teacher of the Year Finalist
Stephanie Haecherl

CONGRATULATIONS!

THANKS
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2019 Teacher of the Year TOP FIVE FINALISTS



ERIN BUA PUTS THE SPARKLE IN LEARNING

Boasting 27 years with Charleston County School District (CCSD), James B. Edwards Elementary School counselor Erin Bua was named a finalist for 2019 Teacher of the Year (TOY).

For many years, Bua taught at Edmund A. Burns Elementary School and then transitioned to Belle Hall Elementary School where she began the school counseling portion of her career. She has been at James B. Edwards for the last 11 years.

Bua went to the University of South Carolina. She is a wife, mother of twelve-year-old twins, and a lifelong pet owner. She has her real estate license, a pet sitting business, and is active in her community. She also earned the prestigious National Jefferson Award in 2016.

Bua wanted to be in a line of work where she felt like she was giving back.

“The reason I became a teacher is because I never had a teacher that took me under their wing or a coach that mentored me,” Bua explained. “I never found that special adult person that really noticed me. So I knew in my career, I wanted to be in a field where I could be that person for others.”

As a middle child, Bua had a natural nurturing ability and her career path took a turn towards education. Upon graduation, she was hired to teach at Burns. Those were some of her favorite years.

“Students are the heart of my work. It’s not just a saying. I really do live that. It is ingrained in me as a person, and that is why I do what I do. My job is to create global leaders and have them ready for the future.”

ERIN BUA
JAMES B. EDWARDS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNSELOR

“I was making a difference, getting to know the families and building a community,” said Bua.

But she kept asking herself, ‘How else can I help?’

“I wanted to touch a larger amount of students,” said Bua. “So I went into the counseling program at The Citadel while teaching at Burns. Eventually I got the position at Belle Hall as the school counselor. It gave me a broader range of population to serve and help.”

Bua serves as a counselor, teacher, and helps with administrative duties.

“I consider myself as a sparkle spreader,” said Bua. “I tell them it is a class about life. We’re learning to be the best we can be each and every day.”

Bua’s unique style of teaching includes unveiling a Hug-O-Meter. Every time she gets a hug from a student, she uses a clicker to log it. Her goal is to have over 10,000 clicks by the end of the year and have a Hug Celebration.

Bua also stresses the importance of leadership and the identities of a leader.

I want them to learn that leaders work hard and plan for success,” said Bua. “Leaders respect others and collaborate to make the world a better place. I am helping them to learn, live and work.”

Becoming a Top Five Finalist

The recognition of earning a spot as Top Five TOY could not have come at a better time for Bua. All else is overshadowed by the joy the honor has brought her.

“I accept this recognition on behalf of my school, and I feel like I am the vessel to represent our school,” said Bua. “We work in the hardest job there is, and I am now a spokesperson. It’s not about me; it is about all of us.”

Counselors are often unsung educators of a school, she explained, and for a counselor to be recognized as a TOY is a unique place to be.

Bua wants to show young educators that it is possible to stay sparkly, spunky, and happy for many years in the field of education.

“The secret is to stay positive and enthusiastic in our jobs as teachers. We should be ‘star polishers’ in that we shine our little stars (students) every year and help every child to be their own shining star. My goal is to touch the lives of every child I meet and shower them with encouragement and praise.”

Bua said the recognition is a great culmination to 27 years in education.

“Students are the heart of my work,” said Bua. “It’s not just a saying. I really do live that. It is ingrained in me as a person, and that is why I do what I do. My job is to create global leaders and have them ready for the future.”



James Costner has just five years of teaching under his belt, but longevity isn’t necessarily a requirement when applying for consideration as the Charleston County School District (CCSD) Teacher of the Year.

The seventh-grade math and Honors pre-algebra teacher at Laing Middle School of Science and Technology is a University of South Carolina graduate. He holds a Bachelor’s of Science in Middle-Level Education with an emphasis on Math and Science.

Having taught at two other middle schools before coming to Laing, he never really set out to be an educator. He had his sights set on law school. But with a mom and a sister in the education field who are very passionate about their calling he eventually switched his major.

Costner was hired to teach in Lexington County and then Richland County before coming to CCSD. He is honored to represent Laing, a learning institution that he credits to teaching to the whole student.

“What makes Laing special is that you can instantly see the opportunities that every single kid has,” said Costner. “It offers an award-winning STEM program not specific to just one class but the whole school. Every single student gets a STEM education.”

Costner said his favorite thing about teaching is the autonomy he is allowed in the classroom.

“While teachers must follow the set curriculum, I can always add my spin on the lesson and make it my own and bring creativity to learning,” said Costner. “I enjoy the impact I can have on even just one student because I know it will carry over and he or she will impact others.”



Costner lives by the saying, “always be hungry for more but enjoy the opportunities that come with the successes.” He said it falls in line with the school culture Laing Principal Jay Whitehair has created.

“Our principal is a forward thinker,” said Costner. “He is not good with the status quo and pushes us and challenges us every day to make sure we’re giving our best.”

Becoming a Top Five Finalist

Costner said that nothing will compare the feeling he had when he was surprised with the announcement by the selection committee.

“It is an incredible honor, particularly since I have only been here for two years,” said Costner. “I knew the Top 5 announcement was coming, but I thought there was no way it would be me since there are just so many great teachers in our district. Now I am among them and getting to know them. It’s like another door has opened for me with endless possibilities.”



JAMES COSTNER BRINGS CREATIVITY TO LEARNING

Costner has impacted hundreds of students in his few short years in the classroom. One, in particular, he remembers with fondness.

“I had a student write me a letter that said he appreciated my daily positivity in the classroom,” said Costner. “When I reflect on that, and what he appreciated about me, I realize he couldn’t have said any of that if I were not giving it my all every single day.”When Costner gets to work, he leaves his personal life behind and is 100 percent focused on the children.

“All I think about is ‘what can I do to help every single person here,’ and I keep that in perspective to make sure that I am doing everything I can for those kids.”

“All I think about is ‘what can I do to help every single person here,’ and I keep that in perspective to make sure that I am doing everything I can for those kids.”

JAMES COSTNER
LAING MIDDLE SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY MATH AND HONORS
PRE-ALGEBRA TEACHER



MELISSA REESE BUILDS RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

Melissa Reese is the exception to the rule when it comes to realizing her career dreams.

At age of three, she approached the podium in the Cathedral of Learning at the University of Pittsburgh as if she were taking up the position of the lecturer. She knew then she wanted to be an educator.

From that young age, she felt the tug to become an educator. That tug has served her well; she was named a Charleston County School District (CCSD) Top Five Teacher of the Year Finalist.

Reese has been teaching for seven years, serving the past three years with CCSD.

The Murray-LaSaine Elementary School teacher holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Early Childhood and Elementary Education and a Master of Education Teaching and Curriculum from Penn State University.

Reese’s family moved from state to state because of her father’s occupation and by the time they landed in Hershey, PA, she had fallen behind in her learning.

“I want everyone to be kind and helpful. I teach children the importance of growing up to be successful, productive members of society. I hope that they go and change the world.”

MELISSA REESE
MURRAY-LA SAINÉ ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MONTESSORI TEACHER

“States teach different standards, and at times I struggled,” said Reese. “I didn’t want others to feel left behind, and that’s when I ultimately committed myself to becoming an educator.”

In college, she studied elementary education, which led to her working in the Head Start and Pre-K programs in her area.

After Reese arrived in Charleston she became aware of the large Montessori following and was drawn to the style of teaching. She completed her training and has been at Murray-LaSaine ever since.

Montessori is a hands-on method of teaching that helps children learn through concrete and abstract methods.

“It helps children find their internal drive and motivation and teaches them that if they want to learn something, they must do the work that comes along with it,” said Reese. “Montessori has its freedoms and limits. It’s not something where kids just come and do what they want. They are required to learn the core subjects and are held to state standards of growth.”

Becoming a Top Five Finalist

The school culture at Murray-LaSaine is more than just academics. The culture is one of peace through education of the whole child. Murray-LaSaine is a hybrid of a traditional public school and Montessori learning.

This was a perfect fit for Reese.

“I want everyone to be kind and helpful,” said Reese. “I teach children the importance of growing up to be successful, productive members of society. I hope that they go and change the world.”

Reese was thrilled to learn of the Top Five Teacher of the Year nomination, particularly since she has only been teaching at the school for three years. The irony is not lost on her that the Montessori Method does not instill competitiveness; however she is a competitive person by nature.

“I am honored that the staff chose me to represent the school,” said Reese. “I realize that the title does not define me. There are many of other teachers that are just as amazing which reminds me to be humble.”

Reese loves her profession and lives for the ‘lightbulb moment.’

“Building relationships with the students and planning and tailoring instruction to meet the needs of all of my students is what brings me joy,” said Reese. “I also love working with a team (my principal and staff) who are leaders in education. They know how to creatively balance Montessori with public education, which helps to encourage social and emotional growth with all of our students.”

— continued on page 4



2019 Teacher of the Year Top Five Finalists – continued from page 3



SHANTIA WILDER GOES ABOVE AND BEYOND FOR HER STUDENTS

What Shantia Wilder loves most about teaching is watching a child gain confidence from learning. That moment a child “gets it” is why she truly does what she does.

Wilder is one of five Charleston County School District teachers who has been named a finalist in the annual Teacher of the Year competition.

Wilder has spent the last 19 years at Chicora Elementary School, where she serves as a Child Development Teacher.

Wilder is a 1997 graduate of the College of Charleston and holds a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Education from Southern Wesleyan University. Most recently she completed her Pre-School Special Education Certification.

In addition to being an educator, Wilder is an active member of the school’s PTA, the school wellness committee, the School Improvement Council, the Trident United Way, the Charleston Teacher Alliance, and the National Education Association.

The road to her career began with a desire to be a nurse.

“It is my heart’s desire to be here. I chose to work here. They are my children, and I feel like I can make a positive impression on them. I treat them as my own children; I am firm but fair.”

SHANTIA WILDER
CHICORA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILD DEVELOPMENT TEACHER

“I spent a lot of time with my maternal grandmother, and I wanted to be a nurse,” said Wilder. “I always had a giving spirit and a spirit of service. My grandmother once said to me ‘you would make a great nurse, but you would also make a great educator. One heals the body, and other heals the mind.’ That resonated with me and she pointed me in the direction of wanting to teach.”

Wilder initially taught first grade and kindergarten; after 13 years she transitioned into teaching child development.

“I want to make sure our children have a stable foundation built on what I have taught them,” said Wilder. I want them to go on to middle and high school with stable foundations in the basics of math and reading.”

Chicora is a community school in the heart of a high poverty neighborhood. According to Wilder, the children here have much higher needs than students in most schools in Charleston County.

“It is my heart’s desire to be here,” said Wilder. “I chose to work here. They are my children, and I feel like I can make a positive impression on them. I treat them as my own children; I am firm but fair.”

Educators are giving and caring people by nature. Wilder is no exception. She earns the respect of the parents by proving that she is not just teaching their children but nurturing the whole child.

“I attend their family events, and try and go above and beyond,” said Wilder. “There are opportunities that I have to do things outside of the scope of my job, and I do them because I care and want those children to grow.”

Ownership and pride are two of the lessons Wilder teaches. She explains to them that their name is attached to their work and it will be like that throughout their lives.

“I try to teach them always to do their best because I want them to be proud and confident in what they do,” said Wilder. “I do for them what I would want someone to do for my children.”

Becoming a Top Five Finalist

Wilder said she is still in awe of being nominated because as a child she was always told do her best in whatever she pursued, but not to look for a pat on the back.

“It is just in my character to do my job, and all this attention on me for doing my job is beyond humbling,” said Wilder. “I was taught that you don’t look for praises. I know so many other teachers out there that teach every day and deserve the honor. To have this recognition is mind blowing. I am truly blessed to be able to fulfill the spiritual calling in my life as a teacher. I am able to rest confidently knowing my faith confirms, ‘Out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding’ – Proverbs 2:6.”



Jayuntay Williams, a math teacher at West Ashley Advanced Studies Magnet, was named Teacher of the Year at his school and now joins four others in the competition to be Charleston County School District’s (CCSD) 2019 Teacher of the Year.

Williams credits his third-grade teacher for influencing him with her passion for education. It shaped the direction his career would eventually take.

Williams was driven as a young boy to work hard, and that hard work paid off. He was the Valedictorian of his high school class in Denmark, S.C. He credits that to the support and motivation that came from his parents.

“Greatness is an obligation, not an option,” said Williams. “I live by that every day and spread that to my students. I am teaching more than math. I’m trying to get them to see the connection between hard work and having a passion and a vision that can be followed through.”

Also, Williams’ participation in the Call Me Mister program is what he said was most influential in him finishing his undergraduate work in education.

Call Me M.I.S.T.E.R. (Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models) is an initiative to increase the pool of available teachers from a broader and more diverse background, particularly among the state’s lowest performing elementary schools.

Through the program at Claflin University, he participated in teacher education undergraduate programs that lead to teaching licensure and job placement.

That’s where he learned how to get his students revved up to learn.



FOR JAYUNTAY WILLIAMS GREATNESS IS AN OBLIGATION, NOT AN OPTION

sure I am keeping up with best practices.”

Williams and his team at West Ashley ASM take learning outside of the classroom by providing field trips and extra opportunities to learn.

“Every year we go in fresh by starting over and focusing on what’s best for our students,” explained Williams. “I am here for a purpose, and if we can all strive to be better in some way, work as a team, and be respectful, there is nothing we can’t accomplish.”

Williams’ passion is math, and he enjoys the opportunity to be the Math Department Chair where he can model instructional strategies for his fellow teachers and be a support system for staff.

“I want to help my team members as much as I can while still being a great teacher,” Williams said. “The opportunity to serve is appreciated and a wonderful learning experience as well.”

“Greatness is an obligation, not an option. I live by that every day and spread that to my students. I am teaching more than math. I’m trying to get them to see the connection between hard work and having a passion and a vision that can be followed through.”

JAYUNTAY WILLIAMS
WEST ASHLEY ADVANCED STUDIES MAGNET MATH TEACHER



Becoming a Top Five Finalist

Costner said that nothing will compare the feeling he had when he Williams’ style of teaching is unique. He finds extra resources for learning and is motivated to keep everything fresh and relevant.

“I allow students to redo assignments and give them a deadline of more than just one day,” said Williams. “I also offer additional help as needed because I want them to be as successful as they want to be.”

Williams acknowledges the need to attract more male teachers to the profession.

“Male educators do seem to have great relationships with their students and those relationships span the subject they teach to life experiences,” said Williams.

Williams has taught varying groups of students at both traditional and magnet schools.

“It’s always a different and challenging experience to change course but great at the same time,” Williams said. “Through the years I’ve learned more instructional strategies, and I’m continuously making

Teachers of the Year Tour Statehouse and Meet with Charleston Legislative Delegation

Focus ON CCSD

Focus on Charleston County School District is published for, by and about CCSD, the state of South Carolina’s premier school district where *Students are the Heart of our Work.*

Gerrita Postlewait, *Superintendent of Schools*
Erica Taylor, *Chief Officer, Strategy & Communications*
Sully Witte, *Communications Officer*

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Charleston County School District (CCSD) 2018/2019 Teachers of the Year were treated to a guided tour of the State House in Columbia, S.C. and recognized on both the House of Representatives and Senate floors Wednesday, March 20, 2019.

Members of the Charleston County Legislative Delegation met individually with over 50 CCSD teachers to discuss education reform and topics such as wage and retention.

CCSD Chief of Staff Erica Taylor organized the event to not only showcase the district’s Teachers of the Year, but to introduce them to the state’s policy makers that represent Charleston County.

“It is important that all of us on the district level advocate for our teachers so that they are not hindered in advocating for our students, which are the heart of our work,” said Taylor. “It is important that our teachers feel empowered to work with legislators. An honest assessment of what has succeeded and failed and a deep understanding of what can be done today, allows for the chance to build a public education system that works; and our lawmakers and teachers should be partners in that.”

