



For Immediate Release

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Media Release

Abby Best named Top 5 Teacher of the Year Finalist

**James B. Edwards
Elementary School**

Gerrita Postlewait, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Karolyn Belcher
Chief Academic Officer

Michelle Simmons
Associate Superintendent
Elementary Learning Community

Robin Fountain
Principal

Mount Pleasant, SC – When James B. Edwards Elementary School (JBE) teacher Abby Best agreed to teach learning virtually, she was under the impression that it would only last about two weeks. It turned into a few more months and then an entire school year. This was a challenging year, but one that Best was ready to tackle head on, stepping up to the task with enthusiasm.

That kind of attitude and work ethic, among other traits, resulted in Best being named a [2021 Top 5 Teacher of the Year Finalist](#) for Charleston County School District.

“I am always thankful when I am challenged,” said Best. “This opportunity allowed me to meet a lot of new people. It also taught me new leadership tools, as I was able to help my fellow teachers with the technology and other aspects associated with virtual learning.”

Best has 22 students in her virtual third grade class. She has built relationships with the kids and their families by using some creative techniques. She explained that personally connecting is hard to do on ZOOM so she conducted a lot of home visits, hosted drive-by celebrations at the school where families could swing through the carpool line for a quick visit.

“The social aspect of a child’s life is just as important as the other stuff,” said Best. “That’s hard to do when you’re in a virtual classroom. I would create times when they would split up into break out rooms so they could get to know each other. We’re almost at the end of the year and these kids love each other. I have a scheduled a day when the students will come to the school and participate in person in an outdoor classroom setting. We’re all looking forward to that.”

“I love this school”

Best always knew she wanted to be a teacher. Several family members are administrators and educators, and when Best was little, she spent many hours playing school.

"There was no other option for me," said Best. "When I was in elementary school my teachers were laying that foundation for me by making learning fun, building relationships with each of us and our families, and instilling a love of learning. I wanted to be that for someone one day."

Best holds a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education with add-on certification in Early Childhood Education from Anderson University and Master of Education: Educational Leadership.

She earned her Master's degree in leadership from The Citadel while teaching, and taking on various leadership roles and positions throughout the school and community. She has served as Grade Level Chair and as a member of the Principal's Cabinet.

"Mrs. Best not only shines on her grade level but within the school as a whole," said Principal Robin Fountain. "She has been an active member of the multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) Team and served as the teacher representative for the PTO. All of these roles have given her the opportunity to be an ambassador for her fellow teachers and strengthen her ability to see situations from perspectives outside the classroom."

"I love this school," said Best. "I get to teach at the most amazing school. Not only do I get to hone my skills as an educator but I am able to build relationships with our administrative team and learn through them."

Best describes JBE as a special place that is family-friendly and everyone knows everyone.

"We all take pride in that," said Best. "We are a global leadership school where students are taught those habits in a stepped-up fashion. They leave here with a rich academic experience and skills to go out into the real world and use."

As far as the working environment, Best thinks her colleagues would agree that because of the amazing leadership from Principal Fountain, the staff and students feel heard, loved and cared for.

"The energy Principal Fountain and her administration team bring to our school is contagious," said Best.

Best's reach goes beyond the walls of JBE. She is a cheerleading coach at Lucy Garrett Beckham High School. She was a cheerleader herself, since the age of three. She also cheered in college, and missed the sport and the comradery that a team shares. Beckham's first-year team featured 19 girls.

"It was an interesting year because of the pandemic," said Best. "We did not get to perform at as many games as we traditionally would have. But we had fun and

the girls learned new skills. We even had them appear at several volleyball matches so they could get in additional performance time.”

“Mrs. Best’s greatest contribution to the profession, students, and the community is that she is truly a reflection of her faith,” said Fountain. “You see her genuineness in all she does. She finds the best in everyone and never speaks ill of others. I have personally seen her walk away from a conversation that was beginning to turn negative and kindly, not judgmentally, say, ‘oh, I’m going to go... this part doesn’t concern me.’ Her life is a testimony to her faith and her love and positivity is contagious to all who interact with her.”

Best said her faith is what drives her. She and her husband also serve the youth in their church.

“We both work hard to honor the Lord,” said Best. “Our faith is the most important thing to us.”

“I want my classroom, whether it be in person, virtual, on the field or at church to be a fun learning community where the students feel loved and safe,” said Best.

As a Top-5 Teacher of the Year Finalist Best hopes to be able to assist her colleagues across the district by listening and encouraging so that in turn they can go back and pour into their students a love of learning.

“I know that all every teacher in every CCSD wants the same thing,” said Best. “It’s all about helping a child meet their full potential and we all must work together to make that happen.”

For more information, contact the school at (843) 849-2805

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is a nationally-accredited school district that is committed to providing equitable and quality educational opportunities for all of its students. CCSD is the second-largest school system in South Carolina and represents a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools spanning 1,300 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves more than 50,000 students in 87 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools. Options include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military.