

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.*

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WEST ASHLEY'S AJ BARNES NAMED CCSD 2021 TEACHER OF THE YEAR



Ryan Cumback (left), AJ Barnes (center), and Gerrita Postlewait (right)



AJ Barnes celebrates 2021 Teacher of the Year honor with family

Adam "AJ" Barnes is Charleston County School District's 2021 Teacher of the Year. Barnes teaches AP European History, US History, and coaches baseball at West Ashley High School (WAHS). This is his fifth year at the school.

Barnes is humbled by the honor and will use the opportunity to promote and foster collaboration across the district between teachers and various high schools.

The announcement came via a surprise visit Thursday, August 26, 2021, from Superintendent Dr. Gerrita Postlewait and a caravan of district officials. Selected from over 80 school-based teachers of the year, Barnes will help lead the CCSD Teacher of the Year Roundtable during the 2021-2022 school year.

Barnes follows 2020 honoree, Lakevia Mills of St. John's High School.

Barnes was honored to have been selected among his colleagues.

"This isn't about me, though," said Barnes. "This is about this amazing school and our community here in West Ashley. This is representative of the district and the incredible students we serve. This represents how we ended last year so successfully despite the challenge and how even

more successfully we kicked off this school year."

Barnes and four other 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.

Barnes is motivated to improve the learning experience for students across CCSD thanks to his own experiences in high school and college. He was a high school athlete and played baseball at Otterbein University in Ohio. His teachers and coaches were positive role models.

"I had one teacher who was passionate about teaching," said Barnes. "He was just as intense and passionate in the classroom as he was on the field. For him, the whole student mattered. Through him and many other coaches and teachers, I learned the importance of relationships and how to overcome adversity. I was taught those tools at a young age and I have carried them with me ever since."

Principal Ryan Cumback describes Barnes as someone with a positive attitude and an unwavering commitment to make a sincere difference in not only the lives of his

students, but also the greater West Ashley community.

"Mr. Barnes is an incredible educator and coach," said Cumback. "He's an advocate for every student at West Ashley High School regardless of whether or not he teaches them. Mr. Barnes is humble and selfless and consistently puts the needs of others before his own."

In addition, Abigail "Abby" Best from James B. Edwards Elementary School was named the 2021 CCSD Teacher of the Year Runner-Up.

Best holds a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education with add-on certification in Early Childhood Education from Anderson University and a Master of Education in 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. Last year she was a third grade virtual teacher.

Other finalists for 2021 CCSD Teacher of the Year include Candace Bare (Ladson Elementary School), Katie Johnston (East Cooper Center for Advanced Studies), and Vickie Klatt (St. Andrew's School of Math and Science).

District celebrates four Rookie Teachers of the Year

Charleston County School District (CCSD) honored four first-year teachers Thursday, August 26, 2021, by surprising them with Rookie Teacher of the Year awards.

Alexis Porfilio (Sullivan's Island Elementary School – top left, Rebecca Patsalos (Angel Oak Elementary School) – top right, Kathleen Remley (Thomas C. Cario Middle School) – bottom left, and Payton Gehrs-Schultz (East Cooper Center for Advanced Studies) – bottom right, were all honored with a surprise visit from Superintendent Dr. Gerrita Postlewait and district staff.

The CCSD 2021 Rookie Teachers of the Year represent the top first-year teachers at the early childhood, elementary, middle, and high school levels. Each teacher was nominated by their principal for embracing Charleston County School District's vision for teachers who truly exemplify the best in their school. After being selected by the schools, the rookies wrote essays in which they described the ways that they meet the needs of their students and their students' families. These applications were rated by a team of veteran educators who had the difficult job of finding the top Rookie Teachers of the Year.

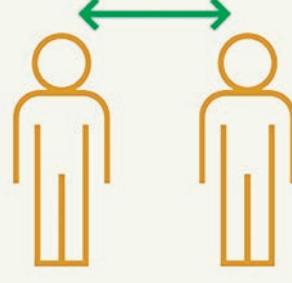
"To be recognized as an outstanding first-year teacher is quite an honor," said Terri Nichols, Associate Superintendent for CCSD. "Not only is an educator's first year in the profession filled with a lot of firsts, last year they had the added challenge of navigating virtual learning during a pandemic and they were fantastic. These wonderful 'rookie' teachers are an asset to our district and to the teaching profession."

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CCSD COVID RESPONSE

Understanding close contacts and quarantines



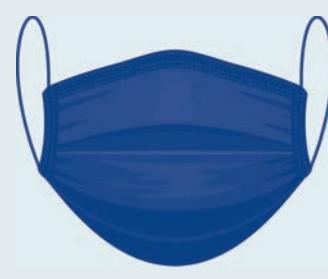
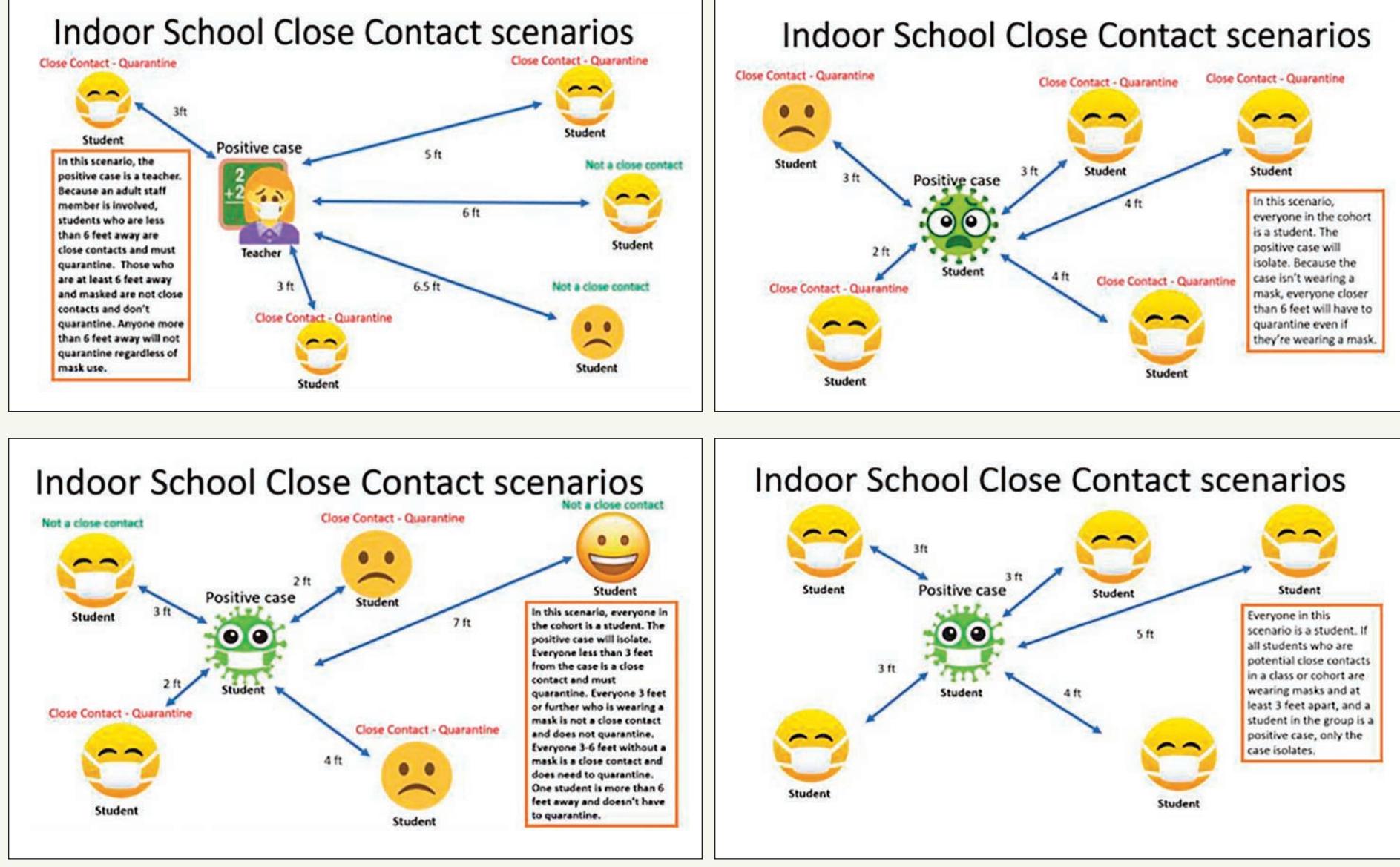
Charleston County School District now has close contacts identified for quarantine numbers for each school on the website dashboard.

The rules for quarantines and close contacts can get a little confusing at times. This four scenario graphic, taken from SC DHEC (see below) can help, families, students, and staff better understand. However, there are two straightforward takeaways that everyone should consider as CCSD deals with a positive COVID case:



WEARING A MASK MATTERS: If all students are wearing a mask (the positive individual and all surrounding persons) and everyone is 3 feet or more away from the positive case – then only the positive case has to isolate/quarantine and there are NO close contact students who must quarantine.

BEING VACCINATED MATTERS: Vaccinated staff and students (12 and older) who encounter a positive case DO NOT have to quarantine unless they have COVID symptoms, regardless of the distance.



ABOUT MASKS

Board of Trustees Chairman's Statement

The CCSD Board of Trustees faces great responsibility and a dilemma of keeping our students and staff safe during COVID's rapid growth in our community under the constraints that have been put on us by State Budget Proviso 1.108 passed into law last summer when virus rates were very low. It is our collective opinion that wearing facemasks in school is an important health and safety measure, and just that simple action by each of us could help prevent serious illness or death from COVID. Last week, the Board issued a strong statement that masks would be required for all students, staff, and visitors for the next 60 days in hopes that the COVID transmission rate would diminish at that time. Our hope continues to be that everyone will comply with the mask requirement for the greater good of all. However, we also do not want students to be punished or sent home from school, because we have seen what a year of disruption can do to all students – especially those most vulnerable and at-risk. Given the complexities of this issue pitting health and safety against state law, we as the CCSD Board of Trustees support the following:

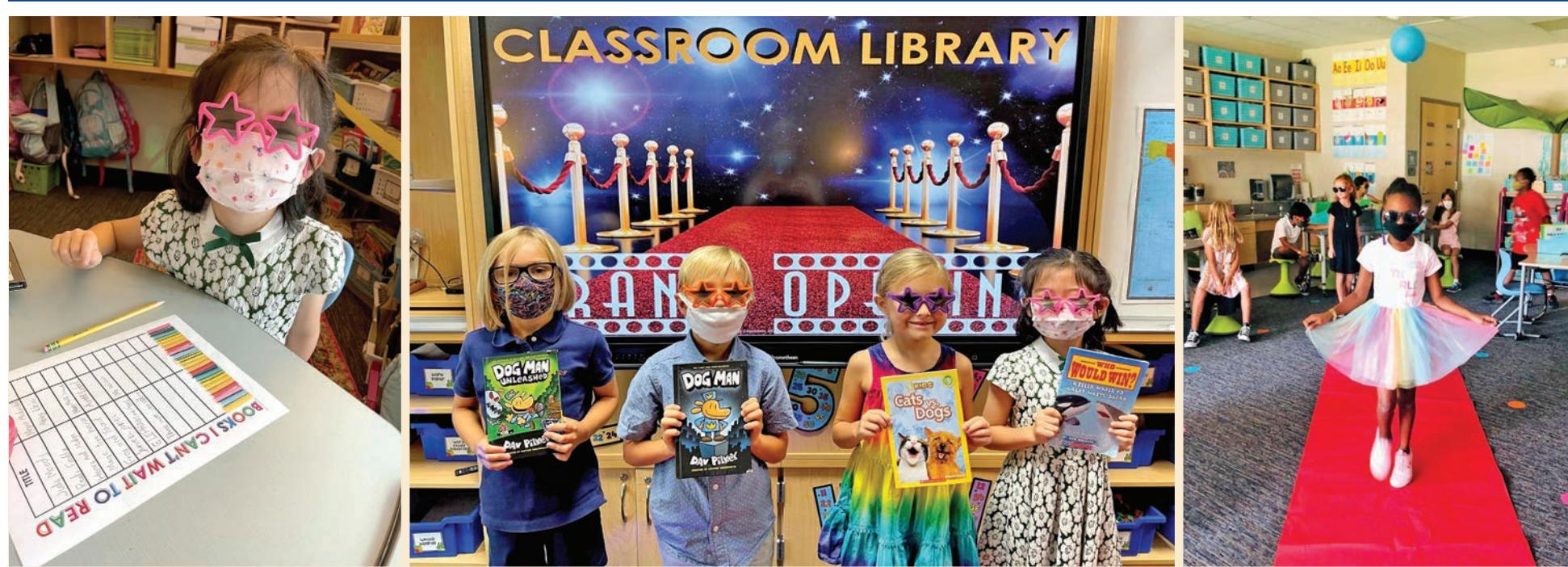
- The statement requiring masks for students, staff, and visitors inside all schools stands as a strong and visible message about our belief that facemasks are important in the fight against COVID. We expect students and staff to wear masks in our facilities and hope our collective call to action for the health and safety of our students, staff, and all CCSD families will be answered.
 - In accordance with State law, we cannot penalize any student who does not wear a facemask, and we will not deny access to their education even as we implore those students and their parents to consider masking as their responsibility to the greater good.
 - We call on the SC General Assembly and Governor McMaster to expeditiously reconsider State Budget Proviso 1.108 in order to allow our Board to make the best local decision for the health and safety of our students and employees.

Decisions on when to close a school

CCSD has had to shift several schools to virtual instruction mode for two weeks due to the COVID numbers. This may continue throughout the next few months if COVID-19 numbers continue to increase. The following describes the decision-making process on when to shift schools to virtual:

District staff closely monitor the number of positive cases, close contacts that become positive cases, the number of quarantined and the ability of the school to cohort students. At a minimum, when the percentage of positive school cases per total enrollment nears five percent, stronger consideration is given to having the school transition to virtual. The final determination to go to 100 percent virtual is made based on the ability to operate safely while providing the best possible educational support for students – and after consultation with SC DHEC. CCSD is re-examining the decision-making process with medical officials and will update as warranted.





Red Carpet at Carolina Park

Second graders participated in a Red Carpet Classroom Library Grand Opening. They read The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore and compared it to the Academy Award winning short. They viewed books from the Hollywood Book Walk of Fame featuring stars from each genre! Students made a list of books they can't wait to read this year from the walk of fame. Classes cut the ribbon on their class library, and students walked the red carpet to pick out books for their book bags. They enjoyed reading books from our classroom library for the first time. Second graders are so excited for reading this year!



Lucy Beckham JROTC hosts special guests



The Coast Guard JROTC program was very excited to host special guests Rear Admiral John Hickey, the Director of Operational Logistics for the U.S. Coast Guard, Master Chief Ann Logan, and LT Lili Simon who visited to meet with the JROTC cadets. During his visit Hickey had the pleasure to present several awards that were earned by Beckham cadets at the South Carolina Leadership Course held at The Citadel this summer. RADL Hickey expressed the Coast Guard's excitement and commitment to the Coast Guard JROTC program and looks forward to many years of cadet success not only in school but also in their lives after they graduate.

James B. Edwards Elementary school greenhouse opens



The James B. Edwards Elementary school greenhouse is up and running! Ms. Eckert's 3rd graders recently prepped the straw bale garden and propagating succulents.



CCSD educators receive STEM grants

At the start of each school year, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) - Charleston Branch awards STEM grants to CCSD educators. This school year, 5 teachers received a grant: E.C. Setser, Pinckney Elementary School; Rosie Herold, James Simons Montessori School; Lynne Shaver, Laing Middle School; Jackie Clarke, Northwoods Middle School; and Brooke Maguire, Oakland Elementary School.

Hootie's Homegrown Roundup canceled, but not the donations



Pallets are being wrapped for delivery

While Charleston County School District (CCSD) was not able to host the annual Hootie & the Blowfish Homegrown Roundup this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they were still able to partner up with the band to support their students. Hootie & the Blowfish donated supplies (via Walmart) to four CCSD schools: Charleston Progressive Academy, James Simons Montessori School, Lambs Elementary School, and North Charleston Creative Arts Elementary School.

The back-to-school event traditionally provides services and back-to-school supplies for 1,000 students from CCSD Title 1 schools. The services and supplies are donated by the band Hootie & the Blowfish and various local community businesses that include the following: haircuts, dental evaluations, eye exams, and backpacks filled with school supplies.

Hootie & the Blowfish are one of the most successful music groups of all time selling over 25 million albums world-wide. The band believes they have a responsibility to use their celebrity status to help improve the lives of those in need, especially children. This type of philanthropic spirit led the band to establish Hootie's Homegrown Roundup: Back to School Basics in 2007.

CCSD greatly appreciates Walmart and Hootie & the Blowfish for donating their time, effort, and generous donations to supply students with much needed school supplies.



James Simons Montessori School with donations

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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.*

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