



**For Immediate Release**

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## Media Release

### **Grant provides tutoring robots to St. James-Santee students**

**St. James-Santee Elementary  
Middle School**

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Superintendent of Schools

**Karolyn Belcher**  
Chief Academic Officer

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Associate Superintendent of Secondary  
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Principal

**McClellanville, SC** – Latoya Bennett, Career & Technology Education (CTE) Teacher at St. James-Santee Elementary-Middle School, was recently awarded a product grant from Van Robotics for eight [Abii robots](#).

Abii robots are Artificial Intelligence robots used to help tutor students. At St. James-Santee, they are being used for intervention. Each Abii robot is worth approximately \$1,000.

Bennett, the school's Teacher of the Year, came across the grant in an email from Van Robotics. She initially wrote the grant for her middle school students but, after receiving it, learned that the robots are designed for students in first through sixth grade. However, that was not a deterrent. She partnered with Kimberly Snipe, the school's reading interventionist so that the robotics would be put to good use.

The award provided more robots than the school actually needed, so the organization agreed to send the rest of the robots to Stono Park Elementary School where Bennett's children attend.

Not only do the robots help struggling students with their academics but they detect attention spans and refocus children by dancing and singing. The device provides personalized instruction.

"The kids love it," said Bennett. "They don't want to put the robots away when their intervention time is up. They teach all South Carolina-based curriculums and run on their own Wi-Fi so they can be used across campus."

Each student has their own unique user name and login, and the intervention is specifically tailored for each student's needs. The Abii features a pre and post-test to gauge improvement.

"The students are excited when it is their time to use the robots," said literacy interventionist Kimberly Snipe. "They treat the robots gently and follow the rules

to care for them. They're so engaged in their lessons with the Abii that by the time the lesson is over, the student doesn't realize how much time has passed."

The robot operates on the individual student's level so that not only can the teachers notice the improvements, but the student can measure their success based on their level and see their progress first-hand.

The lessons used by Abii are also designed to boost confidence. For example, if a student gets an answer wrong, then Abii gives the students other ways to get the answer right rather than saying 'your answer is wrong.'

"This one-on-one robot keeps the students engaged," added Snipe. "We are already seeing improvements."

For more [information](#), contact Principal LaCarma Brown-McMillan at (843)767-8383.

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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.