

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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CCSD REVEALS TOP 5 FINALISTS FOR 2021 TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Charleston County School District (CCSD) officials surprised five unsuspecting teachers by announcing their selection of the Top 5 Finalists for 2021 Teacher of the Year.

The finalists are Coach Candace Bare (PE Teacher) from Ladson Elementary School, Coach Adam "AJ" Barnes (Social Studies Teacher) from West Ashley High School, Abby Best (Third Grade Teacher) from James B. Edwards Elementary School, Kathryn "Katie" Johnston (PLTW Engineering Teacher) from East Cooper Center for Advanced Studies, and Vicki Klatt (Third Grade Teacher) from St.

Andrew's School of Math and Science.

One of those finalists will take over the reigns from the district's current Teacher of the Year, Lakevia Mills, (St. John's High School).

CCSD Superintendent Dr. Gerritta Postlewait presented each finalist with flowers and a certificate. At each stop along the route, live announcements and updates were provided on the District's social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter (@CCSDConnects). Photos from the day can also be found there.



Candace Bare



Candace Bare is in her second year of teaching PE at Ladson Elementary. Prior to coming to Ladson she taught at Addlestone Hebrew Academy but felt a pull back to public school and will tell you that this is where she was meant to be. She graduated from Western Michigan University with both her Bachelor's and Master's degree in Physical Education. Coach Bare strives to inspire a desire for healthy, active living within every student through both modeling and a personal connection. Her goal is "to provide a positive experience that offers my students the best opportunity to excel both physically and academically."



AJ Barnes

Mr. Adam Barnes is a Social Studies teacher at West Ashley High School. He has eight years of teaching experience including three years teaching internationally in St. Kitt and Nevis. Mr. Barnes received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in History as well as a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from Otterbein University. He currently teaches AP European History and US History and serves on the school's leadership and MTSS teams. During the 2020-2021 school year, he spearheaded an effort to provide teachers with a one-stop shop of digital resources. The goal was to assist them through the very difficult process of providing both in-person and virtual instruction during the pandemic. Mr. Barnes hosts monthly roundtables that provide teachers with the opportunity to share tips, strategies, and resources with one another to ensure students continue to receive the very best West Ashley High School has to offer. Mr. Barnes is an active member of West Ashley High's Professional Development Committee as well as the Culturally Relevant Education Leadership Team. He is an advocate for all students and strives to ensure that every student is provided with every opportunity available to them. Mr. Barnes and his finance, Kristen, live in the West Ashley community and are dedicated to making it the very best.



Abby Best



Abby Best is a teacher at James B. Edwards Elementary School. At James B. Edwards, she taught kindergarten for several years and currently teaches third grade. She serves as the PTO teacher liaison and has been a grade-level chair. Born in North Carolina, she moved with her family at an early age and grew up in Mt. Pleasant. Abby attended Anderson University in Anderson, SC where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education with an add-on certification in Early Childhood Education. Upon graduation, she returned to the Lowcountry and began teaching at James B. Edwards in 2017. She also holds a Master of Education in Educational Leadership from the Citadel. In her free time, she serves as a cheerleading coach at Lucy Beckham High School and a small group leader at The Church at LifePark. She lives in Mt. Pleasant with her husband, McLeod and their 2-year old Goldendoodle, Harper.



Katie Johnston

Kathryn "Katie" Johnston has taught for eleven years at Wando High School and the East Cooper Center for Advanced Studies. Mrs. Johnston attended Auburn University where she received a five year Professional Bachelor's Degree in Architecture. Mrs. Johnston relentlessly pursues innovative approaches to teaching and never settles when it comes to her students' education. One of her goals is to bring real-life experiences into the classroom so students don't feel as if they're contained within the four walls of the building. Mrs. Johnston believes hands-on learning is the key to students' investment in their own education, and sees promise in every student, "Every person is incredibly gifted in some way, and I enjoy having a chance to be a part of their development," she said. "At the end of the day, engineering is a great way to have something you're passionate about," Johnston said during a recent interview with the Moultrie News, adding that the process of creation is very satisfying as a student gets to see a project through from the beginning to the end. "All these classes do that in some form or fashion," she said. When asked about Mrs. Johnston, senior Charlie Rohaley said, "I have never had a teacher who is more excited to come to school each and every day. Mrs. Johnston truly has a passion for teaching. Being a registered Architect, she has a lot of knowledge to give her students." Finally, when not teaching, Mrs. Johnston enjoys spending time with her husband and two sons outdoors, traveling, or eating at new restaurants.



Vickie Klatt



Vickie Klatt has taught for 22 years. Most of her years were in the Upstate and the last 2 years in Charleston. She has taught just about every grade level with the same enthusiasm and energy. She is currently teaching a Virtual third-grade class. Beyond the informative lessons, Mrs. Klatt meets with small groups after school for tutoring and support with the virtual platform. She was recognized by the district for her Veteran's Day Display. She wrote a fine arts grant for the entire third grade to experience drumming and instruments from around the world. Mrs. Klatt is an outstanding educator.

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CCSD THANKS SCHOOL NURSES FOR EXTRAORDINARY WORK DURING CHALLENGING YEAR



A school nurse has always been a vital part of a school community. The 2020-2021 school year proved even more so how necessary school nurses are to the overall well-being and operation of schools. With that understanding, Charleston County School District (CCSD) proudly celebrated and recognized school nurses and members of the Nursing Services Department on National School Nurse Day on May 12, 2021.

“The CCSD ‘Nurse Corps’ answered the call for us in a big way this year,” said Chief Operating Officer Jeff Borowy. “There is no way could we have safely had students in-person five days a week for the entire school year without their efforts in contact tracing, COVID-19 testing and vaccinations, all while still being our first responders in schools.”

Shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic closed schools in South Carolina last spring, many of the district’s school nurses began working with medical organizations and hospitals to understand the virus and how to conduct contract investigations. That knowledge became a critical component in

CCSD’s Safe Restart Plan, which allowed the district to offer in-person instruction five days a week throughout the entire school year.

“School nursing is a dynamic profession rooted in public health,” explained Ellen Nitz, CCSD’s Director of Nursing Services. “CCSD nurses have proudly risen to the challenge this year with dedication and professionalism. They are not only tasked with managing their normal clinic duties but to attend to all the needs that arise from the pandemic. Today we celebrate their contributions that ensure the health and learning of our students. Thanks to each of them for keeping our schools and community healthy!”

CCSD school nurses and nurse liaisons have been working long hours, weekends, and holiday breaks to ensure school administrators and district officials have the most up-to-date information on COVID-19 positive cases and close contacts. That information allows leaders at the district and school level to make informed, responsible decisions that keep students and staff as safe and healthy as possible.

Throughout the year, school nurses and nurse liaisons embraced additional tasks, such as administering the rapid and saliva-based COVID-19 tests at school and participating in the district’s partnerships with local hospital systems and medical providers to administer COVID-19 vaccines to staff members and students.

Normally, CCSD selects one District School Nurse of the Year. However, the Nursing Services Department felt that was a collective award this year.

“We were unable to choose one nurse of the year; we feel that each of our nurses has stepped up to do their best,” added CCSD Nurse Liaison Celeste Dailey. “Every nurse has gone above and beyond all of our expectations during the pandemic. They are all deserving of this special title.”

The district sent out tokens of appreciation to schools nurses and produced a highlight video to honor them during the Board of Trustees Regular Meeting on April 26, 2021.

District celebrates Week of the Young Child

The Week of the Young Child™ is an annual celebration hosted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children to celebrate early learning, young children, their teachers and families. This year’s celebration marked the 50th anniversary.

Schools across Charleston County School District (CCSD) hosted activities to inspire, encourage, and educate children and their parents in a variety of methods. This year’s theme was Step It Up.

At Midland Park Primary on Monday, the students and staff cut the ribbon to kick off a week of celebrations.

CCSD Head Start and Early Head Start programs are funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to serve 817 preschool children and 184 infants and toddlers, and pregnant women. Head Start programs are offered at 11 sites throughout Charleston County. Early Head Start is available at 7 of our sites as well as in our home-based option.



Laurel Hill



Midland Park

CCSD to provide meals at no cost to students for the 2021-2022 school year

For the second school year in a row, every Charleston County School District (CCSD) student will be able to eat breakfast and lunch at school for free. Meals will be served at no cost to all students, whether or not the school they attend is part of the Community Eligibility Program. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) announced a set of nationwide waivers that will allow school meal programs and childcare institutions across the country to serve healthy meals for the 2021-2022 school year.

Since the current school year started on September 8, 2020, CCSD's Nutrition Services Department has served 3 million lunches and 1.5 million breakfast meals. The USDA offers a targeted set of flexibilities through June 30, 2022, for school meal programs and childcare institutions across the country. Schools nationwide will be allowed to serve meals through the National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option (SSO), which is typically only available during the summer months.

This option allows schools to serve free meals to all children. Although the waivers do not extend the option to operate the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) during the regular school year, school districts



that choose this option will receive higher-than-normal meal reimbursements for every meal they serve. This option maintains the nutrition standards of the standard school meal programs – including a strong emphasis on providing fruits and vegetables, fluid milk, whole grains, and moderate calorie levels while allowing schools to serve free meals to all children. School districts that choose this option can manage increased costs associated with pandemic-related operational and supply chain challenges, too.

The USDA will continue to offer targeted meal pattern flexibility and technical assistance as needed. In addition, schools and child and adult care institutions can continue providing breakfasts, lunches, and after-school snacks in non-group settings at flexible meal times. Parents or guardians can also pick up meals for their children when programs are not operating under a regular schedule while maintaining social distancing consistent with federal recommendations.

For a complete list of the waiver actions announced last week, visit FNS's COVID Response page at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/coronavirus>.

Grant provides tutoring robots to St. James-Santee students



Latoya Bennet with abii Robots



Interventionist Kimberly Snipe works with a student



A student works with the Abii

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."

Check out the CCSD YouTube channel for an in-depth video on how the robots function and how the students are responding.

Bosch Community Fund supports STEM in CCSD classrooms

The COVID-19 pandemic created multiple challenges for educators, including how to provide hands-on, interactive lessons and opportunities in the classroom. Charleston County School District's (CCSD) new Science Instructional Specialist Deborah Batzer recognized that challenge. When the district applied for a grant from the Bosch Community Fund, she requested funds to acquire Gizmos for every CCSD elementary school.

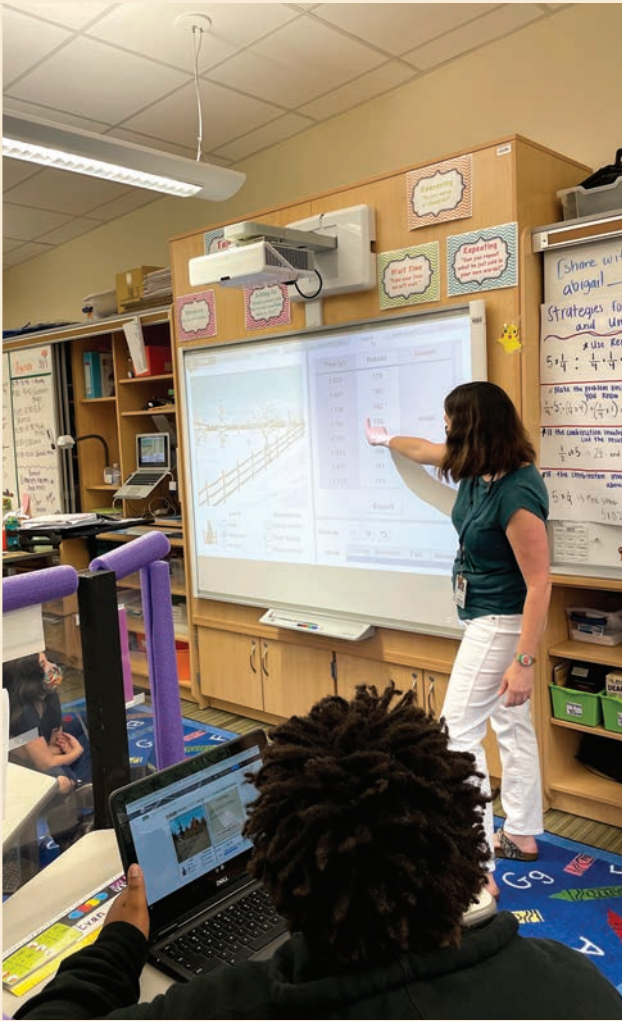
For the past eight years, Bosch Community Fund has awarded CCSD a grant for project-based inquiry projects. This school year, CCSD received nearly \$20,000 to purchase Gizmos, the interactive math and science simulation program for third through fifth graders (the district had already purchased Gizmos to supplement middle and high school classrooms).

"Gizmos align with the latest state standards that help educators bring powerful new learning experiences to their classes," explained Batzer. "The interactive design allows for extensive manipulation of variables and 'what-if' experimentation."

Gizmos are available for every teacher in the district to supplement their lessons and instruction in math and science. They give students something to graph, measure, and compare, even predict and prove. Students can discover concepts, analyze data and go deeper with in-depth activities creating moments to explore, learn, and apply new ideas.

"Gizmos provides hundreds of opportunities where students don't just act like scientists and mathematicians...they are scientists and mathematicians," added Batzer. "Gizmos use innovative technology to create new pathways for learning in both the virtual and in-person classrooms."

CCSD received the funding in the fall, teachers were trained on Gizmos in the winter, and students started using them this spring. Once the school year ends, teachers, administrators, and district staff members will discuss the program's effectiveness and collaborate on an implementation plan for next year.



Dunston Poetry Club students enter MUSC competition



Eliza Bailey – Third Grade

Pizza with friends

Enjoying pizza party

Eliza Bailey – Fourth Grade

In April, Matilda F. Dunston Elementary School's media specialist, Eliza Bailey, taught several poetry lessons and challenged her students to write poetry by personifying a word. This technique enabled the most reluctant poet to come out of his shell. In the midst of the poetry unit, Bailey received an email about the MUSC's 3rd Annual Septima Clark Poetry Contest. Not thinking more than a handful of students would be interested, she casually mentioned the contest and directed students to a signup sheet. Forty-five students expressed interest in entering the contest. Bailey scheduled students to come to the library during their recess and lunch, which led to the creation of Dunston's Poetry Club.

The Poetry Club exposed students to a myriad of resources. They learn how to use a thesaurus, rhyme zone, express their thoughts in Google Docs, and share ideas with Bailey. Of the 45 students initially enrolled, 33 completed their poems, which were entered into the MUSC's Septima Clark Poetry Contest.

The Septima Clark contest is statewide. Bailey acknowledges that the competition will be stiff.

"We are keeping our fingers crossed one of our students will be a contender in MUSC's poetry contest," said Bailey. "The students learned to brainstorm, expand their vocabulary, write, rewrite, and edit in order to complete poems. Whether or not they win, believing in themselves, starting something and finishing it is its own reward."

Bailey also held an in-house contest at school.

"I asked three teachers to read the poems and choose the top three," said Bailey. "From that list, we selected the grade level winners. The top three poems from students in each grade level were celebrated. Those winners received prizes, and the entire club was rewarded with a pizza party."

The following students placed in Dunston's poetry competition:

Third Grade
Nathaniel Read
Saria Aikens
Yesenia Zavaleta Osorio

Fourth Grade
Jessyree Manuel-Santiago
Lonnashia Smalls
Ryleigh Brown

Fifth Grade
Estefani Rivera Garcia
Kamori Jenkins
Kevin Ramirez-Valazquez

GOODWIN PARTICIPATES IN THEIR 10TH ANNUAL RELAY FOR LIFE



Suzette Schiffiano and Ylonda Nero-Anderson

The Goodwin Gators Relay For Life team

TuTu Cute for Cancer

W.B. Goodwin Elementary School participated in the Relay For Life, sponsored by the American Cancer Society, for the tenth year in a row. The Goodwin school community has consistently raised enough money to be one of the top three fundraisers in the Charleston area and is one of a very few elementary schools in the Charleston County School District that participates consistently over time.

COVID-19 has limited the way the Relay for Life is going to be held this year. There will be no large gatherings where teams lap the track. However, Goodwin will hold a mini relay in their car rider loop, lined with luminary bags in memory or honor of loved ones. The Goodwin Gators will join other Relay for Life teams in the area and place their luminaries around the traffic circle in Park Circle on May 7. The luminary candles will be lit at 7 p.m.

Goodwin teacher Ylonda Nero-Anderson spearheaded the effort ten years ago as a way for the school to give back. She chose Relay for Life simply because it was a favorite charity of hers. Great effort goes into planning mini fundraising events throughout the school year, and co-worker Suzette Schiffiano assisted her. Schiffiano is now retired, but her dedication to Relay For Life is just as strong.

Nero-Anderson and Schiffiano are both cancer survivors. In 2014, Nero-Anderson was diagnosed with breast cancer, and Schiffiano was diagnosed in 2009 with leukemia.

"Now this fundraiser is even dearer to us," said Schiffiano.

"Former Principal Diane Ross was very supportive when I came to her ten years ago with the idea," said Nero-Anderson. "The first three years we participated, all we did is raised money and turn it in. In 2015, Goodwin assembled a team and attended the event at West Ashley High School. Co-workers, family, friends, and students joined the team. In 2016 we got creative and dressed around the theme of TuTu Cute for Cancer complete with tie-dyed shirts and tutus and won Best Dressed."

Before the pandemic, the school raised about \$5,000 each year, totaling an estimated \$45,000. Families, staff, the community, and even students donated. They held events throughout the year, such as crowning a king and queen of the school, dollar dress-down days, loose coin donations, and the sale of luminary bags. This year they are relying solely on donations and bag sales. To make a donation or purchase a luminary bag, visit the Relay for Life website and search Goodwin Gators.

"Seeing those bags and the memorials is emotional if you have any ties to cancer at all," said Schiffiano. "When you see a family member's name, it's hard not to cry and even harder not to cry for yourself as a survivor."

While the world faced a pandemic, cancer did not sleep. Fundraising has been slow for the school, but Nero-Anderson and Schiffiano are not giving up hope.

"All the money raised goes to the Cancer Society, and the benefits that come from that include rides to doctor or therapy appointments, a plethora of assistance to patients and families, and research," said Schiffiano. "Cancer has gone by the wayside because of COVID-19. I have all the empathy in the world for COVID-19 victims, but we can't turn our back on cancer."

"We appreciate the response we've gotten so far," said Nero-Anderson. "We could not do this without the support of our faculty, families, and current Principal Natasha Jones."

Principal Jones is proud of the efforts of the school community over the years, and especially Nero-Anderson and Schiffiano.

"It is wonderful that they have created an opportunity to join forces with a team that is so passionate about their cause," said Jones. "We recently lost a valued member of our team to cancer, and many of us have been personally touched by cancer in some way. We can achieve great things when we work together for a good cause."

Nero-Anderson encourages other schools in the district to consider fundraising for Relay for Life.

"It is a great event and way to include students in fun activities all year," said Nero-Anderson. "I am happy to work with any school to get started."

Schiffiano added that it is also an opportunity to make children aware of giving.

"Through our various activities, we're making children aware of charity, and they made their donations with pride," said Schiffiano. "They also learned the facts about cancer."

"I'm proud of our Gator family," said Goodwin teacher Mary Stansell. "We strive to create a nurturing environment, and supporting Relay for Life is one way we show it."

R.B. Stall's Tabytha Walls earns national recognition from ASBDA Foundation

The American School Band Directors Association Education (ASBDA) Foundation recently announced that R.B. Stall High School's band director, Tabytha Walls, is a recipient of the prestigious Outstanding Potential Award. This honor recognizes young band directors who show great potential and promise in the field of instrumental music education.

The award was presented by Principal Jeremy Carrick, Charleston County School District (CCSD) Fine Arts Coordinator Dr. Denisse Santos, and Basil Kerr, representative of the South Carolina chapter of the American Band Director's Association.

The Outstanding Potential Award is presented to instrumental music teachers who have had less than five years in teaching, and who have demonstrated initiative and leadership early in their careers. Only one director from each state may be nominated per year for this award. Because of this, recipients are considered among the very best young band directors in the nation.

"Since Ms. Walls started her teaching career with CCSD, she has been an example of hard work and determination," said Santos. "She has a love for her work and her students, and has been committed to doing whatever it takes to build a quality music program from the start. Her students love and appreciate her, and work hard to meet her expectations. This award is so well deserved!"



Tabytha Walls

Walls was nominated in 2020 but the presentation was delayed due to the pandemic. There has been no nomination from South Carolina for the current year.

"Ms. Walls has exemplified excellence in the teaching profession," said Carrick. "It is even more exceptional that she has taught at such a high level so early in her career. I am pleased that she has received this award and been recognized for all the hard work and dedication she has shown to her students. The Stall High School community is fortunate to have her investing in our students to develop quality musicians."

The ASBDA is a national organization of elected members, dedicated to promoting quality band education through research, study, promotion, and publication. Their most famous publication, The ASBDA Curriculum Guide, is considered the industry standard curriculum guide used by successful school districts and college music education departments across the nation. Other research published by ASBDA includes studies on music and the brain, music administrator guides, discographies, lesson plans, and other supplemental materials for school band directors and music administrators.

"Tabytha Walls exemplifies the best and brightest of the next generation of outstanding educators," said Kerr. "The Outstanding Potential Award is a reflection of her efforts and the support and encouragement of the school district administration. Her students are lucky to have her."

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