

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 5 | Edition 4 | April 2022

CCSD REVEALS TOP FIVE FINALISTS FOR 2022 TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Charleston County School District (CCSD) officials surprised five teachers by announcing their selection of the Top Five Finalists for 2022 Teacher of the Year.



The finalists are Natasha Akery, Academic Magnet High School; Nathalie Bennett, Northwoods Middle School; Chakadasovavan Or, Julian Mitchell Elementary School; Ashley Pomposelli, James B. Edwards Elementary School; and Kory Roberts, Memminger Elementary School.

CCSD Interim Superintendent Donald R. Kennedy, Sr. presented each finalist with flowers and a certificate. At each stop along the route, CCSD shared live announcements and updates on its social media platforms (@CCSDConnects). Photos from the day can also be found there and on ccsdschools.com.

One of the finalists will take over the reins from the district's current Teacher of the Year, Adam Barnes, of West Ashley High School.

MEET THE TOP FIVE FINALISTS

Natasha Akery, Academic Magnet High School



Teaching is a second career for Akery. She joined the profession in 2017 through an alternative certification process. She has filled the roles of English instructor and Diversity Coach at Academic Magnet High School since 2020. She previously worked at Military Magnet Academy.

Akery is a 2009 College of Charleston graduate and attends the International Institute for Restorative Practices as she pursues her Master of Science.

Akery is a member of multiple professional organizations including the South Carolina Council for Teachers of English where she was a presenter at the 2020 and 2022 Annual Conferences, Teacher2Teacher (National Social Media Network for Educators), and #HipHopEd (Virtual Professional Learning Community).

In her role at Academic Magnet, Akery designs and facilitates professional development for administrators, faculty, and staff pertaining to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Additionally, Akery also facilitates professional development for CCSD English Language Arts and Social Studies teachers inspired by culturally responsive teaching and restorative practices.



Nathalie Bennett, Northwoods Middle School

Bennett is a sixth grade math teacher at Northwoods Middle School and has been an educator for 13 years, holding various positions in North and South Carolina. She holds a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and a minor in Biology from Wake Forest University. Professional memberships include Girl Scouts of the United States of America and Girls Scouts of Eastern South Carolina (volunteer).

Bennett's participation in school activities is extensive. She served as a School Improvement Council committee member while teaching at W.B. Goodwin Elementary and Pinehurst Elementary Schools; she was a member of either the PTO/PTA at all of the schools she taught in; was the Grade Chair of Goodwin, and is now in that role at Northwoods. Throughout her career, Bennett has served as a Professional Development leader on various topics.

Recognitions are numerous and include being named a "Tireless Teacher" at Northwoods, a Personalized Learning Leader Cohort, Teacher of the Year nominee at Pinehurst, SC Science P.L.U.S. Institute participant, and a Wake Forest University 2005 Hall Award Winner (presented for excellence in student teaching to one graduating elementary teacher each year).

Chakadasovavan Or, Mitchell Elementary School



Or is a third grade teacher at Julian Mitchell Elementary School. He received his degree in Elementary Education and a minor in Political Science from the College of Charleston. This is his third year teaching at Mitchell.

Or is enrolled in the Teaching, Learning, and Advocacy Masters program at the College of Charleston. His area of interest in education is addressing poverty and environmental factors which disrupt a child's full potential to receive a quality education. Through this program, Or hopes to be able to find ways to support the scholars at Mitchell and advocate for their needs.

Or is a member of the South Carolina Education Association, a math Professional Learning Community Leader, trained in Restorative Circles, and has been recognized as the 2021 Avery Research Center Teacher of the Year, named a 2020 CCSD Rookie Teacher of the Year, and received the 2020 Guiding Light Excellence Award.



Ashley Pomposelli, James B. Edwards Elementary School

Pomposelli began teaching kindergarten in 2010. She spent eight years in Horry County and has been teaching at James B. Edwards Elementary School since 2017. She is a Coastal Carolina University graduate with a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education.

Pomposelli has served as the grade-level chairperson since 2020 and prior to that was a grade-level chairperson and lead mentor at her school in Horry County. While there she was also named the 2015-2016 Forest Elementary School Teacher of the Year.

Pomposelli has focused on staff development, leadership, and training future teachers throughout her career. She worked with various teams to develop new social studies and science curriculums, instructed teachers on the new curriculum through professional development, and attended professional development to become Kagan certified, which enabled her to use revolutionary instructional strategies to boost engagement and achievement. Additionally, Pomposelli has been a cooperating teacher for student teachers at Coastal Carolina University and College of Charleston.

Kory Roberts, Memminger Elementary School



Roberts teaches fifth grade at Memminger Elementary School. Roberts, a third-year teacher, graduated from College of Charleston in 2019 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Elementary Education. Additionally, Roberts was part of the "Call Me Mister" program and is a Boys With a Purpose Advocate.

Roberts participated in CCSD's Summer residency program before joining Memminger's staff. Roberts has been involved with several organizations whose purpose is to lift up students of poverty in high-risk situations, including "Boys With a Purpose." He is frequently asked to serve on committees and has been helpful in teacher recruitment efforts. Roberts has served as a teacher leader in Summer Enrichment Camps.

Roberts held a position on the CCSD Teacher Cabinet and is on the 2022 Planning Committee Member for CCSD's Summer Enrichment Program.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Read Across America2
James B. Edwards wins competition3
Author makes guest appearance at Corcoran3
CCSD school supports Ukraine3
Frog dissection at Moultrie Middle3
Regional spelling bee winner announced4
MMA captures state title4
Burke band students receive opportunity4

Kaleidoscope schools funding awarded5
Recycling education awards5
Academic Magnet mock trial team5
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion5
Inspirational speaker visits Northwoods6
NCE turns 100!6
East Cooper CAS's special opportunity6
Jennie Moore classmate celebrated6

Laing STEM collaboration7
R.B. Stall nurse honored7
Dare to Dream7
SC Scholastic Journalist of the Year7
Pinckney teacher wins scholarship8
National Library Month at CCSD8
Acceleration schools receive grant8

Read Across America 2022 at CCSD



Carolina Park Elementary



Chicora Elementary



Springfield Elementary



Ladson Elementary



Minnie Hughes Elementary



Mary Ford Early Learning & Family Center



Mount Pleasant Academy



Stiles Point Elementary



Northwoods Middle

James B. Edwards wins CCSD's Battle of the Books competition



James B. Edwards Elementary students at the Battle of the Book competition

James B. Edwards Battle of the Books team

Students at James B. Edwards Elementary School won the third annual Charleston County School District Battle of the Books. They competed against 12 other teams on Saturday, March 5, 2022. The event was held at Burke High School; teams competed in a quiz bowl, answering questions from 20 books on the 2021-2022 South Carolina Children's Book Awards nominee list.

Coached by Heidi Benton, the James B. Edwards team, called the Once Upon A Timers, competed in the finals against Drayton Hall Elementary School's Meteor Readers.

Benton said that her students prepared for the competition with diligence.

"The team came to the library to re-read the books during recess, and they met after school at each other's houses to create questions from the stories and quiz each other," Benton explained. "They showed great focus and initiative."

Battle of the Books is a reading incentive program for fourth and fifth grade students. The purpose is simply to encourage students to read good books and have fun while competing with peers.

Christy James, Charleston County School District's Library & Media Services Specialist, was the emcee for

the district championship. The crowd included over 150 family and community members there to support their readers.

James explained that the championship is held as a culminating celebration for the district's Read Across America Week.

"This is the third year that CCSD elementary schools have competed in a district battle that even includes its traveling trophy," said James. "This is an exciting event that truly celebrates students' love of reading!"

District librarians comb through the South Carolina Children's Book Award list, choosing titles and writing questions that are asked of students and teams to test their knowledge of the books they have read.

Leslie Cooper, the librarian at Stiles Point Elementary School, organizes the event but said it takes an entire team to make it happen.

"Librarians start writing questions in May for the competition," said Cooper. "Teams were established in October, and the reading begins. There are multiple copies of each book on hand so that each team member can read the book they are assigned."

Teams were made up of five members, and they had to

complete a reading list of 20 books by January. Teams competed against each other at the school level, and the top team from each school competed in the district event.

"The Battle of the Books promotes a variety of diverse books that students might not automatically select but often find they enjoy," said Cooper. "The competition aspect also encourages students who didn't necessarily like reading to look at it differently. We see a big difference in our students as readers and in the activity of our libraries when children participate in this."

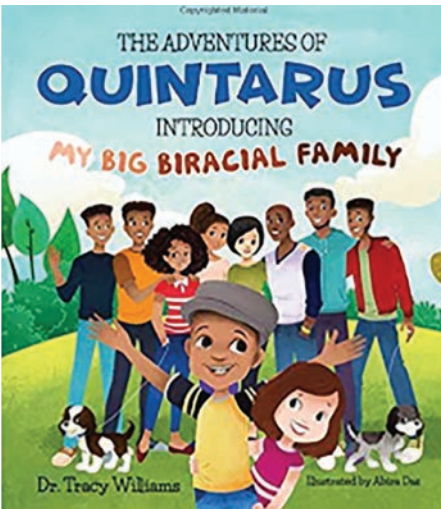
Cooper added another positive aspect of the competition was that electronic devices were not necessary and students could unplug.

"The competition results in students getting excited about reading, and that shows in the increased number of checkouts we see," said Cooper. "This year at Stiles Point, we broadcasted our school tournament to every classroom, and the kids loved it. Students are now asking about how to participate next year."

In addition to promoting reading, the competition promotes leadership, cooperation, and a sense of accountability.

"I think the competition sets a great example that hard work pays off," said Cooper.

Author presents book to students at Corcoran



Students at A.C. Corcoran Elementary School were treated to a guest appearance from author Dr. Tracy Williams and her son Quin. Williams is the author of "The Adventures of Quintarus - Introducing My Big Biracial Family."

Quin, who is in third grade, is the main character in the book.

The book explores what it means to be biracial and takes an inside look at the Williams family. The couple has eight children and two dogs.

The idea to write the book came to Williams after Quin asked her why his skin was different from hers and his fathers.

Williams, who is a pharmacist by trade, travels to schools, book stores and libraries promoting the book, which is the first in the series.

"These books help young readers identify with being biracial and understanding what that means," said Williams. "It also introduces famous biracial people as inspirational leaders."

James Island Elementary students support Ukraine



In support of the citizens of Ukraine, students at James Island Elementary School created an art project using Sunflowers which is the flower of the country.

Frog Dissection at Moultrie Middle



Moultrie Middle School seventh graders dissected frogs this month as part of their biology class.

Ashley River's Shivam Kolwalkar takes title at regional Spelling Bee

There is a new Spelling Bee champion in the Lowcountry: Shivam Kolwalkar of Ashley River Creative Arts Elementary School. He won the 2022 Post and Courier Spellbound! on March 25, 2022, at the North Charleston Athletic Center. The fifth grader edged out a former Unicorn, Jordan Bazzle (now a sixth grader at Charleston County School of the Arts) for the title.

Kolwalkar spelled “cabaret” to lock up his spot in the Scripps National Spelling Bee; he will compete in the virtual preliminaries in May. If Kolwalkar advances through the preliminaries, he will travel to Washington, D.C. for the finals.

“Since the CCSD Spelling Bee, I studied the words for about 30 minutes every day, but sometimes longer on the weekends,” said Kolwalkar. “I was nervous when I got [to Spellbound!]. I didn’t think I was going to win, but I thought I could. When it got down to two people, I got more nervous. When I heard the announcer give me the word cabaret, I knew I was going to win!”

This is the third straight year a student from Charleston County School District (CCSD) finished first in Spellbound!

The 30th edition of Spellbound! included students from CCSD, Berkeley County School District, Colleton County School District, Dorchester School District Two, Dorchester School District Four, the Catholic Diocese of Charleston, Christian Home Educators Association, and the South Carolina Independent School Association.

“We are so proud of Shivam and will be cheering him on in the next round on the way to the National Bee,” said Principal Michelle Conner.



Shivam Kolwalkar

MMA goes back-to-back: Eagles capture second straight state title



Military Magnet Academy used a stifling defense to dominate Denmark-Olar, 35-20, in the South Carolina High School League A state finals. The Eagles forced more than 30 turnovers and held the Vikings scoreless in the third quarter to become the first basketball team (boys or girls) from Charleston County School District in 42 years to repeat at state champions

Sabri Mitchell and Dream Watson paced MMA with eight points each.

The Eagles used a 6-0 run late in the first quarter to take a lead they would never lose and led 21-13 at the half.

MMA, led by head coach Danny Taylor, finished their historic season with a 27-4 record. They were already the first-ever CCSD girls' basketball team to make the state finals three seasons in a row. The last CCSD team to make the state finals three consecutive years was the Middleton boys (1972-1974).

BURKE, HBCUS PROVIDE IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY FOR BAND STUDENTS



Burke High School, led by Band Director Linard McCloud, hosted the 17th Annual Burke High School Band Scholarship Fair. Approximately 60 students from 11 high schools across the state participated. Equally as many Historically Black Colleges and Universities from around the Southeast participated.

Once the day was over, McCloud estimated the high school students in attendance were offered about \$1.1 million in scholarships, which could turn into \$4.4 million over four years (if the students attend four years at the institution of their choice).

McCloud, a Burke High and Florida A&M University graduate, began inviting colleges to audition his band students after he became Burke Band Director in 1979. In 2001, he asked more colleges to participate, and in 2003, he asked more high schools to participate. Seventeen years later, Burke's band auditions have become a notable opportunity for band students, high school band directors, and college band directors throughout the state and Southeast region.

Brendon Johnson was a senior at Darlington High School in 2009. He attended the band auditions at Burke and was offered a band

scholarship to attend Bethune-Cookman University. Johnson is now the band director at Darlington High School and brought 10 students to audition at this year's Band Scholarship Fair. He has brought students to the audition each of the past five years.

“This is very special,” Johnson said. “It’s an opportunity for a student to get thousands of dollars in scholarship money. They get to see the value of all the work they put in. It’s a tremendous advantage to college directors who can audition multiple students in one place.”

Anthony Jones, band director at Livingstone College in Salisbury, NC recognizes that advantage.

“I get a chance to reach out to the most talented students and they get a chance to see what we have to offer,” explained Jones. “It’s a great opportunity for networking and we don’t have to travel from place to place. I’ve auditioned 18 students and I hope I get all 18 of them!”

Mullins High School drummer Aaliyah Slaughter was among the students auditioned. She hopes this experience will be open to all

high school band students in the future, not just juniors and seniors.

“It would help younger students see how they need to grow,” said Slaughter.

The auditions represent an opportunity for students at small schools in rural communities to get exposure they might not get otherwise, McCloud said. With sponsors who might finance overnight stays for students and band directors that opportunity can grow, he said.

Iconic band director Lonnie Hamilton attended this year's scholarship far as well. For 20 years, he molded young musicians at the former Bonds-Wilson High School, taught music to over 1,200 students during his teaching career, and secured 131 college scholarships.

“McCloud has done a tremendous thing,” Hamilton said. “Nobody has done the math, but the economic impact in the Tri-County are alone has been immeasurable! McCloud deserves a lot of credit.”

Participating Kaleidoscope schools receive almost \$500,000 in Building Blocks Funding



The Division of Early Care and Education at the South Carolina Department of Social Services has funded 13 Charleston County School District schools a total of almost \$500,000.

Child care stabilization funding was appropriated to states in the American Rescue Plan Act (Public Law 117-2) to help stabilize the child care sector due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Funds must be used to support the key operating expenses of child care providers to help ensure access to child care for families. In South Carolina, these stabilizations subgrants are called “SC Building Blocks.”

The sites eligible to apply had to be enrolled in the ABC Quality Program and meet the Child Care Development Fund health and safety requirements.

ABC Quality is South Carolina’s statewide rating and improvement system (QRIS) for child care and early education. ABC Quality is voluntary for child care providers and promotes excellence in meeting the total needs of children.

THE FOLLOWING SCHOOLS WILL RECEIVE FUNDING:

- Belle Hall Elementary School
- Charles Pinckney Elementary School
- Charleston Progressive Academy

- Harbor View Elementary School
- Hunley Park Elementary School
- James B. Edwards Elementary School
- Jennie Moore Elementary School
- Maimie P. Whitesides Elementary School
- Memminger Elementary School
- Mount Pleasant Academy
- Oakland Elementary School
- Springfield Elementary School
- Sullivan’s Island Elementary School

“We are so thrilled to have been awarded this funding,” said Jason Sakran, Director of Expanded Learning (Kaleidoscope). “If the pandemic revealed anything, it

is the importance of high-quality child care to keep our economy and workforce moving forward. This money will be used to directly support our programs and students. It couldn’t come at a better time.”

“Qualifying under the new guidelines for the fifth round of the SC Block Grant is a tremendous win for our programs that are participants in the SC ABC Quality program,” said Ashley Peters, Program Officer for the Department of Expanded Learning. “These funds will allow us to hire more staff and position us to expand our enrollment to pre-Covid numbers.”

Funding can be used on personnel, facilities, PPE, equipment, goods and services, mental health services, and past expenses.

SIX CCSD SCHOOLS WIN RECYCLING EDUCATION AWARDS



Recycling Education grants were recently awarded to six Charleston County School District (CCSD) schools by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC).

The Recycling Education grant program is available to all schools to promote awareness of the need to reduce waste and recycle whenever possible. The grant funds can be used to purchase supplies or for field trips to promote recycling within schools.

Stefanie Vandiver, SC DHEC environmental manager who coordinates the grant program is impressed with the applications they receive from Charleston County schools.

They consistently submit outstanding project ideas over the years to grow their sustainability efforts as well as start new sustainability efforts,” said Vandiver. “CCSD schools’ hard work is not only inspiring to other schools throughout the state but also boosts our recycling rates in South Carolina.”

2021-2022 grant awards

- Cooper River Center for Advanced Studies received \$1500 for recycling containers to be placed in common areas.
- James Island Charter High School received \$1500 to purchase wall shelving, containers, and tables to recycle electronics.
- Lucy Garrett Beckham High School received \$1500 for supplies to create a larger school garden.

- Malcolm C. Hursey Montessori School received \$1496 to purchase supplies for the school garden and composting.
- Military Magnet Academy received \$1500 to purchase supplies for the school’s “food forest.”
- Wando High School received \$914 for TerraCycle Zero Waste boxes and a field trip to the Bees Ferry recycling facility.

“James Island Charter High’s Career and Technology Education (CTE) classes include coding, engineering, web design, game design, animation, and networking repair,” said Dr. Elizabeth Conley, a CTE teacher at the school. “This recycling grant will allow us to dismantle and recover more reusable electronic materials by adding recycling containers in our technology storage room.”

“The Sustainability Club at Lucy Beckham strives to make the world a better place one student at a time,” said Alex McCarrell, the club’s teacher-sponsor. “We hope to grow our small community garden with the grant funds and begin composting as well.”

Wando High School students will tour the Bees Ferry recycling facility to learn best practices.

“Using this information, we will apply our knowledge in creating more opportunities for recycling on our school campus, such as adding TerraCycle Zero Waste boxes,” explained Alyse Silvia, Environmental Science and Biology Teacher at Wando.

Academic Magnet’s Mock Trial Team places fourth in the state

Congratulations to the Academic Magnet High School (AMHS) Mock Trial team on their sterling finish at the 2022 South Carolina state competition. Despite only being in their second year as a team, they beat out 34 other high school groups at regionals this February. This sophomore effort secured a third place showing at regionals and a fourth place statewide finish on March 11, 2022.

At the state level, the team competed valiantly, winning all but one of their three rounds, eventually falling to one of the top two teams in South Carolina. Team attorneys Betsy Bailey (’24) and Harry Ding (’24) were recognized by their peers as top litigators as were witnesses Lucas Sutherland (’24) and Harrison Biddle (’23). Peer-nominated attorneys from the regional competition included Harry Ding, Wilson Swenson (’24), and Joey Benich (’23). Recognized witnesses included Harrison Biddle, Lucas Sutherland, and Kimberly Do (’25). Regional scoring judges recognized attorneys Harry Ding, and witnesses Lucas Sutherland, Cambell Leshar (’24), and Colin George (’24).



Elizabeth Fritz Bailey and Betsy Bailey
Attorney Coaches

Started in 2020-2021 by assistant principal Kimberly Zerbst, and directed in 2021-2022 by teacher-librarian Dr. Lara Russell with attorney coaches Elizabeth Fritz Bailey and Judge Gene Wilson, AMHS’s mock trial program runs as an extracurricular activity at AMHS, meeting afterschool on a weekly basis.

“Dr. Russell and Ms. Zerbst have been instrumental in getting this team to a fourth place finish in just two years,” said Bailey. “Our team was well-rounded and professional with almost all of the members being recognized by their peers and judges in “most effective” awards over the two competition weekends and no violations.”

“The team could not have succeeded without the dedicated work of Attorney Bailey and Judge Gene Wilson, both of whom regularly instructed participants on the mechanics of the law and trial proceedings,” added Russell. “Mock Trial is ultimately more than learning about the law itself; it’s about having fun as part of something larger than oneself.

Freshman Kimmy Do, an aspiring civil rights attorney, said she has met some of the greatest people through Mock Trial and is so grateful for the experience.

“Mock Trial is like a family made up of the most talented and brightest people I know,” said Do.



AMHS Mock Trial Team 2022

Daniel Jenkins Academy students, faculty, and staff embrace Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Daniel Jenkins Academy (DJA) students, faculty, and staff participated in a weeklong event emphasizing, educating, and inspiring all participants about the importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) earlier this month. The celebration included discussions and expressions of what

studediversity looks and sounds like, what it means to provide equity (as opposed to equality), and what it means to be inclusive of all individuals. Students, along with faculty and staff members, expressed their ideas through illustrations and words to highlight understandings of DEI and

enhance DEI-themed bulletin boards throughout the building.

“Our staff worked hard to provide meaningful activities, and our students made good connections and showed deep thinking,” said Interim Principal Chad Ferguson. “We are excited to build on this work as we continue to make diversity, equity, and inclusion a foundation of our program at Daniel Jenkins.”

Youth Expo

Additionally, students at DJA participated in the SC Days Trident Youth Expo, a virtual career awareness event, hosted by SC Future Makers Initiative, SC Department of Commerce, and Trident Youth Advisory. The event was held on March 24, 2022, and included presentations by companies such as Boeing, Cullum, SC PORTS/SCPA, Volvo, and Walmart.

The expo afforded students and educators the opportunity to join and engage with employers and in-demand local industries through a series of interactive sessions during the school day. In addition to virtually touring companies, students and educators were able to see and hear about career opportunities in South Carolina and opportunities that exist beyond the state’s border through advancement, growth, and travel opportunities.

“My students were in awe at the great employment opportunities that the Lowcountry and South Carolina, in general, have to offer,” said DJA’s Computer Science Teacher Tarikia White. “We look forward to more virtual events that allow us access to both educational and employment opportunities.”



Daniel Jenkins Academy students participate in the SC Trident Youth Expo

Inspirational speaker Chris Singleton visits Northwoods Middle School

Students at Northwoods Middle School heard from local inspirational speaker Chris Singleton Thursday, March 3, 2022. He is known to the Lowcountry as the rising baseball star at Charleston Southern whose mother was tragically killed in the 2015 Mother Emanuel Church Tragedy in Charleston.

He became a nationally-renowned speaker with a message of resilience, forgiveness and unity following the loss of his mother. Singleton now shares his message with over 60 organizations annually. One of his children's books, *Different – A Story About Loving Your Neighbor*, was a best seller in its category and has been featured by numerous outlets, including The Obama Foundation.

Singleton's overall mission when speaking is to inspire his audiences with his story of resilience and to unite millions of people with his belief that, "Love is Stronger Than Hate."



Motivational speaker Chris Singleton speaks to Northwood students

NORTH CHARLESTON ELEMENTARY TURNS 100!



The staff at North Charleston Elementary hosted the school's 100th birthday party on March 9, 2022. Hundreds of students and their families enjoyed a carnival-like atmosphere in the hallways and the multi-purpose room of the building. Community partners, businesses, and organizations set up tables to provide a wide array of experiences, services, and food.

Additional highlights of the event included a student drum performance by students in the library and a make-shift "museum" that had pictures, yearbooks, and other artifacts from the school's 100 years of serving the community.

East Cooper CAS students earn special opportunity with NASA

Students from East Cooper Center for Advanced Studies are in the process of sending a school project to space. They recently learned their entry in the inaugural NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) TechRise Student Challenge was one of 57 proposals selected. This team of potential scientists and engineers will now have the opportunity to create an experiment that can operate and collect data from the edge of space aboard a Blue Origin suborbital rocket in 2023.

"Our team has done a tremendous job of designing their experiment," said Chris Sjolander, East Cooper CAS Engineering teacher and NASA TechRise Facilitator. "The entire effort has been student-led and managed. Our students are creating the future of safe space travel right here in Mount Pleasant."

The team at the East Cooper CAS will study a surface catheter/blood suction device the students are designing. Each student in this group is receiving \$1,500 to build their experiments and a NASA-funded spot to test them on the Blue Origin suborbital rocket flight in early 2023. The team also will receive a suite of materials for preparing their payloads, access to flight simulator software, and technical support from experts.

Administered by Future Engineers, the NASA TechRise Student Challenge aims to inspire students to seek a deeper understanding of Earth's atmosphere, space exploration, coding, and electronics, as well as an appreciation of the importance of test data. Nearly 600 teams applied, representing 5,000 students in grades 6 through 12 from across the country.

"At NASA, we educate and inspire the next generation of scientists, engineers, and explorers," said NASA Administrator Bill Nelson. "The TechRise Student Challenge is an excellent way for students to get hands-on experience designing, building, and launching experiments on suborbital vehicles. I'm so impressed we received hundreds of entries from across the country, and I want to congratulate the winning teams. I can't wait to see these incredible experiments come to life!"



East Cooper CAS NASATech Team

Classmate's last chemo treatment celebrated at Jennie Moore



Jennie Moore Elementary School students celebrated a second grade classmate who was diagnosed with leukemia when he was four years old. He had his final chemo treatment on Tuesday, March 2, 2022 and a school-wide celebration was held to honor him and his family.



Laing STEM Collaboration

Ms. Power's 6th grade science class at Laing Middle School collaborated with five classes from Jennie Moore Elementary School to create leprechaun traps. The sixth graders worked with STEM coordinator Dr. Mel Goodwin to design their traps using their knowledge of simple machines and simple electric motors. Jennie Moore students used their knowledge of force and motion to create their traps. They then came together yesterday to share their knowledge and designs. It was great to watch four different grade levels share what they had learned.

The teacher grant the PTO provided helped purchase all of the supplies these students needed to design their traps.

R.B. Stall nurse honored by national organization



Kat Bouziane

The National Association of School Nurses (NASN) recently named R.B. Stall High School's Kat Bouziane as an Outstanding Nurse for Students with Disabilities. Bouziane has been a school nurse at R.B. Stall since the start of the 2018-2019 school year and is in her fifth school year overall with Charleston County School District (CCSD).

CCSD Nurse Liaison Liz Brady explained that Bouziane supports school nurses across the district who work with students with developmental disabilities and medical complexities. This support includes working with the CCSD Nursing Services Department to develop best practice policies and procedures that are safe and comprehensive for students with disabilities.

"Kat travels across the district to provide hands-on training to school nurses and support staff," explained Brady. "This training could be for medical procedures such as catheterization or simply to help nurses with best practices for communicating with and moving students. She also provided CCSD school nurses with cultural competency training on disability culture."

While working with CCSD, Bouziane completed the LEND (Leadership Education in Developmental and Related Disabilities) fellowship at MUSC. During her fellowship, she wrote the manual "New School Nursing: A Model of Care to Meet the Needs of Students with Neurodevelopmental Disabilities." Bouziane has presented her manual at both regional and national conferences.

"We are so proud of Kat's work and dedication to all of our students," added CCSD's Director of Nursing Services, Ellen Nitz. "She demonstrates how to provide excellent and individualized care to students with disabilities every day."

Bouziane will be honored at NASN's annual conference in June in Atlanta, GA.

Bouziane graduated from the University of North Florida with a Bachelor's in Public Health in 2014 and earned her degree in Nursing from the State College of Florida in 2016. After graduating from nursing school, Kat volunteered at Gandaki Regional Hospital in Nepal where she worked with adults and children with disabilities.

"Kat is a nurse who knows each student's favorite team, activity, and song," said Brady. "The students love her and look forward to spending time with her."



Kat Bouziane celebrated

Dare to Dream

Students at C.E. Williams Middle School - South campus concluded International Women's Month with a special guest speaker, Ms. Fer Caggiano, who presented her project, Like A Girl: Dare to Dream, to our students. Principal, Maite Porter, is included in the project!

Ms. Fer Caggiano explained that the project, Like A Girl: Dare To Dream, is meant to enlighten others and empower women and girls to reach their full potential. Thinking, feeling, and acting "like a girl" should mean that you are strong and intelligent and can achieve greatness!

At the end of the presentation, the students were able to ask questions about the project and the process of becoming an artist. They were also given the chance to view some of her portraits from the project in person.



Wando's Millie Rice honored as 2022 SC Scholastic Journalist of the Year



Millie Rice with her mother

Wando High School is proud to announce Millie Rice, co-editor in chief of Legend, the school's award-winning yearbook, was recently named the 2022 South Carolina Scholastic Journalist of the Year by the South Carolina Scholastic Press Association (SCSPA).

Rice is the seventh student from Wando to earn this honor. The senior is also the fifth Warrior to receive this award in the past six years, and the fourth yearbook student to earn this recognition during that span. It is the highest honor a high school journalist can receive in the state.

"This is unprecedented dominance by one school for the award in SCSPA's 53-year history of awarding it," said Wando English teacher and yearbook adviser Phillip Caston. "Millie is one of the most award-winning students in Wando yearbook history; she is already in the top-five, with more honors likely to follow."

Rice completed an online portfolio of work ranging from writing, photography, design, editing, and entrepreneurship, as well as several letters of recommendation and a personal essay. Rice's portfolio can be viewed by clicking on this link.

"Being selected as Journalist of the Year for South Carolina is honestly life-changing," Rice said. "It means that all of the hard work I did behind the scenes was worth it to be chosen for this award. Being a part of the Wando High School yearbook staff has impacted my life in so many positive ways that it's hard to name specific ones. This program has given me my closest friends and the confidence to go out and face the world. Being selected by my advisor as one of three leaders of this program has inspired me in so many ways because of the drive and motivation that the staff members have."

Rice will be honored by the SCSPA at their annual conference later this spring.

"Millie employs some of the best work ethic I've ever experienced in my entire teaching career, and she sets incredibly high standards for herself," added Caston. "She is never satisfied that she has done enough, and she is always willing to take on the jobs others try to avoid. This drive and tenacity has been the oil that keeps our yearbook machine running. She couples that effort with her incredible writing and design talents as well as hands-on, lead-by-example mentorship that she provides for the entire staff."

Rice's portfolio will represent South Carolina in the Journalism Education Association's National Journalist of the Year competition. She will travel with members of the Legend staff to Los Angeles next month for the national conference to learn the results.



Millie Rice

Pinckney’s E.C. Setser wins professional development scholarship from PSTA



Charles Pinckney Elementary School’s Alethea “E.C.” Setser has been selected as one of ten winners of the 2022 Dr. Elizabeth Gressette Professional Development Scholarship. The scholarship is sponsored by Palmetto State Teachers Association’s (PSTA) Foundation for Professional Development and is awarded annually to encourage and support PSTA members in pursuing advanced degrees. Applicants must be PSTA members for at least three years and be currently enrolled in a higher education program to apply for the scholarship.

Setser currently works as a Gifted and Talented teacher. She is pursuing a Master’s Degree in Administration from The Citadel.

The scholarship winners were each awarded \$1,600 and were recognized at the PSTA Annual Business Meeting in April.

Palmetto State Teachers Association is the largest professional education association for teachers in South Carolina. Dr. Elizabeth Gressette, a former public school kindergarten teacher, was the founding member of PSTA in 1976. PSTA provides professional benefits to support its members throughout their careers in education. More information can be found at www.palmettoteachers.org.

CCSD CELEBRATES NATIONAL LIBRARY MONTH



Once upon a time, libraries were all about books. Today, libraries serve as a community hub and a space for all people to connect with the resources they need, especially in our schools.

Charleston County School District (CCSD) celebrates libraries every day, especially during National School Library Month, which runs through the month of April. Additionally, the CCSD Board of Trustees proclaimed April as National School Library Month.

During Library Week, various activities are planned for students and staff as a way to “connect” them to their school library.

The theme for National Library Week 2022, “Connect with Your Library,” promotes the idea that libraries are places to get connected to technology by using broadband, computers, and other resources. Libraries also offer opportunities to connect with media, programs, ideas, and classes in addition to books. Most importantly, libraries also connect communities to each other. Overall, the theme is an explicit call to action - an invitation for communities to join, visit, or advocate for their local libraries.

“Libraries are truly the heart of our schools,” said Christy James, CCSD’s Library Media Services Coordinator and District Textbook Coordinator. “Our librarians have the unique role of serving every student and also working with every teacher. They lead by example with research and information literacy skills, but they also read by example with collections of books that allow all students to find what they need, feel safe to explore, and support curriculum needs.”

Libraries

Teacher-librarian Katherine Freligh said her space at Mary Ford Early Learning & Family Center is the heart of the school. Staff can come to get a cup of coffee, chocolate, and a stack of books that are relevant to their current unit and/or ones that they and their students will fall in love with.

“I feel strongly that the library is not just the collection of books and materials, but is also the collaboration, professional development, and teamwork that I, as the teacher-librarian, can provide,” said Freligh. “The more creatively I can approach each problem presented to me, the more our library program can expand and better serve our students and their families.”

At Wando High School, teacher-librarians Tara White and Cindy Philbeck have embraced the idea of their space being a place for students to connect. The library is spacious and features group and individual seating areas, a lounge area, maker space areas, and classroom space for large groups. It caters to the needs of students in a variety of ways.

“In high school, the library serves as more of a resource to students, so we collaborate with teachers to ensure we are providing what students need,” said White. “It’s all about access. A library is not just about books. We have recreational materials, databases, and technology. We show students how to use those resources in an active way to complete their work successfully.”

You won’t walk into a quiet library at Oakland Elementary School, where the only thing you hear is whispers. In Mary Anne Mouthann’s library, it is loud.

“It is the complete opposite of the stereotype,” said Mouthann. “Right now, we’re working on a service project making dog toys from t-shirts donated by our teachers. The students are working together braiding and cutting up the shirts to make the toys, and that involves communication. We’re loud and proud.”

Philbeck added Wando’s library is often a safe space where students can retreat.

“Many students come into the library in the morning before the bell rings and during their lunch period,” said Philbeck. “They’re using that time as they want to, either finishing an assignment or socializing. The space lends itself to small group collaboration, too.”

The library at Camp Road Middle School is the starting point for many different tasks and opportunities.

Librarian B.T. Bouton explained that it is a place where teachers bring classes to collaborate, where ELA teachers bring classes to find great books; a place for author visits; and maker activities. One example of that was a recent Black History Month project.

“Students did research on their favorite Black individuals and created life-size cut-outs of their heroes,” said Bouton. “We hung them in our window space in the library. This was a whole-community project for everyone to see and enjoy. I was the happy host by having this space to display their work, and I am honored to work with colleagues who recognize the value of using it.”

“As an Early Learning & Family Center, we have the unique opportunity to not only serve our little scholars but also their families,” explained Freligh. “I am finding new ways to create occasions for children and their caregivers to bond over early literacy. I have created materials for parents and caregivers to use while reading aloud to their children at home, collaborating on a guidebook of nursery rhymes for families to use while visiting the James Island Festival of Lights, and distributed calendars and choice boards with fun and easy literacy-based activities.”

As a teacher-librarian, Mouthann teaches six classes daily, creates the school newsletter, runs the news show, and the school website.

“I am a one-man show, so there has to be some structure, but there will never be any shushing and demands to whisper,” said Mouthann. “My students like that the library is predictable, but they also know that they will never be stuck doing the same thing. I work hard to give them a safe space with new and exciting things to do so that they will be invigorated and excited to come to the library.”

Wando has a diverse population of students, and the collection in the library represents the school’s community of learners.

“We use population data to drive our collection,” explained Philbeck.

“It is important to us that the students see themselves in the books we have to offer,” added White. “It is also important that they see other perspectives, different from themselves.”

Bouton buys specific books for students and recognizes that their interests may not be as mainstream as others.

“Every child has an opportunity to read a book that speaks to them,” said Bouton. “In middle school, we have very young students and then eighth-graders who are heading to high school and are a little more mature. I have to make sure all of those students find a book that engages them. It’s been nice that a combination of librarians and others are aware that we need books for every reader. The explosion of authors and topics that are so much more diverse than ten years ago is refreshing.”

Being a librarian

“Every single day I have the unique opportunity and challenge to meet the needs of a wide array of people, to figure out how I can best support them and their goals, and build a program that will reflect my students and help open the door to their future,” said Freligh.

“As a teacher-librarian, we are uniquely situated to build relationships with students across the years that they attend Wando, not just the one year they may have in someone’s classroom,” said Philbeck. “We get the privilege of truly getting to know them and are better able to support them as a whole learner.”

White agreed.

“We get to see their interest develop over time,” said White. “As professionals, we interact with all grade levels, in all content areas, and provide meaningful research materials and data for students so that they can be successful in all of their classes. We’re an extension of their classes.”

Mouthann was a high school English teacher for almost ten years before transitioning.

“There was always this assumption that all students could read and wanted to read,” said Mouthann. “In most of my classes, I had several students far below grade level. I didn’t have the training to meet the needs of the diverse learners and realized I could better do that as a librarian. As a librarian, I feel like I can help all students have their needs met and their values respected.”

In this role, Mouthann explained that she can coordinate with teachers to help students who need extra help in a supportive way.

“It is important to recognize that librarians are a source of knowledge, and everyone should seek knowledge, especially in an ever-changing world,” said Mouthann. “A library is a place of innovation, inspiration but most of all a place of comfort. A library is something to be valued and something to be embraced.”

Bouton said that the National Library Week recognition is important because librarians keep so much of the educational train on track.

“We are fortunate in South Carolina that districts are required to have a librarian in our schools,” said Bouton. “Students don’t miss out on instruction that supplements what they are doing in the classroom.”

“Our librarians are real-life superheroes, not only for juggling all they do each day, but mostly for the connections they create through their library spaces and inclusive resources,” added James.

According to Freligh, libraries are one of the few places left in the world where anyone and everyone is welcome to explore their interests for free.

“Libraries are an equalizer because the collections and resources are important, relevant, and available to everyone no matter your age, color, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, employment status, or citizenship,” said Freligh. “While my students are young, they deserve to see the full spectrum of people represented on the pages of their books, they deserve to see themselves reflected back in stories just as much as they deserve to be transported to other worlds, and introduced to other types of people.”

CCSD’s Acceleration Schools receive \$50,000 grant to help boost teacher morale and retention

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*.

Donald R. Kennedy, Sr., *Interim Superintendent of Schools*
Erica Taylor, *Chief of Staff*
Sully Witte, *Communications Officer*



Charleston County School District’s (CCSD) Acceleration Schools initiative has been selected to receive a \$50,000 grant from the Novo Foundation’s Equitable Design for Teacher Morale and Retention program. The grant will allow District officials to devote time and resources toward designing solutions that help address issues of teacher burnout, low morale, and retention.

“We are extremely grateful and excited for the incredible opportunity that this grant presents for better connecting, collaborating, and supporting the hardworking teachers and staff,” said Jacqueline Haynes, Associate Superintendent of Acceleration Schools. “We are hopeful that by taking a teacher-led approach to the challenges faced by our faculty, we can attract, retain, and grow the talented staff our students and family deserve to have in every classroom.”

Novo Morale and Retention grantees will receive support on efforts and planning, along with technical assistance from Education First in equitable design methodologies to help study gaps and inequities, engage diverse voices in problem-solving, and co-design solutions to improve teacher morale in the 2022–23 school year. The grant program is also being supported by the Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, and will give CCSD the opportunity to work alongside a cohort of 12 other school districts from around the country as they embark on similar efforts to collaborate and build new ideas with their teachers.

“Quality teachers are the lifeblood of our district here in Charleston County, and we are committed to ensuring we are listening and acting in ways that ensure high-skilled and high-will professionals are investing in our children each and every day,” said Interim Superintendent Don Kennedy. “This grant opportunity offers us an important step toward addressing the long-term challenges that have been created by the pandemic, and will help us share best practices with teacher leaders around the country.”

Charleston County School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or any other applicable status protected by federal or state law. Questions about non-discrimination policies should be sent to Charleston County School District, 75 Calhoun Street, Charleston, SC 29401 | Phone: (843) 937-6300 | communications@charleston.k12.sc.us