

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 CELEBRATES SCHOOL LIBRARY MONTH HOW LIBRARIANS SUPPORT LITERACY, STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, AND A LOVE OF READING



Shelley Ward, Belle Hall Elementary



Sean Muzzy, Northwoods Middle School



Sean Stephanie, Baptist Hill Middle High School

Charleston County School District (CCSD) celebrates libraries every day, especially during National School Library Month, which runs in April.

Libraries play an important role in our lives and have long been considered a strong influence on children's learning and development. National Library Week 2023 is celebrated with the theme "There's More to the Story" and CCSD adapted this theme to "Connecting All Our Stories." Libraries are full of stories in a variety of formats from picture books to large print, audiobooks to ebooks, and more.

"Our school libraries not only provide foundational literacy skills and access to stories, but they also provide connections between classroom content and deeper learning and exploration opportunities," said Christy James, Library and Media Services Coordinator for the district. "The work that takes place in our library facilities aligns with achieving Vision 2027 where all students reading on grade level by fifth grade."

The month-long celebration also supports all of the District's three "pillars" that uphold the district's mission of educating and supporting every child in achieving college, career, and citizenship readiness, rigorous grade-level instruction, and high-quality teachers and leaders - Pillar 1- rigorous grade-level instruction, Pillar 2 - high-quality teachers and leaders, and Pillar 3 wrap-around services.

Elementary school

Shelley Ward has been the teacher-librarian at Belle Hall Elementary School for the last four years and relies heavily on the American Association of School Librarians' standards when creating enriching experiences for students.

"Increasing engagement is important to me," said Ward. "At the elementary level, you want to make learning, and especially reading, fun. I work hard to meet students where they are when creating new and unique activities."

Her students love room transformations because they're unexpected and fun. In the fall, she decorates the library to look like a campground and students enjoy flashlight reading. Ward selects books about camping, the wilderness, and survival. During "Dinovenber" the room is transformed yet again and features interactive displays, such as an active volcano.

"There is some shock value in the room transformations because it is a surprise to them," said Ward.

Creating a space that students want to come to is just a mere snippet of the role Ward plays in her school community.

Collaboration is a standard that benefits teachers and students. "I meet with teachers on a regular basis to see what students are learning in their classrooms so I can align library reading and activities with classroom curriculum," said Ward.

As a teacher-librarian, Ward also serves as a reading advisor. She often helps students choose books that are a good fit. She learns what series children like and is constantly on the lookout for new series that children will enjoy.

Ward also sparks interested readers with various reading incentive programs like Library VIPs (students who completed summer reading). They receive a special sticker that they can put on their shelf marker. This indicates that they are allowed to check out extra books.

"It is a point of pride," said Ward. "There are other incentive programs and in all of them I notice that the students are very proud to be recognized."

The opportunity to spend time with a therapy dog is new this year. When students read a million words, they are rewarded by spending time with Bridget, Harold, and Finn, the therapy dogs that visit twice a month. Ward plans to expand this program school-wide to all students who show growth in reading.

The library at most schools is considered the hub and offers various ways for Ward and her colleagues to engage scholars. At Belle Hall, that list is endless and forever changing to meet the needs of students. What remains a constant is the "windows and mirrors" philosophy.

"I try to offer a diverse collection of reading materials so students can see themselves reflected in what they're reading and can see into someone else's experience," said Ward. "It has transformed

how my students relate to each other."

Middle school

Sean Muzzy, the teacher-librarian at Northwoods Middle School, prides himself on creating a library environment where there is something for everyone.

"We have a welcoming environment where we build relationships with our students so that we can tailor our books, activities, and learning materials to their interests," said Muzzy. "We carry a diverse collection of books that feature an array of characters so my students can see themselves in what they read and learn about others."

Muzzy works with teachers so that the library serves as an extension of the classroom.

"I purposefully attend teacher planning meetings and schedule face-to-face meetings with our educators so that we can offer meaningful instruction and materials that pertain to what students are learning in the classroom," added Muzzy.

As one might expect, his library has more than just books. Students have access to 3D printers, different manipulatives, and maker space activities. Muzzy said that breakout boxes are popular and promote collaboration and critical thinking.

At the middle school library, hours are flexible, allowing for individuals or entire classes to come in on an as-needed basis.

"Students and staff are served in my library every day, and at any time," said Muzzy. "No two school days are the same and I think the students and staff appreciate being able to come in as needed or scheduled."

Muzzy is also proud of the diverse collection he maintains.

"I make a concerted effort to grow our Spanish and Portuguese sections so that our Multilingual Learners can read books in their native language, as well as find books in English to enjoy," said Muzzy. "We have a very diverse student population so I need to fully understand where our students are from and what they are interested in."

Muzzy is in his fourth year at Northwoods. After being a stay-at-home dad for many years he went back to school to earn a degree in education. During that time he volunteered at his mother-in-law's school where she served as principal for many years. He was a substitute teacher there and shadowed existing teachers.

"I just loved the energy of the school and fell in love with the library," said Muzzy. "It was a perfect fit for me. I am now working in my third school as a teacher-librarian and I feel like it fuels my creative side because the position offers a little bit of everything when it comes to being an educator."

The library at Northwoods is the heart of the school and it just makes sense that it is a revolving door of learning and activity.

"I love that part," said Muzzy. "My kids are coming in here for more than just books, and that makes me proud."

High school

Stephanie Edwards is a teacher-librarian at Baptist Hill Middle High School. She has to think outside the box when it comes to engaging students since she serves a wide range of ages. She relies heavily on decorative displays that promote her diverse collection and draw students in the door.

"The most important thing to me is to have books that feature characters that look like our students," said Edwards. "These stories need to have experiences in them that our students can relate to and subject matters they want to read about and talk about."

Edwards hosts a book club for students and that has proven to be quite popular. By using the donation platform Donors Choose, Edwards is able to purchase new books and enough for each book club member.

"The book club encourages group reading and discussion," said Edwards. "They will often take turns reading aloud to each other."

In a twist, Edwards has students that prefer a one-on-one book

club. Edwards and the student will read the same book and then discuss it together as they progress through the chapters.

Edwards has been with CCSD for 23 years and knows many of the families she serves. She is now teaching the children of some of her former students.

"That closeness and those tight bonds allow me to get to know my students as individuals," said Edwards. "I am better able to suggest books that they might like to read because I know their interests. This also helps when it comes time to order new books."

At Baptist Hill, the library is considered the heart of the school where both teachers and students feel they can come and ask questions, seek help, and find resources.

"There is something going on all the time in this library and sometimes it is a quiet place for students to find some reprieve," said Edwards. "It serves many purposes. Most importantly, it has come to be known as a collaborative space."

Edwards loves her students like her own and wants nothing but success for them.

"To be successful, they must be proficient in reading," said Edwards. "In my library we work together when extra help is needed. I also find ways to encourage students to write. I host virtual and in-person author visits so students can meet these professionals and be inspired."

Edwards fell in love with the library many years ago as a volunteer. She was dreaming of becoming a psychologist but the draw of the written word was stronger.

"I love, love, love my job," said Edwards. "It is a servant's job and hopefully I am making a difference in the lives of my students."

"These three teacher-librarians highlight what is so wonderful about all our school libraries in CCSD," said James. "Our libraries are providing vital support to our students and teachers. Connecting all our stories really is what our teacher librarians do all year long."



Don Kennedy
SUPERINTENDENT, CHARLESTON
COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

IMPORTANT DATES

Workshop 3

May 22

1st Reading of
the Budget

Workshop 4

June 26

2nd Reading of
the Budget

The Charleston County School District Board of Trustees is midway through the annual budget approval process and is poised to consider scenarios that address teacher salaries, as well as school-level expenditures.

Our finance team and I have run over a dozen scenarios, and after the required state increases to retirement, health and dental, paid parental leave, contractual obligations, teacher steps, and \$2,500 teacher salary (\$46,972,407), there is no scenario in which we can fund our three budget priorities with teacher salaries starting at \$50,000—and not experience a budget shortfall without raising at least 7.1 mills.

We have analyzed various strategies to balance the budget, including a mid-year spending freeze (\$2.7M), elimination of department positions (\$4.1M), \$10 million in budget reductions, and use of fund balance (\$5M). Anything short of raising millage to this point will either not allow us to fully execute our budget priorities and/or result in changes to the budget structure. Given the challenging budget process our system is likely facing hard decisions ahead.

The District's general operating budget receives a significant portion of its funds based on projected state revenues which change from year to year. I know you've heard me talk about Act 388 and how that law impacts local revenue. For every dollar Charleston sends up to the statehouse, it only receives 33 cents back since the State's funding formula redistributes funds to each district based on its "taxpayers ability" as indicated by the property values within their area.

Since Charleston is considered the richest county in the state by property value, it effectively donates 67 cents of each dollar to other counties with lower tax-paying abilities. For everything the State's projected revenues do not cover, state law gives school boards the authority to raise taxes locally by raising the millage on non-owner occupied property (second homes, business, boats, cars, etc.) to make up the difference (1 mill = \$3,000,000). The total allowable millage a school board can raise each year by law varies; this year, the millage cap for the CCSD board is 14.5 mills or roughly \$43,500,000.

No matter what scenario the Board of Trustees chooses, the three following budget priorities will be met.

- Increase first-year teacher salaries to somewhere between \$48,000 and \$58,000 The estimated cost of doing so would be anywhere between \$19,287,101 and \$98,200,000.
- Funding of Principal requests from SDR (student data review) meetings totaling \$5,504,191 to include:
 - Increased teacher planning/PD time. (\$1,869,900)
 - A math coach at twenty-one (21) elementary schools. (\$1,926,687)
 - A 210-day Assistant Principal at eleven (11) schools. (\$1,393,887)
 - Sustaining Title I position after loss of funding. (\$313,717)
- Increase the hourly rate and number of contracted days for Data Clerks. (\$1,310,048)

I am committed to keeping the community informed and will continue to share updates as the budget moves through the approval process. If you would like to engage further in the budget process, I encourage you to participate in first and second readings of the budget.

In gratitude,

Donald R. Kennedy, Sr.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

2023 Teacher of the Year finalists	2
CCSD star principals	3
Around CCSD.....	4
Celebrations – Earth Day	5
Unsung Heroes.....	6

Around CCSD	7
Expanded Learning increasing literacy activities	8
ESOL Family Connection Walk.....	8
Girls Night Out at Camp Road Middle	8

CCSD ANNOUNCES TOP FIVE FINALISTS FOR 2023 Teacher of the Year

Charleston County School District (CCSD) officials surprised five teachers today by announcing their selection as the Top Five Finalists for 2023 Teacher of the Year.

The finalists are Katie Bilsback (Mary Ford Early Learning and Family Center), Alexis Marianiello (Burke High School), Erin McGee (Wando High School), Spencer Quinlan (Springfield Elementary School), and Chloe Spitzer (Camp Road Middle School).



CCSD Superintendent Don Kennedy presented the finalists with balloons, flowers, and a plaque. 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 ccsschools.com.

One of the finalists will take over the reins from the district’s current Teacher of the Year, Nathalie Bennett, of Northwoods Middle School.

MEET THE TOP FIVE FINALISTS



Katie Bilsback

Bilsback is in her third year of teaching with CCSD and teaches in the HeadStart program at Mary Ford Early Learning and Family Center. She attended College of Charleston, where she earned a B.S. in Early Childhood Education.

Bilsback is a member of the Multi-Tiered Support System team at Mary Ford and is the Grade Level Chair. In 2020-2021 she was named the Mary Ford Early Learning and Family Center Rookie Teacher of the Year.

Additionally, Bilsback is a member of the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Phi Eta Sigma National Honors Society.

Alexis Marianiello

Marianiello is a social studies teacher at Burke High School who has been with CCSD for just over a year. In total, Marianiello has been an educator for five years, having taught previously in Colleton County.

Marianiello graduated from Clemson University, earned a master’s degree from Binghamton University and is currently enrolled in The Citadel. She serves on the AVID Site Team at Burke.



Erin McGee

McGee is a ninth grade social studies and geography teacher at Wando High School. She is in her ninth year of teaching, seven of which have been with CCSD.

McGee graduated from the University of South Carolina with a Bachelor of Arts in History and a master’s degree in Teaching, and from The Citadel with a Master of Education in Educational Leadership in School Administration (Secondary).

McGee is a member of the National Council for Geographic Education, Palmetto State Teachers Association, South Carolina Council for Social Studies, and South Carolina Geographic Alliance. She is currently the geography curriculum team leader and has previously served as an induction teacher co-leader and geography curriculum writer.

Additionally, McGee has been a Teacher of the Year (and month) nominee numerous times, as well as a Social Studies Department Member of the Semester in 2020.

Spencer Quinlan

Quinlan is a second grade teacher at Springfield Elementary School. She has been a teacher for 13 years and ten of those have been with CCSD. She received her Early Childhood Education degree from the University of South Carolina.

Quinlan is a past member of the Palmetto State Teachers Association and the 2014 Rookie Teacher of the Year at Springfield. She is currently the grade level chair for second grade, and a PBIS team member for second grade. This year Quinlan will again host College of Charleston interns for the practicum experience just as she did in 2017.



Chloe Spitzer

Spitzer is the band instructor for Camp Road Middle School and has been in this role for three years. She has seven years of experience, having previously served in Florence, Darlington, and Georgetown counties before coming to Camp Road in 2020.

Spitzer attended Converse College where she earned a bachelor’s degree in K-12 Music Education (instrumental music focus) and Certification in K-12 Special Education-Teachable Mental Disabilities. She also attended the University of Southern Mississippi where she earned a master’s degree in Music Education. Her professional memberships and organizations include the National Association of Music Education, South Carolina Music Educators Association, South Carolina Band Directors Association, South Carolina Educators Association, Delta Omicron, Omicron Delta Kappa, Mortar Board, Alpha Psi Omega, Pi Lambda Theta, and Alpha Lambda Delta.

Spitzer was named Employee of the Month at Camp Road in 2020, a Grammy Music Educator Quarter-Finalist in 2019, and Brockington Elementary Magnet School Teacher of the Year Nominee in 2015.

The recognition of these Top Five Educators aligns with the district’s Pillar Two (high-quality teachers and leaders), which is one of three pillars that uphold the district’s mission of educating and supporting every child in achieving college, career, and citizenship readiness.

CCSD HONORS STAR PRINCIPALS

Charleston County School District (CCSD) recognized six Star Principals Friday, April 7, 2023. They were selected based on their leadership and work as a principal to improve student outcomes and implement strategic change. These Star Principals were honored among their colleagues at this year’s gala: An Evening with the Stars presents Hollywood! Saturday, May 6, 2023.

STAR PRINCIPALS



Melissa Brubaker
Elementary School Learning Community

Brubaker is the principal at North Charleston Elementary School where she has served since 2020. Brubaker came to CCSD from Dougherty County Schools (DCS) in Albany, GA, where she served as the principal of Alice Coachman Elementary for four years. Brubaker began her career as a guidance counselor at East Coweta High in Sharpsburg, GA in 2005, eventually advancing to director of guidance. In 2013, Brubaker moved into administration, taking on the role of assistant principal at East Coweta for a year before transitioning to DCS to serve in the same capacity at Southside Middle School for the next two years.

Brubaker’s put her prior experience to use in achieving growth and gains among her scholars at North Charleston Elementary School with a focus on building confidence and happiness in students. With schoolwide processes in place, the goal is to continue building on the growth and begin seeing student achievement rise at a more significant pace.



Janice Malone
Acceleration School Learning Community

Malone is the Principal of Sanders-Clyde Elementary School and has served in that role since 2018. She has over 35 years of experience as an educator and administrator. She has a storied career with CCSD, having served as Principal of Matilda F. Dunston Primary School, which was recognized as a National Distinguished Title I School under her leadership. Malone also served at Mary Ford Elementary and Ashley River Creative Arts Elementary.

Faculty, staff, and scholars at Sanders-Clyde are held to high expectations of excellence every day. There must be high expectations for structure, academics, discipline, consistency and continuity, based on data-informed decisions to guide the processes. The focus for teachers is to ensure that they understand the science of teaching, particularly in high-poverty, urban, minority schools. She believes that when processes are established, goals set, and scholars meet, or exceed those goals, everyone should celebrate their success.



Ryan Cumback
High School Learning Community

Cumback was appointed principal of West Ashley High School (WAHS) in 2019. Cumback has served in CCSD schools for the past 17 years. Prior to becoming West Ashley’s principal, he served as the principal of Moultrie Middle for three years.

Cumback has served as the associate principal of curriculum and instruction at WAHS. While at West Ashley, Cumback was also the assistant principal over ninth and tenth grade students, the Science Department, Math Department, and the Fine Arts Department. Before becoming an assistant principal, Cumback served as an assistant administrator, truancy officer, credit recovery program coordinator, world history teacher, and CATS Advisory Board chair at WAHS.

Cumback’s vision has always been to create a school that is a true community asset. His leadership team makes decisions based on this question: Will this work benefit the students? If one cannot answer these questions with confidence, then the team quickly adjusts to find a better solution. This process has proven to be successful. WAHS has seen an increase in scores on the End of Course assessments across all content areas, produced the highest percentage of students graduating with industry certification, drastically reduced the number of students being retained each year, and significantly improved school safety and discipline.



Maite Porter
Middle School Learning Community

Porter is the Principal of C.E. Williams Middle School North Campus. She has held several roles in education including special education teacher, assistant principal, principal intern, elementary principal, and now a middle school principal. Porter came to the district in 2019 as the principal of the former West Ashley Middle School. Previously she served Volusia County Schools where she was the principal of Louise S. McInnis Elementary since 2016. Prior to that, Porter served as a principal intern at Silver Sands Middle School for three years, assistant principal at Heritage Middle for five years, and dean of students at Pine Ridge High for two years.

At C.E. Williams North, Porter has built teams of students who have a sense of belonging, created an environment where teachers feel empowered, and created a warm and fuzzy approach to meeting students’ needs. Community and business partners play a role as well, by filling in where needed, completing the “ecosystem” that provides for and supports students and families in a wrap-around way.



Jermaine Joyner
Star Rookie Principal

Joyner is in his first year as principal at St. John’s High School. He previously served as an assistant principal and director of Wando High School’s Freshman Academy for six years. A CCSD graduate from North Charleston High School, Joyner immediately returned to serve in his home school district as a student concern specialist at Morningside Middle School in 2005 after completing his student teaching at R.B. Stall High the previous spring. Shortly after, Joyner became a middle school social studies teacher at Morningside before taking the same position at the former Brentwood Middle School in 2007. He served as a lead technology teacher and teacher coach at West Ashley Middle School for two years before joining the administration at Thomas C. Cario Middle School as an assistant principal in 2010. In 2012, he took the assistant principal position at what was then Sanders-Clyde Elementary Middle School for nearly three years. Joyner was then appointed as interim principal at Sanders-Clyde for one year.

Joyner is a “Systems Leader” and his work is focused on creating and developing systems that utilize data and allow for continuous improvement. Formal processes and approvals have created a balanced school budget and helped improve the school climate as funds were now available for activities that directly impacted student culture. Joyner also created a system that set high expectations for teacher attendance which changed the culture to one where teachers understood how their attendance played a direct role in students’ academic performance. The result of the impact of teacher attendance on student performance as a teacher with one of the highest attendance rates (97%) has increased the number of students earning C or higher on the course EOC exam to 68.8% as compared to 41.0% at this time last year.



Megan Williams
Elementary School Learning Community

Williams was appointed principal of Springfield Elementary School in 2018. She served in an interim capacity during the 2017-18 school year. Williams began her career in the district at Charles Pinckney Elementary School as a fifth grade teacher for eight years. In 2008, she moved to Stono Park Elementary and taught fifth grade for one year and served as lead teacher for three. Williams next transitioned to Springfield Elementary, where she was the assistant principal for five years before becoming interim principal last school year.

At Springfield, Williams works alongside teachers to establish whatever is needed to succeed. She is the staff’s biggest cheerleader and works continuously to instill a collective efficacy in the building - the belief that all students can do the work and be successful.

AROUND CCSD

CCSD Work-based Learning Partnerships Coordinator earns national recognition



The Work-based Learning Division of the Association of Career and Technical Education (ACTE) announced that Chadwick L. Vail was named the “2023 Brightpath Work-based Learning Professional of the Year Award.” The designation will be formally announced at ACTE’s National Work-based Learning Conference April 26–28 in Atlanta, Georgia. Vail serves as the Work-based Learning Partnerships Coordinator for Charleston County School District (CCSD).

“I am truly honored, and humbled by this recognition, and I share it with the Career and Technology Education support team, the school counselors, teachers, and all CCSD educators working to empower our students to maximize the amazing opportunities that await them in the Charleston region, and beyond,” said Vail.

The award recognizes the work-based learning (WBL) professional that has demonstrated overall contributions to student success through community engagement, leadership roles, student organizations, WBL classroom innovations, and WBL advocacy.

Vail has led the WBL program in CCSD for over 10 years. He recently served a three-year term on the South Carolina Career Development Professionals Board of Directors (SCCDP), including board president in 2021. SCCDP is a division of South Carolina’s statewide ACTE chapter.

Vail’s passion for education, specifically college and career readiness, comes from his time operating small businesses. Vail, along with his family, owned, operated, and successfully sold several businesses in the Charleston region, including three pretzel bakeries, a neighborhood deli, a coffee and ice cream store, and an early childhood development center.

“What sets Chad Vail apart from other professional educators is his extraordinary and unrelenting commitment to authentic career exploration opportunities for each and every scholar,” said Richard Gordon, executive director of CTE for CCSD.

Vail was an enthusiastic contributor on the initial planning team for the Charleston Regional Youth Apprenticeship program, which has become a national model. He remains active on the advisory committee for the program that now places more than 200 youth apprentices annually.

Vail has also been a leader on a team of area stakeholders in the planning and execution of a regional Career Awareness fair that over 2000 students attend annually. The event now includes a Hiring Fair targeting seniors not yet confirmed with a postsecondary destination.

Vail is actively involved in numerous community organizations and business/education collaboratives, including Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce, Tri-County Cradle to Career, Charleston County Economic Development, South Carolina Maritime Association, and South Carolina Manufacturers Alliance. Vail has been a Rotarian for 21 years, serving as the 2014–15 President of the Rotary Club of Daniel Island and as an Assistant District Governor in Rotary District 7770 from 2018–2020. Vail has served on the boards of many other organizations in the Charleston region including Down Syndrome Association of the Lowcountry, Charleston Mayor’s Office for Children, Youth & Families, and Be A Mentor, and has volunteered as a youth soccer coach. Vail was president of Junior Achievement of Coastal SC for three years.

Vail served on the state delegation that visited Capitol Hill in support of WBL and CTE in 2013 and 2019. He also volunteered in November of 2020 with the initial ACTE committee Kelli Diemer formed in support of a new Work-based Learning sub-division and national conference focused on Work-Based Learning. This unique aspect of Vail demands multiple lines of effort as he accomplishes what seems to be his life’s purpose.

Gordon said that on a daily basis, Vail is recruiting business partners, coordinating extended learning opportunities for students, and collaborating with district leadership and school counselors to maximize student potential. Vail has also spearheaded Individualized Graduation Plan and College and Career Readiness initiatives across multiple grade levels district-wide, in an attempt to create “Future Ready” students with competitive advantages. He has also led multiple teams and committees that coordinate internship and apprenticeship programs with dozens of business and post-secondary partners - always recruiting, supporting, and celebrating students along the way.

“This is a well-deserved recognition for a special person who devotes his life to service and sacrifice for his community,” added Gordon. “The award declaration speaks for itself. CCSD is so fortunate to have him as our work-based learning partnership champion. Due to his efforts, entire family trees will be impacted for generations to come.”



Chadwick L. Vail

Charleston County School District’s 2023 FREE SUMMER MEALS PROGRAM



Charleston County School District (CCSD), led by the Nutrition Services Department, is once again planning to connect children throughout the county with hundreds of thousands of free meals this summer. CCSD’s Seamless Summer Feeding Program (SSFP) fills the nutrition gap for eight weeks when school is out.

The program starts Monday, June 12, 2023, and will run through Friday, August 4, 2023 (closed weekends and Tuesday, July 4, 2023). CCSD Nutrition Services will provide free breakfast and lunch to approved sites in Charleston County through the SSFP.

Last summer, CCSD served more than 214,000 free breakfast and lunch meals at a total of 135 sites.

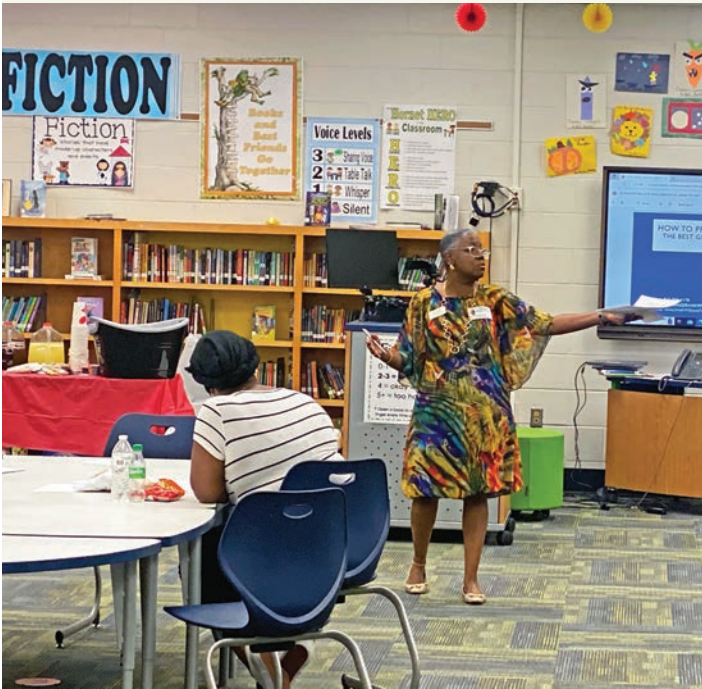
Breakfast and hot lunches are prepared at one of 10 meal preparation sites (CCSD school

kitchens/cafeterias). Representatives from approved summer sites, including schools, camps, community and recreation centers, and churches, can pick up their free meals daily from one of these locations.

Any child or teen 18 years old or younger is eligible for a free breakfast and/or lunch. There is no approval process for individual children because the site itself already qualifies to receive the free summer meals. All necessary serving and eating utensils, plates, napkins, and condiments are provided.

Meals are available for pick-up at approved sites throughout Charleston County, including McClellanville, North Charleston, James Island, Johns Island, Hollywood, downtown Charleston, and West Ashley.

Financial literacy event at St. James Santee Elementary-Middle



In conjunction with the Office of Family and Community Engagement, St. James Santee Elementary- Middle School held a financial literacy event, “Money Talks: Do Your Dollars Make Cents?”

Parents and community members were invited to attend the event, which was held at the school. Participants learned from field experts about financial basics, life insurance, and heirs’ property.

Dorothea Bernique, Executive Director of Increasing Hope Financial Training Center, Courtney Davies, Insurance Broker for The Davies Agency, and Attorney George E Graham delivered 30-minute presentations in their field, followed by a short question and answer session. Refreshments were provided, and childcare was offered for participants.

After identifying the needs specific to their community, Principal McMillian and her team requested the presentation and topics. FACE and the St. James Santee staff hope the event provided parents with a needed resource that will aid families and lead to overall betterment yielding academic success.

CELEBRATIONS

EARTH DAY

Grants help CCSD celebrate Earth Day year-round

All year long, not just on Earth Day, Charleston County School District (CCSD) students learn about respecting and preserving our natural environment. Students learn in school gardens, in natural spaces on school campuses, and through field experiences across the Lowcountry.

Each school year, CCSD schools receive over \$100,000 in grants for environmental education projects. This year, three CCSD schools received a Dominion Environmental Education & Stewardship Grant. Teachers are awarded grants from corporations such as Bosch and Dominion Energy, local groups such as Seabrook Island Natural History Group, and many other philanthropic organizations.

Over 30 CCSD schools have outdoor classrooms. Students learn about history, culture, and science by growing local crops and native plants. CCSD students participate in outdoor field experiences in partnership with local nonprofits such as the South Carolina Aquarium, Charleston County Parks & Recreation Commission, and Keep Charleston Beautiful.

Lucy Beckham High School’s environmental science teacher Jessica Herbert received a \$3,484 grant to build a pollinator garden and composting program.

“It is our goal to beautify the school campus while educating students on the importance of biodiversity, native plants, and minimizing waste in our local landfills,” said Herbert.

Malcolm C. Hursey Montessori School’s garden teacher, Shella Moritz, and teacher librarian, Kaitlin Torres, received a \$2,365 grant to combine garden education with literacy. Students enjoy story time in the media center while sipping smoothies incorporating vegetables from the school garden.

“We integrate reading while enjoying the food that we grow, so our students can appreciate the benefits of both in their lives,” explained Moritz.

Charleston Charter School for Math and Science high school science teacher



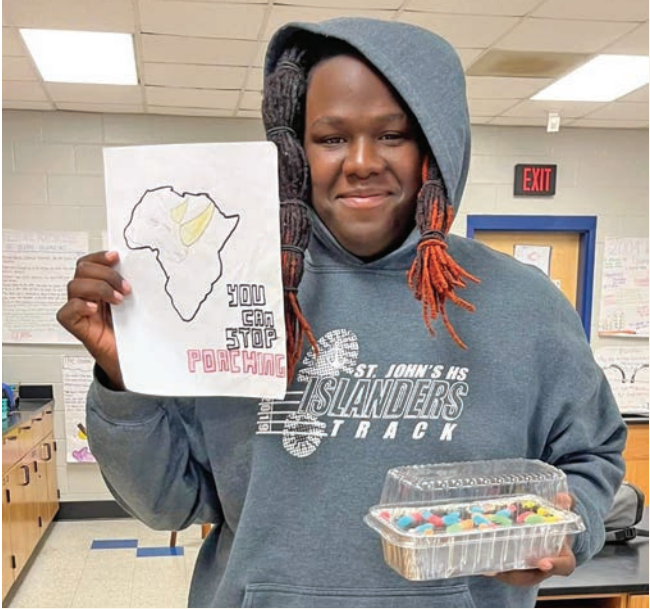
Christina Rutter received a \$4,500 grant for the school's science club to clean local beaches. After the beach sweeps, the students analyzed the type of trash at each beach and recommended a remediation plan specific to that location to prevent future litter. Students presented their research findings at the Lowcountry Regional Science & Engineering Fair at the end of March.

“Our goal is to not only enrich the beaches of South Carolina, but also increase awareness so we can keep our beaches clean,” said Rutter.

All schools are eligible to apply for grant up to \$5,000 through the Dominion Environmental Education & Stewardship grant program. The grant application opens in late summer each year.

Earth Day Poster contest winners at St. John’s High School

St. John’s High School students competed in a school Earth Day Poster Contest. Tyleke Singleton won first place, Jacky Campos won second place, and Jaileen Ramos won third place.



Tyleke Singleton
FIRST PLACE



Jacky Campos
SECOND PLACE



Jaileen Ramos
THIRD PLACE



Mamie P. Whitesides Elementary’s grounds clean up day

Students and families participated in a grounds clean up at Mamie P. Whitesides Elementary School in celebration of Earth Day.

UNSUNG HEROES

Lisa Eidson

CD Teacher's Assistant

Springfield Elementary

Mrs. Eidson's compassion, empathy, and kindness towards her students in her CD blend class positivity encourages and teaches her students how to engage in their social, emotional, and academics in school. She is a hands-on teacher assistant who loves each and every one of her children and in return, they adore her and strive to do well in school. She has created an environment where her children love school and are engaged in activities thus wanting to be a part of our school family. Mrs. Eidson's impact on both the children and staff has made our world a better place. Her passion for her work comes from her heart and love for learning. She has an excellent relationship with her students and peers and she inspires all those whom she comes in contact with. This week's, Unsung Educator aligns with CCSD's Pillar Two (high-quality teachers and leaders) of the three Pillars that uphold the district's mission of educating and supporting every child in achieving college, career, and citizenship readiness.

UNSUNG EDUCATOR OF THE WEEK



*Lisa Eidson, CD Teacher's Assistant
Springfield Elementary School*

UNSUNG EDUCATOR OF THE WEEK



*Alleah Glover, L1-2 Teacher
Hunley Park Elementary*

Alleah Glover

L1-2 Teacher

Hunley Park Elementary

Ms. Glover is an incredible teacher. She engages all of her students in the curriculum while taking the time to meet them on their level and address their individual goals. Beyond her work with her classroom day-to-day she has given her students opportunities beyond the classroom. She planned a field trip to a local restaurant and collaborated with service providers so everyone can help to help prepare her students for this opportunity. Ms. Glover also organized an adopt-a-classroom opportunity for local businesses and beyond to contribute to the Low Incidence classrooms at Hunley Park.

Misti Jurecki

Special Ed Resource Teacher

James Island Elementary

Misti is such an amazing example of a loving and passionate special education teacher! She goes above and beyond to set high expectations for her students that allow them to reach their potential. Her students grow, ALOT! Their progress alone demonstrates her commitment and the hard work she puts in each and every day. She supports a variety of students with disabilities in reading, math, and behavior. As a colleague, she is always willing to reach out a hand to help. She is an amazing resource for ideas and suggestions and creates an environment of collaboration. I'm so grateful I get to work with her every day

UNSUNG EDUCATOR OF THE WEEK



*Misti Jurecki
Special Ed Resource Teacher
James Island Elementary*

AROUND CCSD

Frierson unveils outdoor learning pavilion



Staff from Edith L. Frierson Elementary School hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the school's opening of a new outdoor learning pavilion on Wednesday, April 26, 2023. The project was a collaboration between the school, community members, Charleston County School District, Clemson University's Architecture+CommunityBUILD certificate program (Clemson Design Center in Charleston, SC), Kiawah Cares, and the Kiawah Island Club.

The structure will serve as an outdoor classroom and gardening center. The project combines two covered pavilion areas that join at the corners to accommodate separated activities but are arranged toward a shared focal point, giving the space versatility for multiple uses.

Part outdoor classroom and part gardening center, the project combines two covered pavilion areas that join at the corners. The covered pavilions are arranged to be able to accommodate separate activities, but they are also arranged toward a shared focal point, giving the space versatility for multiple uses.

The structure is a study in the effective use of angles. Both of the pavilions are trapezoidal, slanted 15 degrees. The "floating" roofs of each pavilion are also arranged at irregular angles to maximize shade and manage water runoff. Accomplishing each angle requires hours of careful craftsmanship completed by Clemson architecture students—and a lot of materials.

MILITARY MAGNET ACADEMY HOSTS A COLLEGE/CAREER/MILITARY FAIR



Military Magnet Academy hosted a College/Career/Military fair Wednesday, April 19, 2023 with over 60 vendors in attendance. The entire school participated in this event and were able to speak with professionals and recruiters about potential careers and higher education.

E.B. Ellington's Annual Walk for Autism



E.B. Ellington Elementary School hosted their annual Walk for Autism Friday, April 21, 2023 in honor of Autism Awareness Month (April). Staff members at E.B. Ellington and all students in grades K-5 walked around the perimeter of the large field on campus. Teachers and faculty spent the last few weeks discussing the importance of awareness with students and ways that they can support classmates, family, and friends with autism.

State Quizbowl Champions

Wando High School students dominated in Columbia this month and went 9-0 to win the state Quizbowl championship. They beat Academic Magnet High School and Wade Hampton High School in the finals.



Left to right:
Joey Garner, Drew Pitsis, Sam Henshaw, and Brady Setser

This recognition aligns with Pillar One (rigorous instruction), one of the three Pillars that uphold the district's mission of educating and supporting every child in achieving college, career, and citizenship readiness.

CCSD EXPANDED LEARNING INCREASING LITERACY ACTIVITIES IN AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

Charleston County School District's (CCSD) Office of Expanded Learning has created and implemented a literacy guide that embeds literacy focused efforts in all afterschool activities.

Jason Sakran, Director of Expanded Learning (Kaleidoscope), said that afterschool programs within CCSD continue to improve and offer more robust learning opportunities for students.

"With the implementation of Vision 2027 – where all students are reading on grade level by fifth grade, it was a natural, next step to focus our efforts on improving literacy skills in our students," said Sakran. "We are currently offering several literacy based activities in all our afterschool programs. Literacy is the foundation for all learning and assisting our teachers and principals build literacy skills in our students makes sense on so many levels."

The effort supports the three "pillars" that uphold the district's mission of educating and supporting every child in achieving college, career, and citizenship readiness (rigorous grade-level instruction, high-quality teachers and leaders, and wrap-around services).

The literacy guide contains program goals, measures efficacy, and provides instructors with an abundance of actual content and activities.

"The Office of Expanded Learning and its afterschool programs (Kaleidoscope and 21st Century) is in a unique and purposeful position to build upon our success and our foundation and utilize its programs as a wraparound service with high-quality leaders serving students from birth through fifth grade," added Sakran.

The guide was developed to share the framework and resources for Kaleidoscope's staff and stakeholders that provide eight practical approaches to implementing literacy enrichment. District leaders selected these practices with recommended delivery methods and instruction in partnership with Kaleidoscope Site Coordinators and Program Officers.

Examples of activities include reading corners, read-alouds, vocabulary/word walls, and journal writing. An expansion of those approaches might include book clubs, skits, plays and a reader's theater, poetry or music production clubs, and a media production club. The activities are all age appropriate with an emphasis on fun.

CCSD afterschool programs have transitioned from being childcare and playtime centered to an extension of the school day.

"The evidence is clear," said Sakran. "We have a tremendous opportunity to better leverage the after-school hours and deliver a high-quality learning experience for our students. It can be a game changer."

Lisa Fryar, the 21st Century Director at E.B. Ellington Elementary School agreed. The program there truly is an extension of the classroom. Students arrive at 6:30 a.m. for the morning component which allows for additional time to complete homework and catch up on IReady with instructional support on-hand.

21st Century is a very dynamic instructional program, led by certified teachers. The program provides wrap-around services to students from academics to basic needs.

The afternoon program looks similar. Certified teachers are assigned to specific age groups and work with students on homework, reading and reading instruction, and IReady, but there I also an instructional component in which students are learning additional pieces of the curriculum being taught in their classroom.

"The constant communication and collaboration with teachers make this possible," said Fryar. "Communication is the key, even with our administration. We attend their planning meetings, and schedule face-to-face time with our educators so we can adjust 21st Century instructional time."

Lakeris Wine is the 21st Century lead teacher for second and third grade. She explained that the program requires students to sit for a certain amount of instructional time. That is offset by enrichment time, which consists of African Drumming demonstrations, karate lessons, Sweetgrass Basket sewing lessons, soccer, chess, dance, and more.

Wine said academic supports include reading and math intervention. She has created a literacy room where students can enjoy independent ready or work with an interventionist. Wrap-around supports include snacks, supper, and transportation.

To determine which students need extra help, Fryar pulls scores and works with teachers so that additional focus can be paid to those students.

"It's all very intentional so that we can assure students are reading on grade level," said Wine. "We also track their growth so we can ensure our efforts are beneficial."

Laura Strickland, the Site Coordinator at Drayton Hall Elementary said an example of their literacy activities include K-Scope News where students write scripts and record the news show. Others include read-alouds between students and staff members.

"The kids really enjoy the chapter books," said Strickland. "Also entertaining is a Reader's Theater that we've created where the students pick out a book (the reading center boasts over 300 titles) and we create a set where they perform a mini play based on the book."

Strickland said it is all about extending the school day where students are still learning but they are having fun.

"We're targeting first graders so that by the time they are in fifth grade they are reading on grade level as they should be," said Strickland. "We work closely with the teachers so that we know which students may need the extra help. We've found that reading back and forth with those students has helped and teachers are seeing improvement."

Getting kids to buy into it was the biggest obstacle, but according to Strickland, they realized that it's not just about books and reading, the literacy games, and journaling are fun, too.

Trina Noonan has been the site coordinator at Charles Pinckney Elementary School for six years and served there for a total of 14 years. She said the program has always included activities focused on STEM learning, and adding the literacy component to those activities has increased learning opportunities for students.

"A favorite activity among students is learning and creating recipes," said Noonan. "As a result, Trail Mix Tuesdays was implemented and a different student's recipe is the featured snack of the day each week."

Like other sites, her program features a book club. Noonan paired it with a treat and named it Lemonade and Literacy. It was an activity no one wanted to turn down because of the lemonade component.

"So far, the most popular activity has been taking care of our baby chicks, Pip and Squeak," said Noonan. "They are learning about chicks and caring for them as babies by reading books associated with how to handle them and what they can and can't eat. We have both fiction and nonfiction books to accompany the lesson."



Afterschool program at E.B. Ellington Elementary



Charles Pinckney Elementary afterschool activities

Goodwin Elementary hosts ESOL Family Connection Walk



W.B. Goodwin Elementary School, the Charleston County School District's (CCSD) Department of Federal Programs, and the Community Outreach Office hosted a community event called the Goodwin Multilingual Learner Community Walk on Saturday, April 1, 2023. Charleston Aquí Estamos, a local nonprofit organization, collaborated in this effort and was instrumental in inviting parents from the Goodwin ArtPot board. The goal of this effort was to cultivate family and community partnerships in Goodwin so Latinx students and their families would feel supported in and out of school.

The Goodwin Elementary Community Walk is aligned with Pillar III: Wrap-around Services, one of CCSD's three Pillars that uphold the district's mission of educating and supporting every child in achieving college, career, and citizenship readiness. This event's wrap-around services included family engagement in multilingual learners' neighborhoods.

"We shared the students' report cards and received feedback on any concerns the families may have with the help of our interpreters," said Celina Anthony, Title I Bilingual Coordinator. "These concerns included academics, technology, and any other barriers to students achieving their dreams The Goodwin Elementary Community Walk is an example of providing wrap-around services because we reached out to our students and parents beyond the classroom."

Anthony, Goodwin's Principal Natasha Jones, Tonya McIntyre, (Community Outreach director for the district), and Lydia Cotton from Charleston Aquí Estamos, were the organizers of this event. Maribel Acosta, Executive Director of ArtPot, a nonprofit organization, also collaborated with this event. Charleston Hispanic Association, a local nonprofit organization, donated food, sheets and towels to all the families residing in the neighborhood.

Anthony was grateful a diverse group of individuals volunteered including Rosa Fulmore, Title I Parent & Family Engagement Coordinator, Jackie Haynes, Associate Superintendent of Acceleration Schools, Dennis Muhammad, Director of the Family and Community Engagement Office, and Angela Rush, Director of Translation and

Interpretation Services, among other district employees and bilingual community volunteers.

"I am very glad that each group had at least one bilingual volunteer to interpret for the families," Anthony said. "Families we visited were pleased to see us accompanied by several Goodwin parents," added Anthony. "It was evident that they felt very comfortable interacting with us due to their presence."

Cotton added that the walk demonstrated that it is possible to have a strong relationship between the school principal and Latinx Parents.

"The parents did recognize Principal Jones' smile and affection immediately," said Cotton. "This is very important because clearly Mrs. Jones has crossed the Spanish language barrier without speaking the language."

Along with the volunteers, organizers were able to reach out to at least 50 Latinx families and 70 students.



CAMP ROAD MIDDLE SCHOOL CELEBRATED ITS FIRST GIRLS NIGHT OUT ON WEDNESDAY MARCH 29TH.

Focus ON CCSD

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., *Superintendent of Schools*
Vanessa L. Denney, *Interim Executive Director of Communications*
Sully Witte, *Communications Officer*



The night was designed with connecting, empowering and strengthening the female community at Camp Road Middle. The event kicked off with a panel of INSPIRATIONAL, local female speakers. Mrs. Jessica Beran, founder and owner of Dance Moves of Charleston, Emily Steele, co-founder of Girls Gone Buff, Tirieka Brown, CCSD School Psychologist & owner of Good Deeds Behavioral Health Services, and CeCe Armstrong, Associate Pastor at St. James Presbyterian Church and Mentor/Motivator Vision Empowerment Instructor.

The night continued with parents and students "speed friending" and creating inspirational affirmations to decorate school bathrooms and halls. Long-lasting connections were made, lots of laughter, great food and of course, a selfie-station filled the night.

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