

**For Immediate Release**

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**Baptist Hill Middle High School**

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## Media Release

### **Baptist Hill dance teacher wins social emotional learning award**

**Charleston, SC** – Melissa Murdock, dance teacher at Baptist Hill Middle-High, won a [Social Emotional Learning \(SEL\) in Action Award](#). In partnership with the NoVo Foundation and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors she was selected as one of 105 recipients from 800 applications nationwide and is the only CCSD educator to have won this award.

Murdock used the \$1,915 award funds to attend [Breathe for Change](#) training, a yoga certification program designed specifically for teachers. Breathe for Change integrates social-emotional learning, meditation, and traditional aspects of yoga.

Murdock said that her students from 6th grade to 12th grade, love to meditate and do yoga; so much so that they ask for it daily.

“Yoga and meditation have been my gateway to teaching dance,” said Murdock. “Students are much calmer, focused, and they’re able to process and retain information and embody movement. Students have used breathing techniques as a way to ground themselves and settle in.”

Murdock uses her training to teach meditation and yoga to reduce class disruptions, outbursts and frustrations. In addition, she teaches the SEL strategies and techniques to colleagues so they can better support students in ways that are healthy, emotionally and culturally responsive.

Anya Smalls is a student in Murdock’s class.

“I love that we are doing yoga,” said Smalls. “Doing yoga relaxes you.”

“What she is doing to address SEL, by using techniques that anyone and everyone can participate in, I think is great,” said Principal Brendan Glaze. “SEL is a major focus in schools, especially now during the Covid pandemic. We need a variety of supports to provide our students coping mechanisms

and ways to deal with stress. I am proud Mrs. Murdock pursued this opportunity to encourage positivity at Baptist Hill.”

“It helps my body do things that I haven't done before,” added student Rubi Santos-Antonio. “It also helps me a lot when I'm stressed.”

The students are not the only ones benefitting from SEL in action. “I'm now able to offer yoga classes to the faculty and staff at Baptist Hill after school and share SEL strategies with them as well,” said Murdock. “I'm also incorporating this knowledge in my graduate work on somatics in dance.”

Since 2016, the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in Action Fund has celebrated educators who practice innovative ways to support and center students’ social, emotional and academic needs, and who strive to overcome systemic barriers for those farthest from opportunity. Funded projects prioritized student social, emotional and academic outcomes, contained an orientation and analysis of racial, gender and/or social justice, and created restorative approaches to conflict.

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#### **About the Charleston County School District**

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is a nationally accredited school district committed to providing equitable and quality educational opportunities for all of its students. CCSD is the second-largest school system in South Carolina and represents a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools spanning 1,300 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves approximately 49,000 students in 88 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools. Options include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), music and other creative and performing arts, career and technical preparation programs, and military.