

Friday, September 1, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE STORIES IN OCSD: NURTURING THE NEXT GENERATION OF INNOVATORS - HOW ORANGEBURG COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT'S MAGNET PROGRAMS ARE CHANGING THE LANDSCAPE OF EDUCATION

Orangeburg, SC – Orangeburg County School District (OCSD) continues to pave the way for groundbreaking education with its unique magnet academies, designed to inspire young minds and provide opportunities that go beyond conventional learning methods. One such notable event was the hosting of the Celebrate Freedom Foundation at Mellichamp Elementary School, where students delved into the world of STEM through interactive experiences, career pathways, and demonstrations featuring helicopters, drones, and military vehicles.

Students at Mellichamp Elementary School's Scholars Achieving Investigating and Learning (SAIL) with STEAM Academy were captivated as they rotated through various stations set up by the Celebrate Freedom Foundation, an organization committed to education and particularly STEM Outreach for K-12 students. The event aimed to honor past aviation pioneers and inspire future leaders in space and aviation.

"The energy and excitement were palpable as the students moved from station to station, their eyes widening with each new experience. This kind of hands-on learning doesn't just teach; it

ignites a passion for lifelong learning and curiosity,” said Amanda Steinmetz, S.T.E.A.M. Lab Teacher at Mellichamp Elementary School.

This event is just one example of the incredible opportunities that Orangeburg County School District's magnet programs offer. Launched in the 2021-2022 school year, the District's four elementary magnet academies are focused on a variety of themes: Communication Arts at Edisto Elementary's Broadcasting and Journalism Academy (BAJA); the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) Academy at Holly Hill Elementary; SAIL with STEAM at Mellichamp Elementary; and Visual and Performing Arts at Marshall Elementary's STAGE Academy.

"These academies aren't just about different subjects; they're about different ways to learn, different ways to engage, and different ways to prepare our children for the challenges of tomorrow," said Priscilla Hollington, Coordinator of Magnet Academies for OCSD.

It was recently announced by OCSD that students in the magnet academies will now have the opportunity to continue their specialized educational journeys in middle school. Edisto Elementary's BAJA students can pursue their interests at Carver-Edisto Middle School's Magnet Academy for Media and Broadcasting Arts. Holly Hill Elementary's Bulldog STEAM Academy graduates can advance to Holly Hill-Roberts Middle School's Gator STEAM Magnet. Students from Marshall's STAGE Magnet and Mellichamp's SAIL STEAM Magnet also have a seamless transition to William J. Clark Middle School's Greyhound STEAM Academy.

"We're not just creating a year or two of unique educational experiences. We're establishing lifelong pathways, constructing a strong foundation for a future filled with opportunities," added Hollington.

As Orangeburg County School District continues to innovate and expand its magnet programs, the focus remains clear: to provide students with the tools they need to navigate the complexities of the modern world.

Hollington concluded, "It's not just about raising test scores or meeting educational benchmarks; it's about inspiring these young minds to reach for the stars—whether it's in science, the arts, or journalism. We're preparing them to be the leaders, the creators, and the thinkers of tomorrow."

Watch the video here: <https://youtu.be/AC6-l33fr0w>

Orangeburg County School District

The mission of Orangeburg County School District, the catalyst of innovation and excellence, is to ensure all students discover and develop their person, purpose, and platform through high-quality educational experiences distinguished by a culture of collaboration, equity, and inclusion; a creative learning environment with inspiring opportunities; a commitment to nurture the academic, physical, social and emotional well-being of all. Visit us online at ocsdsc.org

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