

**For Immediate Release**

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# Media Release

## **From classroom to film set - CCSD media students get once-in-a-lifetime training from the experts**

Office of Communications

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**Charleston, SC** – Charleston County School District (CCSD) students from R.B. Stall High School, North Charleston High School, West Ashley Center for Advanced Studies, and Cooper River Center for Advanced Studies have kicked off an experience of a lifetime thanks to a non-profit called Next Generation Storytellers (NGS). A specially designed 18-week course will offer students an immersive educational journey, guided by seasoned Hollywood professionals and an in-depth curriculum.

Media Technology students will discover scriptwriting and filmmaking with NGS which “bridges the gap,” connecting today’s film industry leaders to visionary storytellers of tomorrow.

This one-of-a-kind film program brings the “magic” of Hollywood to underserved communities, casting a spotlight on potential talent and shaping narratives for successful motion pictures. Students will learn comprehensive skill development, using innovative hands-on approaches.

Founded by Trent Garrett and Jacob Young, NGS has now been offered at 11 schools.

“Everyone has a story to tell,” said Garrett. “We hope this program will allow students, who wouldn’t otherwise have an opportunity, to tell theirs on the world stage. These students will be able to bring their experience to life and showcase it.”

### **How it started**

Young is an actor and producer. He is a five-time Daytime Emmy Award nominee, winning once in 2002 for his role as Lucky Spencer in the soap opera General Hospital. His portrayal as JR Chandler on ABC’s “All My Children,” a role that he contributed to crafting, earned him the prestigious Annual Prism Award.

Garrett’s first TV break was on ABC’s “All My Children” in 2011, as Asher Pike, where he appeared in 91 episodes. He is best known for his roles as Bowie Quinn

on the Disney Channel series “Andi Mack”, Wes on “Splitting Up Together”, and John on “Maggie”.

The two are best friends, and as the world learned to navigate a new normal during the COVID-19 pandemic, Garrett and Young came to realize that Zoom had begun to be an everyday tool despite quarantines being lifted.

Young and Garrett share a desire to give back and make an impact on young lives. Through collaboration, they came up with the idea of NGS so they could give back to the kids in their own hometowns – essentially bringing Hollywood to small-town USA.

Garrett is originally from Hampton, Va. He wanted to give back to the students of his hometown. They [launched](#) NGS there two years ago and have since served over 1,000 students.

Young, now a resident of Charleston, felt the program could benefit students in this area.

“We serve Title 1 schools and the program is funded through grants that we obtain,” said Young. “The hope is that we can expose them to potential career paths by partnering with the entertainment industry and local organizations to transform media technology education.”

Cooper River’s Media Technology instructor, James Dean, said his students are especially excited to be working with the Hollywood mentors who have graciously made themselves available.

“The benefits this program will have on my students are endless,” said Dean. “From learning all aspects of movie making to making lasting connections with industry leaders, we are all grateful for this amazing opportunity.”

### **Crash course**

Young and Garrett believe that the best way to learn how to make a film is to make it. Students will learn from the professionals who do it for a living. Together with award-winning screenwriters, the students will learn and be able to ask questions each step of the way.

Every production department will be featured throughout the 18-week course with opportunities for students to engage in writing, cinematography, and acting.

The course is taught by instructors using curriculum developed by NGS with weekly Zoom sessions with industry professionals from Hollywood and around the world. Young plans to attend sessions when he is in town to work one-on-one with the students. Students will also have access to industry leaders who will mentor them along the way.

"I want them to be familiar with us when it is time to shoot the film," said Young.

A script is chosen from student submissions. A \$100 prize is given to the winning student but the real reward is the entire experience.

After the 18-week course, students will begin to shoot the chosen movie alongside Hollywood producers and crew.

Garrett said a barrier between an amateur film and a Hollywood blockbuster is the level of equipment the project is shot on.

"NGS supplies state-of-the-art equipment from some of the biggest companies like Black Magic, Sigma lenses, Hawk lenses, and Nanlux lighting," explained Garrett. "A barrier just as significant to the price of this equipment is the know-how to use it. But with the NGS mentors, we ensure this equipment will be put to great use."

A veteran of the industry, Roy Wagner (think Nightmare on Elm Street) will fly out this spring to work on the production.

"Our mentors are highly successful producers," said Young. "They have proven to be amazing support systems for our students."

The entire experience will culminate in the students submitting their film to a local film festival giving the next generation of storytellers a platform for their voices to be heard.

### **CCSD students at an advantage**

"As a professional with 35 years in the industry, I can honestly say that Charleston County students are lightyears ahead of where I was in terms of these magnificent facilities they are learning in," said Young. "This is a viable career path because there are so many career options on set. Every technical skill is used in filmmaking, from catering to nursing. It is not one dimensional."

The industry is one where doors can open when you least expect them to. At just 19 years old, Garrett jumped in his Chevy Malibu with \$500 and headed to Los Angeles, where he couch-surfed until he broke into commercials. After a guest role on 90210, he began to develop relationships and connections which led to a minor role on "All My children". Garrett met Young on the soap opera, and a friendship blossomed.

"Jacob was a great mentor to me and helped me gain some traction in the business," said Garrett. "I got lucky. With NGS we hope to bring Hollywood to the students and provide a direct pathway so that they don't have to depend on luck."

Young and Garrett said they wanted students across the country to have the same opportunity they did.

“Not everyone is a mathematician,” said Young. “In this industry, I’ll take passion over grades anytime. You do not need to get a degree to go into the industry. That is not to say it is easy. It is highly competitive so you have to have that drive. But it is achievable.”

Garrett said the culmination of the program will be the real moment that touches everyone involved. It will be that moment when the students start expressing that they do not want the experience to end.

“Movies are magic, they can transport you somewhere else,” said Garrett. “This will be an experience they will never forget. Get ready, Charleston. This is going to be exciting.”

Follow this experience on CCSD’s [social media](#) as the project unfolds.

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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 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 50,000 students in 88 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse portfolio of educational options and specialized programs delivered to the students of CCSD through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools and programs. Rich educational opportunities for students include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; military; dual credit; and many more.