



East Cooper Center for
Advanced Studies

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Media Release

East Cooper CAS students earning immediate career readiness through clinical studies program

Mount Pleasant, SC – When students complete Denise Duggan's [Clinical Studies](#) course at East Cooper Center for Advanced Studies, they have the opportunity to be certified nursing assistants and eligible to go straight into the medical workforce. The course also gives them an advantage should they choose to continue studies in a related medical field.

Health Science Clinical Study is a course that guides students to make connections between the classroom and the healthcare industry through clinical experiences and activities. This course provides for further development and application of knowledge and skills common to a wide variety of healthcare professions.

Duggan spent her 30-year medical career working in burn centers, private practice, and everything in between. She is intimately familiar with how demanding the profession is, and acutely aware of how intense the coursework is in college.

"In this class, I require my students to go above and beyond what the course requires because I want to give them the rigor they will face in college," said Duggan. "They will need these study skills to be successful at the next learning level."

What the students in Duggan's class enjoy are the real-life experiences provided.

Keira Golson, a senior at Wando High School, said that visiting the area nursing homes and working with the patients has allowed her to take what she has learned in her textbooks and lectures and apply them.

"The hands-on interaction is what I enjoy most," said Golson. "I am inspired by my grandmother and aunt, who are both nurses, to pursue this path. These real-life scenarios will allow me to decide if this is truly what I want to do with my future."

Ava Funkhouser is also a senior at Wando. Her dream is to be an OBGYN, which requires 1,000 practicum hours in the healthcare field. This course will allow her to earn some of those hours before even going to college.

"I realize that getting to go to our local nursing homes and work with patients is an opportunity that not everyone gets to enjoy," said Funkhouser. "It has been incredibly rewarding to work with these individuals."

According to Duggan, site visits include real people and real situations.

"This is not a job shadowing opportunity," explained Duggan. "They are learning by doing the actual job."

In class, the students learn about catheter care, denture cleaning, walking assistance, transfers from a wheelchair to a bed or bedpan, taking vitals, bed baths, dressing, and feeding.

"I enjoy getting to know the residents and assisting them," said Golson. "I think they enjoy our company, as well. They offer advice on life, and when we leave, they have a smile on their face."

On the other hand, Golson said, it is hard for her to watch a patient struggle with everyday activities that healthy individuals take for granted.

"Knowing that my job is to assist makes me feel proud," Golson added.

Funkhouser said that the experience puts life into perspective.

"The residents take pride in the little things that they are still able to do and accomplish," said Funkhouser. "They also appreciate our assistance very much."

Golson likes the challenge that the Health Studies program has afforded her.

"The teachers are great and bring a lot of knowledge to the curriculum," said Golson. "Their previous careers in the healthcare field enabled them to impart all that they have learned through the years on us so that we can be successful, too."

What the students are learning in Duggan's class has been humbling, according to Funkhouser.

"It is important to start at the base of the healthcare industry even if your aspirations are greater," said Funkhouser. "This class keeps you grounded. While some may go on to do lifesaving work, there has always got to be someone willing to do the caretaking that is so very necessary."

Duggan is proud that her students understand that the meaning of caretaking is much broader than the physical work.

"I can teach them the skills, but the compassion has to come naturally," said Duggan. "To watch them meet a patient's needs with such empathy means everything to me. These patients are in compromising situations, and to watch these students, who are just 16 and 17 years old, deal with it so well, is wonderful to watch."

Principal Jeff Blankenship said that Duggan has been instrumental in leading practical training for her students inside the building and in the community with our business partners.

"Her students have had tremendous success passing their state exams right here inside our classroom testing facility," said Blankenship. "Mrs. Duggan's students will be able to take these skills and certifications as they follow their career paths in the health care field."

For more information, contact Principal Jeff Blankenship at (843) 856-8515.

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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.