



For Immediate Release

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Contact:

Cheryl Swinton 843-579-4815

Media Release

Burke High School

Donald R. Kennedy, Sr.
Superintendent of Schools

Anita Huggins
Deputy Superintendent

Jacqueline Haynes
Associate Superintendent of
Acceleration Schools

Cheryl Swinton
Executive Principal



Burke's Alexis Marianiello named 2023 Top Five Teacher of the Year Finalist

Charleston, S.C. – [Lexy Marianiello, a Burke High School Social Studies teacher](#) feels that her greatest contribution to the teaching profession is still in progress. When she was a child, school brought her joy, because she was good at it and felt successful at almost every endeavor. Marianiello knows that many students have different experiences, and her goal is to dedicate her career to building those students up so that they feel confident in the classroom.

"The foundation of all of my lessons is a good relationship with my students," said Marianiello. "I think all students learn better from someone they trust and respect, and especially from someone who they believe respects them. I lead my students to learn about the world around us by scaffolding their exploration as asking probing questions that force them to think about the information and data they've seen. As any of my students will tell you, I encourage them to ask questions of their own."

Growing up in the suburbs of New York, Marianiello knew from a very young age that she wanted to be a teacher. When it was finally time to get on that path, she balked. Instead, Marianiello studied history at Clemson University.

"My senior year of college, as I sat in a sociology class watching the "Corridor of Shame" documentary, it occurred to me that maybe my original idea had been the right one," said Marianiello. "The world had put a lot of love into me, and I wanted to put some back into the world. So I did."

Marianiello went back to school to earn her Master of Teaching and is now in her sixth year as an educator and was selected as a Charleston County School District (CCSD) 2023 Top Five Teacher of the Year Finalist.

As a finalist, Marianiello hopes to use the platform to advocate for increased connections between the different schools in CCSD.

"For the students, exposure to peers and programs which they might not have in their schools can enrich their lives," said Marianiello. "Diversity is a positive outcome. This could be achieved through combined field trips, project collaboration via video calls, and other planned and controlled events. Teachers in smaller schools may benefit as well from professional collaboration with colleagues across the district."

Making connections

Marianiello believes that knowledge is power and is confident that the Human Geography curriculum she teaches is exposing students to things they may never have known of.

"Even though ours is not an English classroom, we read and we write," said Marianiello. "Even though ours is not a math classroom, we analyze data and make inferences about our findings. My students become familiar with different databases, and styles and scales of maps. The most important skill my students leave my classroom with (I hope), is the ability to question. I encourage and incentivize students to ask questions until it becomes second nature. Through those questions, we drive authentic learning."

Principal Cheryl Swinton said Marianiello has created a robust learning environment.

"Ms. Marianiello consistently performs at a high level of commitment and excellence," said Swinton. "Our scholars are energized and inspired by her innovative and interactive approach to teaching and learning."

Marianiello said that her students become fascinated with learning about the world around them. Through a combination of direct instruction, thoughtful activities, projects, reading, and discussion, my students learn about the characteristics of the population, what leads people to migrate, different cultures, and how people of different cultures come together. They learn about global trends and the world's vastly different economies.

Through those lessons, the students make connections to their own lives and each other.

"Connections are important," said Marianiello. "We are fortunate that Burke is not a large school. I know just about every student. Those students are also willing to

build close relationships with the adults in the building and they feel comfortable being their authentic selves.”

Marianiello recognizes that each student comes into her classroom with different needs.

“It can be really difficult to meet the diverse needs of all of the learners in your classroom,” said Marianiello. “I think that the best way to serve those students is to provide education in multiple domains, so my personal teaching style is a little bit of everything. I think students need foundational academic skills in the subject, soft skills such as responsibility and effective communication, and critical thinking, among other things.”

Marianiello’s classroom is also cozy with comfortable seating for collaborative learning and traditional desks for testing and note-taking.

“Students learn better in a room that is inviting and welcoming,” said Marianiello.

Opportunities to learn are never ending and just as Marianiello challenges her students, she challenges herself. She is currently participating in the CCSD Aspire cohort which is a two-year master’s program for those seeking an educational leadership degree.

“I am very goal-oriented and I want to be a successful teacher so our young adults are successful,” said Marianiello. “To do that, I must never pause my learning journey.”

Through teaching, Marianiello said she’s found patience, which she uses to push her students past their academic comfort zone.

“For students who don’t see themselves as successful in school, I try to challenge their impression of themselves as they see success in our classroom,” Marianiello added.

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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.

