

For Immediate Release

July 7, 2022

Contact:

Andy Pruitt, 843-937-6583

Media Release

Summer SAIL and SMAART programs make successful return

Division of Strategy and Communications

Donald R. Kennedy, Sr.
Superintendent of Schools

Erica S. Taylor, Ed.D.
Chief of Staff

Charleston, SC – Charleston County School District’s (CCSD) Summer SAIL (Students Actively Involved in Learning) and SMAART (Students Mastering the Academic Arts) programs were held this summer after a two-year hiatus due to COVID-19; the only interruption to the programs in two decades. SAIL serves Academically Gifted and Talented students, and SMAART serves Artistically Gifted and Talented students.

Elizabeth Uptegrove, Assistant Academic Director and Gifted and Talented Coordinator, said the SAIL program came back with a strong focus, offering more in-depth and complex student activities to a more diverse student population than ever before. Additionally, in an effort to expand student opportunities, the Gifted and Talented [website](#) offers multiple at-home enrichment activities for continued learning.

At James B. Edwards Elementary School, almost 300 Gifted and Talented students from across the district (rising grades 3–6) participated in the 15-day program. Fifty students received scholarships to attend; transportation and meals were provided as well.

“This is more than just a camp,” said Corrie Glover, Director of Summer SAIL. “It is a program with curriculum and instruction that requires students to dig deeper into the lesson. It is a challenging and accelerated experience to help them academically.”

According to Dr. Denisse A. Santos, CCSD’s Assistant Director of Visual & Performing Arts, Summer SMAART is also more than just a camp. While fun and entertaining, Summer SMAART offers professional instruction in dance, drama, music, and visual arts. Classes in those categories are designed to appeal to a variety of interests.

“From the first day when students attend our program, they are immersed in the arts in ways that they cannot experience during the regular school year,” said Santos. “Students are surrounded by peers that have similar arts interests, teachers who are artists themselves, and the whole atmosphere is one of creativity and outside-of-the-box thinking.”

Summer SAIL

SAIL is the main service model for Gifted and Talented students in CCSD.

In [Summer SAIL](#), each class is unique and there is something for each student's interest. Examples include coding, robotics, and mysteries of the ocean.

"Programs like this continue to challenge students during the summer and bring like-minded students together," added Glover.

Peter Scholz is a rising fourth grader at St. Andrew's School of Math and Science. He likes Summer SAIL because of the combined aspects of learning and fun. Scholz participated in architecture, chemistry, and coding.

"I like science and chemistry, and Summer SAIL offers educational classes where I can experience learning while having fun," said Scholz.

"I am leading the Mysteries of the Deep Blue Sea course," said Rachel Adams, Gifted and Talented teacher. "The students are engaged and interested in all things ocean. They are building models of the ocean floor, learning mapping, ocean zones, and uncovering which animals and life survive in each zone. We're studying our local waters as well to compare to the larger picture."

There are ten different choices of classes for the students to pick from and each one is full.

Angie Alves is teaching Action and Reaction – Newton's Laws of Motion.

"It involves engineering, problem-solving, and communication of their findings," said Alves. "It is such a positive experience for students to take topics we're studying and apply them to new situations."

Isabella Mitchell is a rising fourth grader at Charleston Progressive Academy. She enjoyed participating in classes about Survival, The Magic of Chemistry, and Build it Better. She was particularly excited that the Juneteenth commemoration was included in their themes of Survival and Build it Better.

"You get to feel, touch, and breathe what you're learning in Summer SAIL," said Mitchell. "It is fun because it is hands-on and each activity goes with the lesson we're learning."

Alves explained that the hands-on approach to activities was intentional so the students were engaged.

"According to the parents, the students are talking about our activities at home, still thinking and pondering and trying new things with their projects," said Alves. "That is exciting to hear."

Adams said that students were encouraged to lead the way in their learning.

"That resulted in each scholar being invested in each activity," said Adams. "It was also fascinating to see how quickly the students acclimated to this new environment. They easily were able to work together and share dialogue. The students here want to learn and are respectful of the learning environment."

Both Scholz and Mitchell said they will be back next summer.

"I love SAIL at school and this is another way of learning over the summer," said Mitchell.

Summer SMAART

Like Summer SAIL, students in rising grades 4-8 who are identified as Gifted and Talented in an arts area get to attend Summer SMAART. Students must go through an identification process that includes a nomination, submission of audition or portfolio materials, and adjudication of the materials. If they successfully go through the process, students receive an invitation to participate in SMAART.

Out of the 300 students who attended Summer SMAART, 45 were awarded scholarships.

Students who attend Summer SMAART have the opportunity to explore, create, and experiment with the end result being having pushed themselves beyond what they thought they could do. The program culminates with performances and showcases of student work where students invite their families to experience the end result of their time at SMAART.

SMAART is a three-week intensive summer program where students take classes in their chosen "major," which is their primary area where they are identified as gifted and talented. Students are also given the opportunity to explore other Arts areas, as they rotate through "minor" classes in the afternoons each week.

"This year, we offered classes in many areas of the arts that provided students opportunities beyond the regular classroom," said Santos.

Summer SMAART offered ensemble classes in Band, Choir, Steel Drums, Piano, and Orchestra, as well as a Musical, Digital Music Studio, Film Music and Composition, The Actor's Studio, Musical Theatre Workshop, Studio Art, Textile Art, Performance Art, Artist Sketchbook, and Choreography for the Stage.

"We strive to provide creative opportunities for students to develop their talents and interests in the arts," added Santos. "Last day performances and exhibitions were a great success and a testimony to the quality instruction provided to our students. I think the parents were pleased and I am positive the students had a wonderful three weeks, as evidenced by the beaming smiles I saw."

For more information, contact the Division of Strategy and Communications at (843) 937-6303.

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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.