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Media Release

CCSD celebrates National Library Month

April 3-9, 2022 is National Library Week

**Division of Strategy and
Communications**

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Charleston, SC – Once upon a time, libraries were all about books. Today, libraries serve as a community hub and a space for all people to connect with the resources they need, especially in our schools.

Charleston County School District (CCSD) celebrates libraries every day, especially during National School Library Month, which runs through the month of April. Additionally, the CCSD Board of Trustees proclaimed April as National School Library Month.

During Library Week, various activities are planned for students and staff as a way to “connect” them to their school library.

The theme for National Library Week 2022, “Connect with Your Library,” promotes the idea that libraries are places to get connected to technology by using broadband, computers, and other resources. Libraries also offer opportunities to connect with media, programs, ideas, and classes in addition to books. Most importantly, libraries also connect communities to each other. Overall, the theme is an explicit call to action - an invitation for communities to join, visit, or advocate for their local libraries.

“Libraries are truly the heart of our schools,” said Christy James, CCSD’s Library Media Services Coordinator and District Textbook Coordinator. “Our librarians have the unique role of serving every student and also working with every teacher. They lead by example with research and information literacy skills, but they also read by example with collections of books that allow all students to find what they need, feel safe to explore, and support curriculum needs.”

Libraries

Teacher-librarian Katherine Freligh said her space at Mary Ford Early Learning & Family Center is the heart of the school. Staff can come to get a cup of

coffee, chocolate, and a stack of books that are relevant to their current unit and/or ones that they and their students will fall in love with.

"I feel strongly that the library is not just the collection of books and materials, but is also the collaboration, professional development, and teamwork that I, as the teacher-librarian, can provide," said Freligh. "The more creatively I can approach each problem presented to me, the more our library program can expand and better serve our students and their families."

At Wando High School, teacher-librarians Tara White and Cindy Philbeck have embraced the idea of their space being a place for students to connect. The library is spacious and features group and individual seating areas, a lounge area, maker space areas, and classroom space for large groups. It caters to the needs of students in a variety of ways.

"In high school, the library serves as more of a resource to students, so we collaborate with teachers to ensure we are providing what students need," said White. "It's all about access. A library is not just about books. We have recreational materials, databases, and technology. We show students how to use those resources in an active way to complete their work successfully."

You won't walk into a quiet library at Oakland Elementary School, where the only thing you hear is whispers. In Mary Anne Mouthann's library, it is loud.

"It is the complete opposite of the stereotype," said Mouthann. "Right now, we're working on a service project making dog toys from t-shirts donated by our teachers. The students are working together braiding and cutting up the shirts to make the toys, and that involves communication. We're loud and proud."

Philbeck added Wando's library is often a safe space where students can retreat.

"Many students come into the library in the morning before the bell rings and during their lunch period," said Philbeck. "They're using that time as they want to, either finishing an assignment or socializing. The space lends itself to small group collaboration, too."

The library at Camp Road Middle School is the starting point for many different tasks and opportunities.

Librarian B.T. Bouton explained that it is a place where teachers bring classes to collaborate, where ELA teachers bring classes to find great books; a place for author visits; and maker activities. One example of that was a recent Black History Month project.

"Students did research on their favorite Black individuals and created life-size cut-outs of their heroes," said Bouton. "We hung them in our window space in the library. This was a whole-community project for everyone to see and enjoy. I was the happy

host by having this space to display their work, and I am honored to work with colleagues who recognize the value of using it.”

“As an Early Learning & Family Center, we have the unique opportunity to not only serve our little scholars but also their families,” explained Freligh. “I am finding new ways to create occasions for children and their caregivers to bond over early literacy. I have created materials for parents and caregivers to use while reading aloud to their children at home, collaborating on a guidebook of nursery rhymes for families to use while visiting the James Island Festival of Lights, and distributed calendars and choice boards with fun and easy literacy-based activities.”

As a teacher-librarian, Mouthann teaches six classes daily, creates the school newsletter, runs the news show, and the school website.

“I am a one-man show, so there has to be some structure, but there will never be any shushing and demands to whisper,” said Mouthann. “My students like that the library is predictable, but they also know that they will never be stuck doing the same thing. I work hard to give them a safe space with new and exciting things to do so that they will be invigorated and excited to come to the library.”

Wando has a diverse population of students, and the collection in the library represents the school’s community of learners.

“We use population data to drive our collection,” explained Philbeck.

“It is important to us that the students see themselves in the books we have to offer,” added White. “It is also important that they see other perspectives, different from themselves.”

Bouton buys specific books for students and recognizes that their interests may not be as mainstream as others.

“Every child has an opportunity to read a book that speaks to them,” said Bouton. “In middle school, we have very young students and then eighth-graders who are heading to high school and are a little more mature. I have to make sure all of those students find a book that engages them. It’s been nice that a combination of librarians and others are aware that we need books for every reader. The explosion of authors and topics that are so much more diverse than ten years ago is refreshing.”

Being a librarian

“Every single day I have the unique opportunity and challenge to meet the needs of a wide array of people, to figure out how I can best support them and their goals, and build a program that will reflect my students and help open the door to their future,” said Freligh.

"As a teacher-librarian, we are uniquely situated to build relationships with students across the years that they attend Wando, not just the one year they may have in someone's classroom," said Philbeck. "We get the privilege of truly getting to know them and are better able to support them as a whole learner."

White agreed.

"We get to see their interest develop over time," said White. "As professionals, we interact with all grade levels, in all content areas, and provide meaningful research materials and data for students so that they can be successful in all of their classes. We're an extension of their classes."

Mouthann was a high school English teacher for almost ten years before transitioning.

"There was always this assumption that all students could read and wanted to read," said Mouthann. "In most of my classes, I had several students far below grade level. I didn't have the training to meet the needs of the diverse learners and realized I could better do that as a librarian. As a librarian, I feel like I can help all students have their needs met and their values respected."

In this role, Mouthann explained that she can coordinate with teachers to help students who need extra help in a supportive way.

"It is important to recognize that librarians are a source of knowledge, and everyone should seek knowledge, especially in an ever-changing world," said Mouthann. "A library is a place of innovation, inspiration but most of all a place of comfort. A library is something to be valued and something to be embraced."

Bouton said that the National Library Week recognition is important because librarians keep so much of the educational train on track.

"We are fortunate in South Carolina that districts are required to have a librarian in our schools," said Bouton. "Students don't miss out on instruction that supplements what they are doing in the classroom."

"Our librarians are real-life superheroes, not only for juggling all they do each day, but mostly for the connections they create through their library spaces and inclusive resources," added James.

According to Freligh, libraries are one of the few places left in the world where anyone and everyone is welcome to explore their interests for free.

"Libraries are an equalizer because the collections and resources are important, relevant, and available to everyone no matter your age, color, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, employment status, or citizenship," said Freligh. "While my students are young, they deserve to see the full spectrum of

people represented on the pages of their books, they deserve to see themselves reflected back in stories just as much as they deserve to be transported to other worlds, and introduced to other types of people.”

For more information, contact the Division of Strategy and Communication 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.