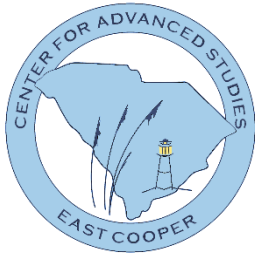


**For Immediate Release**  
September 10, 2021

**Contact:**  
Jeff Blankenship – 843-856-5800



East Cooper Center for  
Advanced Studies

**Gerrita Postlewait, Ed.D.**  
Superintendent of Schools

**Karolyn Belcher**  
Chief Academic Officer

**Richard Gordon**  
Executive Director of Career  
and Technology Education

**Jeff Blankenship**  
Principal

## Media Release

### **Pulse of CCSD – Media specialist Missy Beyel takes STEAM learning to a new level**

**Mount Pleasant, SC** – *"What a school thinks about its library is a measure of what it feels about education."* – Harold Howe

That's why, as a teacher-librarian for the East Cooper Center for Advanced Studies (ECCAS), Melissa Beyel has taken her media center to the next level by providing STEAM-centered (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics) activities alongside the best in literature.

"The responsibilities of the modern-day librarian have evolved," said Beyel. "We have adopted STEAM as the locomotive that transports us through the challenge of staying relevant."

According to Principal Jeff Blankenship, Beyel has done a tremendous job repurposing a former computer lab and tutoring room into a space that many of the students flock to before, during, and after school.

"Before she even started, she designed a new layout for the space to present to our administrative team and we absolutely loved her concepts," said Blankenship. "Mrs. Beyel has really gone above and beyond to enhance the space and materials available for our students through grants, crowdfunding, and donations."

The media center at the ECCAS is actually a designated makerspace room, which is called the Fab Lab. Not only does it feature library space, but it features materials and machines to help both teachers and students practice problem-solving skills, pursue personal growth ventures, and create fun projects. There's room for games, socializing, and relaxing.

With the help of grants, Beyel is able to replenish consumable supplies (which are in constant demand), add new technology, and purchase new applications to enhance learning.

Beyel is a champion for the students and their biggest cheerleader. She believes, though, that for students to be successful, their teachers must have every support that they need to be the best educators they can be. Beyel's purposeful collaborations with her colleagues have resulted in an expansive Fab Lab that supports teachers, classes, specific lessons, and overall curriculum.

"As a Center for Advanced Studies, we offer a variety of programs to prepare students for college and the workforce," said Beyel. "My infinite goal as a librarian in this type of educational setting is to be able to support students and teachers. I want to always be a proponent of what the future workforce demands of our upcoming students, and be able to enhance the curricula they need to succeed in their personal and professional lives."

"Mrs. Beyel took the initiative to design her own webpage specifically highlighting the East Cooper CAS Library Media Center which is full of resources available for our students," said Blankenship. "She has hosted numerous professional development sessions for our teachers highlighted by breakout boxes and virtual reality tours. Each one of our teachers will bring at least one class to work with Mrs. Beyel this school year. This will be a large task; with 23 other teachers and such a wide variety of programs, but we believe Mrs. Beyel is up for the challenge."

Assistant Principal Jason Brisini added that one of the special programs Beyel has developed helps the school's Exceptional Education students develop life and career readiness skills.

"Beyel has been supportive of everyone in the building and creates a welcoming environment for all students and staff," said Brisini. "Furthermore, Ms. Beyel ensured the Exceptional Education students were recognized for their accomplishments in the Week of Ceremonies held last spring at the ECCAS."

### **Her early years in education**

With a degree in early childhood education from Clemson University, Beyel took positions in various preschools and took a break to begin raising her children. The years went by and she met her second husband who happened to be a teacher at West Ashley High School. He mentioned a librarian position as a clerk and encouraged her to apply.

Beyel worked there for four years and learned a lot. In Fact, she was inspired to earn her Master of Library Science.

A brief move to New York enabled Beyel to participate in a media specialist internship where she learned under librarian Anne Mlod who today she strives to emulate.

"She introduced me to the makerspace concept which turned her media center into so much more," said Beyel. "I took those lessons with me and it has proven very successful."

After the internship, a unique opportunity arose in New York where a floating librarian was needed. It had been vacant for some time which was a red flag of sorts, but being a "newbie" she applied for the position.

Beyel rebuilt the library from the ground up, even having to create a Dewey Decimal System and search catalog. She was even able to convince her father-in-law to help her organize the entire library.

"It was a great job and even though I taught classes and floated between campuses, I had assistants to help me," said Beyel.

In addition, Beyel was able to implement the makerspace concept and modeled the empty space she was given after a similar room at the Fayetteville Public Library that she had discovered. It featured gaming stations, Legos, Spiro Robots, arts and crafts, and STEAM challenges.

### **Back at home**

After several years the couple and their family were able to return to the Lowcountry.

"This job (at the East Cooper CAS) was my dream job," said Beyel. "I was so nervous during the interview, my hands were shaking. God must have been looking down on me because despite me being an introvert, the interview went well and here I am in my second year."

"The administration here is so amazing and supportive," continued Beyel. "I can go to them with a tiny request or a giant ask and they will find a way to make it happen. I've never felt so appreciated at a job and been able to work in a climate that feels like family."

Beyel has watched the role of the librarian and the library change through the years and said it is very much focused on STEAM. That is a lifeboat to the technical side of learning for students and STEAM exposes them to jobs they would never even know existed.

Beyel also emphasized how STEAM brings soft skills, teamwork, research, and organization to the table.

"We're getting to a point, sooner than later, where there will be a Fab Lab in all of our schools as an extension of the media center," said Beyel. "Here at the CAS it is a welcoming space where we try to accommodate everyone."

Beyel explained that much of what she is able to do is paid for through grants (totaling over \$8,200) and community and professionals partnerships. Her husband Phillip's company, Beardsley Architects and Engineers, is a community partner.

That kind of support enabled the inaugural year of the [ECCAS Media Center Program](#) to be successful. The library was stocked with a diverse print collection from the former Garrett Academy of Technology. The media center's first Student 3-D Assembly Team was created along with the first [Virtual Tour Committee](#) and much more.

"She recruited students and researched multiple platforms to see what would work best for the school," Brisini explained. "The project has been a tremendous success and we hope that by the end of this year our virtual tour will be complete and available on the ECCAS website for everyone to see."

"One of the highlights of last school year was getting to judge the monthly contests that Mrs. Beyel hosted," said Blankenship. "My favorite was the 3-D printing contest she held in the month of November where students were asked to design their own turkey. There were a lot of creative entries of your traditional gobblers while one student even made an outline of the country of Turkey. These fun-themed contests, along with the Virtual Reality Committee which produced a virtual reality tour of the CAS, really provide a place for students to gravitate to during their free time."

The numbers speak for themselves:

- Total number of ECCAS students – 1,500
- Total number of patron visits in both library spaces – 3,417
- The average number of patrons using the spaces per month – 324

Beyel said she is fortunate to have been able to return to the Charleston area and that this opportunity presented itself.

"My sisters live here and some aunts and cousins are making the move here," said Beyel. "Most importantly, my children Aidan (eleventh grade at Wando High School) and Kylie (eighth grade at Laing Middle School) will get to experience this kind of learning and curriculum. All I will ever want for my children is the best and I am confident they will get that through Charleston County schools."

"Above everything else, Ms. Beyel is one of the most caring and kind people I have ever met," added Brisini. "She truly does whatever she can to help everyone around her and is always the first person to volunteer for whatever we need at the ECCAS. We are truly lucky to have her as our teacher-librarian and everyone is excited to see what exciting project or activity she comes up with next."

For more information, contact Principal Blankenship at (843) 856-5800.

###

### **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.