

**For Immediate Release**  
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**Contact:**  
Erica Taylor 843-937-6303

## Media Release

### **CCSD reveals Top 5 Finalists for 2021 Teacher of the Year**

**Division of Strategy and  
Communications**

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

**Erica S. Taylor**  
Chief of Staff



Candace Bare   Adam Barnes   Abby Best   Kathryn Johnston   Vicki Klatt

**Charleston, SC** – Charleston County School District (CCSD) officials surprised five unsuspecting teachers today by announcing their selection of the Top 5 Finalists for 2021 Teacher of the Year.

The finalists are Coach Candace Bare (PE Teacher) from Ladson Elementary School, Coach Adam “AJ” Barnes (Social Studies Teacher) from West Ashley High School, Abby Best (Third Grade Teacher) from James B. Edwards Elementary School, Kathryn “Katie” Johnston (PLTW Engineering Teacher) from East Cooper Center for Advanced Studies, and Vicki Klatt (Third Grade Teacher) from St. Andrew’s School of Math and Science.

One of those finalists will take over the reigns from the district’s current Teacher of the Year, Lakevia Mills, (St. John’s High School).

CCSD Superintendent Dr. Gerritta Postlewait presented each finalist with flowers and a certificate. At each stop along the route, live announcements and updates were provided on the District’s social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter (@CCSDConnects). Photos from the day can also be found there.

#### **Candace Bare**

Candace Bare is in her second year of teaching Physical Education at Ladson Elementary School. Prior to teaching at Ladson she taught at Addlestone Hebrew Academy but felt a pull to return to public education. She graduated

from Western Michigan University with both her Bachelor's and Master's degree in Physical Education. Coach Bare strives to inspire healthy, active living within every student through both modeling and a personal connection. Her goal is to provide a positive experience that offers students the best opportunity to excel both physically and academically.

### **AJ Barnes**

Adam Barnes is a Social Studies teacher at West Ashley High School. He has eight years of teaching experience, including three years teaching internationally in St. Kitts and Nevis.

Barnes received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in History and a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from Otterbein University. He currently teaches AP European History and US History and serves on the school's leadership and MTSS teams. During the 2020-2021 school year, he spearheaded an effort to provide teachers with a one-stop-shop of digital resources. The goal was to assist them through the complicated process of providing both in-person and virtual instruction during the pandemic. Barnes hosts monthly roundtables that provide teachers with the opportunity to share tips, strategies, and resources with one another to ensure students continue to receive the very best West Ashley High School has to offer.

Barnes is an active member of West Ashley High's Professional Development Committee and the Culturally Relevant Education Leadership Team. He is an advocate for all students and strives to ensure that every student receives every opportunity available.

Barnes and his fiance, Kristen, live in the West Ashley community and are dedicated to making it the very best.

### **Abby Best**

Abby Best is a third grade teacher at James B. Edwards Elementary School (JBE). She taught kindergarten at JBE for several years as well. Best serves as the Parent Teacher Organization teacher liaison and has been a grade-level chair. Born in North Carolina, Best moved with her family at an early age and grew up in Mount Pleasant. Best attended Anderson University, where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education with an add-on certification in Early Childhood Education. Upon graduation, she returned to the Lowcountry and began teaching at JBE in 2017. She also holds a Master of Education in Educational Leadership from The Citadel. In her free time, she serves as a cheerleading coach at Lucy Beckham High School and a small group leader at The Church at LifePark.

### **Katie Johnston**

Katie Johnston is the first Teacher of the Year at the East Cooper Center for Advanced Studies (ECCAS). Johnston has taught for eleven years at Wando High School and the ECCAS. Johnston attended Auburn University, where she received a five-year Professional Bachelor's Degree in Architecture. Before her teaching career began, Johnston was an architect and worked for Reggie Gibson Architects while also owning her own jewelry business. After several years in the field of architecture, she decided to pursue a lifelong dream of teaching. Johnston teaches several Project Lead The Way engineering courses, including Civil Engineering and Architecture, Environmental Sustainability, and Principles of Engineering. Johnston plays an integral role in the ECCAS School Improvement Council, ECCAS Engineering Club, ECCAS STEM Advisory Board, the Metro Chamber of Commerce Engineering Career Academy, and National Council of Architectural Registration Board.

### **Vickie Klatt**

Vickie Klatt has taught for 22 years in almost every grade level. Most of her years were in the Upstate and the last two years in Charleston at St. Andrews School of Math and Science. Klatt is currently teaching a virtual third-grade class. Beyond the informative lessons, Klatt meets with small groups after school for tutoring and support with the virtual platform. Her Veteran's Day Display at the school this past November was featured by the district and local media. She also wrote a fine arts grant for the entire third grade to experience drumming and instruments worldwide.

To see photos of the announcements, visit [ccsdschools.com](http://ccsdschools.com).

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), a nationally-accredited school district, is the second largest school system in South Carolina representing a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools spanning 1,300 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves more than 50,000 students in 87 schools and specialized programs. With approximately 6,100 employees district-wide, CCSD is the fourth largest employer in the region.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, charter, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), and Montessori schools, and is divided into three Learning Communities. Options include specialized programs in science, engineering and mathematics; liberal arts; music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military and other public service enterprises.