



For Immediate Release
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Media Release

JBE librarian receives 2021 Intellectual Freedom Award

**James B. Edwards
Elementary School**

Gerrita Postlewait, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Karolyn Belcher
Chief Academic Officer

Michelle Simmons
Associate Superintendent
Elementary Learning Community

Robin Fountain
Principal

Charleston, SC – Heidi Benton, James B. Edwards Elementary School (JBE) teacher-librarian, has received the 2021 Intellectual Freedom Award from the South Carolina Association of School Librarians (SCASL). She was nominated by Christy James, District Library and Media Services Coordinator for Charleston County School District (CCSD).

This award recognizes those who advocate for the First Amendment Rights of students, teachers, and citizens of South Carolina. The South Carolina Association of School Librarians supports and upholds the U.S. Constitution, the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights, and the freedom to read. The Intellectual Freedom Award is the celebration of this advocacy.

"Heidi Benton has had a huge impact on our school community," said Principal Robin Fountain. "She has broadened the thinking of students, teachers, and parents alike by introducing books with diverse characters and ideas in a kind and nonjudgmental way."

"Heidi is a leader among our teacher librarians and at her school," said Christy James, Library Media Services Coordinator and District Textbook Coordinator. "I'm grateful for her commitment to make sure the library is a place where all her students feel welcome and seen. She's made the library an important part of building and growing the inclusive community at James B. Edwards."

Benton shared her journey and learning with others, including a session at the SCASL Summer Institute that was well attended and very well received.

"There were many lessons learned, but the most powerful one is that a dedicated librarian can help create a more inclusive community by actively promoting books and programs," added James. "That provide mirrors for students to see themselves and their families and windows to help them see others in our global community."

"Everyone's story matters, everyone's life deserves to be shared, and identity is never inappropriate," said Benton.

For more information, contact the school at (843) 849-2805

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is a nationally-accredited school district that is 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 more than 50,000 students in 87 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.