

For Immediate Release
February 6, 2025

Contact:
Andy Pruitt, 843-937-6583

Media Release

Celebrating CTE Month - Auto Collision students at Cooper River CAS have promising futures

Office of
Communications

Anita W. Huggins, M.Ed.
Superintendent of Schools

Michelle A. Mills
Associate of Communications

Charleston, SC - Flint Mincey's day starts at 3:00 a.m. so that he can drive two hours from his home in Loris, South Carolina to North Charleston. He is the [Automotive Collision Repair Technology](#) instructor at the Cooper River Center for Advanced Studies (CAS). The commute and the work make for long days, but Mincey said it is all worth it.

"I do it because of these kids," said Mincey. "They are wide open and eager to learn. If I give them a task, they take it and go with it."

Mincey is proud of his students' drive and finds comfort in their enthusiasm to learn. He sees himself in some of his students. Mincey's family is in the auto body business, and he began learning the trade at a very young age, alongside the "greatest teacher in the world" - his dad.

After many years at his family's body shop, Mincey went into teaching at a local technical and academic school. Mincey was heading into retirement when a former colleague and friend, who had relocated to the Lowcountry to work with Charleston County School District (CCSD), tried to recruit him to the future Cooper River CAS. After repeatedly declining the offer, Mincey finally relented and said he would make the commute for one year to get the program up and running. Five years later, he's made the program his own.

The one-year program has four levels, and students can complete the program with up to 24 iCAR Pro Level 1 certifications and the required OSHA-10 General Certification in their first-level course. Students who meet the center's Ethical A's standards are placed in paid internships, which often results in permanent employment with community business partners.

By the time students are eligible for internships, they have learned everything from collision, automotive technology, material handling, and distribution and logistics to frame alignment, surface finishing, fiberglass repair, plastic repair, refinishing, and shop management.

The automotive class at the Cooper River CAS features top-of-the-line tools and machinery, allowing students to handle equipment used in actual commercial shops. The cars that students work on belong to individuals in the community who make a donation to the program and purchase supplies needed for their repair.

"The Automotive Collision Repair Technology Program embodies the vision and mission of the center," said Principal Vanessa Brown. "Mr. Mincey uses his experience and expertise to teach our students what they need to know about the industry. Students demonstrate mastery of industry standards by earning their certifications, then we send them out to gain experience. When they leave Cooper River they are prepared for a career that is in high demand and will pay them a high wage for their skills. What Mr. Mincey is doing here will transform the life of every student enrolled in this program."

A popular car among the students is a 1964 GTO that came in almost rotted away.

"The kids jumped on it, learning measurements, welding, and more to bring it back to life," said Mincey. "They spent over 30 hours welding the car doors. Our goal was that this would be a three-year project, but we just might have it complete in two and a half."

Mincey's program has garnered significant student interest and is almost always at capacity enrollment. He has students from all walks of life and all backgrounds. One student is Karolyn Figueroa, a deaf student who attends the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program at Charleston County School of the Arts is on her way to completing the program.

"She is eager to work," said Mincey. "This is a male-dominated industry, so she gives it 110 percent every single day so that she can be successful among her peers."

Fortunately, her classmates are a tight-knit group and work closely with each other, as much of their work is team-based.

"I have enjoyed what I have learned in this program," said Figueroa. "I feel lucky to have had this opportunity, and I see this as a future career for me. Mr. Mincey inspires me, and I think he is proud of me. I have had to work hard because this is the first time I've been exposed to these techniques, because I am a girl, and because I am deaf. I feel prepared, though, and look forward to my future."

Like Figueroa, classmate Andy Mellichamp will enter into an internship this month and is excited about a future career in the industry.

"Some of my students will go on to college, but for those that don't, these local companies will hire them, and they will have very lucrative careers," said Mincey.

Mellichamp is following in his father's footsteps and says his experience in the program has confirmed this is the career he wants to pursue.

"It's been a real-life experience, and I appreciate the opportunity," said Mellichamp. "We are lucky to have Mr. Mincey because he obviously loves his job and ensures we are all successful. I want to continue to learn everything I can about cars, and Mr. Mincey has been instrumental in helping me get there."

Automotive Collision Repair Technology is one of fifty-one different Career and Technical Education programs offered to students throughout CCSD.

"All CCSD high school students have access to Automotive Technology at one of our state-of-the-art career centers around the district, as well as many other high-skill, high-demand, and high-wage career programs," said Rich Gordon, CCSD's Executive Director of Career Technology Education. "Flint Mincey sets the standard for what an excellent CTE program aspires to become, which is both rigorous and relevant academic, technical, and employability training that prepares future-ready students for the 21st-century global economy."

To learn more about Flint Mincey's Automotive Collision Repair Technology program, please visit their [website](#) or contact the school at (843) 953-3231 for information on auto repairs.

For more information contact the Office of Communications at (843) 937-6303.

###

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 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 50,000 students in 88 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse portfolio of educational options and specialized programs delivered to the students of CCSD through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools and programs. Rich educational opportunities for students include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; military; dual credit; and many more.