ORANGEBURG COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
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102 Founders Court • Orangeburg, SC 29118
Phone: (803) 534-5454

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Contact: Taylor R. Johnson
Communications and
Multi-Media Specialist
taylor.johnson@ocsdsc.org



William J. Clark Middle School Celebrates Grand Opening of Music Production Studio and Revamped STEM Lab

Orangeburg, SC – Music is a way of life. It is an outlet where individuals can express their voice through words and sound. Today, at William J. Clark Middle School, art, innovation, and education came together as the school proudly celebrated the ribbon-cutting of its first-ever Music Production Recording Studio and a fully revamped STEM Lab. The celebration was a transformative milestone for the central region of Orangeburg County School District.

Dr. Shawn Foster, Superintendent of Orangeburg County School District, noted that these innovative spaces are more than just classrooms, they're launching pads for future engineers, producers, creators, and problem-solvers, giving students real-world skills to kickstart meaningful careers. *"We want students to walk into both the STEM and music labs with confidence,"* said Dr. Foster. *"We want them to feel inspired and proud to be here, because that's what education should be. This facility represents our commitment to cultivating creativity and innovation in every child. I'm proud to recognize everyone who played a part in making this happen."*

A major contributor to this vision is Boeing, whose generous $100,000 donation made the transformation possible. Dr. Foster called Boeing a "tremendous partner" and emphasized the importance of their investment, noting that William J. Clark Middle School has produced SkillsUSA national winners, demonstrating the school's commitment to excellence.

As the ceremony continued, Mr. Robert Hemby**,** Director of Career and Technical Education, Early College (OAC), and K-12 School Innovation, echoed the excitement: "Every child in Orangeburg deserves access to innovation. Today is proof that everything is falling into place for our district."

The newly launched Music Production Lab, also known as the *Beats Lab*, highlights state-of-the-art equipment that allows students to compose, mix, and record their own music. More than just a creative outlet, it's a place of mentorship, discovery, and professional growth. JaiDon Powell**,** a Clark Middle School alum and now the school's new Sound Engineer and Music Lab Instructor, shared how meaningful it was to return as an educator.

"Being able to walk the same halls I once did and now teach in them, it's full circle," Powell said. *"This studio will elevate young creatives by giving them access to professional tools and helping them understand how music is made, from concept to creation. It's about nurturing their voices and showing them they belong in these spaces."*

The revamped STEM Lab**,** led by instructor Ronald Beck**,** now offers students an engaging space to explore science, technology, engineering, and mathematics through hands-on learning and collaborative problem-solving. Beck described the lab as a "fun and empowering environment" where curiosity meets critical thinking.

Students will have access to a pre-recording space**,** where they can work in teams or individually to write and refine music. With the guidance of instructors, they'll learn when their work is ready to move into the recording phase, mirroring the structure of the professional music industry.

The day was made even more memorable by a surprise appearance from local music artist 803 Fresh**,** creator of the anthem *"Boots on the Ground,"* who energized the crowd and celebrated the importance of arts in education. Parents, community members, Board of Trustees, educators, and students gathered for what many called an unforgettable day and a celebration of progress, potential, and the power of believing in young minds.

For additional information, please contact Taylor R. Johnson, Communications and Multi-Media Specialist, at taylor.johnson@ocsdsc.org or 839-253-2070.

Orangeburg County School District

The mission of Orangeburg County School District, the catalyst of innovation and excellence, is to ensure all students discover and develop their person, purpose, and platform through high-quality educational experiences distinguished by a culture of collaboration, equity, and inclusion; a creative learning environment with inspiring opportunities; a commitment to nurture the academic, physical, social and emotional well-being of all. Visit us online at ocsdsc.org

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