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

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Orangeburg County School District Partners with Fusion Dance Academy to Launch Exciting Scholarship Program for Aspiring Young Dancers

Orangeburg, S.C. – Orangeburg County School District (OCSD) has teamed up with Fusion Dance Academy, founded by the passionate and visionary QueWanda Middleton, to offer an incredible scholarship opportunity that will help young performers take their talents to the next level.

Through this collaboration, scholarships will fully cover technique classes and intensive classes for selected OCSD students, ensuring finances are never a barrier to their artistic growth. Scholarship recipients must attend one technique class and one intensive class each week from September 2025 to January 2026, with competition season kicking off in February 2026. The scholarship will run through May 2026.

A proud 2000 graduate of Orangeburg-Wilkinson High School, Middleton knows firsthand the power of opportunity, mentorship, and community support. Her journey from local student to accomplished founder fuels her mission to give back and create pathways for today's youth to shine.

Founded in 2020, Fusion Dance Academy was created with a mission: to build top-tier contemporary and competition teams that would empower children with a passion for dance to achieve greatness. The studio has already earned an impressive reputation, with first-place wins in multiple competitions across

contemporary, jazz, and hip hop dance genres. Fusion's program brings in world-class adjunct instructors, including dancers who have performed with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and the Dance Theatre of Harlem. The academy recently promoted long-time instructor Qaela Williams to competition team director after three years of dedication, and also features Mike Henderson, a former background dancer for Missy Elliott.

"I wanted to open this up to students who have the desire to dance and want to take their passion to a higher level," says Middleton. "Understanding that the creative arts can be costly, I wanted to bring an affordable, high-quality dance experience to Orangeburg so every child who loves to dance can be part of it." With top-notch training, national competition opportunities, and a commitment to empowering youth, this partnership promises to encourage a new generation of confident, creative dancers in Orangeburg County.

"Dance is another opportunity for students to express themselves unapologetically," says Mr. Johnnie Smith, OCSD's coordinator of Related Arts Curriculum and Instruction. While the district already has successful dance programs at Lake Marion High School and Orangeburg-Wilkinson High School, Smith sees this partnership as a chance to expand the district's arts reach, open new creative doors, and inspire more students through movement.

Beyond the stage and trophies, the Fusion Dance Academy scholarship program is about building confidence, discipline, and teamwork. Students will not only train alongside elite instructors but also learn the life skills that come with dedication to an art form, resilience, time management, and the courage to perform in front of audiences. This experience will prepare them not just for competitions, but for success in any path they choose.

"This partnership with Fusion Dance Academy is more than just about dance, it's about opening doors, building confidence, and showing our students that their passions can lead to incredible opportunities," said Dr. Shawn D. Foster, Superintendent of Orangeburg County School District. "We are proud to work with an alumna of Orangeburg-Wilkinson High School who is investing back into the very community that helped shape her. Our students deserve experiences that motivate them to dream bigger, and this program does exactly that."

The scholarship program is open to OCSD boys and girls in grades fifth through eleventh. Middle and high school students can sign up for auditions, while three elementary students will be nominated by their art-related teachers. The program is open to all schools within the district, and the selection process begins the week of August 25, 2025.

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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