ORANGEBURG COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
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Orangeburg County School District to Celebrate Student Writers at First "Master of Mechanics" Competition

Orangeburg, SC – Orangeburg County School District will celebrate the voices and talents of its young writers during the inaugural Master of Mechanics Secondary Writing Competition, with winners announced on Thursday, March 26, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the Roquemore Auditorium at Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College. The competition, which highlights writing excellence among students in grades 6–12**,** brought together participants from nearly every middle and high school across the district. After months of preparation and submissions**,** 21 finalists, the top three students from each grade level, have been selected to compete for first, second, and third place honors.

Spearheaded by Anna Branham-Smith of Curriculum and Instruction**,** the Master of Mechanics competition is being held for the first time in the district. The initiative was designed to strengthen students' writing skills while providing a platform to celebrate creativity, critical thinking, and student voice. Students first signed up for the competition in November and attended informational sessions in December and January to learn about expectations and the writing process. After completing their essays, final submissions were due February 6**.** A panel of community judges then reviewed the entries using a modified state testing rubric to ensure students were evaluated using familiar academic

standards. From those submissions, the judges selected the top 21 finalists**,** representing all middle and high schools in the district except Branchville. Each finalist is now completing a 1–2 minute video explaining their writing process and highlighting a key element of their essay. The videos will be scored and combined with essay scores to determine the final rankings.

Branham-Smith stated, "I am truly excited about this opportunity for our students. Their voices are incredibly important, and they deserve to be heard. Our young people are thoughtful and wise, and they have powerful perspectives to share. While we have traditionally offered oratory opportunities that end at fifth grade, it's exciting to now have something that allows our middle and high school students to showcase their voices and talents as well."

During the daytime conference, students will participate in a variety of breakout sessions led by experienced educators and writing professionals. Sessions will feature guest author Gina Casazza, Dr. Nick Robinson, professor of English at Claflin University, representatives from NoRedInk, Book Break, and district English personnel. These sessions are designed to give students valuable insight into the writing process, strengthen their skills, and connect them with professionals who are passionate about literacy and storytelling. That evening, the community is invited to attend the celebration where the district will announce the first, second, and third place winners for each grade level**.**

"This competition provides our students with an opportunity to showcase their creativity, sharpen their writing skills, and share their unique perspectives. We are proud to celebrate their hard work and look forward to recognizing these talented young writers," said Dr. Shawn Foster, Superintendent of Orangeburg County School District**.**

Community members, families, and supporters are encouraged to attend and help celebrate the achievements of Orangeburg County's student writers.

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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