



West Ashley High School
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Media Release

Top Five Teacher of the Year Finalist Brad Blake

Teaching Resilience Alongside Curriculum Key to Student Success

Charleston, SC (April 27, 2026) - As a young man at Presbyterian College, Brad Blake learned that two area high schools would soon be merged to form West Ashley High School. He knew in that instant that he wanted to go back to his hometown and teach at that high school, in a community that was so familiar to him. Now, 26 years later, he is still proudly serving on the Wildcat campus, a natural fit.

During his lifetime, Blake was surrounded by teachers from all walks of life who influenced him. His experience as a student left a lasting impression, one he looks back on with fondness, and he hopes he is leaving a remarkable impression on his students, just as his educators did for him.

"I learned what it meant to educate, mentor, and inspire by watching the adults who shaped me into the teacher and coach that I am today," Blake explained. "At the heart of my teaching philosophy is a simple belief: every student can learn, and every student deserves to be known. I am a relentless educator who holds my students to the highest standards. Our district once had a mantra of "Excellence is Our Standard." I hold myself, my fellow educators, and my students to that standard. Every student can learn; our job is to help them reach their potential before they move on to the next phase of their life. Every student needs to know that they are seen and are important to me."

Blake was an educator long before he entered the classroom. As a swim coach, he honed his teaching skills poolside. He was a natural talent, and once in the classroom, he rose to the occasion even more, recognizing that you have to meet students where they are to get them to where they need to be.

"Many people in education will say that athletics are the front porch of a school," Blake said. "Coaches and athletics can easily attract positive attention. As a head coach, my job is to attract athletes to my school. As an educator, my job is to attract students to the school. My summer swim team has swimmers who range from 5 to 18 years old. Many of my swimmers want to come to my school, to walk my halls, and be in my math class - and many of them do."



Charleston County
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Anita W. Huggins, M.Ed., Superintendent of Schools
 Sherry M. Eppelsheimer, Ed.D., Associate Superintendent of the
 High School Learning Community

Blake's instructional approach is grounded in consistency and care. He is deeply respected by students for his ability to make challenging content accessible and meaningful, and by colleagues for his professionalism and collaborative spirit. He teaches a wide range of students, from those taking Algebra for the second or third time to students enrolled in Honors Pre-Calculus, and he approaches each learner with the same calm demeanor, patience, and high expectations. Regardless of a student's ability level, Coach Blake has a remarkable ability to reach all learners and help them experience success.

"My students come first," Blake said. "Their well-being in all facets is of the utmost importance to me. Every moment at school should be used for teaching, learning, collaborating, and becoming a better person. I teach bell to bell, and my students come to expect that. I teach via Zoom on all E-learning days. I record lessons ahead of time for any absences so that my students can hear the lesson from the same exact voice that they would hear if I were in the room. I walk the halls at my school so that I can interact with all the students. I speak to as many students as I can. I ask athletes about their seasons. I speak with former students about their college plans or what they are doing in their current math classes. I also help enforce the school's rules and procedures. As I walk the halls, I also speak to my colleagues from other departments. Too often, teachers stay in their lane and only speak with those in their department. My colleagues know who I am and what I do for our students."

Unique to Blake was his insistence on teaching inclusion math classes.

"I have come to realize the impact that I can make on all students," Blake explained. "I currently have a study hall class where I consistently confer with students on how they can pull up their grades. One of the best decisions I have made as an educator was to request some of our Autism (AU) and/or Language Impairment (LI) students to be in my Global Leadership class. It is enjoyable to see the interactions and relationships form between all of these students. One of my seniors from last year would gladly say that one of his closest friends is a classmate of his who has Down syndrome. They would not have met outside of this class. I believe all students can learn content, how to build relationships, and how to succeed in life."

Blake believes that strengthening the teaching profession begins with leadership, mentorship, and a commitment to professionalism.

"Throughout my career, I have actively helped to strengthen the teaching profession by being a teacher leader and a point of contact for administrators and counselors in my building," Blake said. "I have served as the assistant department head for twenty-two years. As one of five teachers who are still on staff since the school opened, I have a great deal of experience and can guide the new teachers and assist administrators."

Blake plans to use the Teacher of the Year platform to advocate for the underrepresented - teachers who are coaches.

"There are teachers who are coaches and consider coaching the side gig," said Blake. "There are so many phenomenal coaches that are phenomenal teachers as well, and do not accept the nomination to be on the ballot at their school, or don't compete at the district level. The commitment competes with their athletic seasons, and they are unable to participate. I hope to represent the fact that there are others just like me who didn't throw their hat in the ring, but they will now be encouraged to reconsider."

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

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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.

