



Charleston County School of
the Arts

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Media Release

Guest Teachers at SOA Provide Students With Special Experience

North Charleston, SC - New York Times best-selling author J. Ryan Stradal and screenwriter and producer George Ducker recently co-taught English classes at Charleston County School of the Arts (SOA). Alea "Stacy" McKinley, an English teacher at SOA, raised the funds to bring Stradal and Ducker to the Lowcountry from Los Angeles through DonorsChoose.org.

Stradal and Ducker actually taught McKinley's English IV class for a week.

"I wanted the writers to come to our class to teach writing workshops and basically change kids' lives by merely being in their presence and getting feedback on their work and dreams," said McKinley.

For a "cultural explication" writing exercise, writers across the country, including Max Wastler and Greg Boose, provided vignettes to teach students how to write about their own cultural landscape. Stradal and Ducker lead a series of writing workshops, and students were able to have an extensive conversation with Stradal about his novel "Kitchens of the Great Midwest" and his other work (including writing for reality TV shows, Deadliest Catch and Ice Road Truckers). Stradal's first novel was selected as the "Best Book of the Year" by Amazon, BookPage, LibraryReads, and National Public Radio.

Jessica Murnane, a food writer and blogger from Chicago, also visited and helped conduct exercises with the students (including tasting some of Murnane's recipes from her new cookbook) on how to write about food.

"I love using real world careers and writing assignments to guide a unit," added McKinley. "I feel that every student we worked with got something different and important that will help guide their future reading and writing experiences."

By the end of the unit, students wrote a cultural essay, a food article, and a screenplay (scene) adaptation of Stradal's novel.

McKinley and one of her students were also invited to attend the Blue Bicycle Books Charleston Author Series (CAS) meeting at High Cotton at the end of March; Stradal was the featured guest at the event.

For more information about this project, contact Alea McKinley at (843) 529-4990.

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is the second largest school system in South Carolina representing a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools that span 1,000 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves more than 50,000 students in 86 schools and several specialized programs. With approximately 6,100 employees district-wide, CCSD is the fourth largest employer in the region.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, charter, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), and Montessori schools, and is divided into three Learning Communities led by associate superintendents. Options include specialized programs in science, engineering and mathematics; liberal arts; music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military and other public service enterprises.