

**For Immediate Release**  
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## Media Release

### **Superintendent Spearman Announces Whitesides Elementary School's Stephanie Haecherl as Teacher of the Year Finalist**

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**Mount Pleasant, S.C.** – State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman surprised Mamie P. Whitesides Elementary School teacher, Stephanie Haecherl (HECK-ruh!), at her school today with news that she has been selected as one of five finalists for the South Carolina Teacher of the Year award.

"As an elementary school teacher, Stephanie has the potential to make a tremendous impact on her students' futures," said State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman. "She rises to this challenge by engaging parents, mentoring others, and personalizing instruction for every student."

Stephanie Haecherl is a second grade teacher at Mamie P. Whitesides Elementary in Charleston County School District. As a National Board Certified educator, she served as an author contributor to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Ms. Haecherl received national recognition when she became one of twenty-two teachers on the Scholastic Book Clubs Teacher Advisory Board.

"The selection committee made an excellent choice in placing Stephanie Haecherl among this elite group of state finalists," said Charleston County School District superintendent Dr. Gerrita Postlewait. "She's dynamic, passionate, creative, humble, and has a heart for all children. An extraordinary educator, Ms. Haecherl is an excellent representative of the high caliber of teachers in Charleston County Schools."

Reaching out locally and nationally she has directly impacted student-learning school-wide by securing over thirty grants. Stephanie possessed the desire to teach at a very young age. She is a lifelong learner who after attending her first Engineering in Elementary workshop was "hooked" on STEAM. She refers to her teaching style as "eclectic"; a small window into her classroom reveals a variety of activities, such as oil pastels used to illustrate how students visualized a story. Her classroom inspires creativity, nurtures critical thinking skills and allows students to "think outside of the box." Stephanie is a community minded educator who is passionate about her profession and illustrates these commitments by finding ways for parents to participate in education by serving as weekly readers. She seeks

mentoring opportunities wherever possible, mentoring student teachers from local colleges and universities and educators new to the profession.

As one of five finalists, Stephanie will receive \$10,000 and go on to the next stage of competition which involves an in-person interview with a team of expert judges. [The South Carolina Teacher of the Year Gala](#) will be held on May 8th in Columbia where the overall winner will be announced.

The winner receives a total of \$25,000 and is provided with a brand new BMW to use while serving for one year as a roving ambassador providing mentoring, attending speaking engagements, working with teacher cadets and teaching fellows, leading the State Teacher Forum, and serving as the state spokesperson for over 50,000 educators.

The Teacher of the Year program celebrates excellence and strengthens the teaching force by honoring and recognizing exceptional teachers on the district, state, and national level. The Teacher of the Year Awards not only assist in retention efforts but serve as a powerful recruitment tool to the educator profession.

Tickets to the Teacher of the Year Gala can be purchased [here](#).

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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 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. 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.