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Welcome to this month's edition of PEP TALK, a column from Public Education Partners (PEP) honoring the creativity, innovation, and dedication of Aiken County's public-school teachers. Each featured educator has received a PEP Teacher Innovation Classroom Grant for a project designed to enhance student learning in exciting and meaningful ways.

Dr. Patricia Saxon has been teaching at New Ellenton Middle STEAM Magnet School for over six years and brings 37 years of experience in education. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communications and English, and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership. She received a PEP Innovation Grant for her project titled "Coding & Creativity: Enhancing Language Arts with MicroBit Technology."



Through this initiative, Dr. Saxon's sixth-grade students used MicroBit devices and platforms like MakeCode and StoryJumper to transform their written work into interactive digital artifacts which they shared with friends, family, and school staff. "This project was innovative because it introduced many students—especially those with no prior coding experience—to the exciting world of digital creation," Dr. Saxon explained. "Students who once struggled with or disliked writing began to enjoy the creative process once they saw how their words could power games, animations, and personal messages." Ninety students participated in the program as part of the English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum, and their reactions were enthusiastic:

"I used to think coding was just for robots or video games, but now I know it can tell stories too."

"ELA used to be my hardest subject. Once we started using MicroBits, I actually looked

Thanks to the generous support of our donors, PEP Innovation Grants are awarded twice a year and provide vital resources to Aiken County teachers. PEP is proud to be the only nonprofit in Aiken County focused solely on supporting our public school system. To learn more or support PEP programs, visit PEPAiken.org or follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

Public Education Partners: Harnessing the power of our community to enhance student learning and support educators in the Aiken County Public School District.

