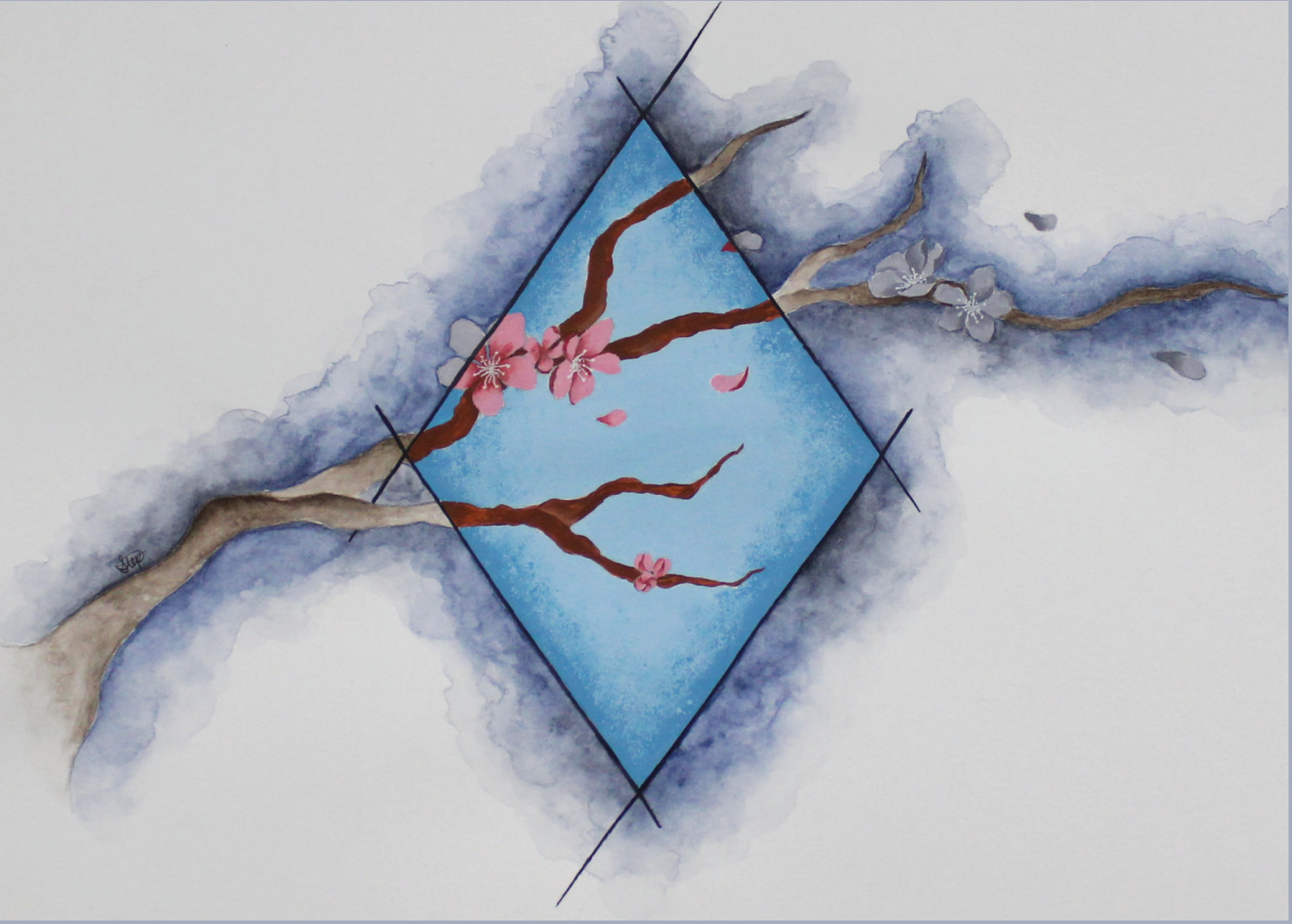


DCSS Digest

Highlighting Excellence in the Douglas County School System

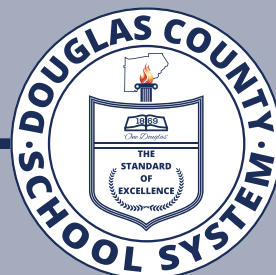
Spring 2022



ON THE COVER Artwork entitled *Spring Breeze*, by Chapel Hill High School Senior Samaya Porter

More student artwork and a write-up on the DCSS Youth Art Month Exhibit featured **INSIDE**

Together, we shape the future.



dcssga.org



From top left - Devettrion Caldwell, Tracy Rookard, Chair, Michelle Simmons, Vice Chair, Glenn Easterwood, Seated from left - Superintendent Trent North, D. T. Jackson

Celebrating the Douglas County Board of Education — recognized as an Exemplary Board for the 2nd consecutive year by the Georgia School Board Association

The Georgia School Board Association (GSBA) Board Recognition Program is a three-tier process to achieve the highest level in board governance. The three recognition levels are Quality, Distinguished and Exemplary, with Exemplary being the highest level.

GSBA developed this program to reflect the state standards, which offers school boards additional ways to increase their effectiveness. The State Board of Education developed the state standards for governance that form the foundation for GSBA's awards and recognition program.

Thank you for your exemplary service and commitment to the students of Douglas County.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 DCSS Accreditation Review
- 2 Black History Month 2022
- 3 DCSS Art Show
- 5 MCMS BETA Club; Audio Enhancements
- 6 BAES Robotics Team
- 7 Regional Science and Engineering Fair
- 8 Sports - DCSS Alums; HS Noteables
- 12 Health & Well-being Series for Staff

The DCSS Digest is published by the Douglas County School System, 11490 Veterans Memorial Hwy, Douglasville, GA 30134, in partnership with the Douglas County Sentinel advertising department.

The vision of the Douglas County School System is to build a community of lifelong learners who become responsible individuals, independent thinkers and productive citizens in a global society.

Dear Douglas County families:

Earlier this year, we shared with our families that we would be applying for the renewal of our Cognia accreditation as part of our commitment to excellence.



Cognia considers accreditation the launchpad for school improvement. The process, which we go through every five years, is very detailed and time-consuming. It is a revealing and rewarding journey.

Our school community played many roles throughout the process. From our administrators and staff to families and students, they all contributed to building a stronger Douglas County School System.

We are grateful for this opportunity to review, reflect, and make improvements. Although the accreditation process takes place every five years, our self-improvement journey never ends.

It is an honor to be a part of a school system committed to growth and academic achievement. For over 150 years, Douglas County has offered an exciting educational system that meets our community's needs. Our school system is one team, united by one goal: developing future-ready students.

These students are our greatest source of pride. The pages of this DCSS Digest are overflowing with stories of extraordinary students and our pursuit of educational excellence. We hope you will continue to be inspired and invest in their future by reading their stories. Their success makes a stronger Douglas County and empowers future generations of students.

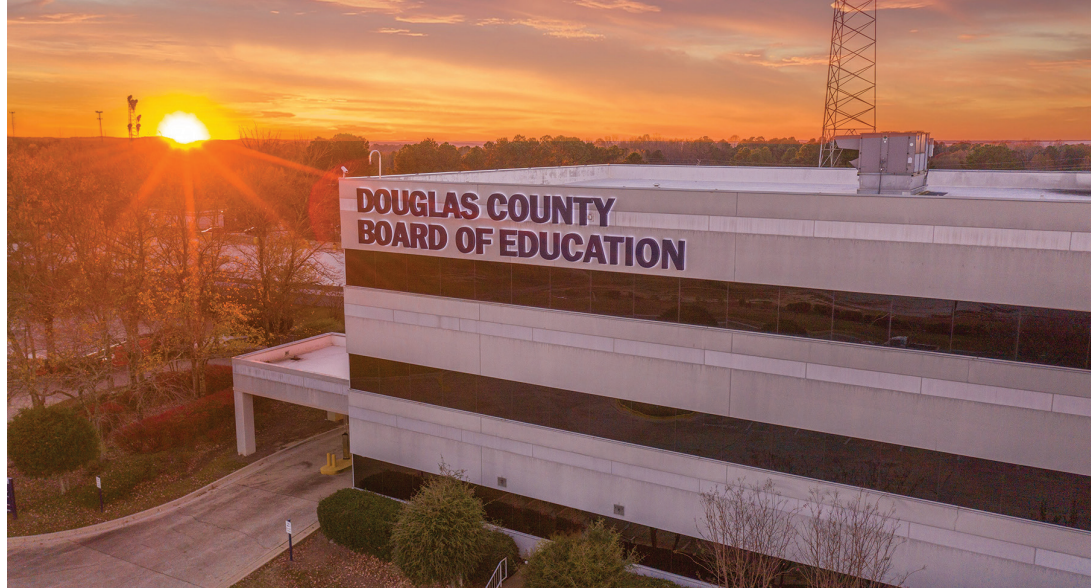
Thank you for supporting these students. When you support our students and educators, we fulfill our mission of serving our school system with excellence. Your gratitude enables us to continue supporting our students, families, and the entire school community.

Together, we play a significant role in building their future. We are working to develop kind, intelligent, and academically prepared students. I'm excited about the possibilities their future holds.

I look forward to the next step in our journey as we seek a new standard of excellence. Thank you, Douglas County. We're grateful for you now and will forever be thankful for your kindness and support.

Sincerely,

Superintendent Trent North
Douglas County School System



2022 Accreditation Review's Preliminary Comments Highly Complimentary

On March 7-9, the Douglas County School System underwent accreditation review with Cognia, formerly known as AdvancEd. This nonprofit organization provides quality assurance and accreditation for schools, school districts and education providers.

DCSS, like other educational institutions, must undergo the process every five years to maintain accreditation.

“Cognia’s standards ensure students always receive the most current research-based educational strategies. It allows us to use their research-based standards and evidence-based criteria to determine how effective we are at meeting the needs of Douglas County students,” said DCSS Superintendent Trent North in a letter to families about the review.

“Their process provides our school system with powerful feedback. It will enhance our schools and drive better student outcomes.”

Though the official review took place over three days in March, DCSS students, teachers, principals, parents, administrators and stakeholder groups spent much of the past year preparing for the process.

“Cognia’s reaccreditation process really shouldn’t be viewed as an event, but as an integral part of our continuous improvement

process,” said Dr. Michelle Ruble, DCSS Assistant Superintendent of Personnel and Policy. “And because we are a district that focuses on continuous improvement at all levels, I think it was a pretty natural process for us.”

Though this year’s review was conducted virtually, the preparation process looked similar to past reviews.

Along with beginning each step of the process early, administrators were tasked with preparing themselves for interviews with the Cognia committee, selecting stakeholders to participate on panels with the Cognia committee that accurately represent the diverse DCSS community, and gathering evidence to display DCSS’ proficiency in meeting Cognia’s standards.

“From the logistics standpoint, everything was easy because it was virtual,” Ruble said. “In the past, the Cognia team would have evidence and interviews, and they would have also had the opportunity to visit our schools and see things in action. But they didn’t have that piece, so that’s one reason we had to make sure we were thoughtful about the evidence we put forward to demonstrate our progress.”

Despite these small changes in the review process, DCSS has already heard good news from their Cognia committee’s lead evaluator about the committee’s findings.

According to Dr. Ruble, evaluators normally share three or four positive findings, or exemplars, when the review process is finished, but **DCSS heard about six areas where excellence was shown.**

The areas highlighted included **the system’s leadership, its focus on student outcomes, an emphasis on data-driven decision making, its culture of stakeholder empowerment and engagement, and its effective strategies to guide the system’s direction forward.**

“Our lead evaluator said how much he appreciated the work that is taking place in Douglas County, and the district showcased a commitment to the continuous improvement process,” Ruble said.

“To me that was one of the biggest compliments we could get, because it showed that we weren’t just putting on a dog-and-pony show. This is just part of what we do in Douglas County.”

Black History Month 2022: DCSS Students Celebrate and Learn



Elana Meyers Taylor Becomes New Figure in Black History

February is Black History Month, and DCSS students got to watch a local hero cement her place in Black history when Douglasville native Elana Meyers Taylor became the most decorated Black athlete in Winter Olympics history during the 2022 Winter Olympics.

“That is overwhelming,” said Meyers Taylor. “It’s so crazy to hear that stat and know I’m part of a legacy that’s bigger than me.”

Despite breaking history in Beijing in February, Meyers Taylor’s journey to the record wasn’t a smooth one.

After being selected as a flag bearer, Meyers Taylor was unable to participate in the opening ceremony due to a positive COVID-19 result. However, she didn’t let that stop her, as she was able to train in her room during quarantine to stay in shape and participate virtually in the opening ceremony.

Following her release from quarantine just days before her first event, Taylor managed to earn silver in the women’s monobob competition despite having fewer practice runs than her competition.

The win was the fourth Olympic medal of her career, and tied her for the most with Shani Davis.

A few days later, Taylor became the most decorated Black athlete in Winter Olympics history after winning bronze in the two-woman bobsled with Sylvia Hoffman to bring home her fifth-career medal.

“That is overwhelming,” said Meyers Taylor. “It’s so crazy to hear that stat and know I’m part of a legacy that’s bigger than me.”

And before the games concluded, things came full circle for the 37-year-old Olympian, as she was chosen to be a flag bearer for the closing ceremony, where she got to bear the United States flag before the world in person to conclude the games.

“I was so honored to be named the Opening Ceremony flag bearer, but after not being able to carry the flag, it’s even more humbling to lead the United States at the Closing Ceremony,” said Meyers Taylor. “Congratulations to my fellow Team USA athletes on all their success in Beijing.”

While Meyers Taylor made her mark as a Black history icon to be remembered,

students and teachers throughout the Douglas County School System celebrated Black History Month in a variety of different ways inside and outside the classroom.

From special programs to having special speakers, students were able to learn more about Black History and its impact on the world today.

Arbor Station Elementary



Arbor Station students, faculty and staff experienced the African American Inventors’ Exhibit which showcased inventions by several African Americans and is displayed in alphabetical order from A to Z.

The exhibit exposed the students to various inventions and it cultivated conversation about how these inventions impact our society today.

The month was culminated by a visit from Dr. Martin Luther King’s nephew, Mr. Isaac Newton Farris. He instilled in the students that Black History isn’t a separate history.

continued ►

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Instead, it is all of our history. This great country we call America achieved its greatness due to the contributions of many “different” people.

He went on to expound on his uncle’s quote, “Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education,” to teach students that no matter where you are and who is around, you should always display good character. Mr. Farris’ visit will be remembered for a long time.

Bright Star Elementary School



Bright Star Elementary School celebrated Black History Month with an engaging Title I event with various students showcasing their talents as innovative African Americans.

Parents were invited to learn about different cultures that are represented within the school. Grade levels highlighted a standard specific culture that the students were previously taught in their classrooms.

Bright Star’s Title I parent liaison, Meghan Russell, did a wonderful job coordinating this educational fun event.

Burnett Elementary School



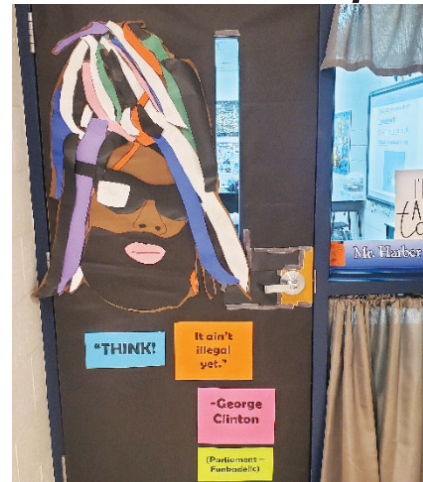
February marks the annual commemoration of the legacies, accomplishments, achievements, and contributions of African Americans. And Burnett Elementary School chose to celebrate Black excellence with teachers, staff, and students donning prestigious attire to portray an essence of excellence that makes our Burnett Elementary community proud.

Chapel Hill Elementary School



Students at Chapel Hill Elementary were able to have an experience honoring a variety of inventors for Black History Month. The exhibit exposes the visitor to various inventions, cultivates conversation about how these inventions impact society today, and generates a desire for students to aspire to become inventors themselves and promote interest and investment in African American inventions.

Mason Creek Elementary



Students and staff engaged in celebrating Black History at MAES! Once again this year, the Diversity Committee is hosting

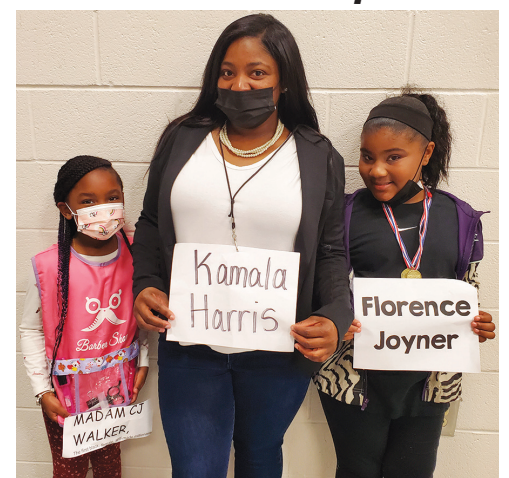
their annual decorated door contest. Each classroom door is decorated to honor and highlight influential African Americans, and judges from around the school system named first, second and third-place winners. Some of the winning doors included braille and QR code technologies!

MAES has a Step Team called Phenomenal that produced a recorded performance for the school. The team, led by Mrs. Kimberly Taylor Harris, included a poetry slam in their performance to highlight African American literature from the past, presence, and most importantly the future.

This happened in collaboration with the magnificent student bucket drummers, led by Mr. Ben Harber. Towards the end of the month, MAES enjoyed delicious cuisine at their annual Soul Food Luncheon.

With all of these wonderful things happening, the teachers integrated activities into their lessons to help students understand the rich history and why we take this month to celebrate.

Sweetwater Elementary



Students and staff at Sweetwater Elementary celebrated Black History Month with a parade on Thursday, February 24 as a part of their Black History Theme Week.

Organized by school counselor Cedric Slay, students and staff members dressed up as famous African-Americans who changed the world. The parade was one of many Black History Month activities at Sweetwater.

Cover Story: DCSS Art Show Puts Young Artists on Display



The Douglas County School System celebrated Youth Art Month (YAM) on March 1 with an art show in the Magnolia Room at the DCSS administrative office facility displaying works from several of the district's young artists.

"The show went really well. We were just so overjoyed to have that space, and for this to be our first event in this new facility, it was really special," said DCSS K-5 Art Specialist Tammy Morris. "A lot of parents commented on how nice it was, and we really had a great turnout."

YAM began in 1961 with its main goals being to put a spotlight on the works of young artists, grow an appreciation of the arts, and to increase community awareness and understanding of the arts through art shows and displays.

For the showcase, each school's art teacher chose four works from the whole school to be put on display. Each school produced a variety of different works of art, as drawings, paintings, photographs, sculptures, pottery and mixed-medium works were all on display.



For many of the students, the opportunity to have their work displayed was an honor and an encouragement for them to continue creating art.

"I'm very proud," said Breyana Roberts, an eighth grade student at Factory Shoals Middle School, "because this is my first time being chosen for a show."

Roberts submitted a mixed-medium piece on The Harlem Renaissance, which paid homage to popular poets and musicians of the time period.

Like many great works of art, Roberts said her work of art evolved from her original idea over time, and she thanked her art teacher, Lisa Fell, for helping her and reminding her to be patient throughout the process.

"At first, I wanted to do a Jeneé Aiko picture, but Ms. Fell told me about this contest that I wanted to enter, so I decided to do something different with it," said Roberts. "[Ms. Fell] taught me that patience is key. It was a lot to get this done."

The night was a proud one for many of the district's art teachers too, as they were able to see their students' finished pieces and celebrate the journeys they took to create them.

"It's like a breath of fresh air. We're reaping from the seeds we've sown. All their hard work, dedication and passion emerges through their artwork," said Fell. "My philosophy in art is that when you're creating the artwork, it's your own personal journey. But when it's done, then it's meant to be shared with the world."

And for parents the night was a proud one as well. Many said this was one of the first times they have gotten to see their student's artwork on display outside of their home, and the student artists did not disappoint.

"I'm extremely proud," said Trisha Roberts, Breyana's mother. "I've



told her to just keep going, because it starts small, but you never know where it goes."

Featured work

Top left: **Iron Man**, pencil, by Javen Devine, 8th grade, FSMS;

Bottom left: **Ama**, watercolor, by Jeremy Estes, CHHS senior;

Above: **Harlem Renaissance**, by Beryanna Roberts, 8th grade, FSMS

Below: **Pink Waterlily**, collage, by Jamie Johnson, 4th grade, SDES



Congratulations to Mason Creek Middle School BETA Club for State Competition Winnings

Mason Creek Middle School BETA Club won several awards at the State BETA Convention in Savannah, GA in November. The club won 1st place in Songfest and 2nd place in 3-Dimensional design.

Individual students placed in other competitions including **Kaylee Story** with 2nd Place in the Color

Photography Category and **Sofia Ellis** with 3rd Place in 8th grade Creative Writing.

The club has been invited to participate in the opening ceremonies for the National Convention in Nashville, TN in June, and compete in Songfest, 3-D Design, color photography, and creative writing.



Students Hearing Clearly Thanks to Classroom Audio Enhancements



Bill Arp Kindergarten student uses the mic for class participation

Oftentimes in school, students may be at a disadvantage based on where they sit in the classroom. The Douglas County School System is taking steps to offset this with new audio enhancement technology in elementary classrooms.

Over the past year, several classrooms have been outfitted with the equipment thanks to funding from the CARES Act, and many teachers say that they have already seen positive outcomes from using it daily.

“It’s something that I wish we had even sooner. I teach kindergarten and it’s amazing,” said Avery Guy, a teacher at Bill Arp Elementary School. “Sometimes our students are a bit chatty, but I don’t have to scream, and my voice comes through to them clearly.”

The idea to purchase the equipment was born out of the COVID-19 pandemic, when teachers and students were wearing masks in classroom settings.

Although it was known that teachers’ voices weren’t as loud or crisp to those in the back, the addition of the mask made it even more difficult to hear.

This was additionally challenging to younger students, as hearing word and letter sounds is an integral part of learning to read and speak correctly.

“We’re definitely building the foundations for learning. A lot of our students didn’t attend pre-k because of COVID, so this is their first real experience with school. Some are a bit timid,” said Guy. “It was also really nice to have with masks. I teach Phonics. The mask muffles you, so you don’t hear the sounds as well. But now, it’s easier for all the students to hear and understand to enhance those building blocks.”

The equipment is easy to use for teachers. After classroom speakers are installed, teachers are given a microphone that hangs from a lanyard worn around the neck. This allows the teacher to speak at a normal, conversational volume and still be heard by everyone.

Teachers are also given a cordless microphone, and many pass it around for students to use.

“I teach six-year-olds, so a lot of them are shy when speaking or reading and others can’t hear them. But when they get the microphone, it’s like they feel like rock stars,” said Pam Cooper, a first grade teacher at Arbor Station Elementary. “Holding the mic just gives them so much confidence to speak.”



Bill Arp Teacher Avery Guy delivers a lesson to her Kindergarten class.

Some teachers have also seen an increase in students encouraging their peers when they hear someone having a hard time with material.

“There’s just something magic about that microphone. When they have it, you can just see them physically get braver and more confident,” said Cooper.

Along with increasing student participation, studies have also shown that the equipment can improve attention in the classroom and lead to fewer behavior problems.

The equipment has provided a personal benefit for teachers. Both Guy and Cooper say their voices aren’t as strained from having to speak above their normal tones to be heard.

“I’ve noticed that my throat doesn’t hurt and my voice isn’t as strained when I go home,” said Cooper. “I don’t have those days anymore.”

Bill Arp Elementary Robotics Team Performed Against Opponents at Super-regionals

The Bill Arp Elementary School Technators robotics team participated in the West Georgia Regional qualifier for the 2021-2022 First Lego League Cargo Connect season on December 4, 2021. Coached by Mr. Matt Nauman, BAES STEAM Lab Teacher, the team



scored second place out of twelve teams (mostly middle schools) in the robot game, and had the highest average robot game score. The team also took home the Core Values trophy. This recognizes their exemplary use of professional practices, inclusion, and networking.

The Technators advanced to the next level of competition, and on January 22 competed in the Mill Creek Middle School Super-Regionals in Woodstock, GA. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, parents and spectators were not allowed to attend the event, and yet, this rookie team met with judges, presented their work, and demonstrated their engineering and programming efforts at the robot tables. They were able to raise their average robot table score more than 40 points, and their high score by 80 points. This group of ten 3rd through

5th graders managed themselves like professionals, and received compliments on their innovative ideas in both the robotics game and the engineering project. Their season has concluded for this year, but they are looking forward to the release of next year's challenge so they can return to compete in the fall.



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Exceptional Showing for DCSS Students at Regional Science and Engineering Fair

The Regional Science and Engineering Fair took place on February 4th at the University of West Georgia. 25 students from Douglas County middle and high schools competed in categories ranging from Plant Sciences to Computing and Systems Software.

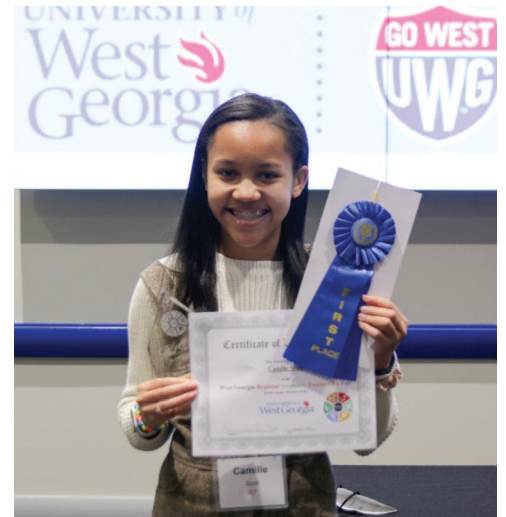
Fourteen Douglas County students earned first place ribbons, qualifying them to advance to the state-level fair (GSEF) in Athens this April.

One student earned a particularly impressive distinction. **Camille Scott**, an 8th grader at Chapel Hill Middle School

pictured here, won the Overall Best In Show Award in the Junior Division for the second year in a row.

Camille aspires to be a marine biologist, which sheds light on the importance of her project - Waterworks: Identifying Microplastics and Microfibers in Various Water Sources. She tracked the presence of these harmful pollutants in Sweetwater Creek over multiple years and compared the results to ocean, tap, and bottled water.

We are proud of all of our future scientists and engineers.



“Overall, our students performed exceptionally well. While their projects displayed superior planning and attention to detail, our students showcased unique abilities in connecting with the judges while describing their methods and conclusions. Our schools are truly preparing students with the content knowledge and interpersonal skills to be successful.”

- Casey Bethel, DCSS K-12 Science and STEM Coordinator

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DCSS Alums Winning on a National and Global Scale

In the early part of 2022, several Douglas County School System alumni have had many reasons to celebrate athletic excellence in many different arenas.

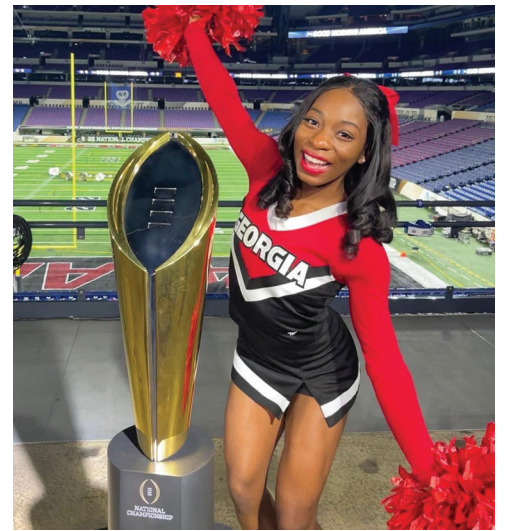
In January, three former DCSS students celebrated collegiate championships, while another earned a Silver and a Bronze medal during the Winter Olympics in Beijing, China the following month.

Shortly after the New Year, Douglas County High School graduate **Jonathan Jefferson** hoisted the College Football National Championship Trophy as a Georgia Bulldog. The victory was UGA's first football national championship in 41 years.

Jefferson saw his first collegiate action in Athens, against Charleston Southern, when he recorded three total tackles.



In his four years at DCHS, Jefferson was a key player for the Tigers. He finished his career with 254 tackles, including 54 tackles for a loss and 41 sacks. As a senior, Jefferson was rated a four-star prospect by many national recruiting services before enrolling at UGA.



Much like Jefferson, **Rickaiya Conyers** was also a part of UGA's National Championship in January as a cheerleader.

Conyers' first big game as a UGA cheerleader was the College Football Playoff National Championship, and she described the night as an exhilarating experience.

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“I had faith in Georgia from the start of the game,” Conyers said. “We came out strong from the very beginning.”

In the end, Conyers’ faith was rewarded. The Bulldogs prevailed over the Crimson Tide 33-14. Conyers rejoiced from the sidelines with generations of Georgia fans as the team won its first national title in over forty years.

While the sophomore is hopeful for more national titles from UGA, she believes Alexander equipped her to succeed as a student-athlete. “Being a competition cheerleader at Alexander meant I had to learn organization. The extracurricular activities there taught me how to handle the cheer and academics load in college,” Conyers said.

Conyers’ former AHS teammate **Bianca McLaughlin** took many of the same lessons to the University of Alabama.

There, McLaughlin was part of the team that captured the school’s third all-girl



cheerleading national championship and the sixth overall title for the Crimson Tide’s cheer and dance program earlier this year.

“My Alexander High School cheer experience helped me build stamina, endurance, and discipline. Alexander’s routines are very similar to Alabama’s cheer routines,” McLaughlin said. “The coaching styles are related, and the way the coaches pushed us is very similar.”

AHS head cheerleading coach Lora McAdams says the accomplishments of Conyers and McLaughlin come as no surprise, and she believes they will succeed both athletically and in their post-graduate pursuits.

Both cheerleaders agree that their support at AHS was meaningful and has been pivotal in their academic and personal lives. After graduation, Conyers plans to join the U.S. Air Force as a commissioned officer before beginning a career in cosmetic dentistry. McLaughlin plans to attend nursing school and becoming a nurse practitioner.

“Whether cheering in the national championship game for the Bulldogs or competing for a national championship title for the Crimson Tide, these two are Cougars at heart,” McAdams said. “They will forever be part of the AHS Cougar family.”

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Lithia Springs High School graduate **Elena Meyers Taylor** made Olympic history in February by adding a Bronze and a Silver to her career total of five Olympic medals in women's bobsled events.

Read more on Meyers Taylor in the Black History Month article on PAGE 2

AHS graduate competing among NASCAR's best



Since beginning his racing career at the age of six, Alexander High School graduate **Austin Hill** has been working to reach NASCAR's highest levels.

This racing season, Hill's hard work has paid off, as he recently signed with Rick Childress Racing (RCR) to compete at NASCAR's second-highest level in the Xfinity Series full time.

"Austin Hill has established himself as a very competitive racer within the

NASCAR Truck Series, and we know that he is ready for a full time opportunity in the NASCAR Xfinity Series," said Richard Childress, Chairman and CEO of RCR. "Austin is a talented young driver, and I feel confident that he will help contribute to wins at RCR."

Hill made a name for himself in the NASCAR Truck Series. Before trading in his truck for a car, Hill won eight races in four seasons and led the series in top-five finishes, top-10 finishes and average finish during the 2020 season.

"To say it's an honor to drive for Richard Childress Racing is an understatement," said Hill. "I've been working hard for an opportunity like this since I was a young kid. I really admire RCR's NASCAR Xfinity Series program, and I am looking forward to having the chance to add my name to the impressive list of drivers who have won under the RCR banner."

In his first Xfinity Series race of the year at Daytona, Hill showed early on why RCR chose to make him a member of their team. With the race nearing its final lap, Hill was able to navigate around a crash and move into first place to win the race.

The victory locks him into the 2022 playoffs, and it marks the second time he's won a season-opening race at Daytona, as he also won there on the Truck Series in his first race of 2019.

"I won (a NASCAR Camping World Truck Series season opener) in 2019 with a new team, now we're with RCR, first race with them. We were able to get the job done," Hill said in a press release from RCR. "Man, I'm speechless. (Crew chief) Andy Street, (owner) Richard

Childress, just all these guys back at RCR for believing in me. It's been a fun offseason, and now we get to go race for a championship."

High School Sports Notables

NMHS Lady Jags make History

Though New Manchester High School has had a successful girls basketball program for much of its history, this year's Lady Jaguars did something that no other team has done before by making the state Final Four.

NMHS achieved its spot among the state's four best teams in class 5A by besting Hiram 41-33 in the Elite 8.

In the state tournament, the Lady Jags entered as a No. 2 seed from their region before defeating Walnut Grove in the first round of the state playoffs. They then knocked off Northside-Columbus in the Sweet 16 to advance.

NMHS fell to defending state champion Forest Park 60-38 in the Final Four to end their season one game shy of the state championship.

LSHS Flag Football Finishes State Runner-Up



Though the season didn't end in the way they'd hoped, the Lithia Springs High School girls flag football team had an inaugural season for the record books.

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In their first year of existence, the Lions managed to finish as state runners up, falling 6-0 in triple-overtime of the state championship to Dodge County.

“I’m very proud of this team,” said LSHS head coach Kendra Pleasants. “I’m proud of their effort, I’m proud of the way they worked hard throughout the season, and I’m proud of their performance.”

The game was a back-and-forth affair, with neither team’s defense giving an inch throughout the first half. After halftime, both offenses got the ball inside the opponent’s 10 yard line, but neither was able to break the scoreless tie.

The first two overtime periods mirrored regulation. But in the third one, Dodge County forced a LSHS turnover on downs and eventually scored the game-winning touchdown on a fourth-and-goal run.

“It’s our inaugural season and first time playing flag football, but the ladies made it all the way to the state as state runners-up,” said LSHS principal Travis Joshua. “It’s not the goal that we wanted, but in terms of expectations, I can’t say at the beginning of the season I expected us to be here. So I’m extremely proud, and they fought hard all the way to the end.”

The Lady Lions finished 15-4, and head coach Kendra Pleasants is excited about the team’s future after having so much success in the first year.

AHS Duo Reels in National Championship Berth

Alexander High School’s bass fishing team had a stellar showing at the state championship fishing tournament at Lake Lanier, with several anglers finishing near the top of the field.

Emma Wilson and Luke Kimbrough led AHS, finishing sixth out of 89 teams on



the day. The finish earned the pair an invitation to the national championships in June at Pickwick Lake on the Alabama, Mississippi and Kentucky state lines. This is the first time AHS has had anyone qualify for the national championship.

Trent Hammock and Carter Seabrook came in next for AHS, finishing in 14th place, followed by Lucas Langley and Pierce Tyson who came in 31st. Mac Nail and Jackson Conner finished in 41st, and Eli Rowell and Josh Hagler finished 60th.

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Series Empowers Educator Health and Well-being

Healthy educators are the key to students who are engaged, inspired, and prepared for success. A new Douglas County School System (DCSS) initiative is introducing new tools to help employees maintain a healthy work-life balance.

With the inspiration and support of Superintendent Trent North, a “lunch and learn” series launched recently with tremendous success. The 12 session series is the first part of DCSS’ new employee wellness initiative focusing on mental and physical health.

The Human Resources Department coordinates the sessions led by Keisha Reaves, a licensed professional counselor and owner of Push Thru Therapy. A previous popular session titled “Pushing through the Pandemic” offered educators practical tips and strategies for coping with stress and navigating through pandemic-related realities.

DCSS Benefits Supervisor Stephanie

Facilitator Keisha Reaves leads a session for staff at Mason Creek Middle School



Groover sees demand and need for the program. “Throughout the program, we are finding that people are dealing with a lot,” she says. “Employees are trying to navigate two worlds: life and work. We are trying to introduce the tools to help them achieve balance.”

Executive Director of Human Resources Jill DePriest says introducing these tools helps fulfill the DCSS mission. “This series not only benefits employees and students, but it benefits our entire school community. Achieving balance helps overall health and improves staff

productivity. These outcomes have the potential to inspire our entire community to be the healthiest versions of ourselves.”

Feedback from the series has been overwhelmingly positive. Participants have returned to their worksites eager to share their newfound knowledge with colleagues. DePriest says this resource provides a vital benefit. “As DCSS employees, we have so much to be proud of,” she says. “This series is one additional benefit that will enable us to fulfill our mission of building a stronger future.”

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