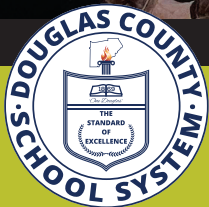


# DCSS Digest

Highlighting Excellence in the Douglas County School System

Spring 2023



Together,  
we shape the  
future.

GEORGIA SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSOCIATION 2023 GOLD AWARD OF EXCELLENCE FOR MAGAZINES

## Changing the landscape

AHS agriculture students, Instructor Ryan Bragg participate in the multi-faceted, national effort to rescue the blight-stricken American Chestnut tree

Cover photo courtesy of Taylor Gammill, Alexander High School

Cover story page 5

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*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**

*Our VISION is to build a community of lifelong learners who become responsible individuals, independent thinkers, and productive citizens in a global society.*

#### **The Mission of the Douglas County School System**

*We will serve our community with excellence by:*

- *Helping our students reach their potential as we prepare them for college and career in a safe and supportive environment*
- *Recruiting, cultivating and retaining the best teachers, staff and administrators*
- *Providing a challenging curriculum and relevant learning opportunities*
- *Providing the highest quality instructional resources and tools*
- *Fostering a culture of continuous improvement*

#### **The Beliefs of the Douglas County School System**

*We BELIEVE that we must ...*

- *Understand how children and adults learn and continue learning*
- *Build communities of lifelong learners*
- *Cultivate the leadership potential of every employee, student and parent in our school system*
- *Be creative, energetic visionaries who respond quickly to diverse and evolving issues*
- *Meet the diverse needs of all stakeholders (students, parents, employees and community)*
- *Maintain efficient and effective administrative processes for instruction, operations, human resources and sound fiscal management*

Dear Douglas County neighbors:

Spring is here, and I am excited to welcome this season of new beginnings. This time of year always brings a sense of renewed energy and excitement. As we transition into this season, I often reflect on our school system's accomplishments and set new goals for the rest of the year.



With this issue of DCSS Digest, I would like to celebrate one group's accomplishments. I'd like to recognize the hard work and dedication our students have shown this school year. I am proud of them for their perseverance and commitment to their studies. Their dedication to learning is impressive, and I am confident these qualities will serve them well in years to come.

As we look ahead to the last stretch of the school year, I've been encouraging them to continue pushing to reach their full potential. Whether studying for exams, working on projects, or pursuing extracurricular activities, their hard work is always valued and appreciated.

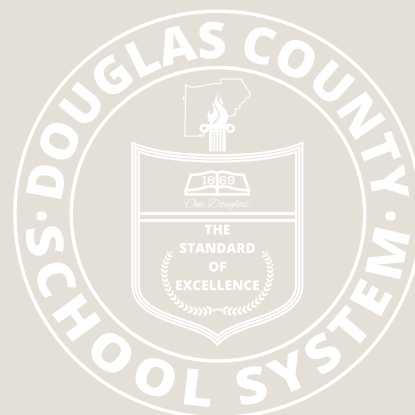
Finally, I would like to thank our Douglas County friends and neighbors. I am grateful for your unwavering support of our students. Your dedication and commitment to our students is inspiring, and it is through your collective efforts that our students can thrive.

Douglas County neighbors, I wish you all a happy and healthy spring season. I look forward to celebrating the many achievements of our students in the months ahead!

Trent North, Superintendent

A handwritten signature of Trent North in black ink.

Douglas County School System



# Representing the State as Georgia Superintendent of the Year, North Went on to Become Finalist for National Title

Soon after being honored with the state Superintendent of the Year award, DCSS Superintendent Trent North was selected as one of four finalists for National Superintendent of the Year. And though the national title ultimately went to a colleague from another state, Superintendent North said it is a humbling honor to represent the state nationally. He believes his recognition belongs to the students across the district and those he has served throughout his 32-year career.

“This award represents the teachers

and families that helped build a school system focused on strategic and continuous growth. Their support and leadership from the Board of Education helped propel students to success. Good superintendents could not exist without good governance or dedicated staff members,” North said. “Thank you for allowing me to serve you, the students, staff, and families of the Douglas County School System.”

Superintendent North has led the district since 2017. Before joining Douglas County, he gained broad

DCSS  
Superintendent  
Trent North  
was named  
2023 Georgia  
Superintendent  
of the Year in  
early December



educational experience as a middle school teacher, elementary school principal, middle school principal, alternative school principal, and human resources director.

Under his leadership, the Douglas County School System has become a model for academic and technology improvement, financial stability, community support, and safety, with a focus on building for the future. The transformation has benefited students, employees, and the entire community. His contributions to education have made a difference throughout the state through his work on Metro RESA and Governor’s Education Advisory Committees.



## Rotary Honors DCSS STAR Students and Teachers

During a February meeting, the Rotary Club of Douglas County honored Douglas County School System’s STAR Students and Teachers.

Ethan Sayles from Chapel Hill High School was named STAR student for the county, meaning that his SAT score was the highest among all DCSS seniors. Sayles chose CHHS Advanced Placement Biology teacher Krystle Teal as his STAR Teacher.

STAR Students must be enrolled seniors in an accredited Georgia public or private high school. The program is designed to recognize and honor high school seniors who have the highest SAT scores in their graduating classes. STAR Students select a teacher who has meant the most to them in their educational journey as their STAR Teacher.

Other STAR Students and Teachers from Douglas County were:

### New Manchester High School

- Brennan Bransford - STAR Student
- Terry O’Malley - STAR Teacher

### Douglas County High School

- Edwin Balderas STAR Student

- John Cunningham STAR Teacher
- **Alexander High School**
- Garrett Pierce STAR Student
- Jeffery Davison STAR Teacher
- **Lithia Springs High School**
- Logan Thompson STAR Student
- Brandie Jones STAR Teacher



(from left) STAR Students Edwin Balderas, Brennan Bransford, Ethan Sayles, Garrett Pierce, and Logan Thompson, with Superintendent Trent North

## All DCSS High Schools Receive AP Honor School Recognition

For the second year in a row, all five high schools in Douglas County were among 273 schools around the state to receive AP Honor Schools recognition from State School Superintendent Richard Woods on February 16. These honors reflect achievement and participation on the Advanced Placement (AP) tests administered by the College Board during Spring 2022.

Chapel Hill, Douglas County and New Manchester high schools each earned recognition as AP Access and Support Schools. This honor goes to schools with at least 30% of AP exams taken by students who identify as African American and/or Hispanic and 30% of all AP exams earning scores of 3 or higher. These three schools were among 80 in the state to receive this honor.

In addition to being named AP Access and Support Schools, DCHS and NMHS joined Lithia Springs High School in being named AP Expansion Schools. This distinction is awarded to AP schools that saw at least 25% growth in AP student participation from May 2021 to May 2022 and a minimum of 25 students testing in May 2020. Eighty-four schools from around the state also

received this recognition.

Four DCSS schools were named AP STEM Schools. Alexander, Chapel Hill, Douglas County and Lithia Springs high schools each earned this honor for having a minimum of five students testing in at least four AP STEM courses. This honor was given to 187 schools around the state.

“We are proud that the AP exam scores for Douglas County School System students have improved every year for several years,” says Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning Melanie Manley. “Our teachers and administrators are working hard to refine instruction and preparation. We hope to continue improving our exam scores to have schools recognized in additional categories next year.”

Superintendent Trent North also celebrates educators and administrators for fostering a culture of excellence.

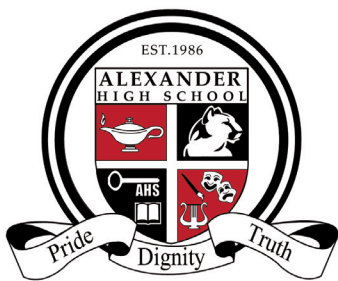
“Recognizing all our high schools as AP Honors Schools is a prestigious honor,” Superintendent Trent North said. “As a school system that cultivates a culture of learning, we are proud to



offer motivated students an additional opportunity to get a head start on college. We applaud the hard-working students, their dedicated families, and the outstanding educators who helped make this accomplishment possible.”

AP exams are administered by the College Board, which also administers the SAT. AP courses are one of several ways Georgia students can access college-level learning at the high school level; students who receive a 3, 4, or 5 on an AP exam may receive college credit. In addition, GaDOE began recognizing AP Honor Schools in 2008.

Visit the Georgia Department of Education’s website to see the complete list of AP Honors Schools from around the state.



DCSS Algebra I teachers are now using virtual reality (VR) goggles to teach. Prisms of Reality is the first ever spatial learning platform for math, where students learn through movement, discovery and purpose. DCSS is one of five districts in the state to be using the platform which is currently being used by about 50,000 students around the country.

According to **Kenya Elder**, DCSS Executive director of Teaching and Learning, 30 teachers have participated in training to learn the use of the VR experience and the teacher dashboard. The dashboard allows teachers to monitor students as they use the goggles. The platform has content libraries that align with DCSS curriculum. Teachers are able to provide students with real time synchronous support and feedback. The Prisms modules can be used flexibly within Algebra I units. The equipment has been sent to all five DCSS high schools.

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*Chapel Hill HS algebra students shared about their recent experience with the VR platform. Quotes from students include, "Kids enjoy hands-on learning," "It has an ability to engage with the students easier," and, it was "a different learning aspect."*

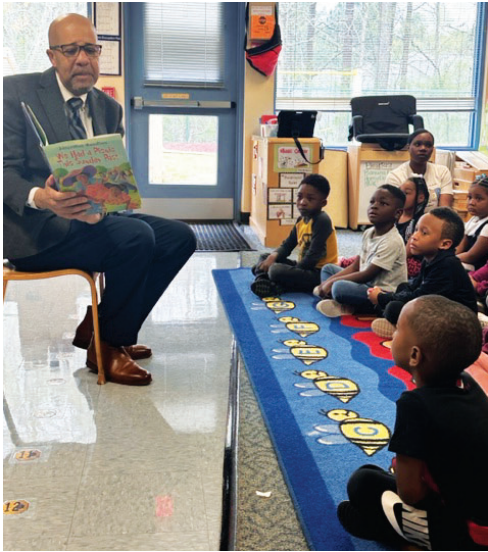
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Chapel Hill High School Teacher **Diona Swinney** recently challenged her students with a lesson using the headsets. Afterwards, they were asked to complete a survey. They commented on how immersive it was and how much more interesting education can become using VR. The survey revealed that most students felt VR can be used to teach math successfully. The students also said the headsets were user-friendly and did not have issues like most electronic devices.

Swinney observed that the students were calm and intrigued with what was being shown to them. "They seemed to be more involved and eager to learn, she said. "It was a learning experience for both the students and the teacher."

"Student feedback was very positive. They commented on how they were looking forward to future lessons using VR. The students seemed to thoroughly enjoy their VR experience," she added.



Superintendent Trent North visited Douglas County's Head Start program in early March, highlighting the importance of early childhood education. During a visit filled with smiles, laughter, and literacy, he learned about the program's impact on young learners.

## North Visit to Head Start Program Highlights Role of Early Learning

In addition to speaking with students, Superintendent North talked with program administrators and teachers to learn about the program's successes. He also spent time observing classroom learning and reading to students.

While there, Superintendent North expressed admiration for the staff members' dedication and hard work. He shared excitement about meeting the future scholars and later shared that he attended Head Start as a child.

His visit reminded teachers that their work is invaluable. Early education, he says, is critical to our community's success. As a result, Superintendent North says we must strengthen the years from birth to five. "The Head

Start program is an investment in our community's future," he explains. "The Douglas County School System must continue to support early childhood education programs. We must work together to provide every Douglas County child with the necessary resources to thrive."

He also emphasized early childhood education as a key factor in ensuring all children have an equal opportunity to succeed. Chelsie Goodman, K-5 Executive Director of Teaching and Learning, agrees. Goodman says the visit highlights the district's commitment to ensuring all children have a firm foundation for lifelong learning and success. She adds, "When we invest in our children's education, we invest in the future of our community."

## Changing the Landscape: Tree Planting, Restoration Celebration Highlight Student Work in National Cause

Arbor Day is celebrated across the country on April 28 this year, but Alexander High School agriculture students hosted an early celebration as they welcomed local and national members of The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) for an event focused on restoration of the blight-stricken species.

Longtime Douglasville resident Dot Padgett, Chair of the Douglasville-Douglas County Friends of the American Chestnut organization, helped to coordinate the event with AHS Principal Chris Small and Agriculture Instructor Ryan Bragg. The program, which featured keynote speaker Lisa Thompson, President and CEO of TACF, was attended by a standing-room-only crowd of local and out-of-state guests including elected officials and members of the media. FFA (Future Farmers of America) members of the school's chapter hosted and participated in the program.

### The backstory

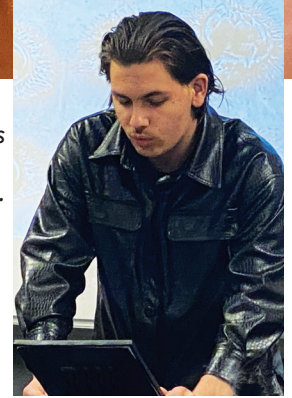
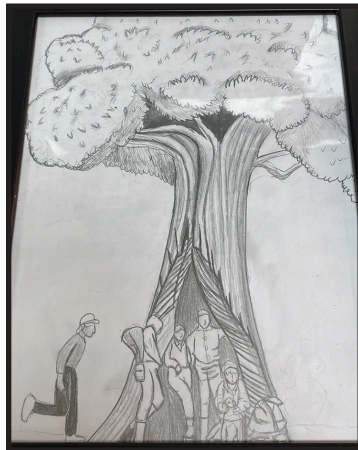
Several who take active roles in breeding, cultivating, and planting the new blight-resistant American chestnut were in the audience as Thompson spoke about the great forests of the eastern United States, once thick with the massive, nut-producing trees, that are now searched for a rare survivor.

The complex story unfolded about the blight, a fungus which came from Asia during the 19th century, and how it wiped out nearly 4 billion native trees. The impact to the regions, like Appalachia, that relied on the crop of nuts and the rich source of prime lumber was devastating.

But, there's a twist. This pathogen that causes disease and eventual death to the giant trees is unable to kill the underground root system. Sprouts grow from the remaining stumps, if there is enough sunlight, and the blight eventually gets to the new growth. A cycle of death and rebirth exists. Therefore, the American chestnut is not extinct, but considered functionally extinct.



A student art and poetry contest eas help as part of the Restoration Celebration. Art contest winner **Ava Holcomb** (above, center) discusses her work with event keynote speaker **Lisa Thompson** (above, right); FFA chapter reporter **Taylor Gammill** displays her artwork (above, left).



Poetry contest winner **Logan Bradd** prepares to recite his work (above).

Art entries by **Emmanuel Cowins** (far left) and **Gracie Infalt** show the former grandure of the trees nicknamed Redwoods of the East

### Restoration begins

TACF was founded in 1983 by a group of plant scientist and others who recognized the severe economical and ecological impact of the blight. The organization's fundamental goal is to develop a blight-resistant American chestnut tree via scientific research and breeding, and to restore the tree to its native forests in the eastern U.S.

Scientists cross-bred Chinese chestnuts, which are naturally blight resistant, with American chestnuts. The process was repeated until all characteristics of the Chinese trees were eliminated except for the blight-resistance.

The first potentially blight-resistant American Chestnuts were harvested in 2005. The next and current phase of the process is testing and trials in the forest, orchard, and research lab.

### A unique opportunity for student involvement

Bragg and his students planted six American chestnuts on the AHS campus. The students will create cages to protect the trees from damage as they grow. They will water the trees while they are young and need the assistance. They will take soil tests to monitor the quality of the soil to see if fertilizer or a soil amendment is needed.

“Honestly, this is just the most amazing opportunity for students to be able to have a meaningful, real-life example of how vital the agriculture industry is to our community, state, and nation,” said Bragg. “Through this experience, the students have also had the ability to meet and interact with people who are truly influential in the industry.”

# AHS Cougars State Basketball Champs

Throughout the course of a championship season, every team on that journey has a watershed moment— a major turning point in the season when the team knows that it is capable of winning a title.

For the Alexander High School boys basketball team, that moment came in Jacksonville against nationally-ranked Sagemont High School. Against one of the best teams in Florida, the Cougars battled to earn a 67-59 victory in a hostile environment.

“I think this was one of the first times our guys realized that if we don’t come to play from the beginning, we may lose, and we could even get embarrassed,” said Cougars head coach Jason Slate. “That game in that atmosphere was almost like a state tournament game, and when we were able to pull it out, it let our guys know that we were really contenders for a state championship.”

After falling in the second round of the 2021 state tournament against the eventual state champion, the Cougars spent the offseason with the mission of returning to the state playoffs and winning the championship.

Throughout the offseason, Slate and the coaching staff shared their vision for the season with the team, and they began preparing to climb the mountain back to the state playoffs. This included creating a tougher schedule than in years past with a couple of overnight trips for games and tournaments against stiff competition in Georgia, Florida and Alabama.

Along with helping the team improve and grow together on the court, these trips also allowed the team to bond, something that Slate says was key to winning the championship.

“Having so many trips was different. It was grueling, but we had a lot of opportunities to spend time with the team off the court,” said Slate. “This is a funny group, sometimes to an irritating point, but that’s part of what keeps them loose. I never felt like we went into a game where they were intimidated.



Photo credit: Colin Hubbard/Newton Citizen

When it comes down to it, they’re going to play hard for each other.”

With this disposition and a renewed confidence and commitment to the season’s goals, the team soon rose to the No. 1-ranked team in Class 6A and concluded the season as Region 5 champions, which earned them a No. 1 seed in the state tournament.

In the tournament, AHS moved comfortably past the first two rounds before facing a stiff road test in the Elite 8 against Jonesboro. Late in the game, the Cougars trailed by a point until freshman guard Greg Dunson dropped in a floater to secure a 54-53 victory and send the Cougars to the Final Four.

The quarterfinal victory held special significance for Slate, as it was his 500th career victory as a head coach.

“You want to talk about a blessed season, we definitely had it,” said Slate. “I don’t know many other people who can say they got their 500th win in the game that sends them to the Final Four in the year they won the state championship.”

In the Final Four, the Cougars once again relied on the seasoning that their early-season schedule provided, as they clawed back from a nine-point deficit to defeat Etowah and advance to the state championship in Macon.

In Macon, AHS played to a stalemate through the first half against Lee County. However, the Cougars closed

the third quarter with a 13-0 run to blow the game open thanks to big contributions from key players Noah Melson and Braeden Lue.

“Noah is more of a quiet leader. I wanted him to be a little bit more vocal throughout the year...and I saw a way more serious and vocal side of him before the state championship. He thought a couple of our guys were playing a little too much before the game, and he let them know that it was time to get locked in,” said Slate.

“Braeden is super talented, he listens well, and we’re trying to expand his leadership role. With all those seniors, he could sit back and not be very vocal. Going into next year, we’re going to need him to be more of a voice.”

The most memorable moment of the season for many came after the championship game when hundreds of fans greeted them following their victory.

“For our guys to get to experience what we did coming out of the Macon Coliseum with hundreds of people lining that tunnel waiting over an hour just to see them was incredible. I’ve never seen anything like it,” said Slate. “It was absolutely unbelievable. To have those people to stay and celebrate for another hour was truly special. The community showing up like that is something that will always stick in my mind.”

*Go Cougars!*



# Lithia Springs Lions Win Flag Football Championship

For the second season in a row, Lithia Springs High School's flag football team walked off the field at Center Parc Stadium with tears, but for completely opposite reasons.

At the end of the 2021 season, the Lions season ended in triple-overtime heartbreak, as they saw Dodge County score the game's only touchdown on a fourth-and-goal play to snatch the state title away. Despite the disappointment, the focus for the future became immediately clear – to return to the state championship in 2022.

Fast forward 364 days to December 8, 2022. Despite a new region and a new opponent in the state championship game, LSHS would not be denied. Again led by a stifling defensive unit, the Lions shut out Central (Carroll) High School 14-0 to win the school's first Class 5A-6A State Championship.

"This year was so much fun because the girls got an opportunity to recreate the narrative surrounding them," said Lions head coach Kendra Pleasants. "They got a glance of what it was like to be on that stage, and this year they already knew what they needed to do to get where they wanted to go. Our whole team came back from last year, so that was a big plus for us."

The dominant performance was a perfect snapshot of the Lions season, as the team's defense was nothing short of historic. The unit recorded a shutout in 18 of their 19 games this season, and it only surrendered one touchdown to opponents.

"The biggest thing for us is that we pride ourselves on defense. One of the biggest things that will go down in Georgia High School Association history is that we're the only team in flag and tackle football to only allow one touchdown for an entire season," said Pleasants. "I think that's huge. A lot of people may not pay attention to that, but I think that's huge, and I don't think another team will be



able to do that."

Entering the season, the team's goal was simple – avenge last season's state playoff loss. However, that goal didn't come without some pressure, Pleasants said, because of the team's desire to make it back to the state championship game.

Despite the outside pressure, any questions about the Lions' ability to return to the state championship were silenced in their first two games, as LSHS won its first two games by a combined score of 68-0.

"I felt sorry for the first few teams that we played, because I knew that we were going to give everything that we had to let people know that we were coming back for what we felt like we should've had last year," said Pleasants.

"I think we sent a message to everyone because in previous year we were known as a running team, but our quarterback showed that she could throw the ball in those two games. That was the gamechanger for the entire season, because teams had to defend the run and the pass against us."

With an even more potent offense, LSHS rolled through much of its regular season schedule and entered the playoffs as a top seed from its region. In the playoffs, the Lions' dominance continued in the first round before they faced a stiff test against Greenbrier in their second round game.

LSHS emerged victorious, but Pleasants called this matchup a turning point late in the season where the team knew that it had what it took to win a state title.

"That was a tough game, and it was hard for us to score. We were doing great defensively, but we started getting a little frustrated as the game went on because they started to get close to the end zone," said Pleasants. "It kind of flipped a switch and we knew that if we made it out of that game, then we knew that we had a real chance of winning it all."

From there, the Lions grabbed two more big victories before turning in a defensive masterpiece to take down Central (Carroll) in the state title.

Entering next season, the Lions return the bulk of their team after only graduating three seniors. But even with so much talent back, Pleasants says the team's commitment is to another strong season that ends with a trip to the state tournament in order to have a shot at another title.

"The three seniors we had this year did a lot for us," Pleasants said. "With them leaving next year, our goals are to fill the gaps and continue growing in what we do best on defense and to see our offense continue improving and taking another step forward."

*Go Lions!*

## Schools Celebrate Read Across America Day

DCSS Students of all ages enjoyed a variety of activities for National Read Across America Day which is celebrated every year on March 2, the birthday of Dr. Seuss. Schools welcomed guest readers from within the district and across the metro area to share a favorite book and a lot of fun.

Theodor Geisel, also known as Dr. Seuss, started writing children's books. In 1957, He was inspired by a report in Life Magazine on illiteracy among children. The report suggested children were having trouble reading because they were bored with their books. Geisel set out to create a children's book that not only captivated young readers but also taught them 220 vocabulary words. The resulting book was named "The Cat in the Hat."

Geisel went on to write dozens of children's books including "Green Eggs and Ham," "Oh, the Places You'll Go," "One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish," and many more.

Mason Creek ES



Burnett ES



Chapel Hill ES



South Douglas ES



## Districtwide Accomplishments in STEM Education (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics)

### *STEM certifications earned on the school level and by individual teachers, DCSS named STEM District to Watch*

**Holly Springs Elementary and South Douglas Elementary** schools will receive National STEM certification from the National Institute for STEM Education in May.

“The Teaching & Learning Department is proud of the hard work of these schools,” said DCSS Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning **Melanie Manley**. “The administrators and teachers are dedicated to providing our students with opportunities to integrate processes and concepts in real-world contexts of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.”

According to **Dr. Marissa Prather**, DCSS Director of STEM and Fine Arts, these schools have earned the honor and certification through hard work, instructional changes, and effectiveness that has only been achieved by less than 2% of schools in the United States. In addition to these two schools becoming newly certified, **New Manchester**

**Elementary** has earned recertification as required to maintain the designation at five year intervals.

STEM education seeks to take advantage of the similarities and interplay of skills and knowledge among the STEM fields to weave together a rich and meaningful learning environment. STEM teaching is dedicated to engaging students in ways that other areas cannot. Students develop unique cognitive skills, habits of mind, and attitudes that benefit them throughout their lives.

While the district’s schools are earning STEM certification, so are the teachers. Nearly 100 DCSS teachers have earned district STEM certification.

The DCSS program for teachers to earn STEM certification is one of only four in the state, and the only multi-module competency-based STEM teacher certification process in Georgia.

“We have been named a STEM District to Watch,” said Dr. Prather. She will share with other educators across the state about how DCSS is leveraging STEM strategies to increase student engagement and increase student achievement.



Students from four DCSS schools, LSHS, SDES, MAES, and HSES, recently participated in a Saturday program offered by Georgia Tech’s Center for Education Intergrating Science, Mathematics, and Computing (CEISMC) in Atlanta.

# DCSS Media Specialist of Year Announced




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*Chapel Hill Elementary Principal K'Asha Davis (left) and Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning Melanie Manley (right) congratulate Cameron Sheldon on her award.*

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Chapel Hill Elementary School is delighted that **Cameron Sheldon** has been awarded the title of Douglas County's Library Media Specialist of the Year. The award honors K-12 library media specialists who have created instructional collaborations that improve student engagement and achievement.

As an educator with 14 years of experience, Sheldon has transformed

Chapel Hill Elementary's Media Center into a lively and welcoming community. She regularly organizes school-wide reading celebrations to foster a love for literature among students. Additionally, she sponsors the Cheetah News Network, producing daily video news announcements with fifth-graders.

Sheldon's vision for the media center is to create a student-centered, vibrant,

fun space that promotes learning. She strives to make it the heart of the school, where all guests feel comfortable and at ease.

According to Principal K'Asha Davis, Sheldon's Media Center welcomes everyone who enters. Davis praises Sheldon for instilling a love for literacy, technology, and creativity in every learner. "With each visit to the Media Center, our students are fully engaged and excited to go on their reading adventure because of her infectious love for literacy and learning," Davis adds.

The Georgia School Library Media Specialist of the Year award recognizes K-12 library media specialists like Sheldon, who have fostered instructional collaborations that increase student engagement and achievement.

Sheldon will now compete for the Georgia Library Media Specialist of the Year award. The winner will be announced at the Georgia Library Media Association (GLMA) Summer Institute in June.

## DCSS Communications Team Earns Top Awards from Georgia School Public Relations Association

The Douglas County School System's communications department earned statewide honors from the Georgia School Public Relations Association (GSPRA) for its communications and community outreach efforts.

GSPRA is a nationally recognized professional organization of school communicators. The organization works to promote public education and help members become more effective school communicators. Through an annual awards program, the organization recognizes the outstanding work of members who communicate effectively with their school community.

This year, DCSS brought home 16 total awards, including eight Gold Awards, four Silver Awards, one Bronze Award, and three Best in Category Awards.

In addition to winning the Best in Category award for its "Together, We Shape the Future." marketing campaign, DCSS also took top honors in the calendar category for the 2021-2022 Annual Report.

The district also took Gold Awards in several categories, including Excellence in Writing, Newsletter/Magazine, Annual Report, and Image/Identity package categories. GSPRA awarded highest honors in Excellence in Writing for features on an Alexander High School student who started a Habitat for Humanity chapter and a regular Superintendent's Corner feature with Chapel Hill News and Views magazine.

"A key component of our strategic plan is providing timely and accurate information," explained Superintendent Trent North. "We're very fortunate in



*Communications Office staff members, from left, Isaiah Smith, Digital Communications Specialist, Portia Lake, APR, Interim Executive Director of Communications and Director of Public Information, Anne Principe, Coordinator of Interactive Graphic Design*

Douglas County. We have a Board of Education and district leadership team that values communications as a tool to engage our community."

Transparent communication, he continues, is essential to building trust.

"We've worked hard districtwide to maintain that trust. For that reason, we're honored to be recognized at the state level for excellence in school communications."