



**VSBA**

Virginia School Boards Association

Leadership • Advocacy • Support

# SHOWCASES FOR SUCCESS

VSBA SPECIAL EDITION NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the Virginia School Boards Association Special Edition Newsletter, celebrating programs and initiatives that exemplify excellence and innovation in education across the Commonwealth. As a means of encouraging awareness and recognition of public schools, the VSBA invited Virginia's school divisions to recommend programs that would serve as "Showcases for Success" in public education. The VSBA has created an online database of these successful programs and will feature them on the VSBA web site for the entire year. In addition, this directory will be shared with journalists, school board members, superintendents, legislators, and top state officials. Readers are invited to visit the directory of programs, which is now available on the VSBA website, and encouraged to exchange ideas and initiatives. The directory highlights division-wide programs, as well as those at elementary, middle, and high school levels. The range of programs are vast and remarkable, and divisions are encouraged to use these "Showcases for Success" as a starting point to develop similar programs in their school division. With an open exchange of ideas and implementation of best practices, together we can work toward the ultimate goal of success for all students.

**[CLICK HERE FOR THE ONLINE SHOWCASE DIRECTORY](#)**

## PARTICIPATING SCHOOL DIVISIONS

Alexandria City Public Schools  
Alleghany Highlands Public Schools  
Amelia County Public Schools  
Amherst County Public Schools  
Appomattox County Public Schools  
Caroline County Public Schools  
Charles City County Public Schools  
Chesapeake City Public Schools  
Chesterfield County Public Schools  
Danville City Public Schools  
Dinwiddie County Public Schools  
Essex County Public Schools  
Fairfax County Public Schools  
Falls Church City Public Schools  
Fluvanna County Public Schools

Frederick County Public Schools  
Galax City Public Schools  
Greene County Public Schools  
Hampton City Public Schools  
Henrico County Public Schools  
Henry County Public Schools  
Hopewell City Public Schools  
Isle of Wight County Public Schools  
King & Queen County Public Schools  
Louisa County Public Schools  
Lunenburg County Public Schools  
Madison County Public Schools  
Manassas City Public Schools  
Manassas Park City Public Schools  
Newport News City Public Schools

Patrick County Public Schools  
Portsmouth City Public Schools  
Prince Edward County Public Schools  
Prince George County Public Schools  
Prince William County Public Schools  
Pulaski County Public Schools  
Roanoke County Public Schools  
Rockingham County Public Schools  
Salem City Public Schools  
Stafford City Public Schools  
Virginia Beach City Public Schools  
Waynesboro City Public Schools  
Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools



**DIVISION: Amherst County Public Schools**

**PROGRAM: The Amherst Express Mobile Lab for Exploring Career Pathways**

In a world filled with possibilities, helping young minds embark on their journey toward a brighter future is a task of paramount importance. The "Amherst Express Mobile Lab" is an initiative aimed at empowering elementary school students with the knowledge and inspiration they need to chart their paths toward fulfilling and meaningful careers. The mobile education platform is set to engage students in exploring various career pathways while aligning with the ever-changing needs of our local workforce. In today's fast-paced world, the choices available to the future generations are boundless. Yet, without proper guidance and exposure, many students may miss out on discovering their true passions and potential. The "Amherst Express Mobile Lab" bridges this gap by bringing career exploration directly to elementary schools, offering a dynamic and immersive approach to learning about various career pathways.

**CONTACT: Craig Maddox, Supervisor of Career and Technical Education, ITRTs, and Library/Media, 434-946-9387**



**DIVISION: Danville City Public Schools**

**PROGRAM: Parent Hubs**

This year, Danville Public Schools has implemented Parent Hubs at two of its schools, Park Avenue Elementary and O.T. Bonner Middle School, with plans on expanding this initiative to all of its schools within the year. A project of the division's FACE Specialists, the purpose of the hubs is to have a comfortable and inviting place to hold parent meetings and to house school and community resources for parents. Each hub is decorated in school colors and features comfortable furniture, technology for parents to use, and a space for small children to read or play. One of the division's goals is to increase parent engagement, because it leads to student achievement, and by having dedicated spaces for assistance and conversations.

**CONTACT: Lanie Davis, Public Information Officer, 434-799-6400**

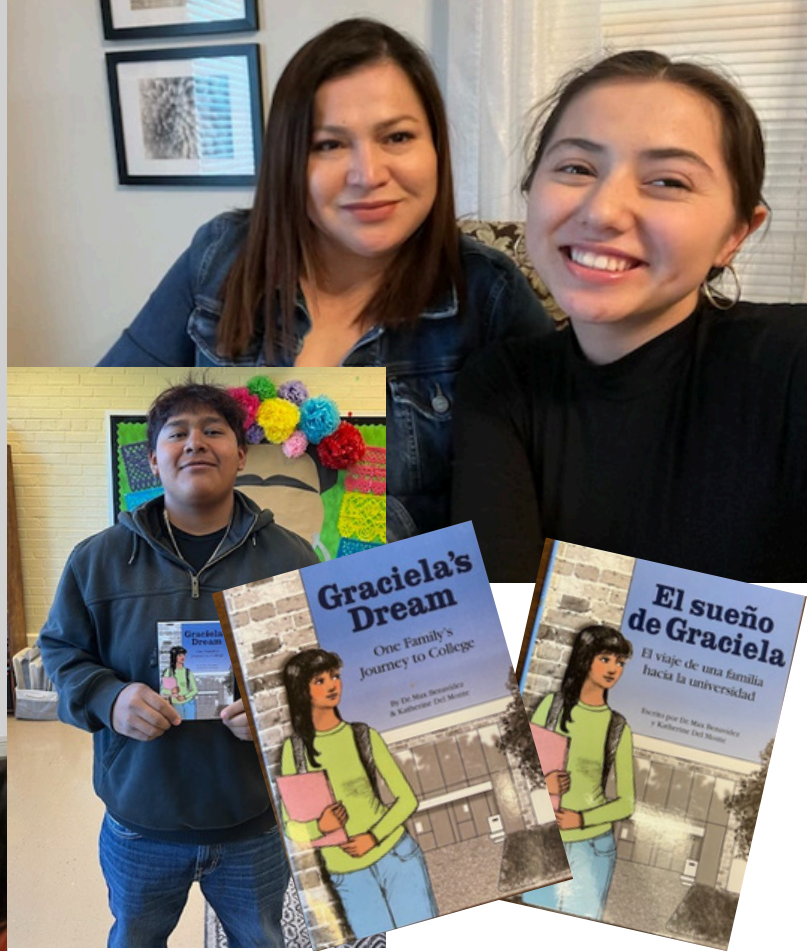
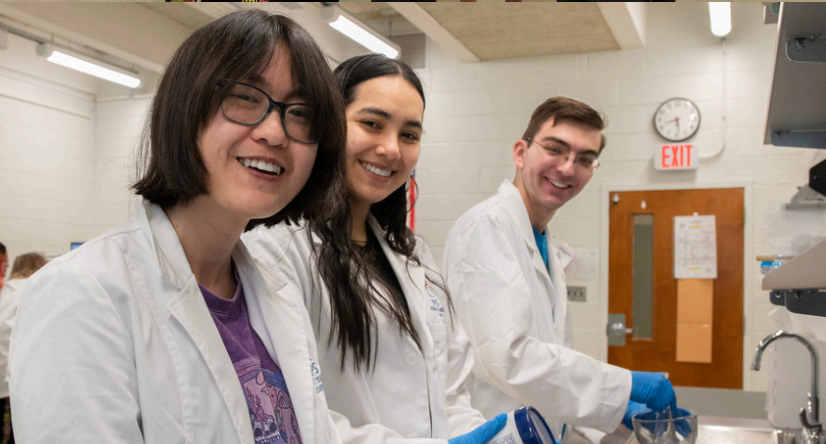


**DIVISION: Frederick County Public Schools**

**PROGRAM: Pharmacy Technician Program**

The Dowell J. Howard Center's Pharmacy Technician Program, a one-year program for seniors, has recently unveiled a state-of-the-art simulated pharmacy. This innovative addition to their program includes shelves stocked with bottles, a customer counter, and other essential pharmacy equipment. The simulated pharmacy is not just a visual aid but a tool that will provide students with a hands-on, authentic learning experience. By familiarizing themselves with the environment and equipment they will encounter in the workforce, students are being equipped with the practical skills and confidence they need to succeed in their future careers.

**CONTACT: Tara Helkowski, Director of Media and Communications, 540-533-1249**



**DIVISION: Galax City Public Schools**

**PROGRAM: Family Literacy Program for College Awareness**

Spanish-speaking families of high school students are invited to participate in a 6-week program in which they learn how to support their child in school and to understand what it takes to go to college. Participants are introduced to the college preparation and application process and learn how to use resources at school. The program is based on a bilingual novel which is read together in class. The novel is about a young girl of immigrant parents who wishes to go to college. Families read about her journey of convincing her parents of the importance of continuing her education when they would prefer that she work to help support the family. They also read about the various resources available and the process of applying for admission to and financial aid for college. Families also have the opportunity to improve their English skills and work on new vocabulary in each class. Families have reported that they feel better prepared to help their children with the college application process, with how to apply for financial aid, and have a better understanding of the importance of education in the United States.

**CONTACT: Elizabeth Stringer-Nunley, English Learner Lead, 276-236-2991 ext. 301**



**DIVISION: Henrico County Public Schools****PROGRAM: The Oak Avenue Complex: A Hub for Community Engagement**

When students moved from Highland Springs High School's 1955 building into a new structure next door, part of the former school was reimagined as the Oak Avenue Complex, Henrico County Public Schools' first full-service community school. The hub is a one-stop shop, connecting families with services, providing a framework for greater student success and making creative use of a public facility. "The Oak" debuted in 2023 with space for nonprofits and other partners to offer career and financial counseling, health and dental care, mental health services, adult education and more. It has also served as a base for winter food distribution. A new partnership with The Oak and the Henrico County Department of Social Services provides a space where families can learn about services and attend workshops on child care, energy assistance and more. As The Oak spreads its branches, it strengthens the community by helping students and families across Henrico County thrive.

**CONTACT: Kevin Robertson, Community School Resource Coordinator, 804-328-4000**

**DIVISION: King & Queen County Public Schools****PROGRAM: We're Happy You're Here**

To boost student attendance, King and Queen Elementary (KQE) has introduced an incentive program. Students earn attendance coins each day they arrive on time, which they can later exchange for treats like ice cream and squishies during a shopping event held every 10 days. On the 10th day, the coins are reset. Flyers have been distributed to all classes, and daily announcements remind students of their coin counts and upcoming shopping days. Moreover, the class with the highest average attendance in the last 10 days, not only receives a certificate, but also gets to showcase the Traveling Attendance Trophy. Students showing improved attendance are also acknowledged with certificates along with phone calls made to their families to celebrate their achievement. The program commenced in November 2023 and has shown a reduction in absentee rates at KQE.

**CONTACT: Shante Harvey, Principal, 804-785-5830**

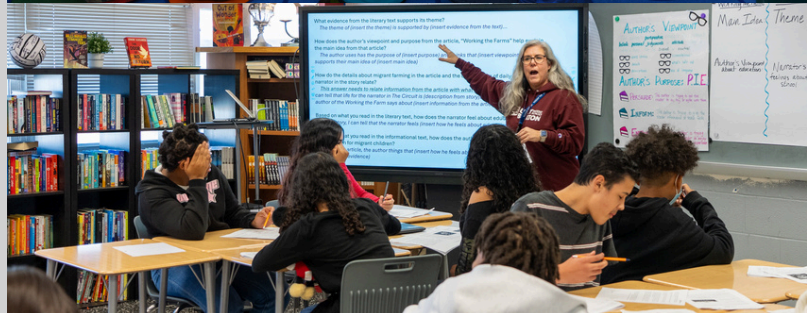


## **DIVISION: Madison County Public Schools**

### **PROGRAM: Waverly Dreamers**

Encouraging students to take on responsibilities and gain practical experience can be an excellent way to help them grow and develop. Waverly Dreamers has been an excellent opportunity for 5th-grade students to apply for and work in various jobs throughout the school building. With a range of jobs available, from library assistant to school ambassador, students have the chance to build a diverse set of skills that will be useful throughout their academic and professional careers. This program helps students develop their confidence and sense of responsibility, while also providing them with valuable experience that can help them succeed in the future.

**CONTACT: Dr. Pattie Rees, Principal, 540-948-4511**



## **DIVISION: Prince William County Public Schools**

### **PROGRAM: Grow Your Own Registered Teacher Apprenticeship**

In February, the Virginia Department of Education awarded Prince William County Public Schools (PWCS) a \$350,000 grant to go toward the Grow Your Own Registered Teacher Apprenticeship program. The program is in partnership with Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and is meant to help address teacher shortages by removing cost barriers and providing quality teacher preparation. The program provides an opportunity for VCU undergraduates, who already have an associate degree, to earn their bachelor's degree at no cost while concurrently working in a PWCS school. The apprenticeship not only covers tuition costs but also offers a full salary with benefits. Furthermore, each participant, who aspires to transition into a classroom teacher role, will be paired with an experienced mentor teacher for guidance and support. The \$350,000 grant will support up to 25 apprentices, paving the way for a new generation of educators.

**CONTACT: Diana Gulotta, Director of Communications, 703-791-8720**





**DIVISION: Pulaski County Public Schools****PROGRAM: PCHS GO**

In September of 2023, Pulaski County High School (PCHS) held their annual PCHS Go Event. PCHS Go is a student led event in which students dedicate a full school day's time to on campus community service projects. This year over 80 projects were tackled to help make the PCHS campus a better place and show their Cougar Pride. Some of these projects were painting areas in the school, landscaping, washing faculty/staff vehicles, cleaning the stadium, collecting and organizing donations for the PCHS clothing closet, and many others. This event started at PCHS, but soon spread county-wide with elementary schools and middle schools initiating their own volunteer projects. Those students who were not involved in on-campus projects read to younger students at the elementary schools, made homecoming corsages, delivered waters and student-made snacks around to those students who were working on projects and made care bags for nursing home residents and armed forces members.

**CONTACT: Jennifer Bolling, Principal, 540-239-4299**

**DIVISION: Roanoke County Public Schools****PROGRAM: Student-led Conference**

The Opportunity Ready Certification program began with 5 pilot schools last year and expanded to 15 schools this year, including students' defenses of learning and student-led conferences. This is a flip of the traditional parent-teacher conference where the parent and the teacher discuss the student's performance. Instead, the student discusses their performance directly with the parent and the teacher helps guide the discussion. The purpose of student led conferences is to help students take charge of their learning and hold themselves accountable for their successes and opportunities for improvement. As students progress through k-12 education, they will develop their presentation skills to the point they are ready to defend their portfolio in their senior year. Those students that successfully defend their portfolios are presented with an "Opportunity Ready Certification." RCPS collaborated with local businesses and colleges so that those students who have earned an Opportunity Ready Certification will receive an extra level of consideration for jobs and college admissions.

**CONTACT: Chuck Lionberger, Director of Community Relations, 540-562-3700**



**DIVISION: Stafford County Public Schools****PROGRAM: Specialty Centers of Stafford**

Stafford County Public Schools has expanded its curriculum, launching Specialty Centers of Stafford - comprehensive, specialized, 4-year pathways for like-minded high school students designed to offer a rich academic experience that leads to high quality post-secondary outcomes. Each center will feature multiple pathways tailored to specific student interests and career goals and incorporate work-based learning experiences that elevate the student educational experience. The initiative underscores Stafford Schools' dedication to academic excellence, fostering high expectations and expanding opportunities through interdisciplinary coursework, while supporting the division's goal that every student will have a plan to be employed, enlisted, and/or enrolled in a post-secondary institution upon graduation. Further, the Specialty Centers engage the community and business leaders in the learning experience through mutually beneficial partnerships designed to offer real-world opportunities and mentorships in high-demand career fields to Stafford students.

**CONTACT: Michael Bolling, Chief Academic Officer, 540-658-6000**

**DIVISION: Virginia Beach City Public Schools****PROGRAM: TIDE Coalition**

Amplification of student voice is one of the key high yield strategies in the Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS) Educational Equity Plan. To better foster an environment through which authentic conversations can be held, the Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion has established the TIDE coalition. TIDE (Togetherness through Inclusion, Diversity and Equity) is a community of practice comprised of VBCPS staff and select high school students in grades 9-12. The purpose of the coalition is to create a forum in which students work directly with central support staff to identify resources needed to increase student sense of belonging and develop advocacy skills. The coalition collaborates to capture student voice on topics related to equity, social emotional learning, mental health, and civic engagement. Additionally, the central support staff working to address these concerns are able to get meaningful input and feedback that will help guide their decision-making. All of this is for the purpose of improving the approaches at the division level, as well as assisting schools in identifying key areas for improvement and building the capacity of students to lead the work in their respective buildings.

**CONTACT: Iy Harris, Director, Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, 757-263-1218**





# VSBA

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*Participation in VSBA initiatives and observances is optional. Any related materials from the Association are shared as suggested ideas and resources for implementation. Member school boards may choose not to participate locally.*



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### MISSION STATEMENT

Virginia School Boards Association, a voluntary, nonpartisan organization of Virginia school boards, promotes excellence in public education through leadership, advocacy and services.

### VISION STATEMENT

VSBA is recognized and respected as an innovative leader in public education.