



**VSBA**

**Virginia School Boards Association**

Leadership • Advocacy • Support

# SHOWCASES FOR SUCCESS

VSBA SPECIAL EDITION NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the Special Edition of the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) Newsletter! We're thrilled to spotlight the brilliance, creativity, and innovation happening in public schools across the Commonwealth! This special edition celebrates the incredible programs and initiatives that are setting the gold standard in public education.

In our ongoing mission to elevate public education, the VSBA invited school divisions from across Virginia to share their most impactful and inspiring programs, true "Showcases for Success." These standout submissions demonstrate what's possible when passion meets purpose in our schools.

To make these success stories accessible year-round, we've created an interactive online directory—now live on the VSBA website! This dynamic resource will be shared far and wide with school board members, superintendents, legislators, state leaders, and journalists to highlight the powerful impact of public education.

From elementary to high school, from STEM to student leadership—these programs are as diverse as the communities they serve and as inspiring as the students they uplift. Whether you're looking to spark new ideas or replicate proven models, this directory is your go-to destination for educational inspiration.

Let's learn from one another, share what works, and keep pushing the boundaries of what education can be. Together, we can build a future where every student has the opportunity to thrive.

## SHOWCASE DIRECTORY

[www.vsba.org/showcases](http://www.vsba.org/showcases)



## PARTICIPATING SCHOOL DIVISIONS

Alexandria City Public Schools  
Amherst County Public Schools  
Appomattox County Public Schools  
Caroline County Public Schools  
Chesapeake City Public Schools  
Clarke County Public Schools  
Culpeper County Public Schools  
Danville City Public Schools  
Dinwiddie County Public Schools  
Fairfax City Public Schools  
Franklin City Public Schools  
Greene County Public Schools

Hampton City Public Schools  
Harrisonburg City Public Schools  
Henrico County Public Schools  
Henry County Public Schools  
Hopewell City Public Schools  
King and Queen County Public Schools  
Louisa County Public Schools  
Lunenburg County Public Schools  
Manassas City Public Schools  
Manassas Park City Public Schools  
New Kent County Public Schools  
Pittsylvania County Public Schools

Prince Edward County Public Schools  
Prince George County Public Schools  
Prince William County Public Schools  
Pulaski County Public Schools  
Rappahannock County Public Schools  
Roanoke City Public Schools  
Salem City Public Schools  
Stafford County Public Schools  
Washington County Public Schools  
Waynesboro City Public Schools  
Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools

**DIVISION: Roanoke City Public Schools****PROGRAM: Community Builders**

Community Builders is a two-year pilot program designed to reduce youth violence in Roanoke while equipping students with the tools to succeed academically and personally. Funded through bipartisan legislation and signed into law by Gov. Glenn Youngkin, the program provides engaging summer and year-round experiences for 8th graders from diverse backgrounds. Weekly summer themes include career exploration, college visits, community service, recreation, and academic support. Students develop professional readiness skills, explore post-secondary opportunities, and strengthen social-emotional competencies through restorative practices. Partnerships with higher education institutions and local community organizations provide ongoing “community-building” activities during the school year. Initial data shows a reduction in chronic absenteeism and disciplinary incidents among participants, as well as improved academic performance. Community Builders empowers students to build stronger futures while positively impacting their communities.

**CONTACT:** Corey Alder, Director of Community Engagement  
[calder@rcps.info](mailto:calder@rcps.info) | 540-853-1359

**DIVISION: Salem City Public Schools****PROGRAM: Forge the Future**

Forge the Future – Manufacturing Inclusion Camp is a four-week program designed to empower individuals with disabilities (ages 16–30) through targeted manufacturing education and career development. Funded by a \$25,000 grant from SparkForce, the initiative includes two weeks of classroom-based instruction followed by two weeks of hands-on job training with local industry partners, including Alro Steel, Altec, Integer, Mersen, and Wabtec. By providing participants with practical skills and exposure to real-world work environments, the camp directly supports career readiness and workforce inclusion. Early outcomes from similar SparkForce programs show increased post-program employment rates and skill acquisition, demonstrating the camp's potential to boost student achievement and long-term success.

**CONTACT:** Jeff Bird, Coordinator of Assessment and Accountability  
[jbird@salem.k12.va.us](mailto:jbird@salem.k12.va.us) | 540-389-0130

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**DIVISION: King & Queen County Public Schools**

**PROGRAM: Independent Living Program**

Central High School's Independent Living Instructor, Katy Packett, has taken the Independent Living Program to the next level for her students. She met the challenge of a self-contained program head on with one goal this year; to create real world opportunities for her students to learn sustainable life skills through collaboration on school based projects that include true work related scenarios. Mrs. Packett entered a partnership with Raise Coffee. Raise Coffee donated the supplies for a coffee cart. Students take orders from staff and deliver their product weekly. This service requires students to interact with the staff, developing their customer service and social skills while they use their consumer math skills in adding totals and counting change. She also implemented monthly family dinners for her students and their families. The funds allow for community-based shopping trips for the meals. These dinners create community and shared experience.

**CONTACT:** Jennifer Eddy, Central High School Principal  
[jeddy@kqps.net](mailto:jeddy@kqps.net) | 804-785-6102



**DIVISION: Manassas Park City Public Schools**

**PROGRAM: Manassas Park High School Partnership with the National Women in Roofing**

The National Women in Roofing organization has partnered with GAF and Beacon to provide a one-week roofing academy to young women at Manassas Park High School. The NWIR program empowers young women in the trade industry by fostering essential skills such as collaboration, communication, and professionalism. Through hands-on training and mentorship, participants learn to work efficiently as part of a team, ensuring seamless coordination on roofing projects. The program emphasizes clear communication, which is vital for safety, project success, and client satisfaction. Additionally, professionalism is a key focus, equipping women with the confidence and industry knowledge to thrive in a traditionally male-dominated field. By building strong networks and enhancing trade expertise, the Women in Roofing Program opens doors for career advancement, leadership roles, and long-term success in the roofing industry. Students were able to continue their experience and earn a roofing certificate and their OSHA 10 certification.

**CONTACT:** Faten Hammad, Work Based Learning Coordinator  
[faten.hammad@mpark.net](mailto:faten.hammad@mpark.net) | 703-361-9131



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**DIVISION: Hampton City Public Schools****PROGRAM: Bethel High School Sheriff B.J. Roberts Simulation Lab**

The Simulation Lab at Bethel High School is a groundbreaking, state-of-the-art facility that enhances hands-on learning for students in the Academy of Law and Public Safety and the Governor's Health Sciences Academy. This cutting-edge lab integrates an emergency management center, ambulance simulation, and 911 dispatch training, providing students with an immersive, real-world experience in crisis response and public safety. Through realistic scenario-based training, students develop critical thinking, communication, and rapid decision-making skills essential for careers in emergency services, law enforcement, and healthcare. This innovative learning environment bridges the gap between classroom instruction and real-world application, fostering career readiness and workforce development. The Simulation Lab exemplifies a commitment to transforming learning spaces in traditional high schools as students prepare for careers, setting a new standard for hands-on training. Its impact extends beyond the classroom, shaping the future of public safety and healthcare professionals with unmatched experiential learning opportunities.

**CONTACT:** James Harris, Chief Academic Officer  
[jharris1@hampton.k12.va.us](mailto:jharris1@hampton.k12.va.us) | 757-727-2130

**DIVISION: Clarke County Public Schools****PROGRAM: Clarke County "JumpStart" Program**

The future of career readiness for high school students in Virginia just got brighter with the launch of the Clarke County "JumpStart" Program. A pioneering collaboration between Clarke County High School and Blue Ridge Community and Technical College (BRCTC), this innovative program empowers students to gain real-world experience, earn college credits, and position themselves for success in high-demand career fields. This partnership among states is the first of its type in Virginia. The BRCTC Campus in West Virginia is home to the JumpStart program. Students can complete their high school education while earning college credits, certifications, or even credentials recognized by businesses thanks to this relationship. Specialized programs include cybersecurity, criminal justice, welding, mechatronics, and culinary arts. This partnership strengthens the bridge between secondary education and workforce development, empowering students to achieve their career goals. This collaboration is a pipeline to high-wage, high-demand jobs that enriches the local economy.

**CONTACT:** Dr. Rick Bolling, Superintendent  
[bollingr@clarke.k12.va.us](mailto:bollingr@clarke.k12.va.us) | 276-298-4149

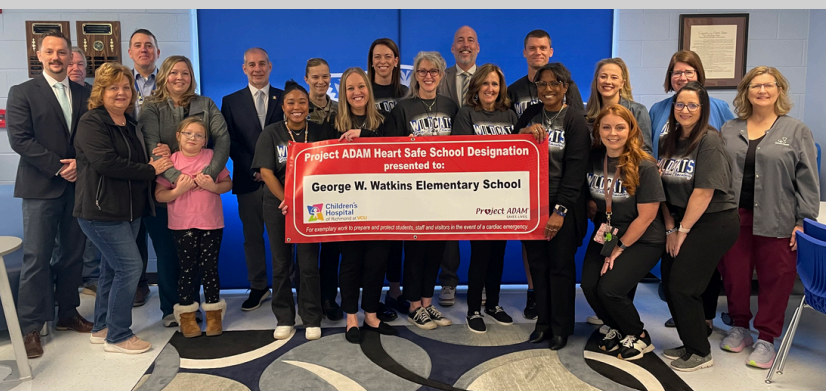
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**DIVISION: New Kent County Public Schools****PROGRAM: George W. Watkins Elementary Designated as a Project ADAM Heart Safe School**

George W. Watkins Elementary School (GWES) has been recognized as a Project ADAM Heart Safe School, one of only 33 schools in Virginia to earn this distinction. This initiative enhances student safety and fosters a learning environment where students feel secure, a critical factor in academic success. Discussions about the program inspired school nurse, Ms. Amanda Akrie, to expand training efforts by teaching fourth-grade students CPR, empowering them with life-saving skills they can use both in and outside of school. In addition, GWES partnered with the Children's Hospital of Richmond at VCU to establish a trained Cardiac Emergency Response Team, strategically placed AEDs, and a comprehensive emergency response plan. Regular training and drills ensure readiness, creating a culture of preparedness that benefits the entire school community. By prioritizing safety and student empowerment, GWES supports a positive school climate that enhances focus, confidence, and overall student achievement.

**CONTACT:** Ashlee Meredith, Technology/ Digital Content Creator  
[ameredith@nkcps.k12.va.us](mailto:ameredith@nkcps.k12.va.us) | 804-966-9671 ext. 4398

**DIVISION: Greene County Public Schools****PROGRAM: Dragon Magic Academic Showcase**

The Dragon Magic Academic Showcase at William Monroe Middle School is an event designed to engage the community by showcasing student achievements. It highlights a variety of academic projects, including student labs and experiments, National History Day presentations, and musical performances throughout the school. The event allows students to demonstrate their learning and creativity, while also fostering a strong connection between the school and the local community. By offering students the opportunity to present their work publicly, it builds confidence, enhances critical thinking, and encourages deeper learning. The Showcase has led to notable improvements in student achievement by promoting a sense of pride and accomplishment, as well as enhancing skills in research, presentation, and performance.

**CONTACT:** Patricia Demitry, William Monroe Middle School Principal  
[pdemitry@greencountyschools.com](mailto:pdemitry@greencountyschools.com) | 434-939-9003

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**DIVISION: Rappahannock County Public Schools****PROGRAM: SPARK (Summer Program for Adventure, Recreation, and Knowledge)**

SPARK (Summer Program for Adventure, Recreation, and Knowledge) offers an enriching summer experience for students in kindergarten through 7th grade, blending academic support, recreational activities, and leadership development. The program also provides meaningful job opportunities for teens, helping them develop leadership and mentorship skills while addressing the lack of local job options in rural areas. Launched in 2024 through a partnership with the Headwaters Foundation, Northern Virginia 4-H Education Center, and the Child Care & Learning Center, SPARK will return this summer. In its first year, SPARK served 138 campers and employed 59 teen counselors, providing vital childcare for working families while keeping students engaged academically. RCPS views SPARK as a crucial component of its mission to promote student well-being, academic success, and workforce readiness. By fostering social-emotional growth, leadership, and community engagement, SPARK aligns with Rappahannock County Public Schools' goal of equipping students for success beyond the classroom.

**CONTACT:** Jenny Kapsa, Profile of a Graduate Coordinator  
[jkapsa@rappahannockschoos.us](mailto:jkapsa@rappahannockschoos.us) | 540-227-0745

**DIVISION: Pittsylvania County Public Schools****PROGRAM: Pittsylvania County Schools' STEM Academy**

Offering STEM opportunities strategically at the ninth and tenth grade levels bridges students' exposure to potential career interests from middle school career investigations/connections coursework to making choices regarding more formalized training in careers in 11th and 12th grade. The PCS STEM Academy offers students authentic industry-driven instructional experiences in the advanced manufacturing and health science career clusters. Upon successful completion of the PCS STEM Academy, students will have fulfilled sequential elective and industry credential diploma requirements. Instruction at STEM is designed to open pathways for students' career interests and encourage them to consider and pursue careers in fields like, CNC Machining, HVAC, Industrial Maintenance, Engineering, Automation/Robotics, Welding, Manufacturing, Emergency Services, Medical Research, Medicine, Pharmacy, Rehabilitative Services, Radiology, and Forensics. More formalized training is offered in many of these and related areas at the Pittsylvania County Career & Technical Center (PCTC) and within CTE courses at the high schools.

**CONTACT:** Janelle Ball-Brooks, Director of Career & Technical Education  
[janelle.brooks@pcs.k12.va.us](mailto:janelle.brooks@pcs.k12.va.us) | 434-432-2761

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**DIVISION: Danville City Public Schools****PROGRAM: STEM Certification**

Danville Public Schools has created model choice STEM programs, Activ8, Innov8, and Motiv8 (AIMS), that enables students to focus at specialized schools in a pipeline approach to science, mathematics, technology, and engineering for each primary and secondary. Activ8 for elementary, Innov8 for middle, and Motive8 for high school students. Each academy provides select students with engaging hands-on learning, problem-solving opportunities, discovery, and integrated experiences in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Course offerings include Agriscience, Aviation, Trade, and Industrial Technology, focusing on Mechatronics.

**CONTACT:** Stephanie Prunty, Curriculum & Instruction, Assistant Director  
[sprunty@mail.dps.k12.va.us](mailto:sprunty@mail.dps.k12.va.us) | 434-799-6434 ext. 264

**DIVISION: Washington County Public Schools****PROGRAM: Collaboration Fuels Success of Grab-and-Go Breakfast Program**

Washington County Public Schools is tackling food insecurity and boosting student achievement through innovative breakfast programs. At the Washington County Career and Technical Education Center (WCCTEC), the new Grab-and-Go Breakfast Program makes it easy for students, especially those who head straight to the center in the morning, to grab a nutritious meal, without having to stop at their home high school first. Our Breakfast After the Bell Programs at our high schools also give students a second chance to eat if they miss breakfast or aren't feeling hungry first thing. These programs are not only convenient, they're improving focus and performance in class. Students are more energized, teachers are noticing better engagement, and parents are grateful for the added support. Thanks to the strong collaboration between schools and the School Nutrition Department, these programs are working, proving that when schools listen to their community, real change happens.

**CONTACT:** Ashley Hoak, School Outreach Specialist  
[ahoak@wcs.k12.va.us](mailto:ahoak@wcs.k12.va.us) | 276-739-3080

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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.





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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.*