

VSBA SHOWCASES FOR SUCCESS

SPECIAL EDITION NEWSLETTER

30 YEARS of SHOWCASING SUCCESSSES



CREATIVE
SOLUTIONS



FORWARD-THINKING
INITIATIVES



IMPACTFUL PRACTICES
THAT SUPPORT
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT



VSBA

Virginia School Boards Association®

Leadership • Advocacy • Support

*Featuring 12 programs & initiatives from the
VSBA Showcases for Success Directory*

Forward

from VSBA's Executive Director, Gina Patterson



Welcome to this Special 30th Edition of the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) Newsletter. As we mark three decades of Showcases for Success, we pause to celebrate not only a milestone, but a legacy—one built on innovation, dedication, and an unwavering commitment to public education across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

For 30 years, Showcases for Success has served as a platform to elevate and share the extraordinary work happening in our public schools. What began as an effort to highlight exemplary programs has grown into a statewide tradition of recognizing initiatives that reflect excellence in action. Programs that are thoughtful in design, impactful in practice, and deeply rooted in the core values of public education. Each year, school divisions from across Virginia contribute to this, demonstrating what is possible when leadership, creativity, and purpose come together in service of students.

This special edition highlights 12 outstanding programs selected from the 2026 Showcases for Success directory—a statewide collection of 62 exceptional initiatives making a meaningful difference in schools and communities. These featured programs represent the very best of Virginia's public education system, showcasing forward-thinking approaches, creative solutions, and impactful practices that support student achievement and strengthen school divisions.

In recognition of this 30-year milestone, VSBA is also proud to continue expanding access to these stories through our online Showcases for Success directory. This resource serves as a hub for school board members, superintendents, educators, policymakers, and community stakeholders to explore, learn from, and build upon the success of others. It reflects our belief that when we share knowledge and celebrate progress, we create opportunities for growth across every corner of the Commonwealth.

As you explore this edition, I encourage you to reflect on both the progress we have made and the possibilities that lie ahead. The programs featured here span grade levels, disciplines, and community needs, yet they share a common foundation: a commitment to ensuring every student has access to high-quality public education. They remind us that innovation is happening every day in our schools, driven by educators and leaders who are dedicated to preparing students for success in an ever-changing world.

For 30 years, Showcases for Success has told the story of public education in Virginia—one of resilience, creativity, and impact. As we celebrate this milestone, we also look forward with optimism, knowing that the future of public education will continue to be shaped by the same spirit of collaboration and excellence that has defined the past three decades.

Thank you for your continued leadership, support, and commitment to public education.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gina S. Patterson".

Gina Patterson

Executive Director

Virginia School Boards Association

2026 Showcases for Success Directory

Celebrating 30 Years of Innovation Across Virginia's Public Schools

As part of the 30th anniversary of Showcases for Success, this year's directory highlights 62 exceptional programs representing 30 school divisions across the Commonwealth. Each program reflects the creativity, leadership, and commitment that define public education in Virginia. Together, these divisions showcase a wide range of innovative practices designed to support student achievement and strengthen school communities.

The divisions listed below are part of this year's statewide collection, with select programs featured throughout this special edition.



SHOWCASE DIRECTORY
www.vsba.org/showcases

PARTICIPATING SCHOOL DIVISIONS

Alexandria City Public Schools	Greene County Public Schools	Pittsylvania County Public Schools
Caroline County Public Schools	Hampton City Public Schools	Prince Edward County Public Schools
Charlottesville City Public Schools	Henry County Public Schools	Prince William County Public Schools
Chesapeake City Public Schools	Highland County Public Schools	Pulaski County Public Schools
Clarke County Public Schools	Hopewell City Public Schools	Rappahannock County Public Schools
Culpeper County Public Schools	King and Queen County Public Schools	Roanoke City Public Schools
Dinwiddie County Public Schools	Louisa County Public Schools	Stafford County Public Schools
Franklin City Public Schools	Lunenburg County Public Schools	Virginia Beach City Public Schools
Fredericksburg City Public Schools	Manassas City Public Schools	Washington County Public Schools
Gloucester County Public Schools	Manassas Park City Public Schools	Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools

FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

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Greene County Public Schools

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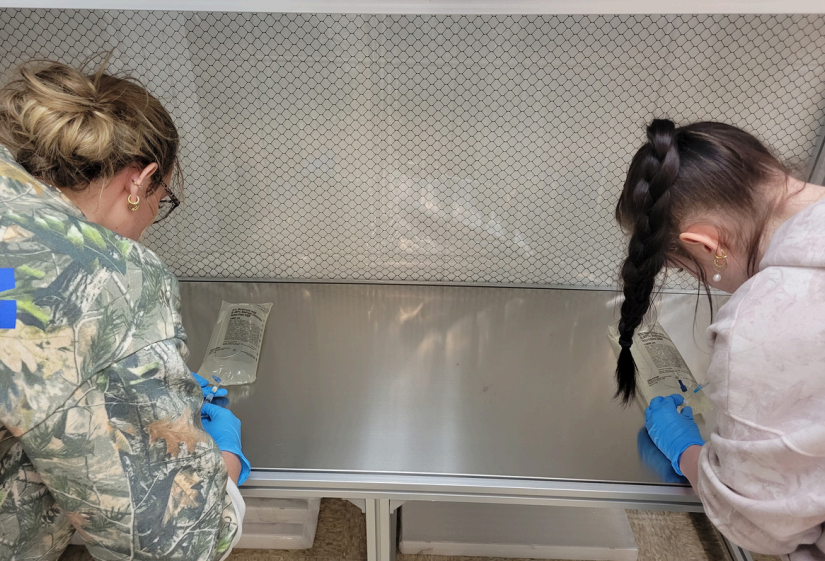
Growing Highland: A K–12 Agricultural Learning & Community Partnership Model — p. 8

DIVISION: Pulaski County Public Schools

PROGRAM: Pulaski County High School Pharmacy Tech Program and Lab

Pulaski County High School is revolutionizing career readiness through its new, grant-funded Pharmacy Lab. Designed to meet rigorous ASHP/ACPE national accreditation standards, this state-of-the-art facility provides students with an immersive, high-fidelity simulation of both retail and clinical pharmacy environments. By bridging the gap between classroom theory and industry practice, the lab allows Health and Medical Science students to master complex compounding and inventory management in a professional-grade setting. This innovative space doesn't just prepare students for national certification, it serves as a critical workforce pipeline for the New River Valley. Our goal was to create a space where the line between student and professional disappears. Thanks to our grant from Blue Ridge Partnership for the lab and our transportation van for non-driving students, our students are now stepping out of PCHS and directly into the heart of the medical workforce all over the New River Valley (Martin's Pharmacy, Blacksburg Pharmacy, New River Economy Drug, Radford Drug, and Carilion to list a few).

CONTACT: Tara Bird, Teacher, Pharmacy Tech I/II Health and Medical Sciences Pulaski County Public Schools CTE-Pharmacy tmbird@pcva.us | 540-643-0378



DIVISION: Gloucester County Public Schools
PROGRAM: Community Engagement Coordinators

Gloucester has a unique program in which each school has a Community Engagement Coordinator. They improve our student achievement by bringing together schools, families, and the community. They act as a liaison between our schools and our community by building relationships and creating events that strengthen relationships and trust within our community. We know public education only truly succeeds when all parties are vested in the same goal! When we all work together our students and school benefit tremendously. These coordinators work with their school to coordinate school and community activities. They manage school volunteer and community partnership programs. They supervise school facilities by school and community groups, publicize school and community activities to promote the mission and accomplishments of our school division. In the words of a coordinator: "I like to think of myself as the community liaison for the school by managing the school's volunteer program, planning enrichment opportunities for the students, coordinating study trips, speakers and special programs, supervising community use of our school in the evenings, and serving as the public relations/information person." We are so thankful our county values the relationship our community has with our schools!

CONTACT: Quinton Sheppard, Community Engagement & Public Information Director, Gloucester County qsheppard@gloucesterva.info | 804-693-5730

DIVISION: Greene County Public Schools

PROGRAM: The Academy at GCPS

The Academy is an innovative program within GCPS designed to support middle and high school students who benefit from an alternative educational environment. The program provides flexible learning opportunities, individualized pacing, and one-on-one staff support, along with access to counseling services that address both academic and social-emotional needs. Instruction is tailored to each student's unique strengths, challenges, and goals, creating a truly personalized learning experience. The Academy has demonstrated improvements in student achievement by increasing engagement, attendance, and course completion rates among participating students. With targeted support and a flexible structure, students are able to make meaningful academic progress and regain momentum toward graduation. Additionally, students participate in CTE and elective courses outside of The Academy, allowing them to explore career interests and stay connected to broader school opportunities. This combination of personalization and real-world relevance helps students build confidence, persistence, and a clear pathway to success.

CONTACT: Jess Perego, Director of Technology & Innovation
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DIVISION: Rappahannock County Public Schools

PROGRAM: Active Learning in Outdoor Spaces and Farm-to-Table Exploratory Classes

Rappahannock County Elementary School (RCES) students are building healthy habits through two new exploratory classes led by Commit to Be Fit (C2BF), the school-based wellness program. In SY25–26, all K–3 students participate in a weekly 45-minute Active Learning in Outdoor Spaces (ALIOS) class. This innovative class, held outdoors, promotes physical activity while introducing foundational concepts of gardening, nutrition, environmental science, and mindfulness. For grades 6–7, a reimagined Farm-to-Table exploratory emphasizes collaboration, garden design, carpentry, and gardening. To further build excitement for this reimagined class, students partnered with local farmer Jason Loris. This collaboration ultimately led to a Guinness World Record for the most peppers grown on a single plant! In each of these outdoor classes, students experienced increased physical activity, enhanced nutrition awareness, a greater willingness to try new foods, and improved student engagement.

CONTACT: Hollyann E. Jenkins, Communications & Engagement Specialist/ Wellness Integration Coordinator
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DIVISION: Stafford County Public Schools
PROGRAM: Band Together to Fight Hunger

Celebrating its 15th anniversary, Stafford Schools Band Together to Fight Hunger is a signature, divisionwide service-learning initiative that unites all five high school marching bands and engages over 400 student musicians in addressing food insecurity while building leadership, collaboration, and real-world skills. In 2025–2026, students collected 4,304 pounds of food and raised \$21,222, providing 42,444 meals to local families. Over 15 years, the event has generated more than 600,000 meals for the Fredericksburg Regional Food Bank. Students lead event planning, outreach, and fundraising, strengthening communication, problem-solving, and civic responsibility, skills directly tied to college, career, and life readiness, while demonstrating the lasting impact they can have on their community through service, teamwork, and innovation. The initiative exemplifies Stafford County Public Schools' mission to inspire and empower every student.

CONTACT: Ann Rutt, Visual & Performing Arts Coordinator
ruttae@staffordschools.net | 540-658-6000



DIVISION: Lunenburg County Public Schools
PROGRAM: Kenbridge Construction Playhouse Partnership

The Central High School Carpentry II and III students are gaining real-world experience through an exciting partnership with Kenbridge Construction Playhouse project. This hands-on initiative allows students to apply classroom skills to meaningful projects, strengthening their understanding of construction techniques, teamwork, and problem-solving. Through this collaboration, students are working alongside industry professionals, learning current practices, and seeing how their skills translate into careers. As a result, we have seen increased student engagement, improved technical skill development, and greater confidence in completing complex tasks. This partnership is also helping students make clearer connections between their coursework and future opportunities, leading to stronger performance and a deeper commitment to their learning. We are proud to provide experiences that prepare our students for success beyond the classroom.

CONTACT: Karen McGrath, CTE Coordinator
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DIVISION: Hopewell City Public Schools

PROGRAM: Balanced Calendar

The Balanced Calendar is a division-wide year-round school calendar. It maintains the mandated 180 school days for students, but provides those days in a more balanced manner across the calendar year. It also offers six additional weeks of instructional opportunities through intersession courses. There are two types of courses: Enrichment courses, self-selected by students and families, and Remediation courses, with attendees selected by the school. Enrichment courses allow students to have experiences they otherwise would not have, while remediation helps students to address learning gaps. Intersessions occur in two week increments in the fall, late winter, and summer. Courses are teacher-designed, diverse, creative, and innovative. Intersessions allow the school division to simultaneously address two competing concerns: 1) allowing those who need a break to take one while 2) offering instructional opportunities for those that want or need them. In the race to prepare students, Hopewell gets more time.

CONTACT: Byron Davis, Director of Strategic Initiatives
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DIVISION: Washington County Public Schools
PROGRAM: CultivatED Leadership Academy

The goal of CultivatED Leadership Academy is to grow a leadership team that is ready to flourish, driving measurable improvements in student achievement by strengthening the people who shape instruction every day. When leaders are intentionally developed, they become more effective at coaching teachers, analyzing data, and implementing evidence-based practices. This leads to more consistent, high-quality instruction across classrooms. Strong leadership also fosters a positive school culture, where expectations are clear and accountability is shared. As leaders evolve, they are better equipped to identify learning gaps, support struggling students, and scale successful strategies. Over time, this alignment between leadership, teaching, and student needs results in higher academic performance, improved engagement, and sustained excellence across the school.

CONTACT: Dr. Keith Perrigan, Superintendent
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DIVISION: Chesapeake City Public Schools

PROGRAM: Teen Summit

The Teen Summit is an annual event for middle and high school students and their families. This conference-style forum allows teens and parents to learn, discuss, and engage with topics affecting today's youth. Free community resources are provided, along with lunch and a keynote speaker. Parents and students then attend breakout sessions of their choosing, aligned with topics such as college and career readiness, mental health and wellness, parent and family support, life skills, and leadership and student voice. Presenters include students from various high school student council associations and school and community experts.

CONTACT: Dr. Angie Smith, Chief of Staff
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DIVISION: Hampton City Public Schools

PROGRAM: Living Library 8th Grade Signature Experience

Hampton City Schools launched the Living Library 8th Grade Signature Experience, an innovative program connecting classroom learning with real-world career exploration. Now in its second year, the initiative continues to grow through strong community partnerships. The City of Hampton Public Library hosted the program's first year, and Hampton University hosted this year's experience, providing meaningful spaces for student engagement. All eighth-grade students across the division's middle schools participate in hands-on activities designed to expand their understanding of careers, community leadership, and personal passions. Students digitally "check out" community professionals aligned with the Academies of Hampton career pathways and prepare through reading and reflection before conducting one-on-one interviews to learn about career journeys, skills, and passions. The experience encourages students to reflect on career awareness, networking skills, and personal growth.

CONTACT: Dr. James T. Harris, Chief Academic Officer
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DIVISION: Clarke County Public Schools

PROGRAM: Cultivating Impact: A Clermont Foundation and Clarke County Public Schools Partnership

Clarke County Public Schools, in partnership with the Clermont Foundation, has developed a vertically aligned middle school program integrating agriculture and science through hands-on learning at Clermont Farm. Aligned to Virginia Department of Education standards, students in grades 6–8 engage in progressively complex, real-world experiences. Sixth graders explore Earth science through water systems and conservation practices, seventh graders apply life science concepts through ecosystem and environmental stewardship activities, and eighth graders connect physical science to agricultural applications through animal science studies. This approach strengthens student achievement by increasing engagement, deepening conceptual understanding, and improving retention of scientific content. Students demonstrate greater mastery of Standards of Learning through applied experiences, while also developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The program has led to measurable improvements in academic performance and fosters awareness of agricultural careers, environmental responsibility, and future workforce readiness.

CONTACT: Jessica Nail, Director of Curriculum and Instruction
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DIVISION: Highland County Public Schools

PROGRAM: Growing Highland: A K–12 Agricultural Learning & Community Partnership Model

Growing Highland: A K–12 Agricultural Learning & Community Partnership Model integrates a student greenhouse with a division-wide Agricultural & Natural Resources Field Day to deliver hands-on, career-connected learning for all students. In a small, rural division with limited access to off-campus experiences, HCPS brings industry and real-world applications directly to students through partnerships with organizations such as Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District, Virginia Department of Forestry, local FFA and 4-H programs, and Bath Community Hospital through its “Food is Medicine” initiative. All PreK–12 students participate in applied learning experiences aligned to science Standards of Learning, increasing engagement and content retention. The greenhouse supports year-round, inquiry-based instruction, while Food is Medicine connections reinforce nutrition, wellness, and real-world application. This model has strengthened student engagement, expanded STEM and CTE pathways, and contributed to improved academic outcomes through meaningful, place-based learning.

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



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