

DCSS Digest

Highlighting Excellence in the Douglas County School System

Fall 2021



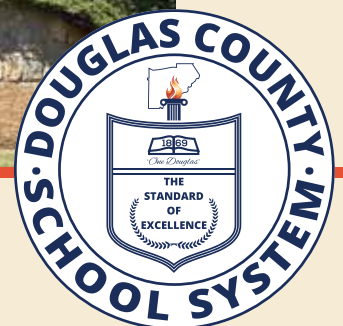
ON THE COVER

Renovation work is scheduled to finish in the spring at the new DCSS administrative office facility, formerly GreyStone Power, on Veterans Memorial Highway.



Together, we shape the future.

dcssga.org



Dear Friends:

I am excited to return with this new edition of the DCSS Digest. Last spring, we moved into our new location at 11490 Veterans Memorial Highway. The former GreyStone site now houses our Central Office and allows many of our administrative offices to be together under one roof. Housing many Central Office departments together maximizes our efficiency and better serves Douglas County parents and students.



We spent the summer quickly settling into our new home, but the renovations and improvements continue. Efforts are underway to make our new workspace an efficient operation that is welcoming for employees and visitors. Overall, the transition to our new headquarters has been successful and allowed us to continue creating new ways to celebrate student success.

This edition of the DCSS Digest celebrates the students, staff and parents in the Douglas County School System. Despite being a year filled with many challenges, we have been committed to celebrating their success every day. I hope you will enjoy reading and celebrating their accomplishments as much as I do.

We have so many reasons to be proud of our students. From a Douglas County High School student's business detailing Georgia Tech's Ramblin' Wreck to the DCSS grads teaching in our school system, I continue to be amazed by what our students and graduates accomplish. Every day they give the world their best and inspire others with acts of service and selflessness. Their actions inspire the next generation of dreamers, thinkers and achievers.

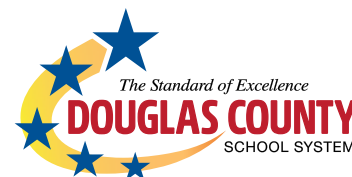
I hope you will enjoy reading about their successes. Thank you for continuing to support their journey and our school system.

Sincerely,

Superintendent Trent North
Douglas County School System

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

Tahira Chandler named DCSS Teacher of the Year

Tahira Chandler, the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) teacher at New Manchester High School (NMHS), has been named the Douglas County School System (DCSS) Teacher of the Year for 2021-22. Chandler was recognized at a banquet on September 23, along with the other 33 school-level Teachers of the Year.

During the TOTY judging process, judges spoke highly of Chandler, many saying her positive attitude and passion for her students and teaching set her apart. Another remarked that Chandler had a genuine love and commitment to her profession, while another added that each student in her class is important to her.

“As a public school teacher, we are blessed to serve a diverse group of learners each year. Some years, we get students who love school and want to learn, and some years we have students who are just not lucky enough to be able to focus on their schooling alone,” Chandler said. “We must ensure the success of all of our students, no matter what deficits or learning gaps they may have.”

Chandler, a Detroit, Michigan, native, moved to Georgia in 2007 and began her teaching career in 2010. Since 2016, Chandler has been helping students at NMHS, first as a math teacher before transitioning to teaching AVID at the beginning of the 2021-22 school year.

Chandler, center, is pictured with Radiance Ruffin, middle school TOTY, and Avery Zachery, elementary school TOTY.



AVID is a year-long program for students that seeks to close the achievement gap and prepare them for college readiness and future career success in a global society.

At the banquet, Avery Zachery, a Winston Elementary School fourth-grade teacher, was named Elementary School TOTY, and Radiance Ruffin, a seventh-grade teacher at Stewart Middle School, was named Middle School TOTY.

Other semifinalists for district TOTY in addition to Chandler, Zachery and Ruffin were Meagan Russell of Bright Star



(Above) Board of Education Chair Tracy Rookard and Superintendent Trent North present Douglas County TOTY Tahira Chandler with her trophy.

(Below) Chandler is pictured with her husband, John Chandler, who serves as assistant principal and athletic director at Alexander High School.

Elementary School, Colette Bell of Yeager Middle School and Leah Mathis of Alexander High School.

The 2021-22 Douglas County School System TOTY will represent Douglas County for the next year at various speaking engagements and will compete for 2022-23 Georgia Teacher of the Year.



DCHS student washes Ramblin' Wreck

The entrance of the Ramblin' Wreck is one of college football's most iconic traditions. But before the Wreck takes the field, the 1930s Model A car undergoes a thorough detailing the night before the game.

Earlier this year, Douglas County High School International Baccalaureate (IB) Senior Josh McElroy, a lifelong Yellow Jacket fan who recently started his own detailing business, received the honor of getting to wash the Wreck.

"It was a total dream to wash the Wreck," McElroy said. "The opportunity came up through my sister, Haley McElroy, because she is a member of the Ramblin' Reck Club at Georgia Tech. Haley mentioned my business in conversation one day and the driver of the Wreck overheard and wanted me to come teach him how to care for the vehicle."

About 18 months ago, Josh began his mobile detailing business with a \$300 loan from his parents for startup materials. He detailed his first car with the business in July 2020, and since then, he has made hundreds in revenue, built impactful relationships with long-term clients and maintained a five-star Google reviews rating from customers.

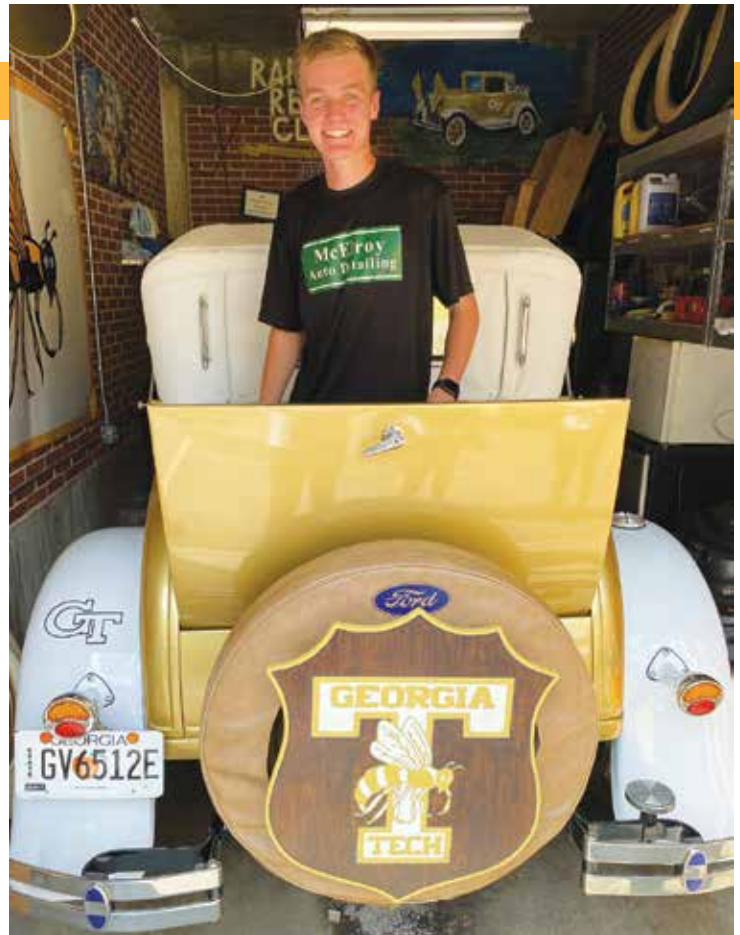
"The root of the business lies in my passion for cars and being introduced to detailing by some older friends of mine," Josh said of his business. "My difference as a detailer is that I genuinely enjoy my work and find it quite satisfying to spend four to six hours on a car and witness the entire transformation from start to finish."

After being contacted about detailing the car by the Ramblin' Reck Club, Josh made his way to a secret location on Tech's campus to help members of the Club wash the car on Sept. 10.

Washing the car is typically a process that involves several members of the Club, so to keep everyone involved and not disrupt the usual rhythm, Josh brought his materials from his business to the site so everyone could help clean the car.

"All the club members loved the equipment," Josh said. "I was able to talk to the driver, Ethan Rosman, for an extended period of time on how to care for the Wreck. I ended up creating a document for him with all my product recommendations and instructions for how to wash the Wreck. He specifically requested it be sent to an email that all future drivers of the Wreck will be able to access."

Along with getting to wash his team's favorite mascot, Josh's



DCHS student Josh McElroy takes a photo with the freshly detailed Ramblin' Wreck earlier this fall after being asked to clean it before a game by Georgia Tech's Ramblin' Reck Club. McElroy has owned and operated a car detailing business since July 2020.

car detailing business has also taught him many different lessons that he feels will be beneficial as he prepares for his college career and looks to begin studying finance.

"I have learned so much from my business that will help me in my future careers. For example, I've done the basic cost accounting of the financials of my business to understand what it truly costs me to do each detail (labor wage and materials)," Josh said. "I look forward to the growth of my business through college and hope to continue to learn as much as possible."

Where does Josh plan to attend college next year? He hopes to follow in the footsteps of his older brother and sister, current students at Georgia Tech, or possibly branch out and attend the University of Georgia.



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AHS Habitat for Humanity nearing home completion



When Alexander High School (AHS) senior Sutton Cadman first gathered a group of ambitious, community-minded students together to start Alexander High School's Habitat for Humanity chapter two years ago, his goal was to do more than just start a new organization at AHS. He wanted to build a home for someone.

And two years later, Cadman and AHS' chapter have seen their vision become a reality, as they hosted their final work day on the home on Oct. 16.

The home, located at Veterans Place, one of two all-military Habitat neighborhoods in the country, will belong to local disabled Army veteran Steve Harris and his long-time fiancée Jane Kellogg.

"It is super exciting to see all my hard work finally pay off," said Cadman. "From fundraising to building a full house it finally all came together to be completed."

Cadman's vision of building a home started in 2018 when a baseball injury pushed him to explore new ways to spend his time.

After getting the club started, Cadman and the group began maybe the most daunting task - raising funds for the home.

Though most school Habitat for

Humanity chapters in the Northwest Metro Atlanta area work together to raise money for builds like this one, AHS' chapter undertook fundraising by themselves. Through fundraisers, like car washes and yard sales, and community donations, the group was able to raise the required funds.

However, just before the build began, the pandemic delayed the build for about a year. And as the price for lumber and building materials began to rise, the group stayed focused and continued raising money to offset the increased costs.

Eventually, the build began on August 7, 2021, and once again, the community came out in full force to support the team through volunteer man hours and other contributions.

"The community is the only reason we were able to complete this project. Not only did they help support us with fundraising but they also came out to the builds," said Cadman. "We couldn't have done it without them. They are the reason we got to the finish line."

Along with getting community support on the build, Cadman and the chapter were visited by CBS46's Surprise Squad.

During the visit, the chapter was presented with another donation for the home, and Cadman also received a Bass



Pro Shops gift card and other prizes for his work in getting AHS' chapter started and working to turn his vision into a reality.

"I was more than surprised, but it was great," Cadman said. "I'm super glad that The Surprise Squad came out, and I'm just really happy to be surprised with the donation. It more than pushed us over our goal, and now we've raised \$100,000."

But after nine weekends of building with the community, Cadman and AHS' Habitat for Humanity Chapter gathered at the home for a ceremony dedicating it to the Harris-Kellogg family on Oct. 30.

With the build now completed, Cadman says he won't take much time to rest. The AHS senior hopes to partner with other Douglas County Schools' Habitat for Humanity chapters and begin fundraising for two more homes.

"I love giving back to the community, and these young adults I work with do too," Cadman said. "Nothing is better to see than somebody with that nice smile and being so thankful for getting a house."



You can come home again!

Douglas County grads return to teach

In Douglas County, 23 brand new teachers who are also graduates of a high school in Douglas County started their careers with the Douglas County School System. These teachers, many just a few years removed from high school themselves, are making a difference at 16 DCSS schools. Some of them are working at one of their former schools.

Our hats are off to all 23 of our first-year teachers and DCSS alums! Enjoy these profiles from 15 of them.

“Teaching is one of the most important professions. Teachers have the potential to touch the lives of the children and families of Douglas County. I am particularly pleased when our former students decide to become teachers. What an awesome way to give back to our school system and work to help us become even better at meeting the needs of the boys and girls of the Douglas County School System!”

—Jill DePriest, Executive Director of Human Resources,
Douglas County School System

Kerbi Rucker, New Manchester HS, Food and Nutrition



“The best part of my job so far is honestly the students. They are some of the toughest critics, so they push me to be better every day.”

Attended: Sweetwater ES; Factory Shoals MS; Lithia Springs HS, Class of 2016
College: University of Georgia, 2020

Support: Everyone at my job has been amazing. I have a mentor, and of course I attended the New Teacher Orientation.

Why DCSS? I decided to return because I feel at home in Douglas County. I grew up here, went to school here... why not work here! I was also a substitute teacher at NMHS last year, so I felt lucky to be offered a job at a school I was already familiar with.

Additional responsibilities: Assistant cheerleading coach at Factory Shoals Middle

Nana Pearson, Douglas County HS, 9th and 10th Grade Literature



“I love the students. As cliché as that might sound, I genuinely LOVE my classes and my students. I have enjoyed getting to know my colleagues as well. I feel very welcome and accepted at DCHS.”

Attended: Burnett ES; Chestnut Log MS; Douglas County HS, Class of 2016

College: Jacksonville State University

Support: My school community is very supportive. It felt like I was coming back home when I walked in for my first day.

Why DCSS? Douglas County High School is my home. I was born and raised right here in Douglas County, and I could not imagine teaching anywhere else.

Additional responsibilities: Varsity basketball coach

**Jalen Curry,
Lithia Springs HS,
10th Grade Literature**



"The best aspect of my job is knowing that I am positively impacting my students in the best way. I have built great classroom relationships with my students. My favorite aspect of my job is my classroom because when my students step inside, we all become one family. I look forward to teaching and seeing my students every day, and I believe they feel the same way."

Attended: Chapel Hill HS, Class of 2011
College: Georgia State University
Prior experience: LPN in doctor's office
Support: I have received a tremendous amount of support from my co-workers and administrative staff at LSHS. From the moment I came to Lithia Springs I was welcomed with open arms.

Why DCSS: I was educated by the Douglas County School System and I felt it would be an honor to pay it forward and give back to my community by educating our youth.

Additional responsibilities: Sponsor for Student Government Association (SGA)



**Jamie Williams,
Lithia Springs ES,
Kindergarten**

"I chose to work in Douglas County because I grew up here and worked here prior to becoming a teacher."

Attended: Lithia Springs ES; Arbor Station ES; Yeager MS; Alexander HS, Class of 2015
College: West Georgia Technical College for associate degree; Mercer University for bachelor's degree

Prior experience: Parapro at Bright Star ES for two years

**Rachel Baxter,
Douglas County HS,
Sports Medicine**

"The best part of the job is being able to educate students on what an athletic trainer is. Most think an athletic trainer is a personal trainer or PE coach, and they quickly learn that an athletic trainer is a healthcare provider."

Attended: Alexander HS, Class of 2011

College: Jacksonville State University for bachelor's and master's degrees; Life University for master's in athletic training

Prior experience: Athletic trainer

Support: My department is very supportive as I am starting the Sports Medicine Pathway, which includes an internship at this school. The athletic department is also very supportive.

Why DCSS? I returned first to Douglas County as their athletic trainer and over time Mr. Weaver talked to me about starting a Sports Medicine Pathway. I love to educate and inform others of what I actually do, and I have students who are interested in what I do which led me to teaching.

Additional responsibilities: I am over the athletic training student aides and the athletic trainer for all sports at Douglas County High School.



Jealon Richey, Factory Shoals ES, Physical Education

"The best thing about my job is being around people who strive to make a difference and impact students' lives each and every day."

Attended: Douglas County HS, Class of 2016

College: University of West Georgia

Why DCSS? I decided to return to Douglas County because I loved being here when I attended school.

Additional responsibilities: Sponsor of Road Runners running club

Douglas County grads return to teach - continued



Karla Hernandez, Alexander High School, Computer Science

“My favorite part of teaching is getting to witness all of the ‘aha’ moments. When I teach the content in just the right way for students to fully understand, it makes me feel accomplished. I love the meaningful discussions in which all students are engaged in the conversation. Of course, the FBLA activities and trips are so fun, too.”

Attended: Bill Arp ES; Fairplay MS; Alexander HS, Class of 2003

College: University of Georgia and University of Phoenix for bachelor’s degree; Georgia College and State University for master’s degree.

Prior experience: Operations accountant, human resources assistant, special needs paraprofessional

Support: My school has been very welcoming to all first year teachers. They have provided me with a wealth of resources to develop engaging lessons. I have been provided with an experienced teacher mentor who has helped me tremendously this year. Additionally, my school consistently shows their appreciation for what I do each day. They notice the work that all teachers put into their students and in making our school the best it can be, and they make sure to recognize us for those positive actions.

Why DCSS? Douglas County is home to me. I grew up in this school system and my son is currently growing up in it. I had many great teachers here who helped shape me into the individual I am now. Some of those teachers are still teaching in Douglas County. I find it very special when the same teacher who made a positive impact on me is now teaching my son.

Additional responsibilities: FBLA advisor

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Kallie Owens, Alexander High School, World and U.S. History

"So far the best parts of my job are seeing my students open up and express their creativity through projects. I have some very talented and passionate students who go above and beyond on their projects and assignments, and I always look forward to seeing what they come up with."

Attended: Chapel Hill HS, Class of 2012

College: Georgia College and State University

Prior experience: Public educator in museums; historical and environmental interpreter for AmeriCorps through the Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites

Support: I have a mentor who assists me with every little question I have which is a massive help! Also, my department, administration, front office, and other teachers in the building have all been extremely helpful, friendly, and willing to help us new teachers out!

Why DCSS? My former teacher, friend and current mentor, Holly Perry, knew I was wanting to get into teaching and reached out to me about an open position at Alexander. She told me how amazing the administration was. As a first year teacher working for a school system I am familiar with and with people I knew was very comforting to me.

Additional responsibilities: Head coach for swim team



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Jakarla Hill, Eastside Elementary, Fourth Grade

"The best aspect of my job so far is seeing the students jump for joy when they have mastered a concept. I also enjoy seeing students get excited about learning a concept and the endless amounts of hugs and laughter. I also love planning activities students will enjoy and remember for the rest of their lives."

Attended: Eastside ES; Chapel Hill MS; Lithia Springs HS, Class of 2016

College: Valdosta State University

Support: I have received an abundance of support from colleagues, administrators, mentors, and instructional coaches.

Why DCSS? I decided to return to Douglas County because I had such awesome teachers while growing up. My first grade teacher inspired me to become a teacher because she was warmhearted, patient, goal-oriented, and was an honorable teacher. I also came back to impact the lives of students who may not feel they can strive to be the best and to be the lending ear teacher when they feel everyone is against them.

Additional responsibilities: After School Program (ASP)



Jasmin Ellis, Chapel Hill HS, Special Education

"I value the relationships and trust I have built with my students and athletes."

Attended: Chapel Hill HS, Class of 2013

College: Kennesaw State University

Prior experience: Walt Disney World

Support: I receive support from my special education department and administrative team.

Why DCSS? I had some amazing teachers and coaches in Douglas County who have inspired me to be the role model to this generation as they were to me. This is truly a passion of mine, and I am blessed to be here at my alma mater.

Additional responsibilities: Coach for competition and sideline cheerleading and track and field



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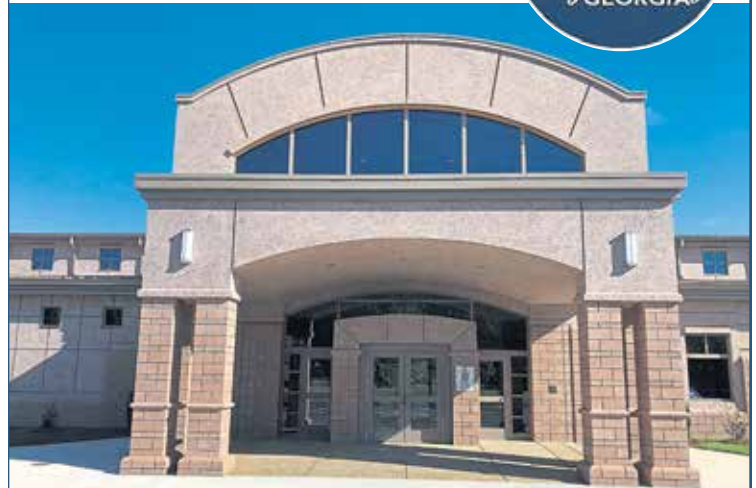
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Mallory Rice, Bright Star Elementary, First Grade

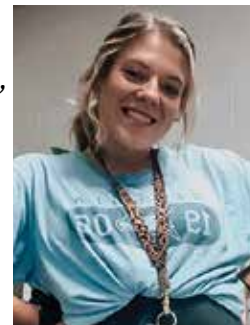
"I think one of the best aspects of my job so far has definitely been the students. I look forward to seeing them come to school each day, and they never fail to put a smile on my face."

Attended: Chapel Hill ES; Chapel Hill MS; Chapel Hill HS, Class of 2017

College: Georgia Southern University; currently working toward master's degree at the University of West Georgia

Support: I have received so much support from everyone here at Bright Star. They have all been there to help and support me with whatever I need.

Why DCSS? I decided to return to Douglas County because I wanted to give back to the county that gave me so much, and I have known so many people who have enjoyed teaching here.



Rashard Leonard, Chestnut Log Middle, 7th Grade Social Studies



"The best parts of my job are helping students learn, strengthening our community, and becoming a positive role model in Douglas County."

Attended: Mt. Carmel ES; Chestnut Log MS; Lithia Springs HS, Class of 2013

College: Georgia State University

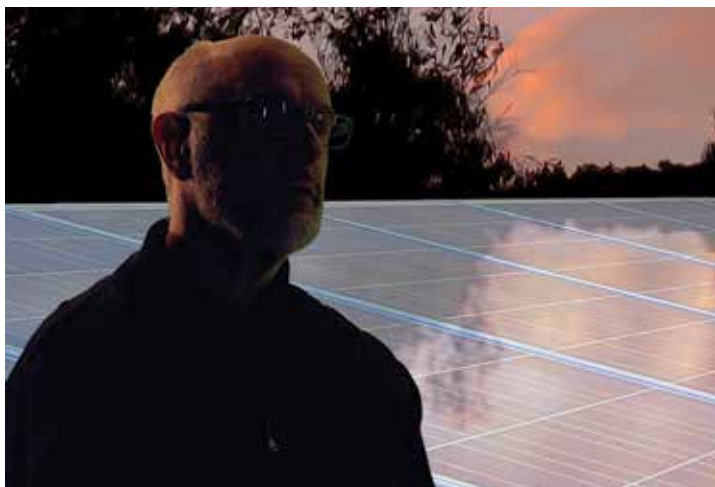
Prior experience: Security field

Support: I have been welcomed back into the Chestnut Log family with open arms. I have mentors in my grade level and subject area that have helped me adjust to my new position. Administration has ensured that I am not alone on my teaching journey.

Why DCSS? Douglas County is home for me. I was educated here most of my life. I wanted to give back to a community that gave so much to me.

Additional responsibilities: Assistant football coach for CLMS

AVOID SHADY SOLAR SCAMS



Consumers across the state, including GreyStone Power members, have fallen victim to disreputable rooftop solar vendors.

While the Georgia Public Service Commission chairman asks the attorney general's office to investigate these bad actors and their misleading advertising, GreyStone is asking members to contact the cooperative for information about solar power.

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Douglas County grads return to teach - continued

**Maria Delangel,
Beulah ES,
First Grade
Spanish
Dual Language**



"The best aspects of my job so far have been building relationships with my students, watching my students appreciate learning, working in a team, continuing to learn, and receiving support from my colleagues."

Attended: Lithia Springs ES; Turner MS; Lithia Springs HS, Class of 2017

College: University of West Georgia

Support: Our school principal supports the Dual Language Immersion program so much and has been very supportive! The instructional lead teachers have been a big support for me as well. Tracy Moore has also been great – providing me with learning materials for our DLI classroom and moral support. Mrs. Moore is very passionate for teaching and for the Dual Language Immersion Program, and it is contagious.

Why DCSS? I decided to return to Douglas County because it is my hometown, and I wanted to give back to the community where I grew up. Many of my teachers were my role models and I hope to one day do the same for my students.

**Madison Henley,
Fairplay MS,
8th Grade Science**



"I value building relationships with students, parents, and faculty in the community. I believe these relationships allow me to be a better teacher and even an overall better person."

Attended: Alexander HS, Class of 2016

College: Truett McConnell University

Support: I have received support from administration, parents, school personnel, mentor teachers, grade level teachers, content area chairs, and teachers in the school community. Everyone at Fairplay is willing and able to help me thrive during my first year of teaching.

Why DCSS? This is home and what better place to start my career than a place that is home.

**Natalie Townsend,
Chapel Hill ES,
Kindergarten**



"So far, my favorite part of my job is seeing my students' light bulbs go off. I love seeing them accomplish anything they may have been having difficulty understanding."

Attended: North Douglas ES; Stewart MS; Douglas County HS, Class of 2015

College: Valdosta State University; currently working toward master's degree at Mercer University

Support: I have received an awesome amount of support being a first-year teacher. My team is always willing to help out where I need it.

Why DCSS? I returned back to Douglas County because I loved having the opportunity to learn in this district. I wanted to be able to give back to the community that once gave to me.

Additional responsibilities:

Cheerleading coach at Stewart MS



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Janelle Brown

Douglas County parent Janelle Brown is working with State School Superintendent Richard Woods to improve the quality of the schools in our community and our state. As a member of his advisory council, she plans to share ideas on increasing academic performance and parental involvement in schools.

The North Douglas Elementary School parent is part of the State School Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council, a group of thirty parents across the state providing input on new policies, projects, and materials impacting students and their families.

Brown is a mother to twin girls in the fourth grade. Principal Pamela Wooley nominated Brown, who is in the first year of a two-year term. The council

selected Brown based on her capacity to lead, her involvement in her children's school, and application questions.

In her application, Brown talked about inclusion. "Diversity sets Douglas County apart from other school systems. Relatable role models matter. I also addressed the importance of promoting community and school partnerships. Partnering with schools is paramount to building lasting solutions and working towards excellence."

Brown believes this opportunity is

significant because it offers the chance to spotlight the achievements of the Douglas County School System. Serving on the council provides learning opportunities and means she can bring new ideas back to Douglas County and North Douglas Elementary School.

"Being actively engaged at my daughters' school and building relationships with the faculty has helped form a community with a common goal of preparing every student for success."

Mrs. Brown's twin daughters inspired her to serve on the State School Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council.



New Weather Station Fascinates South Douglas Students

A South Douglas Elementary teacher says the school's new weather station inspires students and teaches them about the world around them. "Our students are now enthusiastic meteorologists. They've been busy recording temperature, air pressure, wind speed, and the amount of rainfall every day during

science class," fourth-grade teacher Kati Kent says. She says since August, they have collected the weather data to make predictions and forecast weather for their school community.

The new weather station includes a thermometer, barometer, wind vane, anemometer, and rain gauge. Each day during science class, a student from each class becomes the meteorologist of the day. They are responsible for collecting all the data from the weather station in the classroom, recording it on the class data sheet, and reporting the data to the class. Students then discuss cloud types and weather instruments, along with what patterns and trends they see.

Students won their weather

station through a Rain Barrel Contest sponsored by the Douglas County Water and Sewer Authority. Their winning rain barrel design had individual thumbprints envisioned as raindrops using the theme "Every Drop Counts." Their art teacher, Terezie Rice, helped the students' vision come to life with her rain barrel painting. Their colorful rain barrel has been installed and will supply water for the new garden and garden club this school year.

Teachers believe creating the rain barrel and winning the weather center enables students to stay connected to the world around them. Ms. Kent believes teaching students to observe the weather helps them better understand nature.



"The weather affects the way we live. It impacts humans, animals, and our environment. Now students are learning more and more about that connection," Ms. Kent says. "I love watching my students use the information they have learned in class and apply it to new situations every day!"



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REGISTRATION EXTENDED!

AGES 3-14 • SEASON BEGINS MAR 12TH

REGISTRATION NOV 1ST - FEB 4TH
IKE OWINGS COMMUNITY CENTER

Jan 26th - Coaches Meeting
Feb 5th - Evaluations (Ages 5-14)
Feb 7th - Player Draft (Coaches only)
Feb 9th - Parent Team Notification
Feb 12th - Practice Begins
Mar 12th - Season begins
*Age Control Date is Apr 30th, 2022

FEES

Ages 3-4	\$75
Ages 5-6	\$90
Ages 7-8	\$115
Ages 9-14	\$135

REGISTER AT DOUGLASVILLEPARKS.COM