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# CONTENTS

## Page 6

Pitt County Early College High School

## Page 9

Innovation Early College High School at ECU

## Page 10

Principal of the Year: Allison Setser

## Page 12

Teacher of the Year: Julie Brickhouse

## Page 14

Behind the Scenes: Custodian Curtis Blow

## Page 16

Athletics

## Page 18

Career-Technical Education

## Page 20

Community Schools & Recreation

## Page 22

Health Sciences Academy

## Page 25

Media Library Services

## Page 26

Student Services

## ABOUT THE COVER

Photo by Brenda Monty



The 2018-19 school year marks two historic milestones for Pitt County Schools Early College High School — moving into a new 16,750-square-foot facility and the graduation of its first senior class. In addition to rigorous classes, competitive academic opportunities to excel and develop personal interests, students can earn college degrees/credits or trade certifications tuition free, all while remaining in their community under the guidance and support of parents and nurturing teachers.

# QUICK HITS

## Page 28

A.G. Cox Middle  
Ayden Elementary

## Page 29

Ayden Middle  
Ayden-Grifton High

## Page 30

Belvoir Elementary  
Bethel School

## Page 31

C.M. Eppes Middle  
Chicod School

## Page 32

Creekside Elementary  
D.H. Conley High

## Page 33

E.B. Aycock Middle  
Eastern Elementary

## Page 34

Elmhurst Elementary  
Falkland Elementary

## Page 35

Farmville Central High  
Farmville Middle

## Page 36

G.R. Whitfield School  
Grifton School

## Page 37

Hope Middle  
J.H. Rose High

## Page 38

Lakeforest Elementary  
North Pitt High

## Page 39

Northwest Elementary  
Pactolus School

## Page 40

Ridgewood Elementary  
Sugg-Bundy Elementary

## Page 41

South Central High  
South Greenville Elementary

## Page 42

Stokes School

## Page 43

W.H. Robinson Elementary  
Wahl-Coates Elementary

## Page 44

Wellcome Middle  
Wintergreen Primary  
Wintergreen Intermediate

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Education is  
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Thank you for your interest in learning more about Pitt County Schools. Whether you have a child in one of our schools, you are considering us for your child's education, or you are a curious member of the community, you can reference this publication to learn more about the many opportunities provided to the nearly 24,000 students who inspire us on a daily basis.

This magazine highlights our amazing schools, our wonderful staff and the programs and activities that are offered within our district. In all, Pitt County Schools is comprised of 16 elementary schools, six K-8 schools, seven middle schools, eight high schools and a pre-K education center. Additionally, we will share information about the extracurricular opportunities and academic programs that have helped Pitt County Schools achieve record graduation rates in recent years while providing each child a rigorous and personalized education.

As one of the 15 largest school systems in North Carolina, we are fortunate to be located in a county that is among the state's fastest growing and features a thriving business, medical and educational community. It is our goal that all residents and visitors will be aware of the many outstanding things happening each day in our schools.

We celebrate every child and challenge every learner in Pitt County Schools. We want all of our students to become happy, healthy, productive contributing members of society. This magazine is just one way that we are highlighting how we achieve this goal. You can also visit our website [pittschools.org](http://pittschools.org) to learn more about us.

Thank you again for your interest in Pitt County Schools.



*kindest regards,  
Dr. Ethan Lenker  
Superintendent  
Pitt County Schools*



# PITT COUNTY

# EARLY COLLEGE

*Brenda Monty*

Pitt County Schools Early College High School soon begins its fourth year of operation. In doing so, it reaches two historic milestones.

The 2018-19 school year is expected to open with the Pitt Early College Wolves in a spacious, new den.

In partnership with Pitt County Schools, Pitt Community College built a 16,750-square-foot facility not far from where the early college high school opened in mobile classrooms in 2015 with just 75 freshmen. Each year, another grade level and another 75 students have been added.

When school closed for the year in May, 202 students occupied seven classrooms in two mobile units and had spilled over into four classrooms in the nearby Russell building.

Ultimately, 10 classrooms are needed. The building contains eight classrooms with room to build on another two classrooms in the future. Until then, students will still need to trek to three classes in the Russell building.

Ideally, it would be best for high school students to remain together in one building for the sake of oversight and safety. However, learning to navigate a small portion of the vast community college campus has provided the young students an even better taste of the college experience.

“At least now, the bulk of our students will be in one place instead of three,” said principal Wynn Whittington.

Instructional coach Elizabeth Martin added, “We are pleased to have what will feel like a permanent home. What a great statement of investment by Pitt Community College to collaborate with Pitt County Schools on building this.”

Another memorable milestone will be Pitt County Schools Early College High School will graduate its first senior class. Approximately half of the seniors will make up the Class of 2019. The other half will return as “super seniors” the following year to finish up their remaining college courses for their degree.

The early college allows students to earn an associate degree, trade certification or two years of college credits right along with their high school diploma without having to pay tuition fees.

In addition to saving families money, students are able to remain in their community under the guidance and support of parents and



nurturing teachers.

While students must go through an application and selection process, students from anywhere in the county and all rising freshman from all middle schools are welcome.

The early college concept began as a way to better prepare students for working and living in the 21st century. The primary focus is on students who would be the first in their families to attend college and the disadvantaged who might otherwise not attend college.

The early college high school model has proven to be highly successful in bringing together diversity and academic excellence.

The 2017-18 student body consisted of 73 Hispanics, 67 African-Americans, 57 whites, three Asians and an American Indian, plus six other freshmen, sophomores and juniors — 87 percent were economically disadvantaged.

The early college offers many of the same academic opportunities for students to compete, excel and develop personal interests. However, it does not offer sports, which is just fine with teens who simply want a good education.

With all these characteristics, it is easy to





***“We want the kid that wants to be here, wants to change their life forever, and we feel like we do that.”  
- Wynn Whittington***



see why early college students are a unique breed. They are often the ones who typically get lost or left out in large, traditional high schools.

“We want the kid that wants to be here, wants to change their life forever, and we feel like we do that,” Whittington said. “There are a handful of children that if they were not in our program would have probably quit school, because they didn’t have the supports that we’re able to give them. You’re looking for the blue-haired kid that doesn’t conform. ... They don’t want to do sports. They just want to go to school and get done and go to work.”

Students are accepted based on their merit, ability — and grit.

The early college program is rigorous, but because the school is small and classes average between 15 to 18 students, students and staff are able to truly get to know and care about each other. This adds greatly to the teachers’ ability to recognize students’ strengths, weaknesses and individual needs and the students building trust in their teachers.

“I know every kid’s name. They come sit in my office, and we shoot the breeze between classes. We have a lot of irons in the fire every day



ers and four support staff.

Jonathan Gay teaches social studies at Pitt Early College. He has experienced the challenges of traditional school. He also previously taught at Bertie Early College in Windsor.

“I wanted to move to the Greenville area but wanted to stay in an early college system,” he said of his motive. “You really build those relationships with the kids. We still have kids that have challenges, and all of our kids are not straight-A, high flyers, and that’s OK. We have a good environment; those strong relationships between the staff spill over with

here, but it just is not like that traditional high school. You’re not chasing kids down for discipline issues. These children will run through a brick wall for you because they know you care. ... This is what it’s all about,” Whittington said.

He loves being the principal at the early college, calling it “the best gig in town.”

In building the school from scratch, Whittington was able to accumulate a small but outstanding staff of 10 teach-



the students. One of our strengths is the family environment. ... That's definitely why I love it."

Pitt Early College is innovative and STEM focused.

The school has separate computer coding groups for boys and girls.

"We started with girls because females are traditionally under represented in coding careers. We really wanted to offer girls the opportunity to work on their coding skills in a safe, less competitive environment," Martin said.

The girls' latest project is a weather station that math and science classes can use to study real-world problems using local data. The boys have been working on coding for a game for more than a year, figuring out how to write code for the various skill levels.

"Engaging students in these types of real-world projects really keeps them engaged in their learning," Martin said.

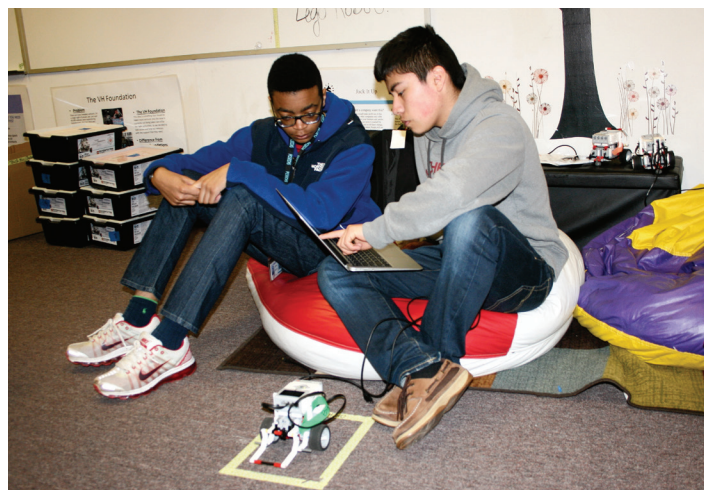
As student population increased and matured, extracurricular activities have grown.

"Our Student Government Association has become more active with older students," Martin said. "We try to do a lot of the same things as traditional high schools."

Students compete in club and academic competitions alongside traditional schools, with Pitt Early College students bringing home first-place awards and monetary prizes for their innovative ideas and academic achievements.

Students have the ability to take as many Pitt Community College courses as they can handle during high school. Martin previously worked at South Central High School, and she saw this demonstrated to a remarkable degree.

"We had one brilliant student that went through every course PCC offered. He finished all high school math in 10th grade, then all of Pitt's math courses. Students have so many more opportunities now," Martin said, referring to access to the array of Pitt Community College courses. "They can truly craft an individualized path and therefore make their education more meaningful and be more engaged in it. All students can do that, but it is particularly so here at the early college."



**THERE IS A  
SUPERHERO IN ALL  
OF US, WE JUST NEED  
THE COURAGE TO  
PUT ON THE CAPE.  
- SUPERMAN**





# BEGINNING A NEW

Jake Keator

The Pitt County Board of Education recently began the process of preparing to open a new early college high school on the campus of East Carolina University.

Innovation Early College High School is located in the D-wing of the Brewster building on the university's campus, which faces 10th Street in Greenville.

Jennifer James, previously the principal of Stokes School, is the principal of the early college, which opens in the 2018-19 school year.

Pitt County Schools and East Carolina University began collaborating a few years ago.

"They brought in different stakeholders to brainstorm how to develop an early college on East Carolina's campus. Superintendent Dr. Ethan Lenker and Mary Carter with Pitt County Schools and Dr. Sharon Kibbe and Dr. (Christopher) Locklear (the vice provost of academic success at East Carolina University), who both work at ECU, worked together on the proposal to send to the Department of Public Instruction," James said.

The process began a few years ago.

James moved into her new office in May 2018 and over the summer the classrooms in Brewster were renovated.

Innovation Early College High School will begin with its first cohort of 55 students. The school will continue to accept 55 new students each year, making the opportunity to be accepted into the program competitive for those who

apply.

"Innovation Early College High School takes the place of a traditional high school for those who are accepted. It will be a Monday through Friday program from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Students will arrive and take their high school classes, which will be honors courses taught by Pitt County School teachers," James said.

On top of their typical high school class load, students will also engage in university courses.

In their first year, students will take COAD 1000, a basic entry to college course, and kinesthesiology 1000, the equivalent of a freshmen physical education course.

East Carolina University professors will go to Brewster to engage with the students in those classes.

"In their sophomore and junior years, students will begin going on to the university campus to take courses. Students will have the opportunity to earn up to 60 university credit hours from East Carolina University," James said.

A selection committee reviewed more than 110 Pitt County middle school student's applications and interviewed 75 students to narrow down the search for the first 55.

"The process was difficult due to the high number of qualified applicants, who displayed both the intellectual and social knowledge to succeed in taking high school courses on a university campus," James said. "We had a lot of students who were strong,

determined, knew what they wanted to do and see this as a good opportunity. It was difficult to narrow down the students."

The applications and interviews were scored using a rubric, which helped to determine who would be a part of the 55 students in the introductory class.

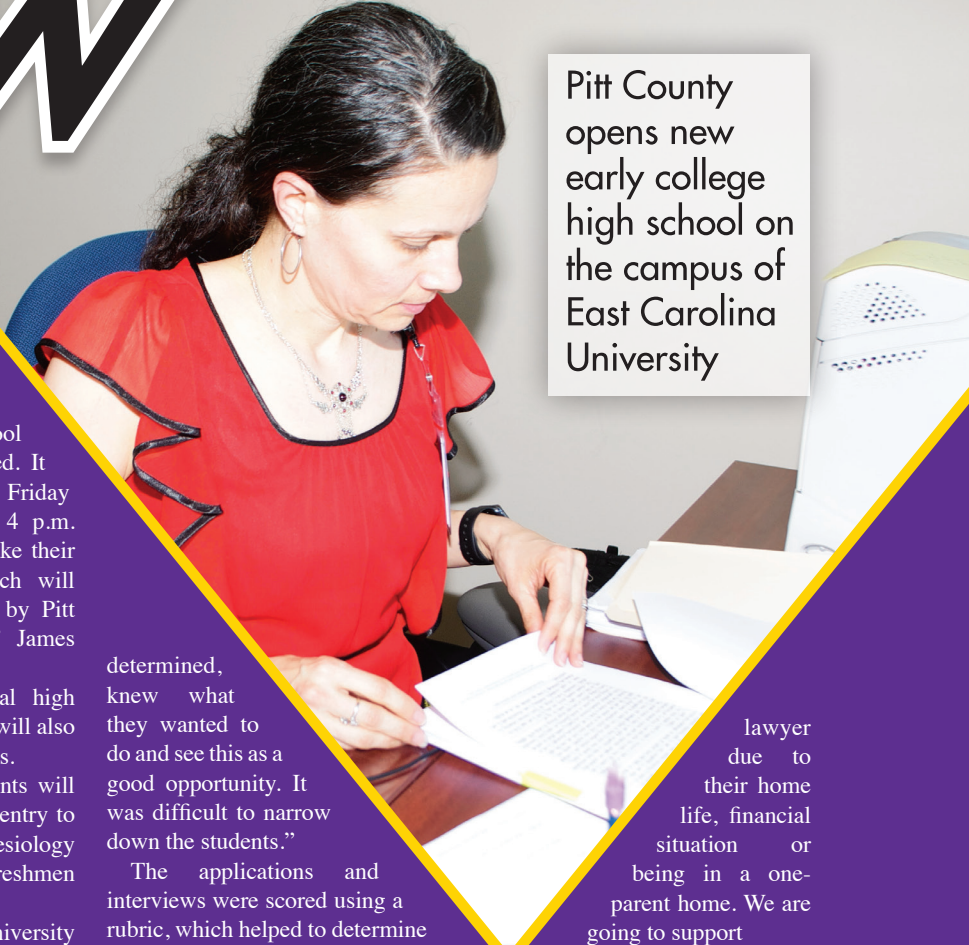
"We have representation from all of the attendance areas in the county," James said.

James was "refreshed" to see students who had already decided on their career paths and were willing to put in the hard work to achieve their goals, she said.

"I didn't know those things when I was in eighth grade. It's just really cool to see kids who have goals and are willing to take the opportunity to meet those goals," James said.

Some advantages of attending high school on a university campus include helping students realizing a dream they may not have originally known of or thought attainable, according to James.

"Some students may not have thought they would be able to be a



Pitt County opens new early college high school on the campus of East Carolina University

lawyer due to their home life, financial situation or being in a one-parent home. We are going to support students as they work towards their 60 credit hours, so that when they become seniors or

get in their fifth year, they see the potential of getting their bachelor's degree," James said.

Another advantage James sees is acclimating to a new setting. A student may have faced bullying or may feel "lost" in a large crowd of students while attending high school. The smaller class sizes can help those students excel in a closer environment with teachers and faculty.

James expects the class sizes to average 18 students.

James looks forward to the excitement of a brand new school year and the unique advantages attending a non-traditional high school can provide.





# PRINCIPAL *of the year*

Angela Harne

Allison Setser will enter her 23rd year in education in the 2018-19 school year. She is the 2017-18 District Principal of the Year.

The New Jersey transplant and East Carolina University graduate began her tenure with Pitt County Schools at Eastern Elementary School. She spent 13 years at the school as a fifth grade teacher. She then spent time at E.B. Aycock Middle School as a sixth grade teacher and then became an assistant principal for the district. She began her principal career at Bethel School before being transferred to H.B. Sugg and Sam D. Bundy elementary schools.

"I love kids. I love inspiring kids, getting them excited about learning and developing them into leaders," Setser said. "I loved school and learning. It has become a joke that I loved school so much I never left."

The administrators over her career path quickly realized Setser was a born leader. She thoroughly enjoyed her leadership role in her classrooms and wanted to expand her impact beyond her class walls.

"What a better way to impact children than to lead a whole school the way my classroom was," Setser said.

She set out to become a principal. She accomplished her goal.

"I loved the Bethel community. It was a great place to be, but Farmville is my home," Setser said.

Setser served as the assistant principal at H.B. Sugg and Sam D. Bundy elementary schools for several years before being named principal at Bethel School. When she was named principal of Sugg-Bundy, she was elated.

"I knew the staff and families, and I wanted to make big changes," Setser said. And changes she did make.

The culture changed, she said.



“There were 34 beginning teachers here when I was assistant principal. Turnover was constant. Now turnover is low. Many teachers are contacting me to come here. We are getting top candidates,” Setser said with pride.

By year two in her new role as principal, Setser advocated for Sugg-Bundy to become the district’s first-ever AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) elementary school. She was granted the title.

She also launched Club Fridays and started themed days, like Science Day, Social Studies Day and Schools-a-Palooza.

Her staff backed her up. She cannot do it alone, Setser said.

Science and social studies are typically “neglected” subjects, so Setser wanted to highlight them and the career paths available to students. Both days feature representatives from science and social studies-based companies.

“They are whole day events. It is a lot of work but so much fun, and our students are learning. To watch a child hug a cow or see where honey comes from or play an instrument with an East Carolina University student — learning does not just come from a textbook. Science Day and Social Studies Day makes learning come alive,” Setser said with a smile. “They are taking selfies with kangaroos and trying sushi.”

Throughout Social Studies Day, students travel the world. Each hallway represents a different country



**I’m always pushing harder and want more. Our children deserve the best and the best school.**  
**- Allison Setser**

featuring food and crafts.

“Each year, I want to add a day,” Setser said, adding this school year will feature Math Day. “A day of games and real world experiences. Kids must see the reasoning in learning. They need to be literate. They need to be able to function in the world. With technology, our students are unable to communicate as well, but with hands-on experience, they laugh and talk to people. Education is more than a multiple choice test.”

The special days “add another layer of instructional” opportunity, she said.

Setser is grateful to her staff, who embraced her leadership and drive. “My first year here, I about killed myself doing all the activities by myself. By year two, I turned it over to my staff, who stepped up and have taken leadership and ownership of our days,” she said. “By year three, we started refining what we were doing to make it better. I’m never satisfied, and I believe we owe it to the kids to get better.”

Setser pushes the mindset of growth and GRIT (Give it your best. Redo if needed. Ignore negatives. Take your time).

“I’m always pushing harder and want more. Our children deserve the best and the best school,” she said.

Nominated by her peers, Setser is appreciative of the Principal of the Year title.

“I wanted my school recognized,” she said.

Under Setser’s leadership, H.B. Sugg and Sam D. Bundy elementary schools are home to Custodian of the Year Cedric Blow, Teacher Assistants of the Year Monica Dupree and Judy Moore, Office Person of the Year Denise Mewborn, Media Coordinator of the Year Anitra Cook and Teacher of the Year finalist Kelsey Phillips.

“I have the best staff. I work them to death between our clubs, Palooza and Science Day, but they see the benefits with our kids. It excites me to see our kids excited to come to school,” Setser said.

Sugg-Bundy is one of a few community schools within the district, according to Setser. She takes pride in the partnership she and her schools have with Paul Briney, the principal at Farmville Middle School, and Brad Johnston, the former principal at Farmville Central High School.

“We work together, and our community supports us,” Setser said. “I am very proud to be a principal. We are on the cusp of greatness.”

Sugg-Bundy is home to 130 teachers and faculty members and 840 students.



# INSPIRING OTHERS

Jake Keator



## TEACHER OF THE YEAR



Pitt County 2017-18 Teacher of the Year aims to promote inclusion for exceptional children.



Teachers are a special breed. Unlike most, who make their career decisions based on monetary gains or personal benefits, teachers choose to teach due to the simple fact they enjoy helping and pushing others to succeed.

Teachers want to help prepare the next generation for the many challenges life can present and work to help them overcome such obstacles.

Every year, one Pitt County teacher is selected to receive the special honor of Teacher Of The Year. Wahl-Coates Elementary exceptional children's teacher Julie Brickhouse earned the honor for the 2017-18 school year.

Brickhouse began her career in education in 1990, after realizing her initial dream of becoming a physical therapist would not pan out.

"During the summers, I would work at the United Cerebral Palsy Center in Charlotte and at a separate school for children with disabilities, just to see if I would be interested. I ended up loving it and knew that was what I wanted to do," Brickhouse said of her experience.

Three years later, Brickhouse began her tenure in Pitt County working at Eastern Elementary with children with disabilities. She then arrived at Wahl-Coates in 2016.

While some may not be up to the task of working with exceptional children and the new challenges and situations it can create, Brickhouse enjoys coming into school and working with her assistant teachers, Pat Page and Sylvia Suggs, to help her students become as independent as possible.

"It's fun to be able to think out of the box to figure out how to help them because everyone is so individualized," she said.

In order to be nominated for Pitt County Teacher of the Year, Brickhouse must first have been selected Teacher of the Year at her school.

When she had learned she had received the award at the school level, she was shocked and humbled.

"I haven't been here that long, and it really meant a lot to know that other people who work here see what we do in the classroom. It was a surprise, and we really appreciated the respect," Brickhouse said.

At the Pitt County Teacher of the Year banquet on March 7, Brickhouse learned she was a finalist for the award.

"It almost felt like 'you don't deserve this' because there were so many other wonderful teachers nominated," she said.

After hearing she had won, Brickhouse was emotional. She spoke of how her desire to help others who may have an extra challenge in life become successful is what drives her to excel in her career.

"This job is very rewarding. Some of them may not be able to be completely independent, but you know when you look in their eyes, they have feelings and they want to be able to tell others. You feel like you've ac-



**This job is very rewarding. Some of them may not be able to be completely independent, but you know when you look in their eyes, they have feelings and they want to be able to tell others. You feel like you've accomplished something when you see that.**  
- Julie Brickhouse

complished something when you see that," Brickhouse said.

All teachers form a bond with their students throughout the course of a year; however, Brickhouse develops an even more special bond.

"It's a very loving bond. You feel close to them because you have them two or three years in your classroom. You become very close with them and their families. They become kind of like your own family," she said.

Despite their challenges, Brickhouse assigns homework for her students. Parents may read with their student to help encourage cognitive development. Parents also help teach her and her assistants as well, Brickhouse said.

Parents may help explain a new skill or issue their child is having so Brickhouse can focus on improving and strengthening that skill in the classroom.

A priority for Brickhouse is helping other students understand the challenges her students face.

At Wahl-Coates, Brickhouse described a time where a class would visit her students every day to meet and play. A similar program was in place at Eastern Elementary, where at the beginning of every school year, other classes were invited to meet the exceptional children students. The program helps foster understanding and compassion between the classes.

"We would invite them into the classroom and explain to them how alike everyone is. They like going to movies, riding horses, going swimming and things like that. It helps them understand that they are just like they are; they just have some other issues they have to deal with," Brickhouse said.

That mentality continued this school year, where volunteers from other classes helped put on a performance of the traditional folk dance and story, "La Raspa." "La Raspa" is an ancient Aztec legend involving bats and peacocks. The show, performed in April, was a hit with the school, staff and parents.

Despite some of the unique challenges Brickhouse faces, she loves her job, her assistants, and most of all, her students.

While she may be sad to see some of her students move on after each year, she is always proud of the progress they have made and the memories that she will have for a lifetime.





# ALL FOR THE KIDS



Custodian works to help steer students on life path for success

## *Jake Keator*

Custodians are some of the friendliest people to walk the halls of an educational facility, quietly working to maintain the pristine image of their school and always open to talking to students about any troubles or news that may be going on.

Cedric Blow works at H.B. Sugg and Sam D. Bundy elementary schools in Farmville, but he has been working with schools around the county for eight years.

He started at Farmville Middle School in 2010 before going to North Pitt High School and then heading to Sugg-Bundy in 2017.

Blow is known for his positive attitude and willingness to help faculty and students through any situation.

“Being in the middle schools, then high school and now elementary, my interactions between the kids and myself have been positive. One of the things is that when I was growing up, my mother ran a single parent household with three girls and myself, so I didn’t have that father figure I needed in my life. I always want to be that father figure to every child,” Blow said.

Blow uses his life experience to help push kids in a positive direction, hoping to help them avoid the same mistakes he made growing up, the same skills he teaches his two children, Justin, 9, and Jordan, 6.

Blow knew he needed to make a change in his life as he was attending North Pitt High School.

Blow was not a fantastic student growing up and made poor decisions, he admits. It was then when he chose to work to help others in his situation and to help them avoid making mistakes that could hold them back in the future. Now, he takes every opportunity to help when he can.

“I said to myself, I can’t let another child make the same mistakes I did and go through the same things that I did growing up,” Blow said.

Walking the halls with Blow through the Sugg-Bundy campus is a rewarding experience. As he goes about his daily routines, checking in on his custodial staff and making sure the school is in top shape, he takes the time to speak with students and faculty, being sure everyone is happy and having a good day.

It is those moments when Blow stops to talk to a student that have the biggest impact. Blow described how when he sees a student sitting in the hall, possibly for a discipline reason, he stops to help the student understand what happened and how the situation could be avoided in the future.

Blow has spent years mentoring Pitt County Students of all ages.

“I remember one time I had a little girl who was having some guy problems, and I wanted to be a mentor (to her). I know kids are going to be kids and you can tell them things but you know what they are going to do. At one point her and her boyfriend had been arguing so much, I just told her ‘You’re too young to stress yourself over boys, and you





**I want to tell these kids, do your work in school now and get the education you need now instead of trying to wait and playing around. There's no need to wait.**

**- Cedric Blow**



have your life to live. Just go get your education, and the boys will come,” Blow said.

Students have thanked Blow over the years for his help and guidance. While he is proud of the kids he has helped, he still has higher dreams for them in their lives, he said.

“Some kids have come up and said, ‘I want to be like you when I grow up.’ I tell them I’m glad you want to be like me, and this is a great job, but it is something I had to settle with,” Blow said.

As he sat in North Pitt High School as a 21-year-old senior, some told Blow he would never graduate, and he would never get a job.

Blow has used those doubters to continue to grow as a student and a person. Blow graduated from Pitt Community College in 2016 with a degree in criminal justice. He will soon graduate again from Pitt Community College with a degree in business and marketing.

“I want to tell these kids, do your work in school now and get the education you need now instead of trying to wait and playing around. There’s no need to wait,” Blow said.

Blow has touched the lives of many children in multiple ways, from personal troubles to inspiring them to take the next step in their lives.

Blow spoke of a previous encounter with a North Pitt High School senior, who felt they were not good enough to attend college.

“They said, ‘I’m not good enough for college; college is not for me.’ I told them maybe you don’t go to college, but look at the Army or the Marines. That student ended up joining the Na-

tional Guard, and I watched them on graduation day,” Blow said.

Working on each level of public education has provided unique challenges for Blow. He enjoys working with elementary school students due to the fact they will “still listen to adults,” which becomes harder as students become older. Blow feels he can make the biggest positive impact on younger students and help set them up for success in middle and high school.

“I feel I can reach these kids a lot quicker than at the other levels. If I can reach these kids, I can help them succeed and be sure they leave a positive impact,” Blow said.

Along with his work with students, the faculty also enjoys Blow’s assistance throughout the school.



“Mr. Blow is great; he is always assisting the faculty and students. He monitors us in the hallways and helps whenever we need anything. I’m fortunate enough to have his son in my class, and he is always personable with all of the teachers,” said Kasey Stephens, a third grade teacher at H.B. Sugg and Sam D. Bundy elementary schools.

Blow looks to continue to make an impact on students, but also looks forward to using his newly earned degrees to help advance his own life to help himself and his family.



# PLAY THE



Athletes work to develop their skills.

Pitt County Schools is home to six unique high schools, which house a variety of talented student-athletes. From baseball to soccer and football to track, these students utilize their skills both in the classroom and on the field and court.

Pitt County Schools Athletic Director Ron Butler oversees the state of athletics inside of the county, along with ensuring rules and regulations provided by the N.C. High School Athletic Association are followed to a tee.

Butler has been the district's athletic director for nearly nine years.

Most believe open enrollment, which allows students to attend a school outside of their district school, and high school athletics, are closely related. The two may operate in unison but have no direct correlation, Butler said.

"Let me be clear, the policies of open enrollment have nothing to do with athletics," Butler said.

One of Butler's main jobs is to maintain competitive and fair play between the county's high schools.

"The beauty of athletics is that sometimes this is the last time some players have complete fairness," Butler said.

Open enrollment can benefit or hurt a program.



# GAME

Jake Keator



“For example, in basketball, one kid can make a good team a great team. On the other hand, losing one player can make a great team an average team,” Butler said.

Open enrollment started when J.H. Rose High School was under capacity, while D.H. Conley and South Central high schools were at or over capacity, Butler said.

Smaller schools, like Ayden-Grifton, North Pitt and Farmville Central high schools had already been involved with the open enrollment policy for more than 20 years.

Following the addition of Rose to the open enrollment list, the Pitt County Board of Education voted to include Conley and South Central, bringing all of the county’s high schools into the mix.

“There was a concern, athletics-wise, involving the potential for recruiting, so it was decided that if you transferred to a larger school, you had to sit out one year,” Butler said.

This meant a player moving from Farmville Central to Rose would be required to sit out of athletic competition for 365 days, starting from the day they officially became enrolled at the school and not just the season of the sport the student was hoping to become in-

involved in.

Students who choose to transfer schools before entering ninth grade are not effected by this policy. For example, should a rising freshmen choose to attend South Central rather than North Pitt, they are immediately eligible to participate in athletics.

“We have the policy listed so that a student can not play for more than one team in a season. If you play, which we define as dressing in your pads or uniform for a regular season game, you can not play for another school that season,” Butler said.

Players are allowed to be involved in preseason scrimmages and still participate in the regular season if they choose to transfer.

An issue with open enrollment is the possibility of recruiting players, Butler said. While there have been very few instances of recruiting by high school coaches, Butler is still keen to understand how parents and coaches may try to push athletes to attending certain schools.

“Obviously, if we know about it (transfers), it has been done legally,” Butler said, explaining he monitors social media to see if any illegal actions are occurring via coaches or parents. “The thing about (social media) is, it leaves a

permanent record.”

Traditionally, word of mouth and accusations were how others found out about possible recruiting violations, but with the addition of social media and the growth of other technologies such as texting, Butler now has records to view should an infraction occur.

Butler sees the state of athletics in Pitt County as “thriving.”

“Middle school and high school athletics right now are thriving. I really don’t think sometimes in Pitt County people appreciate how respected we are throughout the state. Right now, it’s good. We compete well and are dominant in a lot of sports; we take it for granted. You look at girls’ volleyball and you look at the excellence, not only of Rose, Conley and South Central, but Ayden had a great year last year. North Pitt and Farmville have also had a lot of success. We’re good and have great feeder programs,” Butler said.

High school athletics are a staple of a community, whether it is Friday night lights on a football field, a Wednesday afternoon game on the baseball or softball diamond or even a swim meet, Pitt County athletics are in a state of continuing to be a powerhouse throughout North Carolina.

**High school athletics are a staple of a community, whether it is Friday night lights on a football field, a Wednesday afternoon game on the baseball or softball diamond or even a swim meet, Pitt County athletics are in a state of continuing to be a powerhouse throughout North Carolina.**



# PREPARING THE STUDENTS

*Jake Keator*

Pitt County Schools Career and Technical Education director Beth Ann Trueblood helps keep the county's CTE programs on track.



Career and Technical Education programs, also known as CTE, helps prepare students for a career. CTE programs are available at all Pitt County middle and high schools. This allows students to explore various occupations while still in school.

Programs include agriculture, automotive, business, carpentry, family and consumer sciences, health sciences, marketing and STEM, which is the newest program offered.

“These programs prepare our students for careers beyond high school,” said Pitt County Schools’ CTE director Beth Ann Trueblood.

While the focus in middle school is career explorations, CTE also offers STEM and computer programming.

As students enter high school, they are encouraged to begin a CTE pathway, which involves at least four courses of related instruction. As they progress in their





program, students have the opportunity to participate in job shadowing, internships and pre-apprenticeships.

Simone Pate, the district's work-based learning coordinator, assists students with placement in these opportunities that are related to their area of study and interest. Job shadowing entails a student simply following and observing a worker during their job.

"Internships are typically paid however students must meet eligibility requirements to participate. As interns, students work a required number of hours and report on their progress in order to earn high school credit for the experience. The students are taking the skills they've learned in the classroom and utilizing them on the job," Pate said.

The pre-apprenticeship program is the result of a partnership with N.C. Apprenticeship, Pitt County Schools, Pitt Communi-

ty College and local businesses. It is a means by which employers address current and projected employment needs. This method is an industry-driven education and career-training program based on recognized industry standards.

Greenville Utilities Commission offered the first pre-apprenticeship placement in our county as well as region.

"They start work as a junior and work while in school, as well as the summer, while taking classes at Pitt Community College," Pate said.

In addition to work-based learning opportunities, credentials are a large piece of the CTE puzzle. CTE programs assist students in attaining industry-recognized certifications or credentials to ensure that students graduate from high school with a specific set of skills that allow them to be competitive for work and postsecondary education.



Trueblood has lots of experience with the CTE program. After working as a business teacher at J.H. Rose High School and in the school's CTE program for 18 years, she took on her current role with the district. She has been the county's CTE director since 2011.

The rewarding part of her job is seeing students succeed, thanks to the CTE programs they participated in while in school, Trueblood said.

"It's always good to see both teachers and students succeed in

areas they are passionate about," she said.

Pate also has experience, as she took over her position in January 2016. Pate also sees the reward in the long-term advantages that CTE programs provide, she said.

"Businesses are more than willing to work with our students and eager to train them for careers in our community," Pate said.

CTE programs are available at all high and middle schools within the district. The classes are taught by certified faculty.



The students are taking the skills they've learned

in the classroom and utilizing them on the job.



- Simone Pate





# SERVING THE COMMUNITY

*Jake Keator*

Ron Butler works to provide activities for all Pitt County residents





# ALICE F. KEENE PARK

Operated By Community Schools & Recreation

Est. By Pitt County 2008

Our goal is to do what is best for citizens.

-Ron Butler

Ron Butler wears many hats from driver's education instructor to county athletic director. Recently, he took on yet another new role, head of community schools and recreation.

Butler began his tenure in February, following the retirement of Rita Roy, who served in the position for more than 30 years.

"(Before I took this job) I never really appreciated how often these facilities were being used and how much was going on at one time," Butler said.

The department celebrates 40 years in 2018.

"In a nutshell, the question is, 'How do you provide parks and recreation to a county this size?'" Butler said.

Collaboration between the Pitt County Board of Commissioners and the Pitt County Board of Education has resulted in using taxpayer money to help keep community schools and recreation throughout the county in top shape.

Community Schools and Recreation takes advantage of local school facilities, such as fields, to host various forms of recreation, like flag football leagues.

Other activities the department helps to sponsor include Special Olympics, a yearly event for those with disabilities to enjoy the spirit of competition, and summer enrichment programs, which assist working parents in the summer and acts as a full-time day care for children in grades 1-6.

Youth sport leagues are a big piece of the Community Schools and Recreation department's job.

These leagues focus less on competition and more on life skills, such as teamwork, sportsmanship and skill development.

There are more than 300 volunteers in recreational sports leagues throughout the county, acting as coaches, assistants and referees.

Also offered are various camps, including football, soccer, volleyball and track and field, along with non-sports-related camps, such as art camp and teen chef camp.

It is not only the county's youth who benefit from these activities. The department also offers programs for adults, such as aerobic line dancing, Pitt County Schools physical activity challenges and the Tar River community band, which is comprised of adults, age 18 and older, with a variety of musical talents and skill levels.

Seniors also have programs tailored to their needs. Fit Beyond Fifty is a low impact aerobics class that works to increase levels of endurance for seniors who participate in the yearly senior games.

Other programs include two styles of Tai Chi, an ancient Chinese martial art that focuses on smooth movements and the channeling of energy throughout one's body.

Tai Chi has been proven to help seniors who suffer from the pains of arthritis, and the Community Schools and Recreation department offers three classes based on Tai Chi: Tai Chi I for arthritis, Tai Chi II for arthritis and Tai Chi 73 Form, which is the highest level of the courses and is supported by the Tai Chi Institute for Health.

An impressive part of the senior programs is the county's three-on-three basketball program. Teams of three, ages 50 and older, compete one to two times a week. Pitt County has the largest number of senior three-on-three teams with teams in age brackets of age 50 and older.

Combined with the numerous programs is the use of several parks, including Alice F. Keene Park, located at 4561 County Home Road, Greenville. The park hosts a walking trail, space for youth recreation leagues, a playground and a garden bed where volunteers grow vegetables and other plants.

The department has plans for future expansion to the park, including adding an emergency shelter and gymnasium, along with half court/pickup basketball courts in the area for residents to enjoy.

The gymnasium is expected to be nearly 24,000 square feet and will include spaces for volleyball, basketball and pickleball, a large attraction for county seniors and also the fastest growing sport in the United States.

"Our goal is to do what is best for citizens. It is not about who gets credit or things like that," Butler said.

Along with his department, Butler hopes to continue to grow cooperation with parks and recreation department leaders in Pitt County's municipalities.

"We're hoping to continue to grow. I say, 'let's work together and not tear down any of the progress we have made,'" Butler said.

While Butler acclimated to his new job, he received advice from Roy following her long tenure as the leader of the department.

"I've known Rita and Alice (Keen, the namesake of Alice F. Keen Park) for a long time. So we've talked and thankfully she is still here. We've had a lot of discussions, and a lot of the hard work they've done is just like everyone who does a lot of work, they don't want to see it undone. I believe a lot of the job is going to be not messing up all of the good things they have done. Not messing it up is probably my No. 1 goal," Butler said.



# HEALTH SCIENCES ACADEMY

*Brenda Monty*

Homegrown health care workers.

Thousands of Pitt County high school students have had the unique opportunity to be exposed to health care careers through the Health Sciences Academy program, the only one of its kind.

Vidant Medical Center provides the financial support for the program to help address the shortage of health care workers.

“The goal when it started was to home-grow health care, to get more students interested,” said program coordinator Megan Newman, adding there is still a shortage.

Health Sciences Academy is an opportunity for students who think they want to go into a medical or health care career to find out what is involved and how to prepare for it, according to Jan Burnette, one of the program’s two guidance counselors.

“It’s an opportunity for them to job shadow and receive extra support services like counseling to guide them along the way. It helps them focus on keeping their grades up, networking with others in the profession and seeing what they think a career is like before they actually go to college. We all experience doctors and nurses and don’t realize all the hundreds of other occupations that are there that are health care related,” Burnette said, adding that through job shadowing, students may discover a field of medicine they thought they might like is not a good fit. “It’s just as important



to find out what you don't want to do as it is what you do want to do."

Students apply for the program their freshman or sophomore year and must maintain a 3.0 GPA. The program requires students complete at least six courses from a list of more than 30 options as well as log 25 community service hours a year.

"Each student has to get 100 hours by the time they graduate, and 25 of those must be in a health care or medical setting," Newman said, adding many Academy students volunteer in doctor's offices or rehabilitation centers.

Kenneccia Woolard, an Ayden-Grifton High School Class of 2018 graduate, enrolled in the program as part of her "backup plan." Her first career choice is paralegal.

"I can fall back on my experience with volunteering at all these different medical areas that will help me get somewhere in the future," she said. "I have learned so much in every area I have volunteered in. It's been eye-opening."

She volunteered at an elementary school, the Boys & Girls Club, a homeless shelter, Vidant Medical Center and Family Foot and Ankle Physicians.

"The program keeps us connected to the young folks and allows us to recruit great folks into our profession," said Dr. Scott Stancil, a pediatricist with Foot and Ankle Physicians.

Todd Stancil, a rising senior at D.H. Conley High School, joined the Health Sciences Academy three years ago for the volunteering and counseling opportunities.

"My brother was in it, and he was always telling me the interesting stuff they did," he said. "It's really helped me look at how much community service I was doing. I hadn't really thought about how much I was not volunteering until I had to keep up with my hours."

Academy students attend job fairs to see medical professions they may not know exist.

"Part of our goal as a counselor is helping the students understand that a job like veterinarian is not just about loving on cuddly animals. You also have animals that are abused. We introduce them to the Humane Society, where they learn that some animals may be euthanized. We try to get them into the community to volunteer experiences so they can really see what it's all about," Burnette said.

Health Sciences Academy students may participate in Destination Health Careers, which exposes students to the various degree programs at Pitt Community College and helps them see how these degrees translate to the workplace at Vidant Medical Center.

"A lot of students feel like they have to have a four-year degree or beyond in order to provide health care, but that is not the case," Burnette said, adding training for many jobs in health care are only available at community colleges, such as ultrasound or X-ray technician. "We have a week during the summer where we take students to the community college and professors let them use their equipment."

Students rotate through eight fields of health care to learn what education is needed.

"Community college costs about half of what a university costs, but you can earn the same degree in nursing," Burnette said. "We are exposing them to all that information to help them find their niche. We need to help our students understand you don't have to travel off to get a good education. You've got it right here in our own county. We need to help students understand what an opportunity they have here in Pitt County to stay and



continue to work here."

Health Sciences Academy students can participate in one-day job shadowing at the hospital in operating rooms, labor and delivery, the children's hospital and other areas.

For eight select students, Vidant Medical Center offers paid internships during their senior year. There are now students working in electrophysiology lab, catheterization lab, physical therapy, employee pharmacy, the children's hospital, clinical nutrition and occupational health.

Students are paid \$12 an hour and work up to 15 hours a week while also going to school and full time in the summer.

Sophia Villani, a D.H. Conley High School Class of 2018 graduate, worked as a technician in the Vidant Employee Pharmacy. The program paid for her pharmacy tech classes and the certification exam.

"This program really solidified my passion," she said.

Health Sciences Academy students may also participate in the Honors Medical Research program, where they participate in weekly seminars at the Brody School of Medicine and are treated much like first-year medical students.

Students also have the opportunity during the summer to participate in Dental Exploration Day at the School of Dental Medicine to observe treatments, talk with students, make models of teeth, explore forensic dentistry and use manikins and instruments.







“We are grooming our kids for the future, for workforce, for college, for college scholarships, for life.”

- Jan Burnette

Additional benefits of the Health Sciences Academy program are the summer SAT/ACT workshops and interview training, where they prepare for scholarship or job interviews. Part of the training is table manners and etiquette.

“We are grooming our kids for the future, for workforce, for college, for college scholarships, for life,” Burnette said.

The Health Sciences Academy advisory committee includes representatives from East Carolina University, Pitt Community College, the School of Dental Medicine, the Brody School of Medicine, the Eastern Area Health Education Center and the Greenville-Pitt Chamber of Commerce.

When not helping high school students learn about health occupations, Health Sciences Academy staff and volunteer health care workers also educate elementary students about medical careers.

“They’re scared to go to a hospital or a doctor’s office. So we bring a simulation to their school that is not so scary. We hold a Teddy Bear Hospital in the school gym,” Burnette said.

Children bring in their sick or wounded teddy bear or stuffed animal. They start at the admissions desk where their animal receives an identification armband, like in a real hospital.

“Their bear may have the flu, a broken leg or asthma. One child said her bear was stabbed. Another said hers had been torn up by a police dog,” Burnette said, adding the event gives volunteers clues about the child’s own fears.

Bears are stitched up, bandages and casts applied and breathing treatments given.

“When they leave, they are excited. It’s not so scary anymore when you see it done to your teddy bear,” Burnette said.



# STAYING UPDATED

Jake Keator



Pitt County Schools Media Services Department helps bring unique learning opportunities to county schools.

Pitt County Schools has immersed itself into the latest technology and most up-to-date learning tools to help students, teachers and librarians thrive in the modern learning environment.

Joanna Gerakios, the media and technology facilitator for Pitt County Schools, is on the front line of ensuring that every school in the county is able to utilize all of today's newest equipment.

A big part of Gerakios' job is to work with media coordinators, such as Laura Mangum, the media coordinator at North Pitt High School.

"I work with the media coordinators to ensure they have the best programming they can offer. We do professional development training about once every six weeks, and I provide support however I can," Gerakios said.

Gerakios is also extremely helpful in grant writing and working to figure out how to improve facilities throughout the county's schools, Mangum added.

During professional development meetings, Gerakios focuses on one particular part of the media coordinators' job.

"One of the things we've been working on over the past few years is incorporating makerspaces into the school libraries. This is where we really get into hands-on learning," Gerakios said.

Makerspace is a term used to describe different types of technology, from green screening to stop motion video. Gerakios works to train coordinators in the technology so they may be able to help students in their schools.

"We try to give the media coordinators the opportunity to use the technology so that they feel confident when they go back to their schools," Gerakios said.

During meetings with Gerakios, they work to create the example product they will use with their teachers or students, Mangum explained. One example is BookSnap. A Booksnap teaches students how to become comfortable annotating books via mobile phone or tablet applications.

Input is another crucial piece to the media services job. Each school is surveyed once per year to help determine how effective new technology

was to each school, along with a wish list of new items and technology.

"We get good feedback that the media coordinators are taking back the skills they've learned and are utilizing them to teach others," Gerakios said.

In fact, the teaching was ongoing, as two North Pitt High School teachers were learning how to use Sphero. Sphero is a small sphere-shaped robot that can be controlled remotely through an iPad application that teaches coding.

The teachers would test out the innovation toys through a simple game of trivia tic-tac-toe. Whenever one player answered a question correctly, they would steer their Sphere-O to the space they would like to capture. The learning process would enable the teachers to take the technology back to their classrooms for use with their students in a fresh and interactive way, which will involve more than just their students' minds.

"We want to use makerspace projects, but keep them in line with the curriculum. At North Pitt, the teachers and I have figured out useful ways to incorporate 3D technology and stop motion. So this is not doing it just to do it," Mangum said.

North Pitt features several makerspace areas, including multiple 3D printers, a green screen room with iPads for filming, a T-shirt press and a sound studio.

The use of the sound studio is unique as a reward for students.

"The students are allowed to use the recording studio at lunch or when they finish their work if their teachers allow them to. They can not have had any discipline referrals in the past month, so they have to have been behaving in order to come here," Mangum said.

Along with managing discipline referrals, the studio also helps control attendance. The number of days a student

misses can disqualify them from permission to use the studio.

Unique technology is abundant in today's modern learning landscape.


"Pitt County Schools and its library media programs are working to maximize the effectiveness of the many engaging learning tools our schools have to offer," Gerakios said.





# TEAMING UP FOR STUDENTS

Jake Keator



Pitt County Schools Student Services team works to ensure students are prepared for school each day.

Students show up each day to school with their supplies from pencils and pens to paper and books, and even shoes and socks. Sadly, at times, there are some who may not have the means to be able to obtain all they need to be ready for school each morning.

Enter Pitt County Schools student services department, led by student services coordinator Karen Harrington, director of community and student services Dr. Travis Lewis, lead social worker Cassandra Campbell and lead school health case manager Patricia Hooton.

“We want parents and the community to understand that there are a lot of individuals who work behind the scenes to remove barriers to student success. That may be an academic barrier, social or emotional barriers or physical barriers to their success, and that’s the part our student services play. Our school nurses, our social workers, and our school counselors work diligently to help students overcome those obstacles that might impede their school performance,” Lewis said.

A situation where a student may not be able to eat after school, Lewis explained. That student would go to school hungry and have trouble concentrating on their studies.

“Our social workers would collaborate with local churches to provide backpack pals,” Lewis said.

Campbell is the county’s lead social worker. She describes herself as feeling “like the mother of everyone in Pitt County Schools.”

“So just like a mother, I want my kids to go to school and I want them to be successful in school. Between me and my other 15 colleagues, we make sure students have everything they need for school,” Campbell said.

Student services quietly and confidentially watches over its students to

ensure that each one has the tools to succeed. The tools can include school supplies, underwear, shirts, coats and more.

“If we have to, we will go to a secondhand place, but most of the time we really try to go and get the student something nice,” Campbell said.

An example of the community helping students is an arrangement made between Pitt County Schools and Shoe Carnival.

“Say a student becomes infected with bed bugs, that student is now required to have brand new shoes, new underwear and a new uniform. That way if they wear their clothes from home which may be infected, they have something nice and clean to wear at school,” Campbell said.

Lewis added, “The key with our social workers, our nurses, our therapist, is that they are people with big hearts who are familiar with access and support for students’ mental health, local resources and our partnerships with other local businesses, organizations and nonprofits.”

Another point of emphasis for student services is not only the academic success of students but also the social-emotional learning. The department aims to help produce good people out of its graduates on top of strong academic successes.

“I want to be sure my new next door neighbor who graduated from Pitt County Schools. They did well in English and math, but if they are terrible human beings, that’s not somebody I want to be living next to, so character education and graduating students with high character is imperative to our definition of a success,” Lewis said.

Harrington specializes in assisting students on the mental and social aspects of their lives. The district’s partnerships with two local mental health agencies, Pride in NC and Integrated Family Services, Harrington explained.

There are counselors assigned to each of the district’s 37 schools, she added.

“Again, student services staff are the front lines of connecting to parents and letting them know this is available at schools. Some families may need mental health help, but they work multiple jobs or don’t have transportation to get their child to a therapy appointment. If we provide it at school, it takes out of instructional time, but if you have intense mental health needs, you won’t be focusing on your reading and math to begin with,” Harrington said.

Another way to help students is an “alternative suspension” program.

The idea behind the program is to not just send a child home for discipline issues, but to help identify and teach the correct behavior to the student through training and classes.

“We have modules that teach kids about specific behaviors. We are partnering with different agencies to help avoid suspensions,” Harrington said.

Lewis added, “If we send them home on suspension, are they going to learn from that and change their behavior in the future? Often the answer is no.”

While suspension rates across the county have decreased, according to Harrington, she still hopes to see the rates fall farther as programs help students.

The staff of Pitt County Student Services works tirelessly to help students in multiple ways with whatever issues they may face in their lives.

Through partnerships with local businesses and agencies, to making sure every child has a full stomach and food to eat on the weekends, their goal is to see every student in Pitt County Schools achieve their maximum potential.





Pitt County Schools Construction Career Day



Wellcome Middle School Career Fair



E.B. Aycock Science Career Day

Elmhurst Elementary Careers on Wheels



# Greenville Utilities

## SHAPING OUR FUTURE

Greenville Utilities' employees play an active role in enriching the educational lives of our neighbors, children and adults alike. We visit classrooms and civic groups to share our knowledge about the utilities industry, conservation, safety and a variety of other topics.

We offer a number of internships for college students and participate in career fairs at high schools and colleges to spread the word about opportunities that exist right here in our own backyard. GUC is also happy to provide speakers or civic groups or arrange tours of our facilities. For more information, visit [www.guc.com/speakers-and-tours](http://www.guc.com/speakers-and-tours).



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## A.G. COX MIDDLE SCHOOL

Just Do It. That is the motto embraced by the students and staff at A.G. Cox Middle School. The incentive based program is designed to encourage students to complete their work on time, turn in homework assignments and stay on task.

Launched in the 2016-17 school year, Just Do It first encouraged students to complete and submit all assignments. Those who managed to accomplish this goal for an entire school year were allowed to attend the two-hour Just Do It event, which featured games, a Chromebook room, bounce houses, painting, jewelry making, a basketball tournament, life-size Jenga pieces, a DJ and more.

The following semester, students were challenged to maintain an average grade of 60 percent. The goal was increased to 65 percent average the next semester, and A.G. Cox closed out the 2017-18 school year with a 70 percent average.

"We want our students to work hard. They can do the work; some are just choosing not to," said principal Norman McDuffie. With the incentive in place, McDuffie and his staff are seeing effort levels improve.

"It is amazing to see the effort. They want to attend Just Do It," he said. "We have noticed improvements academically. Students are making an effort. We have a better read on their academic level because they are actually turning in assignments." Just Do It is not

just improving academics.

"We are teaching social skills and life skills. We are dedicated to preparing students for high school and beyond. We want to inspire them to grow academically and socially and empower them to become productive citizens," McDuffie said.

The number of zeros on assignments has dramatically decreased since Just Do It was launched, according to school counselor Dena Landis.

"Our students are more independent than ever before," she said. "They have an external push that is motivating them to become more independent. When we increase our expectations, students raise many steps."

Just Do It has also helped increase students' confidence levels.

"Students are asking for work. They are more self aware," Landis said.

Sixth grade math teacher Emily Leary added, "They definitely want to get the work done and want to please me and are aware of the Just Do It event and want to attend. I love seeing their enthusiasm."

Just Do It not only celebrates academic success, but it also allows students in grades 6-8 to mingle. "It is a nice change of scenery and great seeing the kids have fun," Leary said.

Just Do It also strives to have an activity for all interests, from a quiet room where students can use a Chromebook, read or play a board game, to an art center where students are encouraged to paint a ceiling tile with encouraging thoughts that are then hung throughout the school, to sports. Throughout Just Do It, students are welcome to roam activities freely with their cellphone in hand.



## AYDEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Ayden Elementary School's FIRST LEGO League team is open to students in grades 1-4, under the director of fourth grade teacher Hannah McClure and kindergarten teacher Catherine Romagnoli.

The LEGO team builds off of the STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) curriculum.

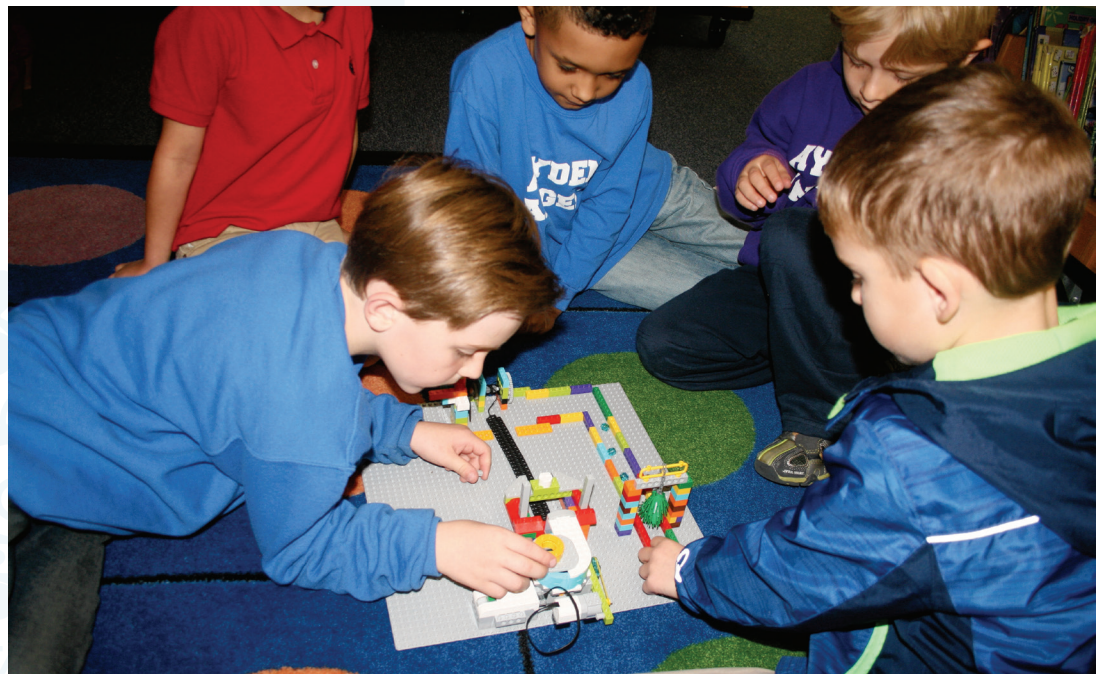
"It is great to see our students be creative and to watch their growth and knowledge expand," McClure said.

Entering its fourth year in the 2018-19 school year, Ayden Elementary is the only elementary school in the district to offer a LEGO team. The team competes in regionals each year at East Carolina University.

"It is fascinating watching them do what they do," Romagnoli said. "We are creating problem-solvers."

With STEM challenges, there is no right answer, just a different way of thinking. Our students have to work together and talk respectfully to one another to get their ideas across."

McClure added, "To see what they can create when self-led is amazing." The LEGO team consists of four teams of six students. Each



team works with a LEGO kit, which includes coding directions featuring photo instruction, so even the youngest participant can figure out how to build the motor or model.

The school's PTA supports the program with funding, and the school allocates funds to support the team.



# AYDEN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Students in Ayden Middle School's STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) lab took third place in the 2018 Armed Forces Communications and Electronic Association-N.C. Conference competition.

Last year, as the only middle school to compete, Ayden Middle School won \$500 in the competition.

Teams of four were tasked with identifying a problem in society within the environment or technology. Once identified, students had to solve the problem. Students created in-shoe cellphone chargers, a cellphone charger generated through a solar powered picnic table and a mouth guard that detects concussions. They also transformed cooking oil into fuel for vehicles, to name a few solutions.

The in-shoe charger charges one's phone when the person is moving. The kinetic energy creates the charge. To charge a phone on the picnic table, the phone just had to be touching the surface and the sun would generate the charge.

"Our STEM program is excellent. It is important our students have opportunities to dig in and get their hands dirty and see how things work," said principal Marieka Harrison. "Jason Wade, our STEM teacher, is always engaged and a good facilitator."



# AYDEN-GRIFTON HIGH SCHOOL

Ayden-Grifton High School is home to Charger Brews, a mobile coffee shop. Charger Brews, under the direction of exceptional children teachers Lyndsey Joyner and J'Celyn Bryson, exposes students in the school's Exceptional Children program to various aspects of the school.

"Charger Brews provides opportunities for our students outside of the exceptional children's classroom," said principal Chena Cayton.

Launched a year ago, the Charger Brews cart is taken throughout the school twice a week, selling coffee, beverages and snacks to teachers and staff.

It is teaching the exceptional children vocational skills, improves their communication and social skills, and teaches them how to calculate money, Joyner said.

"We want to teach our students vocational skills because there will not be many opportunities for them when they leave high school," Joyner said.

Students are learning how to count money, follow directions and take orders, Bryson added.

"They are learning job skills," Cayton said.

Students are each given a job, from barista and waiter to cashier to



greeter. Each student wears a uniform — an apron.

Charger Brews operates Tuesday and Thursday, but staff is allowed to place orders throughout the week on non-delivery days.

"Our teachers visit their classroom and ask the students to brew them coffee," Cayton said.

Others will call for a bag of chips or another snack, Joyner said.

"Our students have to follow directions," she said.

Neil Williams, 16, is responsible for making the coffee and distributing the proper amount of cream and sugar to his customers. Eric Kennedy, 16, typically serves as the cashier but said he is "good at making coffee."

He has a good memory and knows what a customer more than likely will order, from almond milk and sugar in one's order to another

who just likes their coffee black.

A top-selling menu item is the "Cayton Cookie" named for their principal.

Sale proceeds are filtered back into Charger Brews for supplies, classroom materials and field trips.

Bryson is proud of her 17 students.

"It is motivating. They are each working toward a position goal," she said.

Charger Brews made an appearance at the 2017 Ayden Christmas parade. Sales were at an all-time high.



# BELVOIR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Belvoir Elementary School is entering its fourth year of Dos Mundos in the 2018-19 school year. The program, which begins in kindergarten, teaches students English and Spanish simultaneously.

Students rotate each day from either an all English-speaking class or an all Spanish-speaking class.

“Our students are able to speak two languages, and to watch them from one language to the next is incredible,” said first grade teacher Ainsley Harris, who teaches the English class.

Dos Mundos teaches students not only how to speak both languages but also how to write in dual languages, according to principal Alison Covington.

Belvoir Elementary School is now an open enrollment school. Covington hopes Dos Mundos entices parents to enroll their students at her school, since it is the only school in the district with the program.

Dos Mundos is creating bi-literate students and is exposing them to different cultures, Harris said. The school’s Spanish-speaking teachers hail from Ecuador, Honduras and Costa Rica. Belvoir’s students Skype with students who are learning the same curriculum in their teacher’s native country.

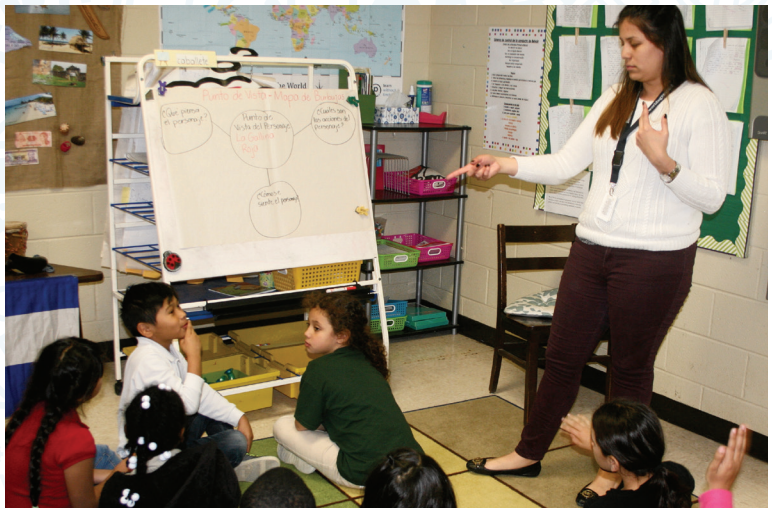
There is a need for bi-literate employees in today’s workforce, according to instructional coach Courtney Dubis.

“Being bi-literate better equips you to support your community,” she said.

Covington’s son is enrolled in Dos Mundos.

“It challenges him. Everyday he learns something new and comes home proud and full of confidence,” she said. “He thinks in Spanish and is 5-years-old.”

The students are aware of one another’s weaknesses and are always



willing to help, Harris said. For instance, last school year, a student was transferred to Belvoir Elementary from a school in Mexico. It was English Day and the students were playing a game, which required someone to state: One, two, three, go.

When it was the transfer student’s turn to go, the student giving the directions said: Uno, dos, tres, vamos.

“The children understand,” Harris said.

Dubis added, “They have an awareness of one another.”

In the 2018-19 school year, Dos Mundos will be open to students in grades K-3. By 2020-21, the program will be available to the whole student body — grades K-5.

# BETHEL SCHOOL

Bethel School has all the charm of a small community school while also providing its 300 students in grades K-8 all the technological, academic and extracurricular opportunities of any public school in Pitt County.

“Bethel is the perfect combination of a public school with a private school mentality,” said Elaina Wingfield, a grade 7-8 English and social studies teacher.

Rising eighth-grader Cadence Mundell echoed the sentiments of fellow students when she said, “Every morning when I wake up, I know I want to come to school because the people here are so great and you can trust our teachers are supportive.”

Iseuri Bautista, also a rising eighth-grader, experienced Bethel School for the first time this year.

“It’s very different. There are more teachers that help you with things

like testing when you barely know what you’re doing,” she said.

Rising freshman Brianna Joyner agreed.

“Not only is it a school, it’s a place where we can be ourselves and they will push us to do better,” Joyner said.

The teachers intentionally make sure every child who walks through the door is celebrated for his or her unique ability. Whether a child is academically, artistically or athletically inclined, they will find a place to not just fit in but also thrive.

“Each child has something unique they bring into Bethel School every day,” Wingfield said.

Many of the student body are literally family.

“It’s made up of brothers, sisters, cousins. The older ones look after their younger siblings,” said principal Jeremiah Miller.

The school offers every sport other schools do, including wrestling and track, and after school clubs that cater to a wide variety of interests from technology to yoga.

“Our students live here. From 7:30 in the morning to 5:30 in the afternoon, kids are here at their own will. We have to push them out of the building most days,” Wingfield said, adding the staff is much the same way. “We stay to collaborate and work extra every day because we want to, not because we are told to. The staff enjoy coming to school on Monday just as much as we do going home on Friday. You couldn’t pay me to teach anywhere else in Pitt County.”

Students love the small community school so much, many return as teachers, and many of those stay until they retire.

The small community outside of school also contributes greatly to making Bethel School a success, generously supplying volunteers and material resources.





## C.M. EPPES MIDDLE SCHOOL

C.M. Eppes Middle School has worked hard to become a model of how well the Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports or PBIS program works.

PBIS is a framework of positive strategies aimed at preventing and changing behavior that hinders teaching and learning. Each school builds on the framework, customizing it to fit its individual needs.

"The PBIS in this school is incredibly important. Our students come to us with unique needs," said principal Francis Altman. "If we focus some of our efforts on fostering good student behavior allowing us to engage and grow them (academically), that's mission accomplished."

Now in its fourth successful year of implementation, Altman credits the school's music teacher Caroline Bisset and the entire staff for championing the PBIS process at Eppes.

"We are probably one of the No. 1 schools in the district for our PBIS program. She is recognized in the school district for leading PBIS," Altman said.

The program gets kids excited about being at school because they are earning rewards for good behavior.

"Immediately, you could see a change," Bisset said. "Suspensions went down almost 20 percent in one year, and it is progressively getting

better."

Tickets earned when being "caught doing good" are deposited throughout the week into a bucket for weekly prize drawings on Ticket Tuesday.

Students earn the opportunity to participate in fun events, like games when they meet behavior standards all week long.

The school's PBIS team structured regular events, including PRIDE (Prepared, Responsible, Integrity, Doing one's best and Everyone matters) Fridays to include theme-based indoor sports tournaments that create excitement as kids dress up and compete. Students especially look forward to games that pit teachers and students against each other, Altman said. The 9-week rewards called the Big Events bring bigger rewards for students who display good behavior all the time.

PBIS has become so successful and the well-behaved students so many, the school is looking at re-vamping some of the events. Naming a Student of the Week or the Top Dog every nine weeks also works well.

"If the PBIS program is successful, it is because you have loving, caring teachers who implement that program with fidelity," Altman said. "It's still an up and coming program for our school and other. It's nice to know we are helping lead the way."



## CHICOD SCHOOL

Chicod School's 61,000-square-foot addition opened in January 2018. The state-of-the-art media center is three times the size of the former library, which opens up greater opportunities for students, teachers and the community.

"A lot of things we didn't have to give them before are finally starting to happen," said Angie Miller, the school's media coordinator.

The spacious media center includes reading areas, 10 new computer stations, a book room for teachers, staff meeting room, an office and innovator lab. There is now private space where testing, tutoring or other quiet activities can be conducted.

More space allows for simultaneous instruction of several grade levels.

"Before, it was chaotic. We were on top of each other," she said. "Our stress level has decreased dramatically."

Miller is excited to see the pride students, particularly the younger ones, have taken in the new media center.

In the former library, books had to be stacked, the roof leaked, the carpet stained and sticky mousetraps were plentiful.

Upon entering the new media center, students were awestruck.

"I wish I had videoed their reaction. It was like coming downstairs on Christmas morning," Miller said, adding she witnessed a whole new sense of pride in taking care of it.

Art, hands-on projects and lessons involving innovative equipment like 3D printers can now take place in the lab.

"We are excited about the possibilities," Miller said.

The spacious center is able to accommodate staff and club meetings as well as community events like parent night.

"Now that we have the space, we'll try to add and build and get ourselves up to a standard," Miller said, reflecting on the

old facility's inability to accommodate 21st-century technology. "I'm excited at where we are headed with the lab, the technology, the media center itself and the ownership the kids are taking with this room."

Rising third-grader Alexis Inkell thinks the new center is "awesome."

"There is new stuff, not all dirty. The floor is not dirty like the old library. There are labels on the shelves so we know where books are supposed to be. You can find the books really easy. We can get on computers. There is stuff we can do here, stuff that's new," Inkell said.

Miller Stanley, a rising third-grader, loves to read.

"All the new books (Miller) got are pretty cool. There's a lot more furniture in here and brand new furniture, too," Stanley said.





## CREEKSID E ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Creekside Elementary School was the first elementary school in the district to start a Student Government Association or SGA nearly five years ago.

Since its implementation, staff has seen a decrease in behavioral issues, according to assistant principal Jennifer Forsythe.

SGA consists of two representatives from each homeroom in grades

3-5. SGA members are responsible for hosting two assemblies a year. Last year's assemblies focused on spreading kindness and skits highlighting responsible and respectful behavior.

Abdal Musallam served as the 2017-18 SGA president.

"Kids that act bad get more attention, but we wanted to recognize good behavior and bring attention to kindness," Musallam said.

SGA members launched a "shout out" board, which highlights good character. They also implemented a buddy class system, where fifth-graders are partnered with second-graders, fourth-graders with kindergarteners, and third-graders with first-graders.

The buddies host monthly meetings and team up with their buddies to read stories aloud.

The SGA also promotes Creekside's four Cardinal Rules: Be Prepared, Be Respectful, Be Responsible and Be a Learner. These rules support the school's Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports or PBIS system.

"As SGA president, I listen to students' concerns, interests and ideas. All the homeroom representatives come to me. If students are behaving well, they get rewarded. If they aren't acting correctly, they won't get rewarded. My friends now look at the system as a strong motivation," Musallam said, referring to the school's Dojo system.

This system tracks students' behavior. Rewards are presented every two weeks, like a technology day, movie time or recess. Students in grades K-2 earn points, which can then be traded in for prizes.



## D.H. CONLEY HIGH SCHOOL

D.H. Conley High School is expanding its cross training and collaboration among staff to enhance the learning experience for students.

Collaboration between technology teacher Kenny Weston and health occupational therapy teacher Brooke Hardee sparked the school-wide initiative.

Health students worked on pro fitting an artificial hand last semester, while technology students created the parts from the school's 3D printers.

"It is trial and error as they are learning together," said principal Don Marr.

Thirty-five students worked on the project, which if successful, would

benefit patients and help plastic surgeons.

"Our students are excited and look forward to ownership," Hardee said.

Weston said, "My students' interest peaked when they began printing. They are motivated to design the pieces, so they can print them."

D.H. Conley's science and agricultural departments are also collaborating through the school's egg sales. Conley grades and sells chicken eggs out of the school. The school's automotive courses are collaborating with the grounds crew and are receiving on-the-job training by fixing equipment. Sociology and psychology are also collaborating with the agricultural department with more hands-on learning opportunities. Using mice, students are testing behaviors.

"We don't injure the animals; students just observe how the mice react in certain simulations, like a maze," Marr said.

The school's carpentry classes also collaborate with agricultural to construct their chicken coops and fences.

Staff is seeing first hand the benefits of cross training.

"We are giving our students practical experience," Marr said.

Practical experience will continue to expand in the 2018-19 school year, when the school's health occupational lab opens. It will be the first lab of its kind in the district.

Featuring eight study areas, the lab will introduce students to pharmaceuticals, veterinarian and dental fields. Students will learn how to set a cast, draw blood and more.





## E.B. AYCOCK MIDDLE SCHOOL

Belinda Nolen, a seventh grade math teacher and the school's community outreach coordinator, organized E.B. Aycock Middle School's first-ever Community Learning Exchange in December 2017.

Approximately 50 parents, educators, school board members, community members and 10 sixth and seventh graders came together to get acquainted. They talked about where they'd gone to school, where they were now and the type of school they would like to attend in the future.

"The more we talked, the more we learned about each other's stories. It was a wonderful event," Nolen said.

The event included discussions geared for each grade level — environment and recycling for sixth-graders, bullying for seventh graders and substance use prevention was discussed with eighth graders.

"I was nervous about the whole situation," said rising eighth-grader Yazmein Miles, who is often bullied for being unusually tall for her age.

However, once she opened up, she learned she was not alone.

"It was good knowing that there were other people who went through what I did and know what it's like," Miles said. "It is good to talk to people about how you feel."

The fact that her math teacher is also tall helped, too.

"After Ms. Nolen became my teacher, I felt like I had a tall teacher that understands me," Miles said.



The Community Learning Exchange held in April focused on what it means to be a community school.

Another successful initiative E.B. Aycock is growing is its after-school program, coordinated by Angela Grillo, a sixth grade science teacher.

The 9-week program was launched in spring 2017, which had 100 students participate every Tuesday and Thursday until 5:30 p.m. to prepare for end-of-grade testing.

When the fall program began, 125 students signed up for general lesson content review.

"We have had people from outside the community asking to be part of our after school program," Grillo said.

Female students from East Carolina University in the "Crimson Court" and "Queen in You" groups worked specifically with girls who would benefit from conflict resolution and adjusting to middle school.

"I liked that it was an all girls group and no boys playing around. We could talk about things only ladies would talk about," said raising seventh-grader Nhari Newsome.

At least 15 teachers now participate in the after school program.

Christine Briscoe, a rising seventh-grader, appreciated the extra help.

"I really like that teachers took time out of their day to help me," she said.

The spring 2018 after-school program targeted 150 students for end-of-grade prep in reading, math and science.

"We have so many kids begging for after school applications. They love it," Grillo said. "It's nice to see they want to stay after school for that extra help. The program is a big success, and I'm excited that we are doing it."

## EASTERN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Eastern Elementary principal Robbie Johnson felt the best way to implement STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education into his elementary school this year would be to include the whole school.

"The teachers have done a great job with it — art, music, physical education, guidance counselors, special education teachers; everybody is involved in the process, which makes it a lot stronger foundation from which we can build, starting with kindergarten up to our fifth-grade students," said Ashley Fillingame, the school's STEM guru.

During the first year of full implementation, Fillingame taught staff and students to think as teams rather than competitors, to see there is not always one right answer and that failure is still learning.

This first year has been about training teachers, getting the engineering process and STEM language woven into everything the school does, Johnson said.

"Just allowing people's creativity to run wild," Johnson added.

Old-school teaching and learning centered on learning facts and taking tests to show proficiency whereas problem-solving and hands-on, project-based education allows students to see instantly the practical application.

Teachers were not asked to teach a whole new curriculum, just add challenges into the lessons they already cover, which



Fillingame helped facilitate.

She helped fifth grade teachers apply STEM in a lesson about the Boston Tea Party by having students design shipping crates from various materials. STEM was woven into Native American history for fourth-graders with design and construction of long houses, and young children built wind-resistant houses for the famous "Three Little Pigs" of fairy-tale fame.

"Teachers may choose to do a STEM challenge as a lesson review instead of a worksheet or quiz," Fillingame added. "If we can keep kids excited, they don't mind as much doing the rote memorization stuff."

Students are learning and discovering how to create something using math, without being stressed out by the expectation of accurately solving 20 math problems on a worksheet. "It's the same goal, just getting there differently," Fillingame said.

Teachers see students who typically don't 'get it' in class or pass written tests suddenly actively engaged and naturally applying the math concepts taught in class to the problem-solving process.

"There has been some ah-ha moments with teachers," Fillingame said. "We're excited to see where this goes, to see what today's kindergartners are able to do in fifth grade."

Johnson added, "We have definitely broadened horizons that we had not even touched up to this point."



## ELMHURST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Elmhurst Elementary School is enjoying its new 6,000-square-foot gym expansion, but it has been greatly challenged to fully implement its use. All the global health and wellness programs the school had planned were put on hold when long-time gym teacher Ronnie Goodall suddenly became ill in January and another teacher left to care for family obligations.

Meanwhile, Elmhurst focused on growing other programs to benefit healthy minds and bodies, such as the Walking Classroom. It allows an entire class of students to walk while listening to educational podcasts on individual digital iPod-like devices called Playaways. While other North Carolina schools have adopted the Walking Classroom, Elmhurst is piloting the \$3,700 program for Pitt County Schools and introduced it to fourth grade students this school year. The school is adding 25 more players for fifth grade classes in 2018-19. The program consists of 110 fourth and fifth grade curriculum-based lessons along with vocabulary and video enhancements.

For 15 minutes, three days a week, students in Christopher Hill's science and social studies classes walk outdoors or in the halls during inclement weather while they listen to the lesson created by other children. "We're constantly having kids read lessons and passages, but with this,



they are hearing it. They get to hear the vocabulary that many of the kids lack presented in a voice that is comfortable for them," said principal Colleen Burt. "As they're walking, all their brain receptors are activated, so being exposed to that while they're walking is a win-win."

After listening to the podcast once while walking, students return to the classroom to discuss it. They then listen to it a second time in class and take a comprehension quiz.

"It's fun because we get to walk and listen," said rising fifth-grader Jaiden Floyd. "You get more exercise, so you won't have to just sit in the classroom."

Rising fifth-grader Tate Pinner added, "You can get a lot of exercise from walking and learn about anything you want to, like history."

The Walking Classroom benefits Hill as well as the other fourth grade teachers, he said.

"It provides an opportunity while they are in my class to get 'ants out of the pants' as my mama used to say," Hill said, meaning by the time students get to the math and English classes his colleagues teach, they are more focused. "When we are talking about topics in class, they might remember something they listened to in one of the Walking Classroom lessons three weeks ago. It is opening their vision to a world of things they are able to see and comprehend at a greater level. It's 21st century learning."

## FALKLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Falkland Elementary School is in the process of developing into a school of innovation, which will focus on creativity, curiosity, critical thinking and collaboration, according to principal Ferdonia Stewart.

This new focus will be implemented using the STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) curriculum. Students will have access to coding methods and robotics.

"Kids will have access to hands-on learning and will be actively involved. Hands-on learning opens windows of opportunities. We want to prepare our students for the future," Stewart said.

As part of the innovation efforts, the school year will be extended through late June.

"I'm excited to be part of new things and creating this new identity for our school. We are already seeing improvements in student achievements, attendance and discipline," Stewart said, referring to the school's restart model.

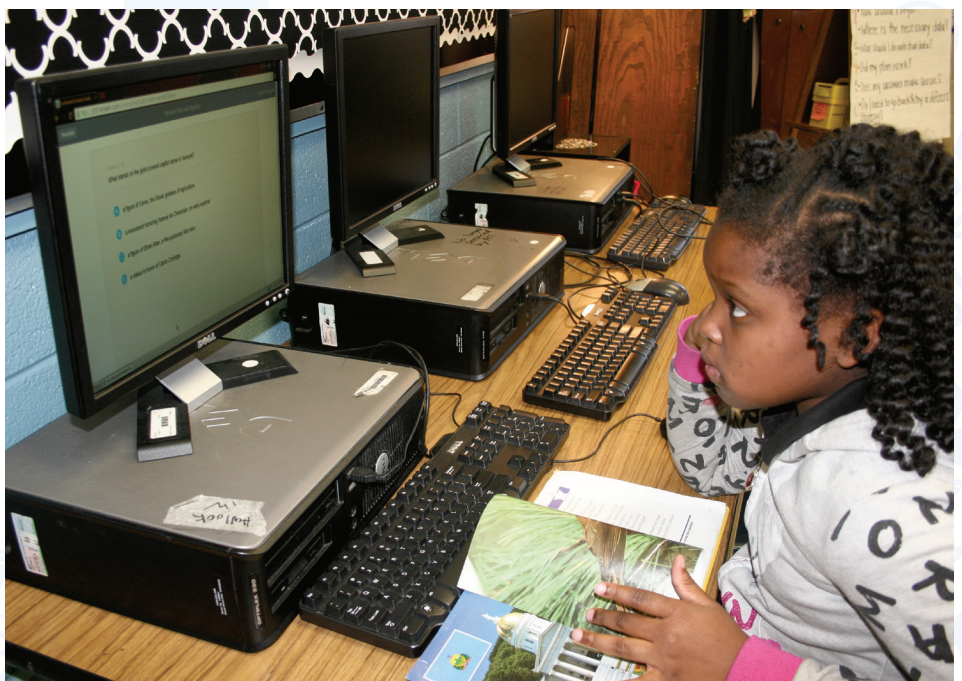
For the 2018-19 school year, Falkland Elementary School Elementary is restarting as a School of Innovation and Design. Staff is excited about focusing on student engagement using collaborative teaching best practices, Stewart said.

Falkland is using manipulatives such as LEGO math and coding to enhance mathematical thinking and problem solving, she added.

"We have great teams in place. The impact of these changes and the new programs will only

result in positive improvement," Stewart said.

Falkland's school facilities are also expanding with more community involvement and the expansion of its walking trails. The school has strong partnerships with its alumni, Rose Hill Church, DSM, United Way, East Carolina University and Cross Pointe Church.





# FARMVILLE CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

“Farmville Central is a small school with the same opportunities as a large school because of the advances of technology,” said principal Brad Johnston. “Ten years ago, we couldn’t offer academic equity or distance learning. Our students had to go to other schools, but now we offer an online option, which gives our students access to all classes through the virtual public high school.”

Students can enroll in college courses and even learn Japanese and German if they wish, Johnston said. “We didn’t have these opportunities 10 years ago. Students now have the opportunity to shine in a smaller setting,” he said.

The opportunity to be able to take the course a student wants also increases at Farmville Central due to the smaller student population. “There are less kids vying for the same opportunity, so there’s a great likelihood they can participate,” Johnston said.

Outside of academics, Farmville Central staff strive to create well-rounded students through volunteer and extracurricular activities.

“What sets you apart?” Johnston said is a common question asked to students. “You have the academics, but everyone does. More opportunities exist at Farmville Central because we are small, and our students are given the opportunity to set themselves apart from the competition. There is not less competition, but our school setting provides a greater opportunity to excel to set themselves apart.”

The close-knit setting also allows staff to get to know students on a more “personal level outside of academics,” he said. Farmville Central offers its students a personalized plan based on their interests and goals after high school. “I appreciate the ability to be flexible and respond to students’ needs,” Johnston said, explaining there is a large interest in welding within the student population, so Farmville Central expanded its partnership with Pitt Community College to offer welding classes on the high school campus.

The high school is also adding computer manufacturing

and HVAC courses through its partnership with the community college. “We are preparing students for life after high school. It doesn’t have to be a four-year college. It can be trade work. Many students like to work with their hands. As educators, we need to push them in the right direction, and we have the ability to be flexible with a student’s schedule to make it work.”

Students who enter the trade path have the opportunity to graduate from high school with a two-year degree or certifications needed for employment. “We want our students to become gainfully employed and be able to support themselves. That is the ultimate goal we have for each student who walks in our door,” Johnston said.

For college-bound students, Farmville Central offers dual enrollment, which allows students to complete high school requirements and take college-level courses. “The opportunity is here at the Pitt Community College-Farmville Center and here on our campus. A student can get a two-year degree and high school diploma, just like they can at the early college,” Johnston said.

More than half of the Class of 2018 were dual enrollment students. “What does life after high school look like?” remains at the forefront of Farmville Central. “It is our mission to get a kid set up in the best position for life after high school,” Johnston said. Staff has taken an active role in determining students’ strengths and steering them in that direction.

“The success we have had comes back to the small school setting. We know our students’ strengths and make sure they apply for the scholarships they are best suited for,” Johnston said. Farmville Central’s scholarship amount continues to increase. The Class of 2015 garnered \$4 million in scholarships. That figure jumped to \$8.5 million for the Class of 2016, and the Class of 2017 earned \$8.6 million in scholarships.

“Our students have done a good job helping to market themselves and project their best image. They understand how to put their best foot forward to be successful,” Johnston said.



# FARMVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Farmville Middle School’s AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program enters its fourth year in the 2018-19 school year. The course better prepares students for their future, according to AVID site coordinator Latonya Nixon-Vines.

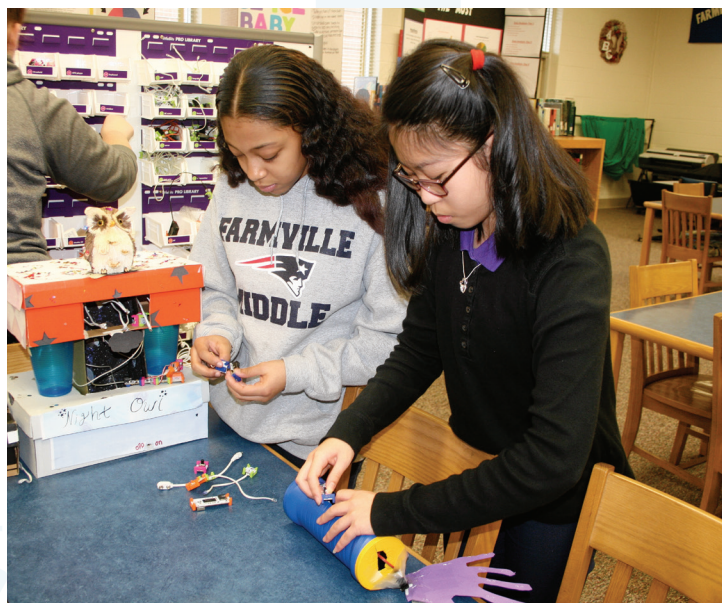
AVID teaches students study skills, and how to plan and organize materials and exposes them to higher learning opportunities with college tours.

“We promote a college culture,” Nixon-Vines said, explaining college banners line the school’s hallways and every Friday is College Day. “College is what we want all our students to shoot for.”

The program “increases awareness” about one’s future, she added. Students participate in study groups and learn how to problem solve and collaborate.

AVID students also complete community service projects. They partner with H.B. Sugg Elementary School and serve as student mentors to K-2 students.

Farmville Middle’s OWLS (Occupations Women Likely Skip) program will enter its third year in the upcoming school year. Fully funded by a Women For Women grant, OWLS exposes young girls to occupations typically dominated by men, like networking, coding and electrical work. OWLS highlights STEM (science, technology, engineering and math)



careers. Students work with Little Bits, STEM-based materials similar to LEGO bricks that allow students to create and build, according to former media coordinator Delane Fuquay, who wrote the grant for the program.

“In rural Pitt County, OWLS has opened doors and our students see the opportunities available to them. We didn’t want our school to get left behind,” she said.

Using Little Bits, students have created a record player using a pizza box, an aquarium, a “Your Room Was Hacked” buzzer and more.

“It is inspiring to see their creations,” said OWLS adviser

Rebecca Bunn. “They see something and aren’t sure how it works but know they can find out.”

Fuquay added, “Our students are energetic and eager to learn. They enjoy math and science and working with their hands. OWLS builds confidence.”

OWLS meets twice a week for an hour during the school’s Patriot period. OWLS partners with various companies, including Pitt Community College and Apple for tours.



# G.R. WHITFIELD SCHOOL

The G.R. Whitfield Cougars are crazy about sports.

For a small school, G.R. Whitfield School offers all the same sports middle schools do, including wrestling.

The school's new Cougar Crazy's spirit club made up of nearly 50 students in grades 5-8 has inspired more enthusiasm, participation and game attendance.

"It is for those kids who perhaps don't participate in athletics and a club they don't have to have specific academic criteria to meet. It's a club anybody can be a part of," said principal Tracy Gibbs, adding parents play a major role in growing the school's athletics program.

Supporting the school's sports has also become quite a fashion with the school's new spirit wear, which is available for all students not just athletes.

Matthew Melton, Whitfield's athletic director and baseball coach, continues to grow the program.

"Last year, we had 115 middle-school students and 75 of them played something. There are even more this year," Melton said. "The only thing we don't offer is track. We have cross-country but not track. We are just so far from anybody that has a track that we can use for practice."

School may be the only opportunity for many youth in Grimesland to participate in sports at all.

"The 9 miles between here and Greenville to play recreation basketball might as well be an ocean because they don't have a way to get there," Melton said.

The school is campaigning to raise \$60,000 to build restrooms and a concession stand on the soccer

field, located nearly 500 yards from the gym.

"If we can get restrooms, we could use the field a lot more for physical education too. We also have a recreation program that plays baseball out here, so they could get dual use out of it," Melton said.

Whitfield also wants to add a sink to its existing concession stand to be able to provide more than pre-packaged foods.

Grimesland residents and businesses are very supportive of their community school's goals.

"Being a small school, the opportunities and experiences we can provide for all students is something we are proud of," Gibbs said.



# GRIFTON SCHOOL

Grifton School is located in the heart of Pitt County's one and only "Family Town," per its town tagline.

"For the police department, Grifton School is our main focus, our priority," said Chief Brian Silva of the Grifton Police Department.

Principal Kevin Smith added, "It has been a long tradition for our school to build on its partnership with the town."

The Grifton Police Department has a presence in the school daily with officers conducting walk-throughs twice a day, Silva said.

Smith tries to be visible in the community, too.

"I want to build our school's relationship with town leaders. I meet regularly with the town manager and see the police chief several times a week," Smith said. "I want the town's leaders to have relationships with our children and see our school as a part of a larger community."

His staff is also highly active and visible in town. Each year, Grifton School has a float in the annual Shad Festival parade and participates in community events held throughout the year. Students participate in a local church's Pinewood Derby contest. Fourth graders tour Grifton's landmarks, like the museum.

"These are the partnerships needed if

we want to see our children succeed. We must work together. This community is very supportive," Smith said, adding Dollar General of Grifton recently donated \$10,000 to the school's literacy program, and in the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew, the community came together as one.

Silva added, "Grifton is the family town."





# HOPE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Hope Middle School's trophy case contains numerous symbols of students' intellectual prowess as well as physical. Scholars participate in nine state and national academic competitions in art, writing, math, science, literature, history and technology.

"We can't offer these extracurricular activities unless we have staff to support it," said principal Jennifer Poplin. "Our staff is willing to sacrifice their personal time above and beyond classroom responsibilities, so we can offer opportunities to our students. If staff didn't sponsor our extracurricular activities, we wouldn't be able to provide the numerous opportunities for our students."

The abundance of academic trophies demonstrates the teams are worthy of the investment.

Hope's outstanding reputation makes other schools groan when it shows up, said math and robotics team sponsor Karen Eberenz with a smile.

"Kids know each other from other schools and say, 'If nobody from Hope is there, I stand a chance,'" she said.

Art Showcase features drawing, photography, painting and poetry. Quill is a narrative, argumentative, information and persuasive writing contest. Twelve is a 12-round, 12-category, 12-question, 12-student team trivia competition. Hope also has a Quiz Bowl team, and its MathCounts team is among the top schools in the region.

Hope has been a three-time regional

champion in Battle of the Books, where students are quizzed about facts in 27 assigned books.

Numerous students go to the Science Olympiad regional meet. At least one typically advances to nationals. The fledgling FIRST LEGO League robotics team, Mechanical Mustangs, continues to improve.

Pitting their intellectual ability against top middle school students in the country is just as rewarding and fun for academic teams as football or basketball is to others.



"This is their sport," said Eberenz, who is also an Academically/Intellectually Gifted teacher and MathCounts coach. "When you know you do well in your school and on your grade level, you really don't know where you are until you go to an East Carolina University competition and there are 700 students there."

Academically gifted students are intrinsically driven and need greater challenges outside the classroom, Poplin said. Like student-athletes, each academic team has its own T-shirt with the student's name on it, giving scholars a sense of belonging and pride.

"These academic teams give them a place to fit in and find their 'people,'" said LEGO team sponsor Beth Sanderson. "There is a place in this school for these academic competitions that give these children opportunity to excel. I'm glad we can do that."

# J.H. ROSE HIGH SCHOOL

J.H. Rose High School's advanced placement or AP language teacher Ashley Hutchison teaches Seminar, the first course of the new two-year AP Capstone program that teaches independent research, teamwork and communication skills.

"It is a way to bring all the good things our students are doing into one program and focus their attention on being able to do some scholarly research in their areas of interest," Hutchison said.

Because it is a yearlong course, the school requires AP language be taken along with Seminar, which earns students two credits.

The final exam in Seminar is based on performance tasks worked on for months. It requires students to write a critical analysis of reasoning and a mini research paper.

Students practice research skills the first semester and work on the performance tasks in preparation for the exam in the second semester. They first write an individual research report then team up with others in a small group for a multi-media presentation of all their different perspectives. Scoring is based on individual work, which is uploaded to a College Board site and scored during the summer.

Another task is choosing a research question and argument from a packet that contains documents related to art, literature, history, technology or science. Then they do an individual media presentation. To accomplish

the tasks, students had to explore art, science, history and other subjects.

"I've been able to work with other teachers in the school to bring in their expertise to my class, so they can see it really is a multi-disciplinary course," Hutchison said.

Seminar is rigorous, and some students have felt overwhelmed at first but are later proud of their accomplishments.

"It requires them to be self-motivated, independent and willing to solve problems and work through them," she said.

The yearlong language and seminar courses help them be better prepared for the exam.

"They have really liked putting work into something and enjoy doing the presentations. ... It makes them feel good to overcome some of those challenges," Hutchison said.

"The writing and research is a lot like what they will be doing in college. Because they have to do a lot independently, that also prepares them for college."

The research course to follow in 2018-19 will be taught by an AP social studies teacher.

Due to the independent nature of the course, students will check in with others teachers from time to time.

"We have a great AP program here, not only with the number of courses we offer but also how our students perform. Our proficiency is higher than the state average every year and the highest in the county," said principal Monica Jacobson.





## LAKEFOREST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The Leadership Academy, a group of older African-American men, visit Lakeforest Elementary School twice a month for an hour to mentor approximately 20 male fourth and fifth grade students.

They are members of 100 Black Men of Eastern North Carolina, a local chapter of 100 Black Men in America.

“We want to make these young men well rounded, to catch them at an early age, get them thinking now about their future,” said Butler Lewis, 64, a former military and civil law enforcement officer.

Johnny Ford, 51, added, “Our primary focus here is to be positive role models and to train leaders, to see the potential they have in themselves.”

The mentors teach skills in communication, teamwork, conflict resolution, managing money, grooming, manners and general good character. They teach table manners, when and how to wear a tie and how to greet others, such as eye contact and shaking hands.

“We try to challenge them to be the best they can be every day, not just in school, but at home and in the community, to just be great citizens,” Ford said.

The group also introduces community leaders to the students, in such



fields as banking, emergency response, military service, law enforcement and former Leadership Academy mentees.

“We want them to see there are people that care about them,” Ford said.

Curtis Best, 72, a retired psychiatric social worker, added, “One of our mottos is ‘What they see is what they will be.’ So we try to provide them things they want to know about.”

Ford said, “Our main goal is to support the family, the school and the community. To get these young men thinking about others, not just about

them — being leaders in school. We are going to challenge them.”

School counselor Brittany Rollings recognizes the value of such a program.

“This is an incredible group to get students to witness positive male role models first hand and to have these men to ask questions to,” she said. “The boys look forward to it.”

Best added, “We want them to know they can come to us for anything. We want to make it easier for them to deal with all the stuff they have to deal with. We are going to put all the tools they need in their toolbox to be able to deal with anything.”

## NORTH PITT HIGH SCHOOL

Students at North Pitt High School work to feed their community. In response to Hurricane Matthew, which hit Pitt County in October 2016, North Pitt secured a \$2,947 Future Farmers of America Living to Serve grant.

Hurricane Matthew adversely affected Pitt County’s agriculture. North

Pitt’s FFA students decided to expand its greenhouse products by adding produce. They also expanded its chicken operation.

Students grow tomatoes, lettuce, collards, radishes, peppers and corn. They also grow pineapples, plants, basil and more. The products are given to the Bethel Food Hub, a local food pantry serving residents who live north of the river. This area of Pitt County does not have a grocery store.

Approximately 110 students are part of the FFA program, under the guidance of agriculture teacher and FFA adviser Lauren Wilmot.

The students are also responsible for manning the school’s chicken coop and handling the sales of free-range eggs. Cost is \$2 per dozen.

“I like the hands-on learning,” said rising junior Brooke Terry.

Rising senior Amer Abdeljabbar added, “I’m learning new things, like how to feed chickens.”

Students are proud to be making a difference in their community.

“It feels awesome to help someone in need,” Terry said.

North Pitt hopes to expand its greenhouse products and FFA programming.





## NORTHWEST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Northwest Elementary School hit the restart button in the 2017-18 school year. Northwest will reopen under a new formula of teaching and learning in the 2018-19 school year.

Similar to a Montessori concept, Northwest will develop via a personalized learning concept incorporating Go Grow initiatives.

“For personalized learning, students will have individual goals to meet their learning needs,” said principal Tara Parker.

The formula for students in grades K-2 looks different than 3-5, she added. Reading and math will be taught on a personalized learning formula with numerous clubs, activities and STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) projects incorporated into the classrooms.

“Hands-on learning gets students highly engaged. We want our students to take responsibility for their own learning and, as teachers, be facilitators,” Parker said.

Students in grades K-2 will be “grouped based on reading levels,” she explained.

“We are breaking the grade level walls down,” Parker said, adding Northwest will also be given “more flexibility” with two additional weeks of school added onto the end of the school year.

As a student masters the content, they will advance to the next level.

“Our staff is motivated. (This model) gives teachers flexibility, and hands-on learning sparks curiosity, which results in a love for learning,” Parker said.

Students will enjoy coding and robotics, while learning math and reading skills.

“We want to see academic growth and a desire to be in school. We want to instill pride in our students, so they have the desire to achieve,” Parker said.

The new personalized learning model will launch for grades K-2 in the 2018-19 school year. Each year, an additional grade level will be added to the model.

The Go Grow aspect of the restart will be school wide. Northwest is an open enrollment school.



## PACTOLUS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Pactolus Elementary School hones in on music. It is home to the only steel drums department in the district.

Under the direction of general music and chorus teacher Kathy Smith and band and orchestra teacher Laura O’Neal, the music department is top-notch, according to principal Taylor Matkins.

Band and chorus are open to the school’s middle school students. Or-

chestra becomes an option in the fourth grade.

“We have limited resources, but students embrace music, and being part of band, chorus and orchestra allows them to find a niche,” Matkins said. “Music connects students.”

Through a Perkins Foundation grant, Pactolus School launched a keyboard lab last school year. The lab exposes children to an instrument they may have not otherwise learned, Smith said. The school also has a guitar lab.

Many students cannot afford private lessons, but the labs give students the opportunity to “learn at their own pace,” Smith said.

“Our motto is: Every child can learn,” she said.

Seventy percent of Pactolus’ middle school students participate in the arts or music.

“That speaks volumes. Students want to participate,” Matkins said.

Smith added, “We feed our own program. The competitions drive the interest. In general music, students are learning keyboard and the steel drums. Soon the keyboard lab will be open to K-8 students. I’m so excited.”

Students can also participate in both elective courses.

“The arts make a well-rounded student,” Smith said.





# RIDGEWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Ridgewood Elementary School is entering its second year of Go Grow, a program for academically gifted students. Through Go Grow, students work on virtual tool kits and learn how to code, along with other computer skills.

Students in grades K-5 are given various challenges and must learn how to collaborate with their classmates and problem solve.

For example, students are tasked to build a circuit but are not given directions on how to build it.

"I enjoy the frustrations. It is challenging," said rising third-grader Scarlett Salter.

In another challenge, students had the option to pick three materials and construct a house that could withstand wind simulated by a fan and then by a blow dryer.

Salter's house survived the fan's wind but collapsed when the blow dryer gusts hit it.

Rising third-grader Carter Davenport's house survived both windstorms.

Go Grow class is held once a week during one class period and is something students look forward to.

Ridgewood also offers STRIDE — Striving Toward Responsible Intellectual Development Educa-

tion — for students in grades 4-5. This class is also held once a week but is an all-day class. STRIDE offers students "creative expression," according to STRIDE teacher Becky Brinson.

Last school year's theme was "Structures." This year's theme is "Influences."

In the Structures curriculum, students were tasked to build a bridge. Broken into teams, each student had a role in the company they created, including engineer, accountant, project director and builder. Students learned how to set a budget and manage it.

STRIDE student Jamari Hukins looks forward to the class each week.

"We have a great teacher who pushes us, and the students are nice enough to help each other problem solve," he said.

Go Grow and STRIDE challenge students to complete independent work, Brinson said.

"The key is that it is a challenge, so our students can problem solve and work through it. We want our students to think outside of two seconds. That creates problem-solvers," Brinson said. "I am amazed daily by how the students process information and think. We want them to try and know that it is OK to fail with a growth mindset that says, 'I can't do this yet.'"



# SUGG-BUNDY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

H.B. Sugg and Sam D. Bundy Elementary Schools' Club Fridays enters its third year in the 2018-19 school year.

"Our school motto is FUN — Foster leadership, Utilize technology, and give New experiences," said principal Allison Setser.

Club Fridays rewards students for meeting their academic goals and exposes them to new experiences, Setser said.

Students in grades K-2 participate in activities contained within their grade-level hallways, while students in grades 3-5 rotate activities throughout the entire school. Students get to select their top three club choices and are then placed in a club for a semester.

Club options include Science Olympiad, running, STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math), crochet, softball, chess, yearbook, movie making and animation, Boys to Men Club, cooking, Junior Teachers Association, world travelers and more.

Students have the opportunity to participate in two clubs over the course of the school year.

"Some students end up loving the club they chose, while others don't like it, but we try to teach them, 'you have to finish what you start,'" Setser said.

School counselor Melissa Hastings added, "We see students pick up new hobbies and interests."

Crochet is a "lost art," Setser said.

"But we will see students walking through our hallways crocheting away," she said with a smile.

Members in the Junior Teachers Association are responsible for school bulletin boards. Members in the World Travelers Club each have a passport and travel to different countries through books and videos. The adviser of this club also brings in various foods from different countries, so students can experience different cultures.

"Many of our students have not gone anywhere. This club allows them to experience culture a little bit, which is exciting to see," Hastings said.

Club Fridays has also helped to decrease behavioral problems.

"Our students want to go to their club," Hastings said, adding new bonds are also being created. "They are working with other staff members and students and have a new person to talk to."

As principal, Club Fridays has also allowed Setser to see her staff in a different light.

"We have coaches who play chess; others who are musically inclined," Setser said.

Club Fridays is held for the first 40 minutes of class each Friday.

"It starts Friday off on a good note," Hastings said.

Learning should be fun and engaging, so students want to come to school, Setser said.

"Our students are learning in a FUN way, and it is cool to see them discover things they're good at. Some, when they start aren't that good at it, but they grow throughout the semester and get good."

Setser added, "When things get hard they may want to quit, but we challenge them to keep trying something new."





## SOUTH CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

South Central High School's signature programs – Innovation, Art and Adobe – allow students to thrive and learn creatively.

"Cookie cutter programs don't help. This allows kids to thrive at what they are good at, which hopefully helps them do well in class. All high schools should open up new programs to meet kids' needs," said principal

Janarde Cannon. "Kids have abilities that sitting in a desk doesn't bring out in them. It is about giving kids the opportunity to really express themselves the way they learn."

South Central art students designed and built the props and decorations for Pitt County's annual Teacher of the Year celebration, which also included video recording the event.

"Innovation involves theoretical thinking, not necessarily the tinkering of tangible things," Cannon said. "Kids can create things all day long, but if you can get them to think about society issues ... that is a huge piece of our Innovation course."

Art courses include culinary arts, 3D technology, digital photography, ceramics, welding and more.

Adobe video, digital technology and graphic design students create anything from DVD cases, CDs and posters to commercials, music videos and short films.

Paula Elks, South Central's media coordinator and Innovation teacher, loves her job.

"I do something not many people are allowed to do. I let students drive their own learning. I teach them how to identify problems they care about and use their strengths and interests to solve the problem," she said.

Rising junior Marquita Horton has taken courses in all three programs.

"The academics you can get at other schools, but nobody does art like we do," she said.



## SOUTH GREENVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Pitt County Schools is growing its Maker education approach – problem-based, project-based, hands-on, team-oriented experiences that teach problem solving skills.

South Greenville Elementary School's media coordinator Katie Richardson is making Maker work in the smallest media center in the district.

"You just focus on getting the job done and what is best for the kids," Richardson said.

Bringing Maker into the media center has changed how she teaches and how she views what students are capable of. It has also made the media center less threatening to remedial students.

"The media center can be intimidating if you have been behind in reading since you were in kindergarten, which can create anxiety and turn into behavior issues," she said.

South Greenville Elementary is modeling the co-teaching concept this year.

"It has revolutionized the way I'm doing it," Richardson said, adding students who were previously not participating are now eager. "I'm teaching with the teacher."

Co-teaching allows teachers and media coordinators to combine curriculum with literacy, Richardson said.

For example, they team up to tie in a math unit on measurements with designing an eating utensil for the giant in the book, "The BFG."

"My roots are literacy, and I wanted to grow our kids in finding what they wanted to read and become passionate readers. ... Maker has transformed kids' experience in the media program," Richardson said.

During the first grade unit on the topic of magnetism, students rotate through five stations, such as making magnetic slime, magnetic dust and designing an underground marble run using magnets. Students focus on computer coding with tiny toy robots called Ozobots.

"They figure it out, and it becomes student-led," Richardson said.

Principal Lakeesha Lynch added, "It is amazing to watch them doing this. It is basic engineering at such an early age. It's a new approach to media."





# STOKES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Stokes Elementary School is among the 10 percent of the world's schools with the Lighthouse School distinction. Internationally, there are 3,186 Leader in Me Schools of which only 370 are Lighthouse Schools.

As a Leader in Me School, Stokes worked toward the status this past year, which was awarded in May. In North Carolina, Stokes School was the first Leader in Me School east of I-95 and the only one in Pitt County, according to principal Jennifer Johnson.

"We are a school where students are encouraged to find a voice," she said, explaining Leader in Me schools embody Franklin Covey's "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People." Students are taught leadership skills and accountability. Each student has a duty or job within the school. They

hold this position for nine weeks. Jobs include classroom greeter, tour guide, recorder, announcer and more.

Each student also has an accountability partner. For example, if students are assigned to read 10 books in nine weeks, the partners encourage one another to complete the task. The partners hold weekly meetings and share positive reinforcement, Johnson said.

Last school year, for the first time in the school's history as a Leader in Me School, community members and businesses partnered with the school to follow the seven habits.

The seven habits are part of Grady White Boats' and Panda Express' employee handbooks. Both companies are highly supportive of the school, Johnson said.

One of the seven habits is "first things first."

"Students know when they get home they need to start their homework, then they can have fun," Johnson said, adding it is the same system at school with recess at the end of the day after all work is completed. "First things first."

The school embraces its Motivational Mondays, where students lead discussions about the seven habits. Each day approximately 15 minutes is set aside for Focus Time, when students write reflections regarding instances where they used a habit or did not use a habit and how the situation may have resulted in a different outcome had they used a habit.

"Our students are learning to be proactive rather than reactive. They are learning to be problem-solvers and to think critically. They are learning to 'begin with the end in mind,'" Johnson said, referring to another habit.

When a student enters Stokes, the "end" is to graduate from eighth grade. Then the "end" is to graduate from high school and then college, she added.

"We want our students to seek first to understand and then to be understood. We want them to be active listeners, so they can be productive in life," Johnson said.

Synergizing and collaboration are other key components of the seven habits. "All brains together. You can have one person with five ideas, but two people can generate 45," Johnson said. "We want our students to have the opportunity to voice their opinion and ideas, to get and give feedback, and have a say in their school."

As a Leader in Me School, Stokes staff is also teaching students to be responsible for their emotions.

"They know what they are in control of. 'He said this.' 'He made me mad.' 'He did this,'" Johnson said, adding taking the angle of "I" can change one's attitude and behavior. "'I felt angry.' It is about owning your mistakes and feelings and controlling the outcome and recognizing you have options."

Behavioral issues have decreased since becoming a Leader in Me School three years ago, according to Johnson.

"Poise has increased. Our students understand their part in the school — and the bigger picture. They think twice about their behavior and choices," she said.

Stokes Elementary School is an open enrollment school.





# W.H. ROBINSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The four teachers who teach third grade at W.H. Robinson Elementary School, A'mia Pope, Erin Davis, Bailee Corey and Amanda Monroe, have an innovative project with a real-world application to help their students understand how the world's economy works.

In their social studies economics unit, students differentiate wants and needs, compare cost of goods and work with currency.

Students are taught how to be entrepreneurs, which includes how to develop a business plan and how to produce and market their product.

Teachers also invite local business owners into the classroom to talk to the 8- and 9-year olds about their product or service, how they got started, the business decisions they had to make and all that owning a business involves.

The lesson culminates in all four of the third grade classes coming together to hold Market Day.

Leading up to Market Day, students are given the opportunity to "earn" spending money resembling authentic U.S. paper currency but oversized. Demonstrating good behavior and meeting classroom expectations earns students Market Day money. Turning in homework every day may earn a student \$10. Being kind to a classmate might result in a \$2 reward. This is where students



are given the opportunity to put into practical use what they have learned.

Each classroom becomes a market, where some students play the role of merchants, setting up vendor booths, complete with hand-made posters advertising their product and prices.

Other students are customers. The students visit each classroom to shop for various handcrafted products, such as one-of-a-kind works of art, paper airplanes, jewelry or decorated pencils.

The exchanging of money as they buy and sell also gives students the opportunity to make practical application of math skills.

"I'm broke," announced one student who had learned the consequences of impulse buying.

Rising fourth-grader Molly Bulvanoski was a merchant of the popular toy known as slime, a fun gooey substance that drips and runs, which she made from sodium borate (the laundry product Borax), water and white glue. By adding coloring and glitter, she was able to offer customers a variety to choose from.

"Because I had pretty big containers of slime, if I sold it for \$1, it would be too low. So I went up to \$4," Bulvanoski said. "I like that you got to feel what it's like when people buy your stuff. They really liked it."

Rising fourth-grader Kate Wallen made bracelets from rubber bands and beads, which she sold for \$5 each.

"I got to learn how exciting it is when people come up to buy something and you have to give them change back," she said, adding it was fun to add up her profits.

# WAHL-COATES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

With the acquisition of a full-time theater teacher, Wahl-Coates Elementary School has fully implemented its school of the arts designation. All students are required to take theater, which culminated in the productions of "Alice in Wonderland" in fall 2017 and "Wizard of Oz" in May 2018.

All second and third grade students are required to take a class in "Strings" or stringed instruments.

"We start them off with the Suzuki method of teaching strings and we work our way up to more advanced methods. The kids generally love it," said principal Marty Baker. "We have fourth and fifth grade orchestra."

Wahl-Coates incorporates the arts in its entire curriculum, whether that is in music, chorus, orchestra, art and theater classes, or when the arts teachers are invited into regular classrooms to add to a math, English or science lesson.

"It takes the content of what we need to teach and doing it in a little bit different way," Baker said. "It keeps it very interesting and exciting."

The arts continue after school with an advanced art, music and theater program for Wahl-Coates students as well as the public. It incorporates partnerships with East Carolina University professors, students and visiting artists. Students may also learn to play piano or guitar, learn art techniques or participate in Storybook Theater.

As the school's arts coordinator, Dawn Wilson organizes an abundance of opportunities for students to be exposed to professional artists of all types, including musicians, sculptors, blacksmiths, potters, book illus-

trators and more. In addition, every student attends some sort of performance during the school year.

In addition to making general subjects more interesting, learning all about the arts, music, art and theater teaches students discipline and soft skills like paying attention, listening carefully and coordinating their efforts with those around them, Baker said.

Wilson, who also is the school's music teacher, knows the value of arts in education.

"The arts are where the kids can really be themselves and be successful. There is no right or wrong answer, and they can be creative," she said.





# WELLCOME MIDDLE SCHOOL

STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education is a key focus at Wellcome Middle School, which has three STEM classes, Maker activities in the media center and monthly school-wide STEM Fridays. It has a LEGO robotics team and several STEM-related clubs. Most teachers have been trained, and the school's STEM council includes local industries.

"We are fortunate that we are right down here where the businesses and industries are," said STEM coordinator Pam Ferris, referring to the school's location on Memorial Drive in Greenville.



Principal Kim Harris added, "Our students also get to tour industries through their STEM classes here."

Most students have no clue what the industries in their community do or what future jobs are available to them, Harris said.

At the school's STEM engineering fair, industries provided engaging demonstrations. They also visit classrooms to work with students.

Grants have helped the school acquire tools and other materials.

"It is amazing what the kids can pick up and do if the resources are made available to them," Ferris said. "STEM Friday allows teachers the opportunity to do fun, hands-on things with STEM that they can't always afford the time to do in class."

One STEM Friday was the culmination of school-wide reading of the mystery murder novel "Three Times Lucky," which engaged students in various crime scene investigations related to the book.

Sixth grade students completed message coding and fingerprinting with authentic N.C. Bureau of Investigation staff. Seventh graders learned about blood spatter and ink analysis, while eighth graders learned all about facial recognition.

"The kids have so much fun they don't even realize they're learning stuff," Ferris said.

"STEM isn't just project based. They need to be able to solve problems and use the engineering design process. Industries have told us employees need to know how to work together and talk to each other. A lot of this is workforce development to help the kids become aware of the careers that are available in our area, to get them interested and know what is a good fit for them. Industries want local people. They have better employee retention."

# WINTERGREEN PRIMARY & INTERMEDIATE SCHOOLS

Cathy Kirkland is principal at one of two Pitt County twin schools, Wintergreen Primary and Intermediate Schools.

"We are the third largest in student population behind two high schools and one of two elementary schools in the district that has a B rating," she said with pride.

Wintergreen is a leader in the district in reading proficiency and has adopted a unique approach to the Accelerated Reader program.

"We began looking at the number of words read in an effort to increase students' reading motivation," Kirkland said.

Counting the number of words read makes reading achievement more exciting.

Wintergreen began a Millionaire Word Wall for the first time in 2017-18. The wall consists of a row of large photos of students who have reached word number goals at incremental levels from 100,000 words up to several millions of words.

"We run a report at the end of every nine weeks. Children that have read between 100,000 and 149,999 are grouped, and we take a picture. . . . You have to work really hard to read that many words," Kirkland said.

Wintergreen Primary Instructional Coach Krista Bunting added, "Every school has Accelerated Reader, but this makes it so much more exciting. The kids are so invested. They want to get up on that wall. If you get to a million words, you get a T-shirt. Even kids that didn't really care about making their point goal are now reading books in the hallway."

Kirkland said, "Students will say, 'This book has 50,000 words. If I read this book well and pass the Ac-

celerated Reader test, I can get to the next category.'"

The multi-millionaire readers earn an "even more sparkly" T-shirt, she added.

"For next year, we may combine some of the categories because it's getting to be really big," Kirkland said.

Media coordinator Kellie Williams added, "I've definitely seen students get excited about more challenging books. They are not shying away from the bigger books."







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## Curriculum Programs

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- Associate in Arts – University Transfer
- Associate in Engineering – University Transfer
- Associate in Science – University Transfer  
Biotechnology

### CIT (Construction & Industrial Technology)

- Air Conditioning, Heating & Refrigeration Technology
- Architectural Technology
- Automotive Systems Technology
- Automotive Light-Duty Diesel Technology Diploma
- Building Construction Technology
- Computer Integrated Machining
- Electrical Systems Technology
- Electronics Engineering Technology
- Horticulture Technology
- Industrial Management Technology
- Industrial Systems Technology
- Mechanical Engineering Technology
- Welding Technology

### BUSINESS

- Accounting & Finance: Accounting
- Accounting & Finance: Financial Services
- Business Administration: General
- Business Administration – Human Resources Management
- Business Administration – Marketing
- Entrepreneurship
- Healthcare Business Informatics
- Healthcare Management Technology: General
- Healthcare Management Technology: Healthcare Entrepreneurship

- Healthcare Management Technology: Long-Term Care
- Information Technology: Computer Programming & Development
- Information Technology: Network Management
- Information Technology: Support & Services
- Information Technology: Cyber Security
- Information Technology: Web Administration & Design
- Information Technology: Mobile Applications Entrepreneurship Certificate
- Medical Office Administration: General
- Medical Office Administration: Medical Auditor
- Medical Office Administration: Medical Billing & Coding
- Medical Office Administration: Patient Services Representative
- Medical Office Administration: Dental Office Administration Diploma
- Office Administration – General
- Office Administration – Office Finance
- Office Administration – Legal Office
- Simulation and Game Development

### PUBLIC SERVICES & FINE ARTS

- Advertising and Graphic Design
- Associate in Fine Arts in Visual Arts
- Associate in Fine Arts in Music
- Basic Law Enforcement Training Certificate
- Criminal Justice Technology
- Criminal Justice Technology – Financial Crime/Computer Fraud
- Early Childhood Education
- Early Childhood Education: Birth through Kindergarten Licensure Transfer
- Early Childhood Education: Early Education
- Non-Teaching Licensure Transfer
- Human Services Technology
- Human Services Technology – Gerontology
- Human Services Technology – Substance Abuse
- Paralegal Technology
- Recreational Therapy Assistant

### HEALTH SCIENCES

- Advanced Medical Coding Certificate\*
- Associate Degree Nursing\*
- Breast Sonography Certificate\*
- Cardiovascular Sonography\*
- Computed Tomography & Magnetic Resonance Imaging Diploma\*
- Echocardiography Diploma\*
- Emergency Medical Science\*
- Emergency Medical Science – Bridge\*
- Health Information Technology \*
- Mammography Certificate\*
- Medical Assisting\*
- Medical Dosimetry Diploma\*
- Medical Sonography\*
- Nuclear Medicine Technology\*
- Occupational Therapy Assistant\*
- Polysomnography\*
- Polysomnography – Bridge\*
- Polysomnography Certificate\*
- Positron Emission Tomography Diploma\*
- Radiation Therapy Technology Diploma\*
- Radiography\*
- Respiratory Therapy\*
- Therapeutic Massage\*



\* Students enroll as an Associate in General Education to complete special program admission requirements.

# GET STARTED TODAY





*Supporting* education.  
Creating *bright futures*.



*Freedom 325*



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Exceptional attention to detail.

[gradywhite.com](http://gradywhite.com)

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It All Comes Together in  
the Greenville, NC MSA.

We create successful  
partnerships...

And this makes our communities even stronger. Here, it all comes together – with a creative entrepreneurial environment, a vibrant cultural scene, year-round recreation, comfortable living and a great climate for business success.

Join us in the Greenville, NC MSA.

**The best location - a strong association.**

[www.locateincarolina.com](http://www.locateincarolina.com)





# TAKE A SCHOOL TOUR TODAY!

## Here are key areas you should see:

- ▣ Media Center
- ▣ Cafeteria
- ▣ Classrooms
- ▣ Gym
- ▣ Encore classes
- ▣ Creative Learning Areas
- ▣ Unique Technology Labs

## Here are some suggested questions:

Do you feel welcome  
at the school?

How is learning  
individualized for students?

What measures are in place  
to keep students safe?

How does the school  
communicate with families?

How can families become  
involved with the school?

Visit our website for a full  
list of suggested questions.

[ppspittcounty.org](http://ppspittcounty.org)



# See how we build **BRIGHTER FUTURES.**



Visit any of the 37 schools in the Pitt County School System through a unique collaboration between Pitt County Schools, Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County, the United Way of Pitt County, and the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce.

Tours are provided to prospective families, business leaders or other residents interested in seeing firsthand the activities and initiatives happening in our local schools.

## Contact Parents for Public Schools to schedule your personal school tour.

[kdibble@ppspittcounty.org](mailto:kdibble@ppspittcounty.org) or (252) 758-1604; 201

## OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

