



NEW HANOVER
COUNTY SCHOOLS



2022

ANNUAL REPORT

COVER

Sunset Park kindergarten teacher
Natasha Miller celebrates a
reading victory with her student

NHCS MISSION

TO STRIVE TO PROVIDE CHILDREN WITH
AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A
SUPERIOR EDUCATION IN A
SAFE AND POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
WHERE THEY ARE PREPARED WITH THE
SKILLS TO SUCCEED.







FROM THE

Superintendent of Schools

OUR MISSION:

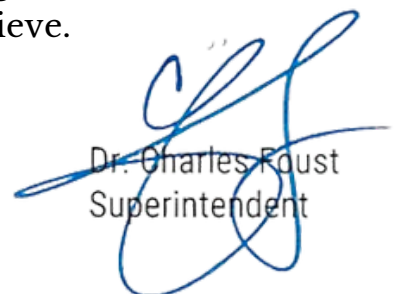
TO STRIVE TO PROVIDE
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When I began my career in education nearly 25 years ago, I wrote down my core beliefs about education. Among them was that “I sincerely believe all students have the ability to learn; the educator’s job is to create and offer a first-class education in a safe and inviting setting.” This belief remains true to this day, and I have dedicated my career to the idea that every child can learn.

As the Superintendent of New Hanover County Schools, I am responsible for employing the best possible leaders who can dedicate the resources and time to ensure our incredible teachers are highly effective and our students excel.

I believe that our graduation rate will be at 90% over the next three years. I believe that 90% of our students will be reading on grade level, and we can grow every sub-group of students by at least 10%. Because I believe this, I hold myself, my staff, and all-district teachers and employees to a high standard. Excellence doesn’t happen by accident.

We are in the business of ensuring that the students walk through our doors to learn and walk out capable of being highly effective citizens, career-ready, or college-bound. NHCS is leading the way to excellence. I am humbled to lead such an incredible organization and thrilled to see what our students will achieve.



Dr. Charles Foust
Superintendent

BOARD OF EDUCATION



Stephanie Kraybill

CHAIR



Stephanie Walker

VICE-CHAIR



Nelson Beaulieu



Judy Justice



Hugh McManus



Stefanie Adams



Pete Wildeboer

BY THE NUMBERS

OUR STUDENTS

Total Enrollment	25,462	
White	14,749	58%
Black/African American	4,452	17%
Hispanic/Latino	4,444	17%
Asian	405	1.6%
Two or more races	1,309	5%
American Indian	77	.3%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	26	.10%

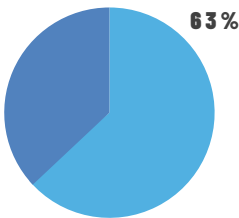
Pre-K Students	572
Elementary Students	11,082
Middle School Students	5,410
Traditional High School	7,465
Non-Traditional High School	238
Early College High School	695
Special Education Students	3,379

OUR BUDGET

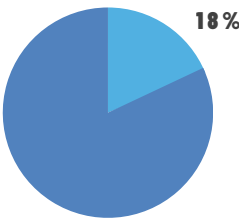
Revenue by Source		
State	\$172,517,228	43%
New Hanover County	\$97,300,657	24%
Fund Balance Appropriation	\$10,200,000	3%
Other Sources	\$3,565,650	1%
TOTAL	\$398,661,867	

OUR EMPLOYEES

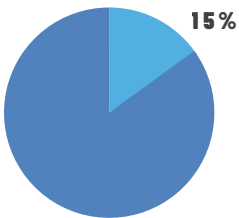
Total Employment	3,608
Teachers & Certified	2,195
Classified Staff	1,413
Substitute Teachers	534
Administrative Staff	166



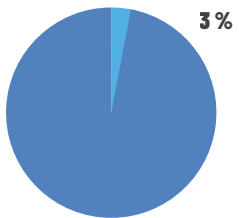
INSTRUCTIONAL
PROGRAMS



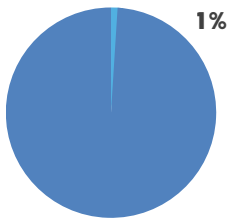
SYSTEM-WIDE
SUPPORT SERVICES



NON-PROGRAMMED
CHARGES



ANCILLARY
PROGRAMS



CAPITAL
OUTLAY

TRANSPORTATION

Yellow Buses in Fleet	129
Bus Routes	511
Students Transported Daily	9,073
Miles Driven Daily	9,090

FOOD SERVICE

Meals Served Daily	12,041
Meals Served in a Year	2.1 million
Students Eligible for Free and Reduced Meals	31%

BY THE NUMBERS

Elementary & Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Funding, Allowable Uses, and Initiatives

NEW HANOVER
COUNTY SCHOOLS



FUNDING SOURCES

 <div>TOTAL: \$88,558,285</div>	ESSER I Source: CARES – Coronavirus Aid, Relief & Economic Security Act Expiration: 9/30/22 \$6,077,863	ESSER II Source: ERSSA – Coronavirus Response & Relief Supplement Appropriations Act Expiration: 9/30/23 \$24,455,997	ESSER III Source: ARP – American Rescue Plan Act Expiration: 9/30/24 \$57,024,425
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ALLOWABLE USES

 Address learning loss	Facility Repairs/ Improvements to Minimize Virus Transmission 	Improving Preparedness and Response 	Summer Learning 
Addressing Needs of Special Populations 	 Mental Health Services	Improve Air Quality 	Education Technology 



BACK TO SCHOOL



TOGETHER AGAIN.

While the 2021 calendar year started with students in remote learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic, by spring we were returning to school, and we started the 2021-22 school year with full-time, face-to-face instruction for every student.

Our educators, staff, and district families were challenged like few of us could have imagined in March of 2020. Together we rose to that challenge, reinvented what education and family involvement could look like, and shared a new degree of pride for our schools and our community.

And when it was time to come back to school, we were more than ready.

We were ready to come back to show what we had learned, to get a helping hand, and to work together to learn and grow.

We were ready to ask tough questions and get face-to-face answers. We were ready to return to performing arts and athletics, to play and exploration.

We were ready to return to working hard, challenging ourselves, and reconnecting, and celebrating.

Together.

The first day of school was so special last year because we knew what we had missed, and we appreciated coming back to it even more.





SUMMER IGNITE



LEARNING CONTINUED ACROSS THE DISTRICT

More than 2,500 children in first grade through high school enrolled in the Summer Ignite program, which NHCS created after the state legislature passed the Summer Learning Choice for NC Families bill, requiring school districts to offer at least 30 days of in-person instruction to students at risk of repeating a grade or losing credits.

The longer, uninterrupted blocks of face-to-face instruction — including two hours of reading at the elementary level — allowed students and teachers to really drill down into subjects and spur more growth in the span of a few weeks.

“That rigor was no joke,” said Ashley Cearfoss, site coordinator at Forest Hills Global Elementary. “But every time I talked to a parent there was so much appreciation for what a teacher can do versus what they thought they could do prior to all this.”

INSTRUCTION THAT STUDENTS NEEDED MOST

At the elementary level, sites offered project-based learning to make math and reading fundamentals engaging.

“The kids craved it. They wanted the social interaction. They wanted to be at school,” Cearfoss said.

At Codington Elementary, teachers guided students through themed projects around this summer’s Olympics in Tokyo, learning about Japanese culture while reading about the history of the Olympics and doing math problems around the competitions.

At the high school level, students had the chance to recover credits so they could graduate on time or avoid re-taking courses in the fall.

“There have been a lot of kids who struggled last year — socially, emotionally, academically. There were a lot of kids for whom remote learning was a challenge,” said Summer Ignite Director Dr. Anita Brown.

DISTRICT STAFF STEP UP

The scale of last summer’s offerings was much larger than in previous years and it really took a village to make it work, Brown said. It was a reflection of how dedicated school employees were to preparing students for success for the next school year.

“We had almost 750 staff members who came out — teachers, TAs, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, nurses, social workers, EC staff — you name it, they were out in schools,” Brown said, “just trying to meet the needs of kids.”



TEACHERS OF THE YEAR 2021

ELEMENTARY

COURTNEY MALAHIAS,
Snipes Academy



MIDDLE SCHOOL

SHANNON MITCHELL,
Roland Grise Middle School



PRINCIPAL

DR. EDITH SKIPPER,
SEA-Tech High School



ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

ABBEY EMERSON
Carolina Beach Elementary



OVERALL NHCS TEACHER OF THE YEAR AND 2022 SOUTHEAST REGION TEACHER OF THE YEAR

ABBEY NOBLES

New Hanover High School

Abbey Nobles, an exceptional teacher, leader, and colleague, is both our district teacher of the year and the Southeast Region Teacher of the Year for the State of North Carolina.

She consistently models that all students can be engaged and successful, regardless of their ability level or their background. She shows her students their potential, and they rise to meet it.

In her six years at New Hanover High School, Ms. Nobles has created a bilingual, open-door classroom environment where every student feels welcome, capable and seen. She also uplifts her colleagues by serving as a mentor for teacher interns and beginning teachers, and leading professional learning communities in English content and school culture.



FUTURE TEACHER SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

The New Hanover County Board of Education believes that the future of quality education in New Hanover County lies in the hands of the future teachers of our students.

Each year the Board awards four \$28,000 college scholarships to students who commit to becoming certified educators and returning to teach in NHCS classrooms for at least four years.

This year's recipients were, from left to right:

Jesse Wooddell, Hoggard High School

Rylee Sherwood, Isaac Bear High School

Makayla House, Laney High School

Jahzar Fields, Wilmington Early College High School



OVERALL NHCS TEACHER OF THE YEAR AND SECONDARY TEACHER OF THE YEAR

STEPHEN O'NEIL

Ashley High School

Losing his job as a medical engineer propelled Stephen O'Neil into a second career of teaching, but he wouldn't have it any other way.

Mr. O'Neil enjoys creating a supportive and exploratory space for his Career and Technical Education students at Ashley High School, and he models his classroom after the professional environment.

"You don't go autonomously when you're an engineer; you're always going to be in a collaborative role," he said. "What I really enjoy the most is the interactivity — they cross paths, they cross over into each other's realms, and they sometimes butt heads. And you know, that's real life."

His students said he treats them like professionals, and many of them plan to go on to careers in manufacturing and engineering. They've practiced it, and Mr. O'Neil has shown them what they're capable of.



PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR

CHRIS MADDEN

Williston Middle School

When you follow Chris Madden down the hallways at Williston Middle School, you see fist after fist being raised by students to bump and greet him. They like and respect him, it shows, and they're willing to be vulnerable enough to show it.

Middle school is not an academic holding time, he said. It's a launchpad to success in high school and the rest of their lives.

"If you're teaching 11-, 12-, 13-, 14-year-olds and you're not worried about where they're going to be at 25, then you're doing them a disservice," he said. "That's the big picture to me — not just what we do here, but where does this catapult them to?"

Since taking the helm in 2020, he's been working to balance creating a safe, loving, comfortable environment with keeping expectations high. Rigor and structure, he said, can happen within a framework of compassion.

TEACHERS OF THE YEAR 2022

ELEMENTARY

**MELISSA ALLEN,
Masonboro Elementary**



MIDDLE SCHOOL

**ELIZABETH RAPPOLD,
Trask Middle School**



ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

**MELISSA DARIA,
Forest Hills Global Elementary**



BEGINNING TEACHER OF THE YEAR

**RACHEL NORFLEET
Wrightsville Beach Elementary**



Ride-Along With Fourth Generation Bus Driver

April Rhodes likes to say she's been riding a bus since she was in utero.

Her mom **Roxanna Wilson** would finish driving her school bus route and park the bus on a dirt road behind their house.

"Then we got ready in the morning, we got on the bus, and we did our route," she said. "I thought it was so cool. My friends would say, 'What bus are you on?' and I'd say, 'I ride with my mom!'"

Her grandma drove a school bus, too, and her great-grandma before that — 80 years ago, for one dollar a day.

Despite the pull of family tradition, however, she had always said, "It stops with me. I am not gonna drive a bus."

Then life happened.

Ten years ago she found herself a single mom with five kids, and bus driving was the job that gave her the flexibility to be there for her family.

After a decade behind the wheel, it's clear that being a school bus driver is more than a job; it's part of who she is.

"I love my paycheck," she said during a mid-day run, hands on the wheel, eyes landing on each of her many mirrors, voice rising over the bus's air brakes and engine shifts. "But it's more, to me, beyond this door."

She tells parents that she will treat her riders like her own children. "We're not going to be disruptive, we're going to be respectful, we're going to mind rules, we're going to listen," she said.

But she also brings the patience, tolerance, and warmth of a mom to now-seven kids. "Kids do the craziest things that you would never dream that they would think up to do. It's never a dull moment," she acknowledges, "but I'm never surprised."

She has students now in high school that she's driven since they were kindergarteners, who run up to hug "Miss April" in the grocery store. Her response to the parent? "I told you that was my baby."

She has parents who will message her if their child isn't going to school, or sometimes, "Hey can you call me so we can talk?"

"Something is going on at home," she said, "and they know that I'll be there to listen."

She has a grandmother who so trusts her and her bus aide Dorothy Stokes to transport a disabled, non-verbal child that when they can't make the run, grandma just drives to pick up the child herself.

In a school community, you never know which adult a child is going to connect with and trust and learn from, she said.

Sometimes it's her.

"I might be the only smiling face they've seen that morning, or the last smiling face they'll see before they go home. Sometimes that's what keeps those kiddos going," she said. "We're all here to do one thing. That's to get a child to school, to get them an education, and to get them home — *safely.*"



CLASS OF 2022



AVERAGE ACT SCORES

580

Math

586

Reading

1166

Composite

END-OF-GRADE TEST RESULTS (percent proficient)

46.3%

Math

51%

Reading

66.7%

Science

SCHOLARSHIPS

New Hanover County Schools seniors earned more than **\$25.2 million in scholarships** and financial aid to pursue higher education.

Our graduating Class of 2022 included:

- 557 NC Scholars
- 20 students attended NC Governor's School
- 5 students admitted to the NC School of Science and Math
- 10 students accepted to Military Academies
- 6 students accepted to Ivy League Colleges
- 1 Morehead Scholar
- 1 Park Scholar

POST-SECONDARY PLANS

44%

Enrolling in a four-year college

39%

Enrolling in a two-year community college or trade school

12%

Gainfully employed

2%

Enlisting in the Military

2%

Other





STUDENT EXCELLENCE

STUDENT VOICES COME TO FOREFRONT THIS YEAR



The students are at the root of everything we do in education. Every policy implemented, every procedure followed, every hire made, and every curriculum created is for the betterment of our students.

With this in mind, during the 2021-2022 school year, New Hanover County School students participated in the NHCS Student Voice Project.

Students in grades 6-12 were recruited and invited to participate in the project, led by the National Student Voice organization to encourage and advise on giving students a more active voice in their education.

Over the year, these students learned about the responsibilities of a school board, met and discussed policies with senior leadership, and networked with peers from 16 different schools in the district.

“Whenever the Board makes decisions, we don’t get input, but we have to follow the decisions.” said Isaiah Singleton, Senior at Ashley High School.

“Our job is to tell them this is working or this isn’t so they can make decisions accordingly that benefit the students.”

The students have met multiple times a month over the last semester virtually and through roundtable discussions, all with one mission: to develop and bring forth a policy to the New Hanover County Board of Education that solidifies student engagement as a part of the governing of the district.

By collaborating with other students and adult allies in the school system and the community, the students believe they can work to implement successful decision-making that keeps students at the forefront of education and also provides them a seat at the table when it comes to the decisions that impact them the most.

Our students were bright, creative, and thoughtful about what they see working in their schools and where we can grow.

They drafted a policy and are looking forward to taking it to the Board of Education policy committee in hopes that it can be presented before the Board for consideration and adoption.

Teacher Saves Student's Life

Tricia Toews can't tell you how she knew something was horribly wrong in her kindergarten classroom. She just sensed it.

Ms. Toews was eating lunch at her desk at Forest Hills Elementary while her students did the same. The first five minutes of their break is always silent to allow chatty five-year-olds time to slow down, quiet down, and actually eat.

And it was quiet.

Then she heard it, a muffled sound at the back of the room, so vague that maybe it was nothing, but her intuition told her otherwise. She looked up and locked eyes with Za'vion, a bubbly student with round cheeks and a proclivity toward hugs.

His hands were at his neck. Panic was in his eyes.

"I said, 'Are you choking?' and he didn't answer. Right away I saw he was struggling. I could just tell he wasn't able to breathe," Ms. Toews said later that night.

Toews had been a medical assistant before going back to school to get her teaching degree as a single mother, a laptop on one knee and her bouncing baby on the other. This is her second year as a classroom teacher.

She ran across the room, stood behind him, and began the Heimlich maneuver, one hand wrapped around the other fist, thrusting upward between his little ribs.

Once.

Twice.

Three times.

Four.

"There was a moment there where I just kept Heimliching and I thought, 'Something's gotta work.' It was just keep going, keep going. I don't think I've ever been that scared," she said. "His life was literally in my hands."

Finally she heard a little cough, and a sound like Za'vion was trying to talk with his mouth full.

"It wasn't like the movies where the food goes flying out ten feet in the

air," she said. "I asked him, 'Are you breathing now? Are you breathing?' He looked at me and he nodded his head. I was just so grateful."

Toews called the school nurse to take Za'vion for a check-up. She asked another staff member to cover her class for a moment. And she went to the empty room across the hall, collapsed, and cried.

"My hands were shaking afterwards. Your adrenaline is going so much. There was this sense of relief that you did it and he's okay and you're okay and everyone in the class is okay," she said.

But also, "I just couldn't help but think, 'What if I wasn't able to do that right? What if something went wrong?' I love these babies so much. It was so emotional for me."



The next day Za’vion was on the playground, playing football catch with his teacher and red light green light with his friends. He remembered it all began with a Flamin’ Hot Dorito that he ate a bit too fast.

“When I had my choked time, I went out of breath, and then it felt like I almost died,” he said. “Ms. Toews held my tummy and pushed it back and pushed it back until the chip came out. I scared everybody in the class.”

His mama was so happy he was okay, he said, but she told him he has to chew slower at lunch.

“And I’m banned from chips,” he said. “My mom said I can’t have them, my nana, my auntie, everyone in my family said I can’t have no more chips because I choked on one.”

He shrugs. It seems like a sacrifice he’s willing to make.

He remembered when the nurse brought him back to the classroom. “I gave Ms. Toews a big hug,” he said, “And I told her, ‘You saved my life.’”

For Ms. Toews, the baby who was bouncing on her knee during her college classes is now a first grader down the hall from her classroom.

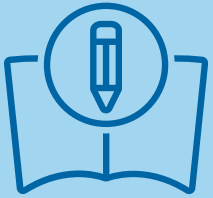
The work has its challenges, but on days like when she was there for Za’Vion, it feels like fate brought her to teaching, and into the lives of her students.

“The path that you are supposed to be on, or that you have taken...” she trails off. “Sometimes there are reasons why.”



EXCELLENT EDUCATORS

Our educators are the heart of what we do in New Hanover County Schools. While we know that facts and figures are just one way to measure their impact, these marks of excellence and recognition tell part of the story of why our vibrant, qualified, diverse team of teachers are some of the best around.



Mastery

38%

of our teachers have a master's degree or higher

Our district teachers bring an average of

14 years

of experience to their classrooms



Experience



Recognition

20%

of our teachers are National Board Certified, the highest mark of excellence for teachers.

\$51,000

average salary and the highest local supplement in the state.



Compensation



OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

2014 BOND REFERENDUM UPDATE



14 Projects
Completed



Serving all schools



\$160 million

The final projects funded by the 2014 Bond Referendum are complete, including construction of three new elementary schools — Porter's Neck, College Park, and Blair — a major addition and renovation at Wrightsville Beach Elementary School; major renovations at Trask, Noble, Myrtle Grove, and Roland-Grise middle schools; and major renovations/additions at Laney, Hoggard, and New Hanover high schools.



The new 595-student **Porter's Neck Elementary School** opened in Fall 2020 to serve the growing northeastern part of the county.



Roland-Grise Middle School improvements are complete, including major renovations to classroom spaces and facilities and improvements to vehicular and pedestrian traffic flow.



An addition to **Wrightsville Beach Elementary** modernized and expanded classroom and learning spaces, and improvements there put the building in compliance with stormwater and zoning requirements.

CHILD NUTRITION

KEEPING DISTRICT FAMILIES FED



2 Million
Meals Served

The COVID-19 pandemic reminded us that often our school employees are on the front lines when it comes to serving our community in times of need.

Our NHCS Child Nutrition staff worked tirelessly even when students were in remote learning, providing hot, nutritious meals through curbside pickups and community drop offs to any child 18 and under in the county.

TRANSPORTATION

BEYOND THE SCHOOL BUS DOOR



700,000
Miles Driven



Our Transportation staff and school bus drivers were called upon to serve our district families in new and important ways in the last two years, and they stepped up and did it with professionalism that made us so proud. In addition to delivering thousands of meals to families during school closures, they also served as teacher assistants during remote learning and helped keep our schools running in so many untold ways.

'You a Queen': Taniyah Harris Joins Homecoming Court

To see Taniyah Harris bounding down the 50 yard line during the halftime presentation of New Hanover High School's Homecoming court, you would think she had already won.

In a black sequined jumpsuit and matching glittery combat boots, she bounced toward the cheering crowd with such energy that her escort, 6'2 Hanover linebacker and cousin Zihiem Graham, had to pick up the pace.

Struts mixed with skips, a fist pumping in the air, she moved like somebody was playing her personal theme song.

And it was a banger.

They hadn't announced any winners yet, but it didn't matter. Being there, being seen, was the victory.

Taniyah lined up with the other young ladies, and over the loudspeaker her name was called: *Taniyah Harris, honorary Homecoming queen.*

As she accepted the bouquet and ducked her head to receive the tiara, the tears began.

"I didn't understand. She was crying, so then I started crying," mom Monique Harris said afterward from the stands. Then, gesturing to the entourage of aunties and grandmas: "We all started crying."

Taniyah said the tears were happy ones.

"I'm so happy, me and my family are so happy, I cried a little bit," she said, taking an auntie's face in her hands and planting a kiss on her cheek.

"You a queen?" another member of the entourage asked.

"Yeah!" Taniyah shouted.

"That's right!" the chorus sang back to her.

Taniyah is a senior at New Hanover, and her teacher of four years, Denise Ebbinkhuysen, was there to see her crowned.

"She's just awesome," said Miss E, as Taniyah calls her. "She's got this spirit, she's vivacious, she's hysterical, she's got a good sense of humor, she's a hard worker."

Taniyah has a stubborn streak like most teenagers, but Miss E is there to meet her. If she pouts and goes in a corner, "I go over there and we do a little 'JuJu On The Beat,'" Miss E said, bouncing her shoulders to demonstrate the hip hop dance that brings Taniyah out of a rut.

Music is the way to Taniyah's heart, and Miss E will take any path there she can get.

Often general ed students, or students with behavioral issues, will come to the special ed classroom to help and make connections with Taniyah and her classmates.

"They think they're coming to help," Miss E said, "But by the time you leave, my kids are giving you something. They're going to teach you more about empathy and grace and hard work and determination than you would ever learn on your own."



Taniyah's next big walk will be across the graduation stage next spring.

"It meant a whole lot to me. I don't think a special needs child has ever been nominated in the Homecoming ceremony, since I've known," she said. "I loved every bit of it."



STUDENT EXCELLENCE

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

2,155

Advanced Placement (AP)
Courses taken

1,116

AP Scores at 3 or above

331

International Baccalaureate
(IB) courses taken

1,690

Dual enrollment courses taken
with UNCW

4,221

Dual enrollment courses taken
with CFCC

28

Career and Technical Education
Pathways offered

70

Students placed in paid and
unpaid internships while in
high school

1,725

Credentials and Certifications
earned by students



INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE AWARD WINNER

Regan Williams, a junior at Hoggard High School, won a \$25,000 award at an international competition for outstanding scientific research for her work on preserving coastal habitats in the face of a changing climate.

Months of hopping into the frigid waters at Topsail in waders and wetsuits, collecting thousands of seagrass samples, and extracting their genetic material in a lab paid off for Williams, who was just 15 when she conceived of the project and began her research.

At the International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF), where the top young scientists from 75 countries compete to showcase original research and inventions, Williams won the \$25,000 Susie and Gideon Yu Award for Innovation in Sustainability.

The prize rewards a student who not only charted new scientific territory, but was also exceptional at communicating the research and its future implications.

BRINGING HIS CULTURE TO THE CAPITOL

Lykon Woodell, a sophomore at Ashley High School, was invited to perform a Lumbee Tribe traditional men's dance at the First Lady's Luncheon in Washington, D.C. hosted by Dr. Jill Biden. A pow-wow dancer since the age of four, Lynkon's performance told the story of a warrior returning from a hunt.

Lynkon said when he dons the regalia and hears the powerful pow-wow drumbeat reverberating in his chest, "it's like an identity swap." "It feels so different from when you're walking down the school hallway. You feel a lot more spiritual," he said.



At the event in D.C. he was paired with a female fancy shawl dancer from Colorado. For dignitaries and leaders from around the country, the pair brought the event theme of "Touch the Earth" to life.



Photo courtesy of Wilmington StarNews

AIDAN PAYNE IS STATE PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Aidan Payne of **New Hanover High School** is the 2021-22 Gatorade North Carolina Boys Soccer Player of the Year. The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the field, distinguishes Payne as North Carolina's best high school boys soccer player.



Aidan led the Wildcats to a 27-0-1 record and the Class 4A state championship this past season. Payne tallied 54 goals and 11 assists, including two goals and an assist in New Hanover's 3-0 win over Hough High in the state title game. He also scored all four goals in his team's 4-2 victory over Cardinal Gibbons High in the state semifinals. The North Carolina Soccer Coaches Association Player of the Year, he is also a United Soccer Coaches All-American selection.

Payne has maintained a weighted 4.48 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at North Carolina State University this fall.

SNIPES STUDENT HEADS TO SPACE CAMP

Leana Harrison-Nelson, a 4th grader at **Snipes Academy of Arts & Design** was named an AstroGirls 2022 Scholar, an honor that includes a scholarship to attend Space Camp in 2023.

Dr. Stephanie Willis, one of Leana's Assistant Principals at Snipes, saw this scholarship opportunity and thought of Leana.

"Leana has spoken of being an astronaut ever since she has been in kindergarten. To hear a kindergartener have such a big dream always stuck with me over the years," she said. "I felt this would be a great way for her to gain exposure."

The AstroGirls Scholarship Fund was created by rocket scientist Tiffany N. Davis to send young girls from under-represented communities to Space Camp for free,



YOUTH OF THE YEAR

Holly Shelter Middle School eighth-grader **Joquin Dingle** was named the 2022 Community Boys & Girls Club "Youth of the Year," in recognition of his leadership, service, academic excellence and healthy lifestyle. He was awarded a \$1,500 scholarship and will go on to vie for the North Carolina Youth of the Year title and a \$2,500 college scholarship from Boys & Girls Clubs of America.

STUDENT EXCELLENCE

STUDENT IN NY TIMES

Dylan Schmidt, a sophomore at **Hoggard High School**, was accepted into the *New York Times* Summer Academy, a selective program for students worldwide. During her fall semester in English with teacher **Leslie Lucas**, several pieces of Dylan's works were selected as "Picks of the Week."



LANEY WRESTLING CHAMPS

The **Laney High School wrestling team** were state champions for the second year in a row in a 32-31 victory over Northwest Guilford. It was the first time in 30 years the program had enjoyed a dual-run championship. Coach **Andre Adams** was also named North Carolina High School Athletic Association Coach of the Year.



NC STATE PARK SCHOLAR

Eleanor Meinhold, a 2022 graduate of **Isaac Bear High Early College High School**, was a recipient of the prestigious Park Scholarship, which provides a four-year scholarship to NC State



University awarded on the basis of outstanding accomplishments and potential in scholarship, leadership, service, and character. Meinhold is the daughter of Jennifer Horan and Stephen Meinhold and was the founder of the Environmental Action Club, secretary of the National Honor Society, and a past president and board member of Science Fair Academy. She plans to major in environmental engineering and chemistry.

Ms. Embry's Legacy Plays On

Jessica Embry had always pushed her Ashley High School orchestra students — and the music they created — out into the world beyond her classroom doors. She was already taking her musicians to play in the special education classrooms when she heard about the nationwide United Sound program, which helps orchestra students teach students with disabilities to play instruments. She petitioned Principal **Pat McCarty** to let her start the program at Ashley.

After the first concert where special ed and orchestra students shared the stage, she texted friend and then-Assistant Principal **Kim Morrissey**, exhilarated.

"Their smiles made me so happy," she said. After more than a decade in the classroom, the partnership had reignited her. "The kids made me so excited about teaching again," she said.

"It was the fulfillment of everything that she had been teaching for — to give back to the community and to see kids growing," McCarty said. "You could see the joy that it brought to them up on the stage."

Embry lived to serve, and last April she tragically died that same way, helping rescue two young girls caught in a rip current at Kure Beach.

New Ashley orchestra teacher **Riley Lopez** has carried on Embry's legacy and taken over the United Sound program, which is almost completely student-led.

"My students are the 'peer mentors,' and their friends are the 'new musicians,'" she said. It's terminology that sets aside the usual labels that divide and define those groups to simply say:

*Some of us are teaching.
Some of us are learning.
All of us share a love of music.*

New musician Robbie chose the violin for its bright and vibrant sound.

"It's peaceful in our hearts," he said. "It's peaceful in the world. It blesses our hearts."

Gina chose the warm and weighty cello. "It's everything to her," said dad Glenn Rosalia. "She lives for orchestra."

At rehearsals, a few mentors form a semi-circle around each new musician and help them hold the instruments, use the bows, and learn to read music.

Orchestra students get to make friendships with students they might not otherwise know. Severely autistic kids who love all types of music flourish when the bow is in their hand.

"They are not going to be concert violinists, but our kids see people loving them, who care about them, who want to interact with them," special ed teaching assistant **Giles Roberts** said. "That is the most important thing."



Roberts counted Ms. Embry as a kind and witty and mischievous friend whom he met when he was a biology teacher on the other side of the school.

If you had asked him about her a few months ago, he would've been too anguished to get the words out. But he can tell you now what you need to know:
She was all heart.

"She cared about people, not only in her life but in her death — she gave herself for the sacrifice of saving someone else," he said.

He pauses. Takes a breath.

"Sweet lady," he adds. "I sure miss her."

At the winter concert, the first since Embry's death, the new musicians are gathered in a hallway near the backstage entrance. They can hear the muffled cacophony of an orchestra warming up, the beautiful chaos of strings upon strings. They know it's almost time; the energy is palpable.

New musician Caleb circles around the group, assuring each of his friends that they are, indeed, "going to knock people's socks off."

There are jitters. There are moments of uncertainty. But in the end, everyone makes it to the stage.

They find their mentors, nestle into the horseshoe of shared musicianship, and "Jingle Bells" begins.

Eight months after her death, this moment shows us exactly what Ms. Embry wanted us to see when she brought the program to our schools:

How empathy can bring us together.

How we are so much more alike than different.

How music belongs to everyone, and there is a place for everyone in its creation.

When the final note is played the musicians rise to accept applause. Caleb throws his hands up in triumph and shouts to his friends, "They loved us!" adding, for good measure, "We knocked their socks off!"

Robbie descends the stairs to meet his mom in the audience, pointing to her and warning, "Don't cry, mom!"

"I'm not crying!" she says — but maybe she was, just a little.

While the conductor's baton has been passed to Ms. Lopez, Jessica Embry's spirit is felt in the shared experience of making, and loving, music.

"It really is one of her legacies," McCarty said. "She's still a part of the community here."



VOLUNTEERS & COMMUNITY

SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY ARE STRONGER TOGETHER



80,149

Volunteer hours dedicated to our schools
this year



7,771

Volunteers serving our schools



1 million

Approximate dollar value to district of
volunteer service hours

HENDRICK SUPPORTS TEACHERS



Hendrick Toyota of Wilmington continued its support of our NHCS Overall Educator of the Year by gifting a check for \$1,000 and the use of a 2022 Toyota Rav 4 for a year to the winner **Stephen O'Neil**.

NEW HANOVER SCHOLARS



The **New Hanover Scholars Organization** is generously supports NHCS students from marginalized backgrounds in their pursuit of a college education. This year they awarded \$17,500 in scholarships to four NHCS students: **Devin Pellom, Janet Garcia Hernandez, Diana Gomez, and Jasmine Springer**. NHCS recognizes the importance of their contributions in the post-graduation plans of our students.

ARBOR DAY AT TRASK MIDDLE



Trask Middle School joined with several NHCS community partners and volunteers to celebrate Arbor Day with their students and teach them about new beginnings and resilience. The **Cape Fear Garden Club** and **Johnson Nursery** donated four trees for students to plant and encouraged them to come back in the coming years to see how their efforts will grow and benefit the community. Other organizations that partnered with NHCS for this project were the **Alliance for Cape Fear Trees**, the **City of Wilmington**, **New Hanover County**, **North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service**, **New Hanover County Parks and Gardens**, **Plastic Ocean Project**, and the **Wilmington Tree Commission**.

'ON THE SPOT' IN OUR SCHOOLS



The **Diaper Bank of North Carolina** Partners with NHCS through their "On the Spot" program to help provide menstruating individuals access to sanitary and safe period products. By having the On the Spot program stationed in several middle schools and high school, NHCS students do not have to miss valuable class time due to lack of access to period products.

INSTRUMENT DONATION



National Pawn and **Bob Moulton** donated instruments and \$2,000 to NHCS. Bob Moulton remembers when he was a 6th-grade student and played the cornett in his school's band. This donation helps ensure that other students have this same enriching educational opportunity.



VOLUNTEERS & COMMUNITY

VIKE CITY JAVA



Port City Java partners with **Hoggard High School** for 'Vike City Java' to teach some of our NHCS exceptional students customer service skills, money skills, and how to brew coffee and fill orders. Port City Java donates all supplies, fostering career-ready skills while providing a bright day for staff. NHCS thanks Port City Java for helping pursue the NHCS mission of providing children with an opportunity for a superior education in a safe and positive learning environment where they are prepared with the skills to succeed.

AZALEA QUEEN VISITS COLLEGE PARK



NHCS enjoys having events that bring together a wide range of community partners. This year, **2022 Azalea Queen Nia Franklin** made a visit to **College Park Elementary School** with NHCS Superintendent **Dr. Charles Foust** and several community partners to promote positivity and diversity in the school environment. Among these community partners were **Ashley alum and Pittsburgh Steeler Alex Highsmith**, **Azalea Festival President John Russ**, and **Dollar General**, which donated \$5,000 to College Park for literacy initiatives.

'WHAT' CLINIC SERVES STUDENTS



As educators, we know that students are best equipped to learn and grow when they have access to healthcare that encompasses their physical health, mental health, and preventative services. For too many of our students, there are barriers to receiving the healthcare they need to be ready to succeed in school and beyond.

In New Hanover County we are incredibly fortunate to have a community partnership with **Coastal Horizons** that they call **Wilmington Health Access for Teens (WHAT)**. In each of our four traditional high schools, Coastal Horizons runs a WHAT Clinic that serves students directly in the school environment.

Whether they need immunizations or physicals, substance abuse or mental health counseling, or treatment for a recent sickness or a long-term disease, they can receive comprehensive care without leaving their school building.

In addition to the in-school clinics, Coastal Horizons offers mental health referrals across our district and an off-site clinic that serves students ages 6-24.

School-based healthcare is one of the most cost-effective strategies for delivering integrated care to hard-to-reach populations with diverse health needs. But beyond the economic benefits, the WHAT Clinic partnership reassures us that our students have what they need to be successful in class, and it demonstrates to our families that we value their students' whole health.

NOURISH NC HELPS ELIMINATE HUNGER FOR NHCS STUDENTS



The vision of **NourishNC** is to be anywhere and everywhere that hungry children need them. Knowing that hunger wreaks havoc on children's minds, bodies, and spirits, they mobilize volunteers and resources to provide food to children who might otherwise go hungry.

Last year Nourish NC provided more than 600,000 meals to children in our community. Their Backpack Program is specifically designed for K-5 children in our schools, and discreetly sends home eight meals, six healthy snacks, milk or juice, and fresh produce every weekend so kids return to school Monday happy, healthy, and ready to learn. Last year the Backpack Program fed 1,652 students every week.

Our schools are stronger and our students benefit when our community partners contribute to the work of serving and educating children. Whatever you have to give — whether it's time, expertise, in-kind donations, or financial contributions — we welcome you to join us.

Contact Caleb Price, our community engagement specialist, to find out how you can get involved with NHCS.

✉ caleb.price@nhcs.net ☎ 910-254-4280



JOIN
US!

New Hanover Celebrates Centennial

New Hanover High School celebrated its storied 100-year history with a year of events with students, community, and alumni.

The school opened its doors in the fall of 1921 and had its first graduating class in 1922. It's the oldest existing school in Wilmington, and at one point was even the largest high school in North Carolina.

Over the last century, New Hanover High has helped educate generations of students in the Wilmington community, producing its fair share of famous alumni: Star athletes like Roman Gabriel, writers and journalists like David Brinkley and Peggy Payne, entrepreneurs like Jim Goodnight, even Medal of Honor recipients Charles Murray and William David Halyburton Jr.

This spring New Hanover welcomed alumni, students and staff, and community and district leaders to celebrate its rich history at a Centennial Open House.

Our diverse, accomplished, resilient group of Wildcats past and present continue to make us proud.



On-Call Team to the Rescue

It's just an unassuming flip phone, the kind you might not even be sure they make anymore.

But it gets passed like a torch among the members of the New Hanover County Schools On-Call Team, and when it rings, it's like a Bat-Signal in the night.

And it often is in the middle of the night.

To be fair, the On-Call Team does have some superhero traits.

They are a premiere squad specially selected for their talents.

They assemble at a moment's notice and activate their super tradesmen powers to get people out of a jam.

And even though they're hiding in plain sight, many in the district don't know about these white knights in Carhartt and steel-toed boots.

"We're the first responders in front of the first responders," said James Dillon, leader of the On-Call Team and alarms locksmith foreman for the district.

Any time there is a building emergency anywhere in the district, at any hour, the team member on call hears the violently loud ring of the team flip phone, and he springs to duty.

He might leave his kid's soccer game to capture a rabid fox loose on a football field.



He might leave a holiday dinner to repair a broken window at a school.

He might wake up in the middle of a perfectly good night's sleep to fix a water main bust.

The eight members bring different skills to the team, but they all have one thing in common, Dillon said: they have some sense about them.

"This is the cream of the crop here," he said. "I'll tell you one thing, walking around New Hanover High

School at two in the morning, you come to Jesus real quick. It's dark outside, it's dark inside. It rounds you out as a person."

The team's goal is to have someone on-site within 30 minutes of a call and fixing the problem, or at least triaging it.

The On-Call van is a bit like the team's Batmobile, with tools for every trade, so a locksmith can fix a broken pipe, or a grounds technician can fix an electrical outage at a stadium.

They call each other on the phone to walk through repairs they aren't sure about, and they call each other up when they need reinforcements.

They are, more than one member said, a brotherhood.

When a rare snowstorm hit Wilmington a few years ago, the



the above-ground pipes at Mary C. Williams Elementary burst and water was pouring into classrooms.

Plumber Shawn Norton was first on the scene and shut off the water, then the rest of the team arrived and worked together through the night to clean up drywall and ceiling tiles and flooded classrooms.

“It was cold, the water we were standing in was cold, there was no heat. It was tough. It was a long night,” remembered Kevin Jordan.

“What stood out for me that night was when you stopped by my house and got me a new pair of socks because mine were soaked,” Dillon told him.

“We opened the school the next day,” Bill Carr said. “There was not any water on that floor when we left.”

“That’s what we do,” Jimmy Bell shrugged. “We get ’em back up and running.”

During hurricane season they protect district buildings and serve the community looking to the district for shelter. James Dillon remembers rushing to beat the storm to deliver milk to a hurricane shelter, and Jimmy Bell spent an hour and a half during Florence single-handedly stacking sandbags in the pouring rain to keep Forest Hills from flooding.

And the On-Call Team’s work didn’t slow during Covid.

“Somebody’s still responsible for those schools,” Kevin Jordan said simply.

Possoms and raccoons and snakes of the venomous and nonvenomous variety still end up where they shouldn’t.

Alarms still go off at 3 a.m.

Kids still get a hold of backhoes that contractors left keys in and tear up the grounds, deer get stuck in fences, and fugitives abandon their vehicles in front of a school’s front door before fleeing on foot.

They never know what the call will be, but they’re always ready.

“We don’t hesitate. We just jump and go,” James Dillon said. “We’re not in it for the glory. We’re a big supportive team for this district.”



TECHNOLOGY & DIGITAL LEARNING

21ST CENTURY LEARNING FOR ALL STUDENTS



3,800

LAPTOPS DISTRIBUTED

This year NHCS rolled out its **One-to-One Technology Plan**, which over the next five years will put iPads and laptops into the hands of every student and staff member in the district.

Technology is an important tool for learning and collaboration, and our district is committed to ensuring that every student has equitable access to it.

Laney High School and **New Hanover High School** were the first schools to get their laptops, and in year two all other high schools will receive theirs.

NHCS is committed to providing students with an innovative learning experience to prepare them for the future, and we're excited to offer this tool that provides our students and staff opportunities to communicate, collaborate, and create content.



60 students

LEARNED TO CODE AT CAMP

This summer the Technology Division introduced **NHCS Can Code**, a free summer program introducing students to computer coding.

In partnership with **Cape Fear Community College UNCW**, **Live Oak Bank**, and **Wilmington Chamber of Commerce**, the camp taught students to use Swift, an easy-to-understand

programming language used by professional developers to create world class apps.

NHCS is committed to preparing students for future careers in tech industries the modern workforce, and bridging the gap in computer science training for all students.



738

STUDENTS ATTEND SUMMER
LIBRARY PROGRAMS

The 2022 NHCS Summer Library Program was a success at **Carolina Beach**, **Pine Valley Elementary** and **Trask Middle School**. More than 700 students and parents participated, and over 300 books were circulated.

Students participated in book discussions, practiced coding, did art projects, tried science experiments, and flexed their critical thinking skills as they kept learning through the summer in preparation for the next academic year.



