ASPIRE

WINTER 2024



In This Issue

2024 - 2025

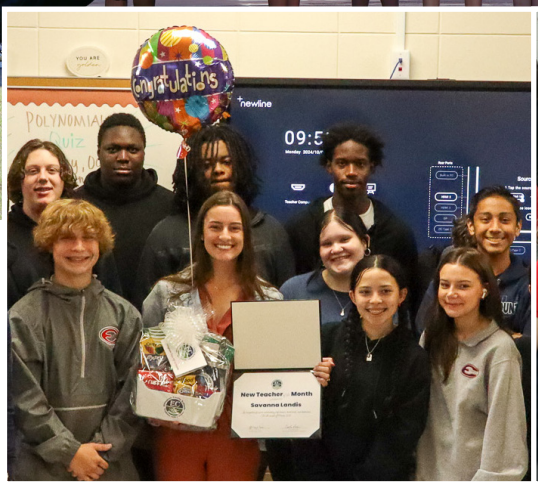
Teachers & Support Staff of the Year

Level Up for Literacy

FFA & Agricultural Education

Aspiring Graduates









Our Vision

Engaging learners for future success.

Our Mission

Make every moment count because every student matters.

We Believe...

...student engagement is key to success.
...in high expectations for all.
...that learning is a shared responsibility.
...in supporting the whole child.
...a positive, caring staff makes a difference.
...in safe learning environments.
...everyone should be treated with respect.

AS-PIRE
verb

: direct one's hopes or ambitions towards achieving something
: to seek to attain or accomplish a particular goal
: rise high, ascend, soar







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EFFINGHAM COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

ASPIRE

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Pictured on Cover: Ivory Brown, 2024 Effingham County School District Teacher of the Year



"I want to thank every member of our ECSD community for their hard work and dedication."



Dear ECSD Family,

As we approach the mid-point of the school year and reflect on this year's achievements, I am proud and thankful for the exceptional dedication that defines our district. This edition of ASPIRE magazine celebrates the commitment of our 2024-2025 Teachers and Support Staff of the Year. These individuals represent the best of ECSD, demonstrating our theme of the year, Level Up! Each has gone above and beyond in their service to our schools and students, displaying a common and admirable quality—humility.

At the heart of every one of these honorees is a love for education and a desire to make every moment count. They do not seek the spotlight but rather embrace their roles with joy and passion, knowing their work shapes the future. We are honored to recognize Ms. Ivory Brown, our Effingham County District Teacher of the Year, for her tireless advocacy and dedication to her students at Ebenezer Middle School. Ms. Denia Boone, our District Support Person of the Year, represents the backbone of our schools—our support staff. Ms. Boone's efforts, like those of all our staff honorees, are foundational to our school's success. These awards, nominated by peers and administrators, reflect each individual's profound impact on our students, schools, and community.

In addition to celebrating our honorees, this issue highlights Georgia's forward-thinking literacy plan, aiming to ensure all students achieve reading proficiency by the third grade. Literacy remains a critical priority in our mission, and I am excited to see how this initiative will equip every child for lifelong learning and success.

We are proud to showcase our winning FFA chapters and celebrate those who earned the prestigious American FFA Degree. This remarkable achievement emphasizes the dedication of our students and educators who lead our agriculture programs.

Since the start of this school year, our students and staff have achieved so much, and I want to thank every member of our ECSD community for their hard work and dedication. It's been an inspiring beginning, and I look forward to seeing all we will accomplish as we continue to Level Up.

Sincerely,

Dr. Yancy Ford
Effingham County School District Superintendent

EFFINGHAM COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
TEACHERS & SUPPORT STAFF of the YEAR
2024 - 2025

Join us as we celebrate the commitment of our 2024-2025 Teachers and Support Staff of the Year. These individuals represent the best of ECSD, demonstrating our theme of the year, Level Up! Each has gone above and beyond in their service to our schools and students, displaying common and admirable qualites—humility and connection.

DISTRICT TEACHER OF THE YEAR



Ivory Brown

Ebenezer Middle

DISTRICT SUPPORT PERSON OF THE YEAR



Denia Boone

South Effingham Elementary

TEACHERS of the YEAR 2024 - 2025





CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR DISTRICT TEACHER OF THE YEAR!

Ivory Brown

Ebenezer Middle · Math & Science

Ivory Brown, a dedicated educator at Ebenezer Middle School, has been honored as the Ebenezer Middle Teacher of the Year and District Teacher of the Year for her remarkable contributions to education. With 18 years of experience teaching math and science to grades 6–8, Ivory embodies the spirit of compassion, inclusivity, and empowerment. Her education journey was inspired by her experiences as a student, particularly by a teacher who made a lasting impression on her—Mrs. Patricia Mitchell.

Growing up, Ms. Brown faced challenges that shaped her desire to make a difference. Mrs. Mitchell imparted knowledge and cultivated a classroom environment that encouraged curiosity and engagement. Inspired by this early influence, Ms. Brown recognized the transformative power of education and dedicated her career to creating similar environments for her students. She believes education is a pathway to building a better community and a brighter future.



Ms. Brown's "why" for working in Effingham County centers around the strong sense of community she has found in the school district. The "welcome home" atmosphere makes Effingham unique. The collaborative spirit motivates her to contribute positively to the lives of her students and their families.

She appreciates the commitment to excellence upheld in the schools and works tirelessly to ensure that every student feels supported and valued. Being recognized as Teacher of the Year is humbling and affirming for Ms. Brown, as it highlights her dedication to her teaching and the relationships she builds with her students.

Ms. Brown is deeply engaged in advocacy and service outside of the classroom. She is the advisor of the Ebenezer Middle School Best Buddies Club, where she nurtures friendships and inclusion among students.

Ms. Brown participates in community initiatives such as Parent University Effingham, providing resources and support to families. Her involvement with the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Observance Day committee and Effingham Navigators demonstrates her commitment to promoting inclusive opportunities for individuals with disabilities even outside of school.

One of Ms. Brown's most memorable experiences in her career was organizing a school-wide inclusion event with the Best Buddies Club. Witnessing students with and without disabilities come together to build friendships and celebrate their differences reaffirmed her belief in creating inclusive spaces.

Looking ahead, Ms. Brown hopes to use her experience to support teacher recruitment and retention in the district, emphasizing the significance of mentorship. With her passion for education and commitment to fostering positive change, Ivory Brown truly exemplifies the qualities of an outstanding educator, inspiring her students and colleagues in the Effingham County School District. "You are making a difference even when you don't feel like it."



Fun Fact: "My birthday is on Valentine's Day!"



Tiffany McCoy

Blandford Elementary · Kindergarten

Tiffany McCoy, a Kindergarten teacher at Blandford Elementary, has inspired young learners for seven years. Her journey in education began as a paraprofessional, and she found her calling while working at the Boys and Girls Club during college. Ms. McCoy believes in the power of love to unlock learning, holding close to the advice she received early in her career: "Love them, and they will learn." Her dedication to her students is reflected in moments like delivering Easter buckets during the COVID-19 pandemic to uplift her class during uncertain times.

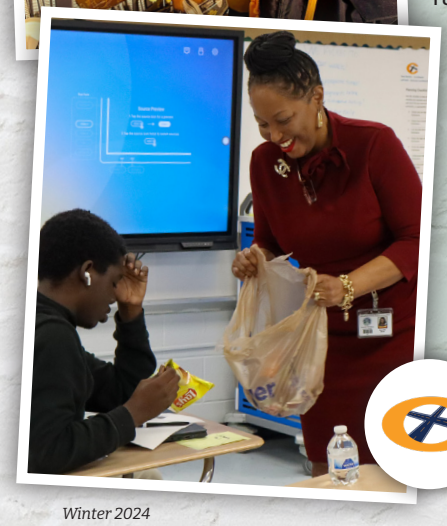


Outside of school, Ms. McCoy is a busy mom to three children and loves spending time with her three goldendoodles. Her father, a retired educator, and her mentor, Carrie Newkirk, have profoundly influenced her teaching path. Ms. McCoy aims to continue touching lives in Kindergarten, believing that "Even on hard days, you are still someone's favorite teacher."



Fun Fact: "I was as tall as my Kindergarten teacher when I was in Kindergarten!"





Dr. Marcella Shaw

Crossroads Academy · High School

Dr. Marcella Shaw, a high school educator at Crossroads Academy with 30 years of experience, believes her life's purpose is to serve others. Initially interested in social work, her high school assistant principal encouraged her to pursue teaching, where she could make a profound impact on students while providing for her family. Her guiding principle is simple: "The day I cease to serve scholars is the day I cease to live."



After retiring from South Carolina, Dr. Shaw brings her passion and dedication to Effingham County. One of her most memorable experiences was helping a homebound student graduate through perseverance and teamwork.

Dr. Shaw's love for education runs deep—her family is filled with educators, a source of pride, and she boldly proclaims that education is at the core of her family. Outside of school, she enjoys thrifting and cherishes the opportunity to continue making a difference, just as her high school teacher, Coach Robert Hutchins, once did for her.

Fun Fact: "Many years ago, I was a high school track star!"



Misti Vandenhouten

Ebenezer Elementary · Adaptive Special Education

Misti Vandenhouten has taught for 16 years and is currently making a difference at Ebenezer Elementary. Inspired by her sister, Julie, a history teacher, Ms. Vandenhouten found her true calling in art education, which sparked her love for teaching. Living in Effingham County, where her husband was raised, she feels grateful for the support and the strong family atmosphere. Her husband has been a constant source of encouragement, and her girls have learned how to be kind, empathetic, and caring to students with disabilities through their interactions with her students.



Hearing from parents who recognize their children's growth and progress is a memorable part of her job. Outside of teaching, Ms.Vadenhouten enjoys life on her small farm, taking care of donkeys, goats, and chickens and watching her daughters play softball. She dreams of working with deaf students and plans to pursue certification in sign language. Ms. Vadenhouten believes in the power of love and empathy in education, reminding new teachers to see their students as more than just names on a list, and while they come to school to learn, they also need to be loved.



Fun Fact: "I like to cross-stitch! I know, it's very old fashioned, and I usually don't hang my work up anywhere in my house, but the process is enjoyable and calming to me."



Rhonda Habersham

Effingham College & Career Academy · French, Spanish, AP Seminar, Journalism

With 26 years of teaching experience, Rhonda Habersham is a dedicated educator at Effingham College and Career Academy (ECCA), teaching French, Spanish, AP Seminar, and Journalism. Inspired by her mother, a fellow educator, Ms. Habersham's love for teaching languages began in her high school days in Trinidad. Her French teachers, Mrs. Taylor and Mrs. Mohammed, sparked her passion for French, which she now shares with her students.



One of her proudest moments was when two of her students earned high scores on the challenging AP French exam. Ms. Habersham believes being named Teacher of the Year gives her a platform to speak on behalf of her fellow teachers and students.

Outside of the classroom, she enjoys fitness, cooking, travel, and the beach. With the support of her husband and children, Ms. Habersham continues to focus on being the best for her students while preparing for retirement.



Fun Fact: "I was certified to teach group fitness but I let it lapse. I prefer to be a student on the mat instead of teaching all the time."



Amy Liles



Effingham County High · 10th Grade Literature & Composition, AP Literature

Amy Liles has dedicated 13 years to teaching, and currently teaches 10th-grade Literature and Composition and AP Literature at Effingham County High School. Her journey into education began with a profound love for reading, which inspired her to pursue a degree in English. Ms. Liles loves her job and the people she works with. She aims to make a difference in her students' lives. She appreciates being in an environment that encourages her to try new things and grow as an educator.



Her family has always supported her, encouraging her in all she does. They stand behind her 100 percent, especially her dad, who inspired her to pursue teaching. One of her most memorable moments was helping a struggling student pass his classes and graduate alongside his peers. Ms. Liles advises new teachers, "Remember, you are not alone. We are all in this together."

Fun Fact: "I have a minor in Spanish and studied abroad in Madrid, Spain."



Jessica Flowers



Effingham County Middle · 8th Grade Science

Jessica Flowers, an eighth-grade science teacher at Effingham County Middle, has made a difference in students' lives for 14 years. Since childhood, she dreamed of being a teacher, inspired by the enthusiastic math teachers she had in high school. She started her career in science and quickly discovered a passion for it. Growing up and graduating in Effingham County, Ms. Flowers feels a strong connection to the community and is proud to raise her children here. Ms. Flowers believes in building strong relationships with her students, knowing that personal connections lead to better engagement. Leading her volleyball team to their first region championship was a highlight of her career. Looking ahead, Ms. Flowers aims to keep inspiring her students and continue her professional growth to be the best teacher she can be.



Fun Fact: "I'm training for a marathon—even though I've never been a runner before! It's been an exciting challenge, and it's pushing me to step out of my comfort zone and set new goals for myself."



Brooke Edge



enCompass Academy · 6th-8th Grade

Brooke Edge, enCompass's Teacher of the Year, has dedicated 22 years to education, guided by a deep calling to teach. After beginning her career at Effingham County High School, she moved away but later returned to Effingham, drawn back to the relationships she had built. Ms. Edge sees the role of Teacher of the Year as an opportunity to advocate for students, teachers, and the community.



Inspired by her mother's lasting impact as a teacher, Ms. Edge emphasizes building meaningful connections with her students. She believes that strong relationships foster a love for learning.

Outside of the classroom, she enjoys sewing, cooking, pickleball, attending church, and watching football. Ms. Edge advises a new teacher to "set the standard, be firm yet show that you care. Find the student's motivation."

Fun Fact: "I have played Donkey Basketball, I was a FCCLA state officer, and I was featured on the GPB Pep Sports Plus as Athlete of the week."



Jeannette Coleman



Guyton Elementary · Kindergarten

Jeannette Coleman, a dedicated Kindergarten teacher at Guyton Elementary with over 30 years in education, has always felt called to the classroom. Inspired by her elementary and ninth-grade teachers who made her feel welcome and valued, Ms. Coleman's teaching philosophy centers on building relationships first, "I knew early on what kind of teacher I wanted to become: one who nurtures and builds relationships before teaching students."

Ms. Coleman's "why" for teaching is to tell and show scholars that commitment to hard work pays off. Through love and understanding, she believes students will achieve their highest potential.

Outside of school, Ms. Coleman enjoys skating, spending time with family, and contributing to her church's youth ministry. Looking to the future, Ms. Coleman aims to continue inspiring new educators and create a mentoring program for young girls.



Fun Fact: "My husband and I delivered our seventh grandchild in our home. We lived in a gated community. The first responders did not have the correct gate number to get through because my husband was so nervous that he gave them the number in reverse."



Amanda DiSalvo

Marlow Elementary · 2nd Grade

Amanda DiSalvo, a dedicated second-grade teacher at Marlow Elementary, has taught for 23 years. Growing up in Statesboro and now raising her family in Effingham, Ms. DiSalvo understands the value of community. She believes that her role extends beyond academics, as evidenced by a special moment when a former student expressed gratitude for her impact on his life. "Teaching 2nd grade, I often feel my impact is not strong because it's such a young age. This student helped me realize that my actions mattered."

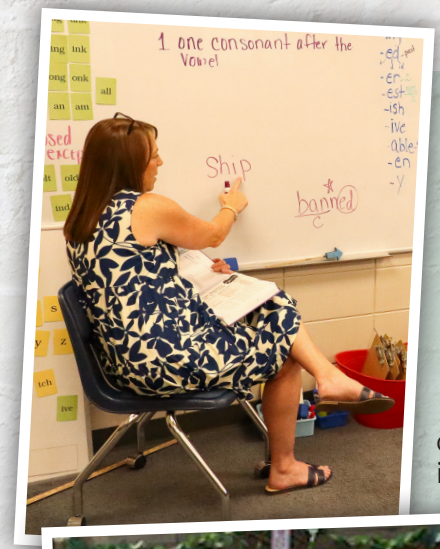


Honored as Teacher of the Year, Ms. DiSalvo realizes the collaborative efforts of her colleagues, emphasizing that this recognition is a reflection of their shared dedication. "I will go into this year trying my best to represent Marlow Elementary and the village of people I work with each day."

Outside of the classroom, Ms. DiSalvo enjoys camping, boating, and reading with her family. Her family is her support system and, most importantly, always there for her on the hard days.



Fun Fact: "I learned how to wakeboard before I got married. My husband and I have taught our children and many family members. We visit Clark Hill lake each year to spend time wakeboarding and tubing."



Kristie Reed

Rincon Elementary · 3rd Grade ELA

Kristie Reed, a dedicated third-grade ELA teacher at Rincon Elementary, has made a profound impact over her 30 years in education. Inspired by her early experiences babysitting and working in a daycare, Ms. Reed values patience and creativity in her teaching approach. Her commitment to creating a positive learning environment in Effingham County is evident as she builds strong relationships with students and their families. Being named Teacher of the Year is a significant honor for Ms. Reed, who says it motivates her to always seek new ways to support her students.





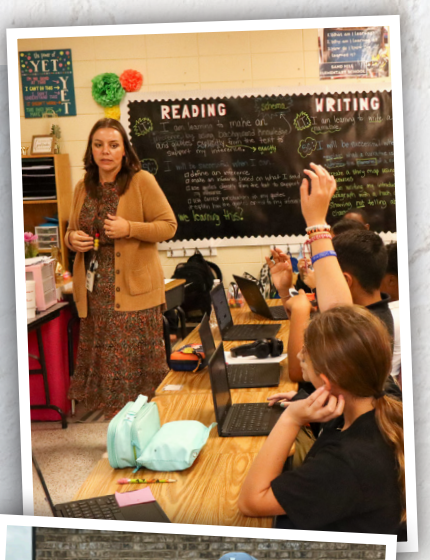
Outside of the classroom, she cherishes time spent with her children, cheering them on at their sporting events. A favorite moment for Ms. Reed is Field Day, where she enjoys having fun with her students and watching them celebrate each other. Inspired by fellow educator Terry Douberly, Ms. Reed continuously works to connect with students and make learning meaningful. Her passion for education truly inspires all around her.

Fun Fact: "I have extremely curly hair! I usually wear it straight, but when I let it loose, it's a whole new look."



Kate Neidlinger

Sand Hill Elementary · 5th Grade ELA



Kate Neidlinger, a dedicated 5th-grade ELA teacher at Sand Hill Elementary, has taught for five years. As a graduate of ECSD, Ms. Neidlinger chose to give back to the community that raised her because of teachers like Mrs. Pride and Mrs. Lynn. "I have never wanted to teach anywhere else." One of her most memorable moments as a teacher was helping a student navigate a troubling time in their life. She realizes that teaching goes beyond academics; sometimes, she might be the only trusted adult in a child's life.

Outside of the classroom, Ms. Neidlinger enjoys spending time with her three boys, embracing their love for sports and outdoor activities. Selected as Teacher of the Year, she feels deeply honored by her peers' recognition, acknowledging that it reflects the passion and effort she brings to her classroom. Looking to the future, she hopes to pursue a leadership role, helping fellow educators grow while continuing to impact as many students as possible.



Fun Fact: "My maiden name is Monopoli – like the board game but with an 'i' instead of a 'y.'"



Kellie Lee

South Effingham Elementary · Technology



Kellie Lee has been an educator for 29 years. Inspired by her mother's career in education, Ms. Lee knew at a very early age that she wanted to be a teacher. As the school's technology teacher, she has built strong relationships with students, staff, and the community. One of her proudest moments is working alongside a former student she taught in Kindergarten, Michael Holton, who now serves as Technology Support staff in her classroom. Mr. Holton is the first person with Down Syndrome to hold such a position in a Georgia classroom.



Ms. Lee loves going to the mountains, the beach, and boating. She loves spending time with her family, her biggest support system. Her advice to a new teacher is, "Teaching is not a competition! Children can't learn if they are not loved, so make those connections quickly."

Although her time to retirement is drawing closer, Ms. Lee will continue to strive to be the best she can be, continue to learn, and make each child feel loved.

Fun Fact: "I love animals and have had a donkey, horse, pig, hedgehog, an exotic cat and dogs!"



Brandon Howard



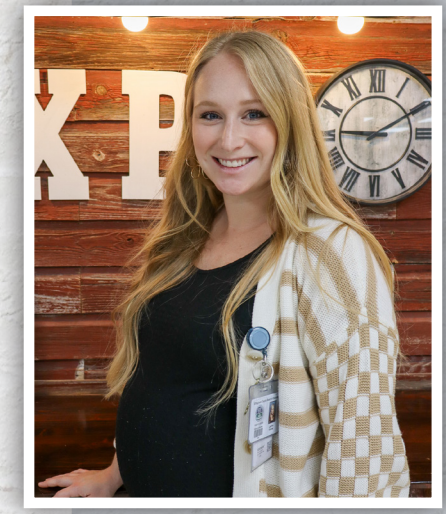
South Effingham High · 9th Grade World History, 12th Grade AP Macroeconomics

Brandon Howard has taught at South Effingham High for 18 years, teaching 9th graders in World History and 12th graders in AP Macroeconomics. He's driven by his love of learning and great teachers he had along the way, believing that education really can change lives. Outside of the classroom, Mr. Howard loves coaching Cross Country and Soccer, and it's even more special now since his kids are into those sports too. He loves to cook (and eat) and listen to music.



Being named Teacher of the Year is a tremendous honor for him, especially among so many talented teachers at his school. His best memories are from a teacher exchange trip to Halle, Germany, where he got a whole new perspective on teaching. His wife, also a teacher, has been his biggest support through the ups and downs. As he looks forward, Mr. Howard is considering returning to school for his Ed. D. or Ph.D.

Fun Fact: "In college I was in hardcore/punk bands and even put on several punk shows in Savannah."



Lauren Klauss



South Effingham Middle · 6th Grade ELA

Lauren Klauss, a 6th-grade ELA teacher at South Effingham Middle School, has taught for five years. Her journey began with her love for teaching horseback riding lessons, which sparked her passion for education. Growing up in Effingham County, she wants to make an impact in a place that is important to her.

Selected as Teacher of the Year, Ms. Klauss feels honored to represent a district that has influenced her life. One of her most memorable experiences was working with ESOL students from Korea, where she learned as much about their culture as her students did about American traditions. Inspired by her high school Spanish teacher, Ms. Klauss aims to make her students feel accepted and proud of who they are. Ms. Klauss advises, "You will learn more from your students than they learn from you."



Outside of the classroom, she enjoys reading, boating, and playing pickleball. Ms. Klauss plans to get her specialist degree in curriculum and instruction with hopes to design educational technology that helps students with reading and writing.

Fun Fact: "I am originally from Seattle, Washington, and I grew up on a horse farm."



Kari Helmly

Springfield Elementary · 3rd Grade

Kari Helmly, the Teacher of the Year at Springfield Elementary, has taught third-grade math, science, and social studies for 11 years. Growing up in Effingham County, she never considered working in any other school district. One memorable moment came when she supported a struggling student, building a bond that showed her that teaching is more than meeting academic standards; it is about meaningful connections with students.

Outside of the classroom, Ms. Helmly is a busy mom, often at the ballfield cheering on her kids, and is actively involved in her church. Her family's support has been invaluable, and they even helped her build a chicken coop when she taught agriculture. Looking ahead, Ms. Helmly hopes to earn her master's degree, step into a leadership role, and continue to impact students' lives.





Fun Fact: "I showed pigs in high school at the county and state fair!"

Congratulations
TO OUR 2024-2025 TEACHERS OF THE YEAR!



SUPPORT STAFF of the YEAR 2024 - 2025



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR DISTRICT SUPPORT PERSON OF THE YEAR!

Denia Boone

South Effingham Elementary · Administrative Secretary

Denia Boone, the Administrative Secretary at South Effingham Elementary, has dedicated the past 28 years to creating a supportive, efficient, and welcoming environment for staff and students. Honored as the Support Person of the Year, Ms. Boone's presence at SEES has become synonymous with dedication, teamwork, and genuine care. For her, the role is more than administrative duties—it's about being part of a larger family that goes beyond to achieve success and promote personal and professional growth.

Inspired by her journey as a mother, Ms. Boone first joined the school to align her work schedule with her children's, allowing her to be present for them while supporting her family. For Ms. Boone, Effingham's "hometown feel" is integral to her commitment to her career and family.

One memorable moment for Ms. Boone was the 2014 school renovation of SEES. With a new principal, everyone was racing against the clock to prepare the school for an open house during the renovation. Ms. Boone recalls the chaos fondly, comparing it to an "ant bed" where every staff member worked tirelessly together to make it happen. This shared mission defines her time at SEES, and she sees it as representative of the school's spirit.

Among her many sources of inspiration is Ms. Cheryl Christian, former principal known for her dedication and ability to make each student and colleague feel valued. Ms. Boone credits Ms. Christian with setting a high standard for hard work and caring leadership—a legacy she aims to uphold.

Outside of work, Ms. Boone's focus is on family and spending time with them through outdoor activities, sports events, and vacations. She also finds joy in volunteering at her church and community gatherings.

As retirement approaches in two years, Ms. Boone looks forward to spending more time with her family while remaining connected to SEES by potentially substitute teaching. Until then, she remains devoted to SEES's mission to "make every moment count because every student matters."







Fun Fact: **"I love to dance and sing, just not in front of anyone outside of family and close friends. Because I am not very good at it. It's just for giggles."**



Nancy Harper



Blandford Elementary · Paraprofessional

Nancy Harper, a paraprofessional at Blandford Elementary, has been named the Support Person of the Year for her commitment to creating a positive learning environment. Inspired to change careers in 2022, she felt a calling to education, "This has been by far one of the most challenging jobs I've ever had; it is also the job that has brought me the most joy." Ms. Harper's dedication to the Effingham County community, where she grew up, reflects her belief in making every moment count for students.



Throughout her three years at Blandford, Ms. Harper has formed lasting relationships with students; one memorable moment occurred when a student expressed gratitude for feeling valued in her classroom, highlighting her impact. Outside school, Ms. Harper enjoys crafting, photography, and sharing her love for sunrises and sunsets with family. Her ongoing desire to learn and grow within her profession inspires those around her.

Fun Fact: "I genuinely love sunrises and sunsets and will randomly stop mid conversation to admire God's beauty."



Missy Davis



Crossroads Academy · Paraprofessional

Melissa Davis, known as Missy, has dedicated four years to making a positive impact as a paraprofessional at Crossroads Academy. Inspired by her high school teacher, Ms. Sheryl Howell, Ms. Davis pursued a career in education to change children's lives. Her passion is evident in how she supports students and colleagues, earning her the Support Person of the Year title.

Ms. Davis believes in the power of encouragement, celebrating moments like her first graduation at Crossroads, where students who once doubted themselves walked across the stage, a testament to their hard work. Outside of school, she enjoys spending quality time with her family, whether cheering on athletes at the ball field or enjoying outdoor adventures. With plans to earn her teaching degree, Ms. Davis's journey is only beginning. Her commitment to education and the community inspires those around her every day.



Fun Fact: "I'm a twin!"



Mary Figuereo

Ebenezer Elementary · Office Assistant

Mary Figuereo, the Support Person of the Year at Ebenezer Elementary, has made a profound impact in her two years as an office assistant. Inspired by her love for children and a desire to serve, Ms. Figuereo connects with students and families, especially within the Hispanic community, breaking down language and cultural barriers.

Ms. Figuereo is honored to receive this recognition and humbly acknowledges the support of her peers. One of her most memorable moments occurred when she helped a first-grade student who was struggling emotionally and reluctant to attend school. By approaching the situation with care and empathy, she successfully encouraged the child to join her classmates and serve as a morning greeter, transforming their school experience.

Ms. Figuereo enjoys spending time with her family and granddaughter. Her advice to someone entering her profession is, "I would encourage them to receive every assignment and task as an opportunity to grow and make a difference."





Fun Fact: "I am a good dancer, and I love to salsa!"





Renee Eason

Ebenezer Middle · Paraprofessional

Renee Eason, a dedicated paraprofessional at Ebenezer Middle, has been making a significant impact on students for four years. After retiring from a 32-year career in dentistry, she sought to align her schedule with her children's and grandchildren's schooling. Ms. Eason's passion for education shines through her commitment to her students, evident when a student expressed appreciation for her support on the last day of school, leaving a lasting impression on her. As a proud Effingham County graduate, she finds purpose in serving her community.



Ms. Eason loves to spend Saturdays watching college football, having weekly dinners with friends, reading good books, and spending time with family. Ms. Eason's family plays a crucial role in her journey, providing encouragement and positivity. Being named Support Person of the Year is a testament to her dedication, and she hopes to continue supporting and inspiring children for many years.

Fun Fact: "I am a huge sports fan and my favorite sport is basketball!"



Marla Chance

Effingham College & Career Academy · Paraprofessional



Marla Chance, the Support Person of the Year at Effingham College and Career Academy (ECCA), has dedicated 16 years to making a difference in students' lives. Inspired by her desire to help others, Ms. Chance has always enjoyed working with children and young adults. Her commitment to education is deeply rooted in her community; having raised her kids in Effingham, she feels honored to contribute to the same environment.

A memorable moment from her career occurred when she helped a struggling student pass math during her senior year. Years later, the student expressed gratitude for the extra support, proving her lasting influence, Ms. Chance advises, "Learn everything you can about different learning abilities and strategies to help students who need extra support."

Ms. Chance enjoys shopping at antique stores, camping, and completing jigsaw puzzles outside of work. As she looks to the future, she plans to continue making a difference in the classroom, demonstrating her dedication to education.



Fun Fact: "My first car was a red AMC Gremlin with gold pinstripes. If you are not familiar with this classic automobile, then count yourself lucky."





Corrie Gadson

Effingham County High · Head Custodian



Effingham County High School proudly honors Ms. Corrie Gadson as the Support Person of the Year for her dedication and commitment. Ms. Corrie, who has been with the district since 1999, has served as the Head Custodian at ECHS, where her reliability and pride in her work have left a lasting impact. An ECHS alumna from the Class of 1984, Ms. Corrie values the close-knit connections she's formed over the years, especially recalling the camaraderie with colleagues in the "good ol' days" on the 500 & 600 halls.

Known for her dedication, Ms. Corrie starts her day at 6:30 a.m., well before her shift, embodying the routine and dedication she advises others to adopt. She credits her late mother, husband Melvin, and Mrs. Shirley Milton for encouraging her to pursue her role as Head Custodian. Mrs. Corrie, who enjoys shopping, family gatherings, and time with her sisters, will begin a new position at the Central Office in November 2024, with hopes of continuing her service to the district until retirement.

Fun Fact: "I love to spend time with my sisters! We are always laughing and having a good time, but when it comes to work, I'm always serious."





Monique Wright

Effingham County Middle · Paraprofessional



Monique Wright, a dedicated paraprofessional at Effingham County Middle, has been making a significant impact in education for four years. Inspired by a passion to revive the importance of education, she aims to leave a meaningful legacy. Ms. Wright's commitment to a safe, supportive environment for students and staff earned her the title of Support Person of the Year. She feels honored and humbled by the recognition, knowing her colleagues appreciate her efforts. Ms. Wright's memorable moments include witnessing students overcome obstacles like when one of her students decided failure was not an option.

Outside the classroom, she enjoys spending time with her grandchildren, participating in church, and listening to gospel music. Influenced by educators like Helen Ward, Ms. Wright values caring for the whole child. With aspirations to further her career in education, she hopes to teach Health Care Sciences in the future, continuing to inspire the next generation.

Fun Fact: "I love to jump Double Dutch."



Dontressia Green

enCompass Academy · Paraprofessional





Dontressia Green, enCompass Support Person of the Year, has always been inspired by educators who make learning accessible and engaging. Her passion for education stems from witnessing its impact on students' lives, motivating her to help others realize their potential.

Growing up in Clyo, Effingham County has always been home, and she cherishes the opportunity to give back to the community that shaped her. The support from her family has been instrumental in her journey, providing encouragement during challenging times and reinforcing her core values. For Ms. Green, every day is a chance to make a difference in the lives of those around her, and even after a difficult day she starts the over the next as a new day, exemplifying the spirit of service and commitment to her students, school, and hometown.

Fun Fact: "I love to go on cruises with my husband."





Sheila Arnsdorff



Guyton Elementary · Paraprofessional

Sheila Arnsdorff, our Support Person of the Year at Guyton Elementary, has dedicated nine years to creating a nurturing environment for students. Ms. Arnsdorff began as a bus driver but wanted more face-to-face connections with children, allowing her to make them feel safe and loved. She credits her inspiration to many people at Guyton but credits Mrs. Melissa Batista as the first teacher who shared a daily passion for education with her. One of Ms. Arnsdorff's favorite memories was watching the fifth-grade end-of-the-year walk and remembering when those students were in her first first-grade class.

Outside of school, Ms. Arnsdorff is an avid churchgoer and a theology enthusiast. She has a doctorate in ministry and may one day consider teaching at a Christian school, but for now, she wants to continue building relationships with her students at Guyton.

Fun Fact: "I love bluegrass music."



Paije Welch



Marlow Elementary · Paraprofessional

Paije Welch, Marlow Elementary's Support Person of the Year, brings a decade of dedicated service as a SPED Para, including eight impactful years in special education. Her education journey began when she volunteered as a room mom for her son's Pre-K class, igniting her passion for working with children. Inspired by Mrs. Cheryl Bacon, Ms. Welch embraced her role and has become a beloved part of the Marlow family. She treasures the bond shared with her colleagues and feels honored that her peers recognize her dedication.

A memorable moment for her includes a former student's triumphant week at 4-H camp, a goal he achieved with her encouragement. With her family's support, Ms. Welch aims to continue making a difference, knowing that every day holds a new opportunity to inspire young lives. Outside of school, Ms. Welch loves to read, dance, listen to music, spend time with family, and attend church. Inspired by his mom, Ms. Welch's son is now pursuing a degree in education and hopes to teach in Effingham County.



Fun Fact: "I once won a radio contest and won about $10,000 worth of stuff, including dirt bikes, Seiko watches, 4 tickets on Amtrak, Orlando Magic vs Chicago Bulls basketball tickets, music cds and a few other small items."



Ashley Donaldson

Rincon Elementary · Paraprofessional

Ashley Donaldson, Rincon Elementary's Support Person of the Year, exemplifies dedication to education and community. With nine years in education, Ms. Donaldson's passion for learning was inspired by her mother, a former educator. For Ms. Donaldson, working in Effingham County means being part of the most professional team committed to making every moment count for students. Her most memorable experience involves helping a student who had struggled with reading. One day at a time, the student grew in reading.





Beyond the classroom, Ms. Donaldson is a talented singer and songwriter who enjoys farming and writing children's books. Supported by her husband and young son, Walker, she is continually motivated to make a difference. Her advice to new educators, "Spend each day making moments instead of minutes." As she looks to the future, Ms. Donaldson aims to identify and support students who lack resources, ensuring every child has the tools they need to thrive.

Fun Fact: "I am a pretty good skater, and I love stunt skating."





Morgan Crunk

Sand Hill Elementary · School Counselor

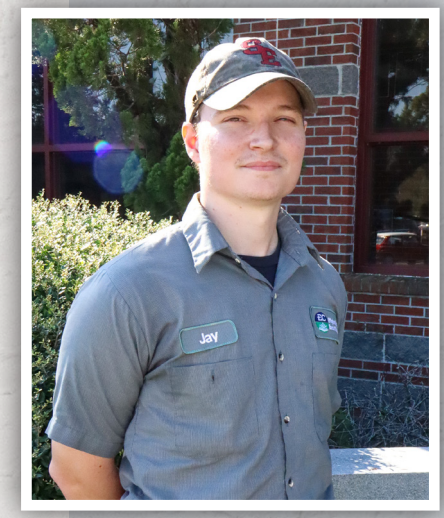
Morgan Crunk, Sand Hill Elementary's Support Person of the Year, is a dedicated school counselor with four years of experience. Inspired by a desire to impact the entire school community, Ms. Crunk has focused on social-emotional learning and ensuring every student feels seen, heard, and supported.



Ms. Crunk's memorable journey began at South Effingham Elementary, where she recognized her passion for working in a Title I school, which led her to Sand Hill. Her family plays a vital role in her career, providing unwavering support. An avid sports fan, she has coached middle school softball. She enjoys traveling with her husband and dog and being involved in church.

Ms. Crunk advises new counselors, "Know that you cannot fix every problem that a student has. The most important thing is for each student to feel supported and valued while they are in our building." Her future goal is to influence every student and colleague she encounters positively.

Fun Fact: "I went to Italy after I graduated High School to play softball and represent the southern part of the U.S.A."



Jay Malphus

South Effingham High · Maintenance

Jay Malphus, the Support Person of the Year at South Effingham High School, shows true dedication as a maintenance worker. Raised in Effingham County, Mr. Malphus chose this career to make a positive impact in the community he loves. His commitment to creating a welcoming and safe environment for students and staff is evident in everything he does.

Mr. Malphus's friendly nature shines through, especially when he remembers his first day at work when he received a warm welcome from Mrs. Wilhelmina. Inspired by dedicated colleagues like Mrs. Shirley and Mrs. Ann, he values teamwork and positivity in the school.

In his free time, Mr. Malphus enjoys writing, journaling, and reading. He thrives in his role because his supportive wife listens during tough days. Mr. Malphus's strong commitment to South Effingham High is reflected in his advice: "Even on tough days, try not to treat anyone any different than you would a friend."





Fun Fact: "I love to collect watches. I only have 7 right now but I caught the fever a few years ago and I can't stop. PLEASE HELP!"





Megan Ripley

South Effingham Middle · Receptionist

Megan Ripley, the Support Person of the Year at South Effingham Middle School, has made a significant impact over her eight years as a receptionist. Originally from Wisconsin, she transitioned from a banking career to education after moving to Georgia. With two children in the local schools, Ms. Ripley became invested in the community.



Her role allows her to connect with families, helping them feel comfortable and supported as they navigate the school system. Ms. Ripley takes pride in witnessing the transformation of parents who arrive unsure but leave feeling empowered and reassured. She credits her calm demeanor to inspiration from former Principal's Assistant Janna Dyals, embodying the kindness that fosters strong relationships. Her advice is, " Be kind to everyone you meet. Have patience and know that you are often the first face people see, and that impression makes a big difference."

Ms. Ripley enjoys gardening, reading, and staying connected with her children and grandchild through daily FaceTime chats. She plans to remain at SEMS until retirement.

Fun Fact: "I have skydived 4 times in the past. It is very peaceful and I love looking down on the world from such a high distance."





Gena Kicklighter

Springfield Elementary · School Nurse



Gena Kicklighter, Springfield Elementary's dedicated school nurse, has been recognized as Support Person of the Year for her 17 years of care and service. A lifelong resident and part of a multi-generational Effingham family, Ms. Kicklighter was inspired by her family's strong community ties and her children to become a school nurse in Effingham. It was her grandmother's caregiving for family and community member that inspired Ms. Kicklighter to become a nurse. Her compassionate care, especially for students with chronic conditions, has made many memories and built unique relationships.

Ms. Kicklighter finds joy in spending time with family and volunteering with CURE, and she encourages new nurses to embrace the role school healthcare plays in students' success. Ms. Kicklighter plans to continue at Springfield until retirement.

Fun Fact: "I love to paint and draw. I even owned a "paint your own pottery studio" when my children were small."

Congratulations
TO OUR 2024-2025 DISTRICT SUPPORT STAFF OF THE YEAR!



LEVEL UP *for* LITERACY

Helping Your Child Become a Strong Reader



Georgia Speaker of the House Jon Burns and Mrs. Dayle Burns reading to Mrs. Leonard's Pre-K class at Blandford Elementary.

Understanding *Georgia's Early Literacy Act* and the *Dyslexia Law*

In recent years, helping children learn to read has become a major focus in education. One important effort in Georgia is House Bill 538, called the *Georgia Early Literacy Act*, which aims to make sure all students can read well by the end of third grade. This law supports not only reading skills but also provides resources for parents and teachers.

> *"There is nothing more important to the continued success of our state than safeguarding and strengthening the lives, education and future of our students, and that can only be accomplished by ensuring Georgia students have access to as many opportunities and choices as possible that will set them up for success."*
>
> **– Georgia Governor Brian Kemp**

What is Georgia's Early Literacy Act (HB 538)?

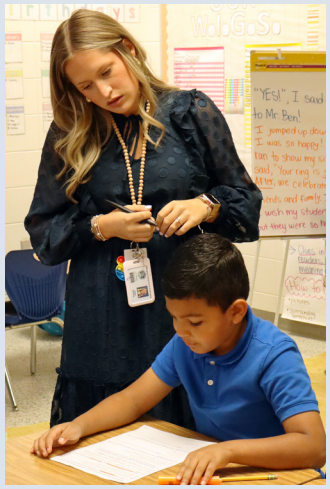
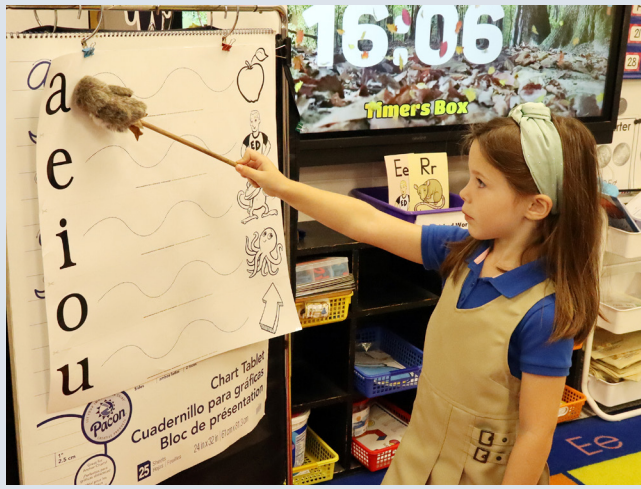
The Early Literacy Act (HB 538) focuses on using proven teaching methods in Georgia's public schools to help children learn to read. Teachers are trained to use strategies that work, ensuring that kids get high-quality reading lessons from a young age. Schools are encouraged to focus on important reading skills like:

- **Phonemic awareness** *(understanding the sounds in words)*
- **Phonics** *(linking sounds to letters)*
- **Vocabulary**
- **Reading fluency** *(reading smoothly)*
- **Comprehension** *(understanding what they read)*
- **Spelling**
- **Oral Language**
- **Writing**







Key Features of the Early Literacy Act:

- **Regular Reading Screening:** Schools must regularly check how well students in kindergarten through third grade are progressing in reading. This helps teachers identify students who may need extra help.
- **Parental Involvement:** Parents are encouraged to support their child's reading at home. Schools provide tips and resources to help parents get involved.
- **Extra Help for Struggling Readers:** For students having trouble with reading, the Early Literacy Act requires schools to provide additional support through special programs that offer tailored instruction to improve their skills.

What is the Dyslexia Law (SB 48)?

Georgia has also approved Senate Bill 48, *Dyslexia Law*. Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that affects reading. It is characterized by difficulties with word recognition, spelling, and decoding. This law requires schools to screen students for dyslexia and provide support to help them succeed. All Kindergarten through third-grade students will be screened for characteristics of dyslexia 3 times during the school year.

How is Effingham County School District (ECSD) Meeting the Requirements of Both Laws in Georgia?

All elementary schools will give the NWEA MAP Reading Fluency screener in August, December, and May. Based on individual students' results, schools will notify parents by letter. Students identified as having characteristics of dyslexia will have a reading plan to provide targeted interventions. A school support team will review data regularly to determine the best support for each student. Schools will continue to monitor students' results and growth on the NWEA MAP Reading Fluency screeners to provide the best support possible.







How Can Parents Encourage Reading at Home?

Creating a reading-friendly environment at home is a great way to help your child develop a love for reading. Here are some simple ways to do that:

- **Set a Regular Reading Time:** Try to have a daily reading routine, such as reading together before bed or setting aside time on the weekend. Making reading a consistent part of your child's day helps build a positive habit.
- **Create a Cozy Reading Space:** Make a special spot in your home where your child can read. It could be a comfy corner with pillows, blankets, and good lighting to make reading time even more inviting.
- **Visit the Library or Bookstore Together:** Let your child choose books that interest them. Books that match their age and interests, like picture books or early chapter books, can make reading more fun.
- **Read Aloud Together:** Reading to your child helps them learn new words, improve comprehension, and develop fluency. You can also encourage them to read aloud to you to build their confidence.
- **Talk About Books:** After reading a book, ask your child questions about it, such as their favorite part or how they felt about the characters. These discussions help improve understanding and critical thinking.
- **Incorporate Reading into Everyday Activities:** Use daily tasks to practice reading, like reading labels at the store, writing grocery lists together, or following a recipe. This makes reading practical and shows its importance in everyday life.
- **Limit Screen Time:** Too much screen time can take away from reading opportunities. Encourage your child to read books instead of spending too much time on tablets or smartphones.
- **Be a Reading Role Model:** Show your child that you enjoy reading too. Whether it's a book, a magazine, or an article, your enthusiasm can inspire them to read more.















Why This Matters:

Georgia's Early Literacy Act and the Dyslexia Law are designed to help every child become a confident reader by third grade. By using proven teaching methods, regular screenings, and encouraging family involvement, the act/law aims to create strong readers across the state. As a parent, your role is essential. By following these tips, you can help your child develop the reading skills they need to succeed, both in school and in life. Together, we can make sure all children have the chance to become passionate, successful readers. When we all work together, ECSD can ***Level Up for Literacy***.

Resources:

To learn more about encouraging literacy in young readers at home and in school, please visit the links provided by our Curriculum Department to find more information.

- **Reading Rope**
  https://bit.ly/GAReadingRope
- **Reading 101: A Guide for Parents**
  https://bit.ly/ParentsReading101
- **Putting Reading First: A Parent Guide**
  https://bit.ly/ReadingFirstGuide



FFA

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

For the Future

For All

Myth: Agriculture classes and FFA are for students who want to be farmers.

Fact: Agricultural Education and the National FFA Organization are for students who want to be teachers, doctors, scientists, business owners, leaders, and more.

WHAT IS AG EDUCATION AND FFA?

Does your child have interests in animals, plants, mechanics, or forestry? Do they want to be teachers, doctors, scientists, veterinarians, or business owners? Encourage them to take an active role in an Agricultural Education class. Agriculture education and FFA has something for everyone. Our school district has provided opportunities for students to take agriculture education classes in elementary school, exploratory agriculture education classes in middle school, and pathways with specific content areas in high school. Agriculture education and the FFA allow students to gain leadership skills, experience hands-on learning, and make lifelong friendships.

The FFA is a National Organization and is the Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO) (the extracurricular arm of Agriculture education). FFA was founded as the Future Farmers of America. In 1988, the name was changed to FFA to show the growing diversity and new opportunities in agriculture, just as agricultural education in ECSD has expanded to include many career options. Students actively involved in clubs and leadership organizations like FFA are more likely to succeed throughout their time in school. FFA members impact our community in a variety of positive ways.

NATIONAL FFA CONVENTION

The National FFA Convention & Expo is the largest annual gathering of FFA members, advisors, and industry partners in the United States, taking place each fall in Indianapolis, Indiana. This exciting event celebrates students' achievements, leadership, and agricultural dedication nationwide and brings together tens of thousands of FFA members from across the country.

The 97th National Convention was held from October 23-26 and drew nearly 70,000 FFA members and guests, including 12 students from Effingham County School District. These students gained leadership experience, connected with industry professionals, and took part in FFA programs that support future agricultural leaders.

The convention is more than a celebration; it allows members to meet peers and mentors, learn about new agricultural advancements including hands-on workshops, and showcase their skills in Career Development Events (CDEs), inspiring ceremonies, leadership workshops, and career-focused networking events. The National FFA Convention & Expo helps young leaders explore careers, build practical skills, and prepare to make a lasting impact in agriculture.











AMERICAN FFA DEGREES

One of the most celebrated moments at the National FFA Convention is the American FFA Degree ceremony, which honors members for their years of dedication and hard work. The American FFA Degree is the highest award in FFA and recognizes members who have excelled in agricultural education, completed extensive Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) projects, and shown strong leadership in their chapters and communities.

Earning this degree demonstrates perseverance, ambition, and serving as a role model for younger members. This year, Macy Morgan, Macee Smith, Aidan Taylor, from South Effingham High, and Megan Williams from Effingham College & Career Academy received this prestigious honor. Their dedication and accomplishments in leadership, SAE projects, and community service embody the values celebrated by the American FFA Degree and showcase the future of agriculture.

Congratulations to Macy, Macee, Aidan, and Megan! We are incredibly proud of your accomplishments and deeply grateful for the outstanding way you represented ECSD!

OUTSTANDING PROFICIENCY AWARDS

Two Effingham County students, Trenton Bracken from Effingham County High School and Landon Turner from South Effingham High School, received national recognition for their Proficiency Awards in their SAE projects. These awards honor members who excel in specific areas of agricultural experience. In April 2024, both won their state categories, advancing to the national level.

At the national competition, Landon earned a Gold placement in Agricultural Mechanics Design and Fabrication, showcasing his innovative design skills, while Trenton achieved a Silver ranking in Agricultural Education, demonstrating his dedication to advancing agricultural knowledge. Their accomplishments reflect the hard work and passion of Effingham County's FFA students, who consistently set high standards in agricultural education!

NATIONAL CHAPTER AWARD

The Effingham County School District made a strong impression in Indianapolis by earning an additional award! South Effingham High School FFA was recognized as a 3-Star Gold Emblem National Chapter, with Landon Turner and Emma Whittaker representing SEHS FFA on stage.

This award honors chapters that embody the organization's mission and goals through the National Quality Chapter Standards (NQCS) and a Program of Activities (POA). South Effingham High School FFA achieved this recognition through active participation in various community events, including First Grade Field Trips at Honey Ridge Agricenter, a First Responders Luncheon with the Effingham County Farm Bureau, and a collaborative "AG-exceptionally AG-tive" Valentine's Day Dance Party with SEHS FCCLA.







WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM AG EDUCATION AND FFA?

Effingham County's agricultural education and FFA programs truly offer something for everyone. With diverse high school pathways in Agricultural Mechanics, Forestry, Plant Science, Food and Animal Systems, and Veterinary Science, students can explore various interests, whether in animals, plants, or mechanics. The Honey Ridge Agricenter provides unique hands-on opportunities, and events like first-grade field trips and livestock shows introduce agriculture to students as early as first grade. These programs prepare students for careers in agriculture and fields like education, medicine, and business.

This success is made possible by our dedicated teachers, who inspire and empower students to reach their full potential. By encouraging participation in agriculture classes and FFA, students develop leadership skills, gain practical experience, and forge lifelong friendships. As agriculture continues to evolve, Effingham County's programs reflect this growth, showcasing the important role of agriculture in our community and beyond. Together, we are nurturing the next generation of leaders ready to make a difference in a variety of careers.























Aspiring GRADUATES



Mackenzie Baker

Telling Stories, Building Connections

Effingham County High School's Class of 2020 alumna Mackenzie Baker discovered her love for storytelling as a member of the yearbook club. This passion inspired her to pursue a journalism degree at the University of Georgia, where she gained hands-on experience through Grady Newsource and performed with the UGA Redcoat Band Flagline.

Now a reporter for WTOC in Savannah, Mackenzie chose to start her career close to home. "I knew I wanted my first job to be nearby," she shares, and WTOC offered the perfect opportunity to continue her storytelling journey within the community that shaped her. Through journalism, she hopes to capture diverse voices and spotlight stories that resonate, staying committed to connecting people through meaningful stories.

Her advice to high school students reflects her journey: "Don't feel like you have to stick with just one thing. Join a club, play a sport, or try something new—your happiness matters most." She credits teacher Anthony Jones for inspiring her to embrace challenges, which she continues to do as she builds a promising career in journalism. Mackenzie's path shows how following your passions can lead to professional fulfillment and community impact.



Andrew Szokoly

Protecting Communities Through Cybersecurity

Effingham County High School alumni Andrew Szokoly, Class of 2005, discovered his passion for technology early on. He enjoyed Dr. Ford's computer classes, which sparked his interest in cybersecurity. This led him to Georgia Southern University, where he studied for a career focused on cybersecurity and risk management.

Today, Andrew works at Lockstep Technology Group, supporting the managed services and cybersecurity teams that protect local school districts, governments, and hospitals from cyber threats. As Chief Information Security Officer (CISO), he oversees Lockstep's IT security operations, writing and updating policies to ensure the company remains proactive and adaptive to ever-evolving cybersecurity challenges.

Andrew's work is deeply satisfying, allowing him to combine his passion for cybersecurity with a mission to help others achieve their goals in secure and safe environments. He advises students: "Don't be afraid to set ambitious goals and work toward them steadily. Obstacles may slow you down, but don't let them stop you completely."

In the next five years, Andrew aims to continue his expertise with a CCSP cloud security certification, continuing his commitment to protecting communities and empowering others through technology.

Macy Morgan

Buzzing Toward a Beekeeping Career



Macy Morgan, a 2021 South Effingham High School graduate, has a passion for agriculture and environmental stewardship that she discovered early through her involvement in FFA, 4-H, and the Art Honor Society. Initially set on becoming a veterinarian, Macy chose Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC) for its strong agricultural programs. However, in her sophomore year, she found a new passion: working with honeybees. Now a Livestock Production major, Macy plans to pursue a career in beekeeping, focusing on the crucial role honeybees play in Georgia's agriculture.

At ABAC, Macy serves as the President of the ABAC Beekeepers Association and is a proud member of Sigma Alpha Sorority. These roles have given her leadership opportunities and a deeper understanding of the agricultural community. She's also achieved her FFA American Degree, a significant honor reflecting her dedication.

Macy advises current students, "Apply for every scholarship you can, and be ready for a new rhythm in college—it may feel overwhelming at first, but you'll find your groove." Inspired by her teachers, Mrs. Gerow, and the Richardsons, Macy is driven to make a lasting impact in her field, aiming to earn her Master Beekeeper Certification and pursue a full-time career as a beekeeper.

Austin McMahon

A Journey Rooted in Agriculture



Austin McMahon, a 2021 South Effingham High School graduate, turned his early passion for agriculture into a promising career path. In high school, Austin was heavily involved in FFA, where he competed in career and leadership events and attended leadership conferences that earned him his State FFA Degree. His work at Honey Ridge Agricenter through the Work-Based Learning program was transformative, providing hands-on experience that fueled his ambition.

Now in his senior year at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC), Austin chose ABAC for its esteemed Agricultural Education program. The journey has been more than academic—he has actively engaged in national FFA events as an assistant and judge and attended the New Century Farmers Conference in Iowa, broadening his network and enriching his understanding of the field. Austin's dedication was recognized when he earned the prestigious American FFA Degree in 2023.

His advice to students: "Live outside your comfort zone, take chances, and have fun. Make sure your career is something you love." Inspired by his favorite high school teacher, Alisha Richardson, Austin looks forward to teaching high school agriculture after graduating this May, all while pursuing his Master's Degree to continue inspiring future generations.

Correction: Dr. Bailey Alford was featured as an Aspiring Graduate in the Back to School 2024 issue of the ASPIRE magazine. The article states that she graduated from Effingham County High School, but she graduated from South Effingham High. We apologize for the error!

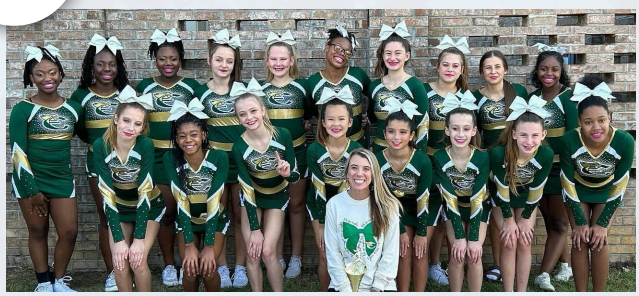
Around "THE HAM"

SOUTH EFFINGHAM MIDDLE



The South Effingham Softball team is Region Champion for the Coastal Middle School Region.
Softball Coaches: Chloe Conaway-Head Coach, Hannah Ward, Kaity White Lancaster, Chuck Smith

EBENEZER MIDDLE



Ebenezer Middle's Competition Cheer squad placed first in their competition at Swainsboro High on November 2nd.

CROSSROADS ACADEMY

Crossroads Academy was named the Georgia Association of Alternative Education (GAAE) Spotlight School of the Year at the GAAE conference! This prestigious award recognizes the dedication and persistence of the amazing staff and students and is a true testament to all the incredible work happening at Crossroads Academy.





On October 17, Crossroads students gathered to celebrate Bre'na Midgett. She officially joined the U.S. Army and received a full scholarship for her commitment. The Crossroads family is proud of her hard work and dedication.

SOUTH EFFINGHAM HIGH

The Battle in the Boro was held at Statesboro High School on Saturday, 10/19. SEHS came in first place. This was the JV team's first competition and they came in second place. This is South's second first-place win this year, the first received at the Creekview Classic on 10/12 in Atlanta at Creekview High School against top competitors.

ECHS also competed at the Battle in the Boro. They had a great performance and they took 4th place.

Varsity Cheer Coaches: Amanda Ramsey, Cynthia Hendricks

JV Cheer Coaches: Alyssa Sterritt, Jody Caudle



HONEY RIDGE AGRICENTER

The ribbon cutting for the Honey Ridge Agricenter Arena was held in August. The state-of-the-art facility, one of the most extensive of its kind south of Macon, is designed to host large livestock shows and events. The arena hosted its first livestock event, a Lamb and Goat Show, in September.

The Honey Ridge Agricenter Arena will also serve as a hub for school and community events, significantly enhancing educational opportunities in agricultural and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) education. This facility will play a crucial role in shaping the future workforce in Effingham County.



2024 ECSD FOOD DRIVE

WoodmenLife sponsored another successful canned food drive, with the combined monetary and canned goods donations reaching a new record of over 45 tons of food! These donations were incredibly impactful for the Manna House Food Pantry, which serves approximately 1,600 families per month in the county.

The following schools received awards for their outstanding contributions to the food drive:

Top Performer ($1,000): enCompass Academy
Outstanding Performer ($500): Ebenezer Elementary
Star Performer ($250): Springfield Elementary
Star Performer ($250): Effingham County High



2024 UNITED WAY CAMPAIGN



Dr. Yancy Ford, ECSD Superintendent, is the United Way of the Coastal Empire's 2025 Campaign Chair. At the kickoff for the campaign, he championed this year's Campaign theme – "Educate. Elevate. Unite."

750 community leaders gathered for the kick-off event at the Savannah Convention Center in September, where it was announced that ECSD's contributions from last year totaled $105,388.

The drumlines from the Rebel Regiment and the Marching Mustangs also performed at the event.

STEM NIGHTS

Throughout the 2024-25 school year, DRT is sponsoring STEM nights at each elementary school. High school students from the STEM Academy at ECCA are volunteering at each event and sharing their passion for science, technology, engineering, and math with the younger generation. Several of these nights have already taken place, and the remaining nights will take place this winter!



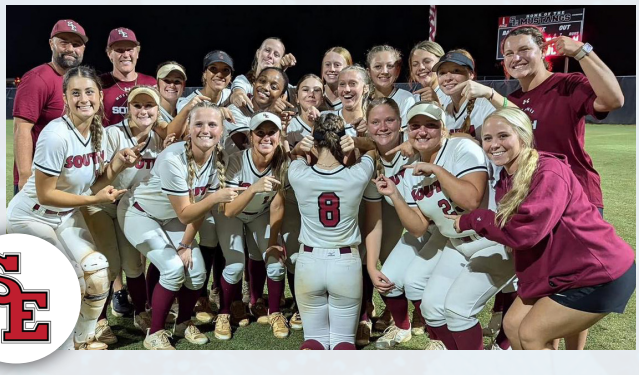




ECHS & SEHS SOFTBALL



Both ECHS and SEHS softball teams headed to the Elite 8 in Columbus! ECHS finished 4th in the state and South finished 5th in the state for the 5A Division!



PUPS PROGRAM

The ECSD Lead Social Worker and Lead Counselor, social workers, and three of our therapy dogs traveled to Barrow County to offer support and comfort to students as they returned to school after the tragic shooting at Appalachee High School.



EFFINGHAM COLLEGE & CAREER ACADEMY

Congratulations to Meredith Clontz, a junior at ECCA, for being selected to the State Superintendent 2024–2025 Student Advisory Council. Meredith was one of 74 students selected from 1550 applicants.



EFFINGHAM COUNTY HIGH JROTC



In September, several ECHS students were awarded full scholarships to Georgia Military College in the fall and will be enlisting in the Army National Guard. Congratulations to Isabella Smith, Colleen Cunningham, and Steven Hall on this incredible achievement!

EFFINGHAM COUNTY MIDDLE



The ECMS Lady Panthers volleyball team finished first in the region and were Coastal Region Champions. Congratulations, ladies!

EBENEZER MIDDLE

Students from ECMS, EMS and SEMS were tasked with creating a short video based on a book they had read. Grace Disi, a 7th Grader at Ebenezer Middle, was voted the winner with her video based on the book *Shadow Weaver* by MarcyKate Connelly. Congratulations, Grace!



SOUTH EFFINGHAM HIGH NJROTC

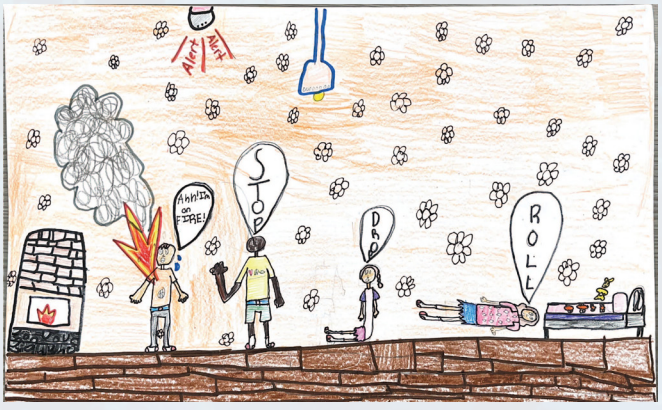
South Effingham High's NJROTC won the Distinguished Unit Award! Congratulations to the SEHS Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (NJROTC) for being designated as a Distinguished Unit for the 2024-25 school year!



SPRINGFIELD ELEMENTARY



Congratulations to Madelyn Landram, a 5th-grade student at Springfield Elementary! Madelyn's fire safety poster was selected for May in the Office of the Commissioner of Insurance and Safety Fire 2025 calendar.



BLANDFORD ELEMENTARY



After 802 days of battling Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia, Miles, a first grader at Blandford Elementary got to "ring the bell," marking the end of his cancer journey. Blandford students and staff joined in this celebration by ringing bells for him as he paraded around the school!

SOUTH EFFINGHAM ELEMENTARY



Georgia's School Superintendent, Richard Woods, visited fourth-grade classrooms at South Effingham Elementary on Constitution Day! Mr. Woods gave each fourth grader "The Words that Built America" booklets containing the U.S. Constitution, Declaration of Independence, and National Anthem, which will enrich their studies as they dive into U.S. History this year.

EBENEZER MIDDLE BEST BUDDIES

Ebenezer Middle's Best Buddies Club met their fundraising goal for the Best Buddies Champion of the Year. Teacher Ivory Brown and student Elly Knowlton were able to attend the Champions Gala in Atlanta with family and friends.



New TEACHER of the MONTH

"The Effingham County School District is thrilled to announce the exceptional first-year educators selected as the New Teachers of the Month. This esteemed recognition highlights the outstanding contributions of these educators in shaping the future of our students. Their dedication, innovative teaching methods, and unwavering commitment to education have made a significant impact in the classroom and beyond. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to these talented professionals for their remarkable achievements and positive influence on the students of Effingham County."

– **Carla Dean**, *New Teacher Induction Coordinator*

SEPTEMBER 2024



Madison McClenehan
Sand Hill Elementary



Kastin Caldwell
South Effingham Middle



Ashley Williams
ECCA

OCTOBER 2024



Dexter Manior
Guyton Elementary



Chrys Hawkins
Effingham County Middle



Savanna Landis
Effingham County High

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EFFINGHAM COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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ECSD Career Fair

February 6, 2025 | 4-7 p.m.
Effingham College & Career Academy
2940 GA Highway 21 S. | Rincon, GA

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RSVP

Scan the QR code or visit the link to RSVP to the Career Fair.
bit.ly/ECSDCareerFair



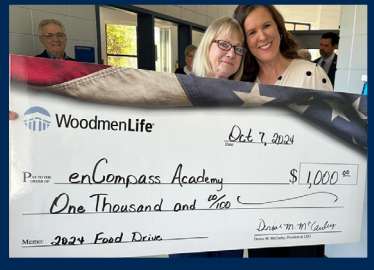
START

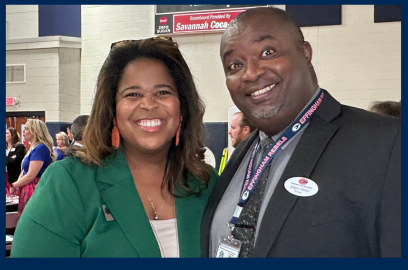











Make every moment count because every student matters.











