



Clayton County Public Schools

Building A Better Tomorrow, Today!

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ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Division of Communications, Public Relations, Marketing & Strategic Improvement

April 23, 2025

CCPS Honors Valedictorians, Salutatorians, STAR students, and STAR Teachers at the Top Scholars: Salute to Excellence Banquet

JONESBORO - On Saturday, April 19, 2025, Clayton County Public Schools (CCPS) hosted its second annual “Honoring Excellence: A Celebration of our Top Scholars” banquet at the Riverdale Town Center (Riverdale, Georgia). This distinguished event celebrated the district’s top academic achievers and the educators who have guided them.

The evening commenced with Master of Ceremonies Mr. Vicorie Brown, Fine Arts Instructional Specialist and CCPS Alumnus, leading the program. Alan S. Castillo, Salutatorian of Mount Zion High School, delivered the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by an elegant rendition of the National Anthem by Giavanni Jackson, a senior at Stilwell School of the Arts. Cindy Hernandez, Valedictorian of North Clayton High School, extended a warm welcome, and Aminatou Seye, Salutatorian of Morrow High School, articulated the occasion's significance.

Dr. Eldrick Horton, Assistant Superintendent for High Schools, provided an inspirational address, emphasizing that the celebration reflects those who “got it right”—students, parents, and educators alike. Dr. Jessie Goree, District 3 Board Member, conveyed greetings on behalf of the Board Chairman, Benjamin Straker (District 9), and the entire Board of Education.



The program featured a video presentation from all Board Members, followed by the introduction of the keynote speaker by Zitlali Blancas, Valedictorian of Lovejoy High School. Ms. Jasmine Bowles, CCPS Board of Education District 1 and Lovejoy High School alumnus, delivered an inspiring charge to the honorees, encapsulated in the mnemonic **B.L.O.O.M.**: **B**elieve in your potential; **L**isten to your inner wisdom; **O**bserve the world around you with intention; **O**bey the call; and **M**ove boldly toward the light. “Take up space,” Ms. Bowles encouraged. “And as you continue to bloom, always remember you have roots in Clayton County and are always welcome here.”

Awards and recognitions were presented by Ms. Stephanie Trice, Executive Director of Secondary Academics, whose leadership helped bring the celebration to life, with generous support from the community and corporate partners. Charles Brooks, Clayton County Solicitor-General, sponsored laptops for all Valedictorians and Salutatorians, while Inspiredu, in partnership with the Clayton County Chamber of Commerce, provided laptops for STAR Students. STAR Teachers received laptops sponsored by Lenovo and Prosys Information Systems. Delta Air Lines awarded \$3,000 scholarships to Valedictorians and \$1,500 scholarships to Salutatorians. Additionally, the Clayton County Public Schools Foundation awarded \$500 scholarships to STAR Students and STAR Teachers. In total, all honorees received both financial awards and technology tools to support their continued academic and professional pursuits.

Dr. Delphia Young, Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning & Strategic Improvement, and the visionary for the annual celebration, concluded the event with remarks of gratitude to all of those who contributed to the event. She offered special recognition to Ms. Stephanie Trice for her exceptional leadership in bringing the vision to life with precision and care. In her closing remarks, Dr. Young echoed Ms. Bowles’ powerful message, urging scholars to “move toward the light” as they continue to lead and make their mark on the world.



When reflecting on the significance of the celebration, Superintendent Dr. Anthony W. Smith shared his sentiments, “These top scholars embody the traits of our Portrait of a Graduate. Our Valedictorians, Salutatorians, STAR Students, and STAR Teachers have shown what it truly means to push beyond comfort, and instead, learn with depth, lead with purpose, think with criticality, and serve with heart. Our top scholars have demonstrated that they are prepared to transform the world around them. And to our teachers, thank you for modeling excellence and cultivating brilliance. As we build a better tomorrow, today, your legacy is already unfolding through every student you've inspired.”

Class of 2025 Valedictorians and Salutatorians

High School Name	Valedictorian	Salutatorian
Charles R. Drew High School	Anita Adenka	Jaylah Burkes
Elite Scholars Academy	Savannah Tran	Tony Doan
Forest Park High School	Cristina Nguyen	Quan Nguyen
Jonesboro High School	Marlon Marquez	Kerrington Cutter
Lovejoy High School	Zitlali Blancas	George Ejike
Morrow High School	Jenny Nguyen	Aminatou Seye Makyah Pierre-Louis
Mt. Zion High School	Rocio Quiroz Salem	Alan Castillo
Mundy’s Mill High School	Elle Amevo	Jason Le
North Clayton High School	Cindy Hernandez	Benet Houdodan Emmanuella Ejidoh
Riverdale High School	Donnavon Rodriguez	Trang Doan Theresa Nguyen
Stilwell School of the Arts	Kaiya Evans	Tamela Jordan
Perry Career Academy	Lindsey Cruz-Reyes	Ja’Tavia Bolling
Utopian Academy for the Arts	Aiden Arichabala	Meagan Stafford

Class of 2025 STAR Students and STAR Teachers

Name of High School	STAR Student	STAR Teacher
Charles Drew High School	Kevin Dinh Ngo	Ms. Dawn Cloud
Elite Scholars Academy	Steven Huy Dao	Mr. Clifford Smith
Forest Park High School	Angel Diaz-Gutierrez	Mr. Samuel Kono-Ayala
Jonesboro High School	Marlon Marquez	Mr. Jason Beavers
Lovejoy High School	Javier Perez Espino	Mr. Paul Louis-Jacques
M.E. Stilwell School of the Arts	Kaiya Symone Evans	Dr. Kristina Graves
Morrow High School	Minh-Khang Tran	Mrs. Javone Richardson-Boone
Mt. Zion High School	Malik-Harmony Sa'Di	Mr. Christopher Bronson
Mundy's Mill High School	Olivia Renee Bivins	Mrs. Vickie Occhipinti
North Clayton High School	Paulina Alexia Sanchez	Ms. Lyndsey Phillips
Riverdale High School	Anghel John Tubelleja	Mr. Micah Johnson

When parents and caregivers were asked for their advice on raising a top scholar, they attributed their children's academic success to providing stability, structure, and instilling values of independence and self-discipline. They emphasized the importance of education and proudly embraced their role as their child's first teacher. In turn, the student honorees reflected on the impact of Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment courses, sharing how these experiences challenged them academically and prepared them for the rigor of college-level coursework.

CCPS congratulates all honorees and expresses its gratitude to Dr. Delphia Young, Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning & Strategic Improvement, for her vision; to Ms. Stephanie Trice, Executive Director of Secondary Academics; and to Dr. Prince Bowie, Director of Fine Arts, for their leadership in facilitating this amazing event. The district also expresses its profound appreciation to the sponsors, organizers, and supporters who made this event possible. The district looks forward to the continued success of its scholars and educators.



To view a copy of the Honoring Excellence program flipbook, please click this link: https://view.flipdocs.com/?ID=10026966_728420

To view a list of Honorees, please click this link [W CCPS Class of 2025 Honorees of Excellence.docx](#)

To view a gallery of photo images, please click this link: [CCPS Celebration of Our Top Scholars](#)

-An official document from the Clayton County Public School System-

About Clayton County Public Schools: Clayton County Public Schools (CCPS) is fully accredited by Cognia. The district offers a focused world-class program based on a challenging curriculum which is taught from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. Serving over 50,000 students, Clayton County Public Schools is ranked among the 100 largest school districts in the U.S. and is the sixth-largest school system in Georgia.

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