Workforce Ready!

LEESBURG, Ga. — January 12, 2026 — The Lee County School System (LCSS) and Lee County Fire and Emergency Services (LCFES) are partnering to offer a new Fire and Emergency Services/Firefighting Pathway at Lee County High School (LCHS), beginning with the 2026–2027 school year.

This project was the result of a phone call between Mr. Cole Williams and Dr. Kathleen Truitt. A proposal to work together to solve the challenge of workforce shortage within the Lee County community was the result. Very quickly all of the key leaders were meeting to develop a plan to ensure that this idea became a reality for Lee County.

This innovative program will give qualified and selected seniors the opportunity to earn industry-recognized Firefighter 1 and Firefighter 2 certifications during the school day—preparing them for immediate employment with local fire departments upon graduation and the opportunity to sit for qualified exams.

The Pathway Forward

The pathway will be taught on the Lee County High School campus by a certified fire science instructor from Lee County Fire and Emergency Services and will include two Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE) courses: **Essentials of Fire and Emergency Services** and **Applications of Firefighting**. Classroom instruction will take place at the high school, while some hands-on skills training will be conducted at the Lee County Fire and Emergency Services training center. Transportation and equipment will be provided through the partnership from both Lee County School System and Fire and Emergency Services.

Students who successfully complete the coursework and pass the required state assessments will graduate fully certified as firefighters, eligible for hire immediately after high school (once they reach the age of 18). There is no cost to students for the program or certification exams.

The First Program Class

The first cohort for the 2026–2027 school year will be limited to **approximately 15 seniors** from the Lee County High School Class of 2027. This initial approach ensures high-quality instruction and hands-on training while meeting workforce needs within the community.

If more than 15 students qualify and request enrollment into the program, selection will be based on factors such as course performance, agility test results, attendance and discipline history, pathway completion status, and demonstrated interest in pursuing a firefighting career.

A Win for Students and the Community

This partnership not only provides students with a direct pathway into a high-demand career, but also supports our local Lee County Fire Department by creating a pipeline of trained, certified professionals ready to serve Lee County and surrounding communities.

The Lee County School System and Lee County Fire and Emergency Services leaders say the program reflects a shared commitment to workforce development, student opportunity, and public safety.

“This partnership is a way to create real solutions to roadblocks our Lee community is facing today,” says Dr. Kathleen Truitt, superintendent of the Lee County School System. “At the same time, this provides an incredible opportunity for our students to leave high school with the necessary training and credentials to start a career immediately following graduation, because we know when a community comes together, works together and gets it right, great things happen for children!”

David Forrester, Lee County Fire and Emergency Services Fire Chief, says, “I am excited about taking students who may not be interested in going the collegiate route and giving them an honorable career path that will serve the Lee County community. This partnership will certainly assist us with our manpower and staffing and we cannot wait to get the ball rolling.”

Next Steps for Students and Families

Families and students with questions about the Fire and Emergency Services/Firefighting Pathway may contact their high school counselor for additional details.