



Barnwell County School District

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Barnwell County Students Shine at Districtwide Science Fair

Innovation and creativity were on full display as Barnwell County School District hosted its second annual Barnwell County Science Fair on Saturday, March 28, 2026, at the Williston-Elko Auditorium.

The event brought together top middle school students from across the district, showcasing the best projects selected from recent school-level science fairs held at each campus. After months of preparation and experimentation, students representing Macedonia Elementary-Middle School (MEMS), Williston-Elko Middle School (WEMS), and Guinyard-Butler Middle School (GBMS) advanced to the district competition.



School and district leaders stand alongside some of the Barnwell County Science Fair winners on Saturday, March 28th.

The day began with private judging, which concluded at 10:00 a.m. and was led by experts from Savannah River Site (SRS) and the South Carolina Department of Education. Community members then had the opportunity to view student projects during a public exhibition from 11:00 a.m. to noon, followed by an awards ceremony recognizing the winners. Science teachers from around the school district were present, along with the superintendent, to present the students with their awards.

During the ceremony, Science Fair Coordinator Alex Kinard highlighted the growth and impact of the program across the district.

“This year alone, we had a total of 385 projects submitted by our seventh and eighth grade students,” Kinard shared. “Of those, 126 students earned awards at the school level—meaning 33 percent of our students were recognized for their work.”

School-Level Highlights

At Williston-Elko Middle School, students earned recognition across a wide range of categories. Notable winners included Moshe Cannon (1st Place, Behavioral Science), Gabrielle Brown (1st Place, Chemistry), and Kaylee Trimble (2nd Place, Animal Science). Additional award recipients included Promize Johnson, Peyton Butler, Titan McDonald, Leilani Rudolph, Reginald Odom, Christian Salley, Jahmoul Ridley, Catherine Branch, and Rashad James. Ridley also earned a



Parents and community members were able to view student projects during a public exhibition prior to the awards ceremony.

special judges' award, an honor highlighting exceptional work.

At Guinyard-Butler Middle School, several students earned top honors, including Aiden Jackson (1st Place, Animal Science), Weston Altman (1st Place, Material Science), Sarah Tadamatla (1st Place, Medicine and Health), and Eon Barajas (1st Place, Plant Science). Gregory Fulmer earned 1st Place in Earth and Planetary Science and was also named 3rd Place Overall. Addeline

Bolen received 1st Place in Thermal Science and Overall Honorable Mention. Additional winners included Garret Gunnells, Kinsley Bridges, Mitchell Bodiford, Easton Roland, and Carter Brown.

At Macedonia Elementary-Middle School, students also demonstrated exceptional achievement. Jay Patel earned 1st Place in Electricity and Magnetism and was named 1st Place Overall. Heather Nickens earned 1st Place in Food Science and 2nd Place Overall. Additional winners included Anthony Castillo (1st Place, Engineering), Johnathan Lopez Pacheco (1st Place, Physics and Mathematical Science), Ja'Nyla Donaldson (3rd Place, Chemistry), and Carolina Flores (3rd Place, Plant Science).

Districtwide Recognition

A total of 29 students received categorical awards at the district level, earning first, second, or third place in their respective categories. In addition, four students were named overall winners, selected from among the top-performing projects across all categories.

Kinard emphasized that the science fair experience is about more than competition.

“This isn’t just about science,” he said. “It’s about giving students the opportunity to express themselves—their curiosity, their creativity, and their interests. One of our judges even said, ‘I

can understand this child without knowing the student.’ That’s the power of what these projects represent.”

He also thanked Superintendent Dr. Crissie Stapleton, the school board, district leadership team, teachers, and families for their support in making the event possible.



Heather Nickens of MEMS was present the day of the event, and she earned 1st Place in Food Science and 2nd Place Overall.

“Science fairs aren’t always about the top student in the class,” Kinard added.

“They’re about creating opportunities. What if this experience sparks an interest that leads to a future career? The possibilities are unlimited for our students.”

As the awards ceremony concluded, students gathered for photos, celebrating not only their achievements but also the spirit of discovery that defined the day.

With continued growth and strong community support, the Barnwell County

School District Science Fair is quickly becoming a cornerstone event that inspires students to think critically as they explore questions in scientific fields and to imagine what’s possible for their future.