



# ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023

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NEWTON COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

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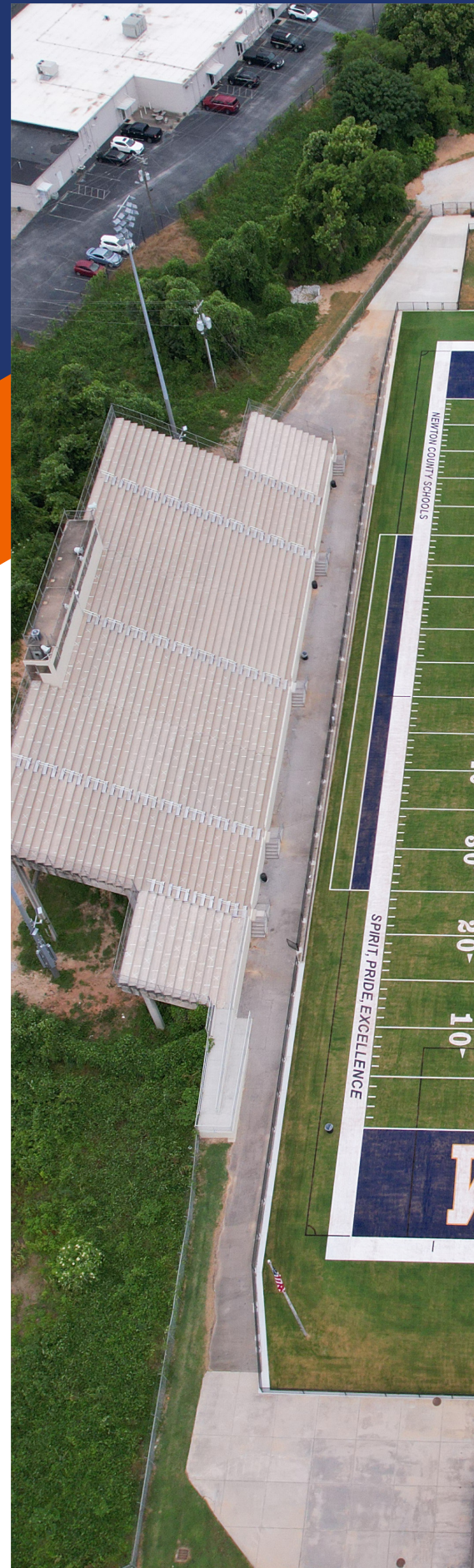


All students will  
be **well-rounded**  
and **prepared for**  
**the future.**

The mission of the **Newton County School System** is to provide educational excellence for all students.

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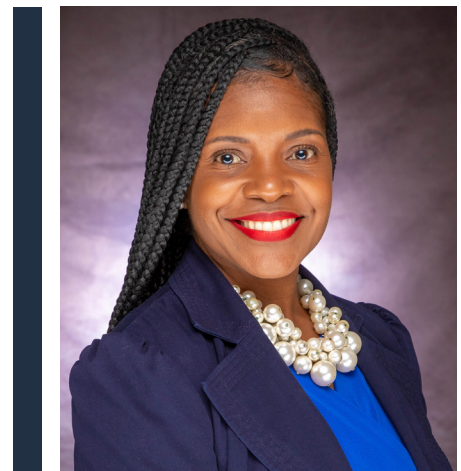




# Meet our Board of Education

## Belief Statements

- Students are our first priority;
- Our principals and teachers make the critical difference in student achievement;
- Respectful partnerships among students, staff, parents, and the community are integral to student success;
- All students and staff deserve a safe, positive, and supportive environment;
- Success is based on high expectations for our students, parents, and school system staff; and
- Lifelong learning is essential in a diverse and changing world.

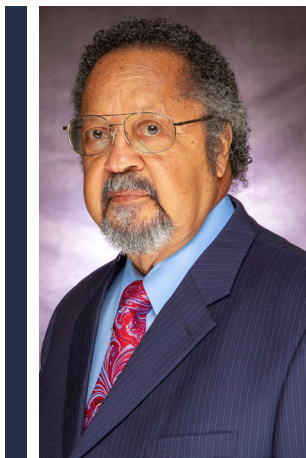


**Mrs. Shakila Henderson-  
Baker**  
Board Chair, District 3





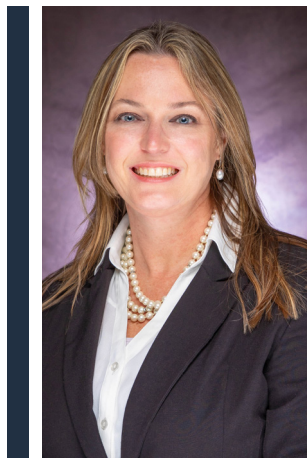
**Mr. Trey Bailey**  
District 1



**Mr. Eddie Johnson**  
District 2



**Mr. Anderson Bailey**  
District 4



**Mrs. Abigail Coggin**  
Vice-Chair, District 5



# A Message from Our Superintendent



Dr. Duke Bradley, III

Dear Newton County Community,

On behalf of the Newton County School System, I am honored to present our Annual Report for the 2022-2023 school year.

Please know that I am humbled to have been selected by the members of the Newton County Board of Education to serve as your Superintendent of Schools. I am grateful for the opportunity to lead this district, and I am committed to providing our students with the best possible education.

First, I want to take this opportunity to thank our previous Superintendent, Samantha Fuhrey, for her dedicated service to our district. Mrs. Fuhrey

retired in June after a decade at the helm, and she left our district in a strong position. I am grateful for her leadership and guidance, and I am committed to continuing the good work that she started.

This year's Annual Report highlights some of the many accomplishments of our students, staff, and schools. The report includes information on our student achievement, our financial performance, and more. I am proud of the work that was accomplished during the 2022-2023 school year, and I am confident that we are on the right track to continue to provide our students with a world-class education.

Thank you for your unwavering support of the Newton County School System. We could not do this work without you.

Sincerely,

Duke Bradley, III  
Superintendent



**I am grateful for the opportunity to lead this district, and I am committed to providing our students with the best possible education.**







**\$14.9 million**  
*in scholarships*



**\$19.7 million**  
*in scholarships*



**\$64.3 million**  
*in scholarships*



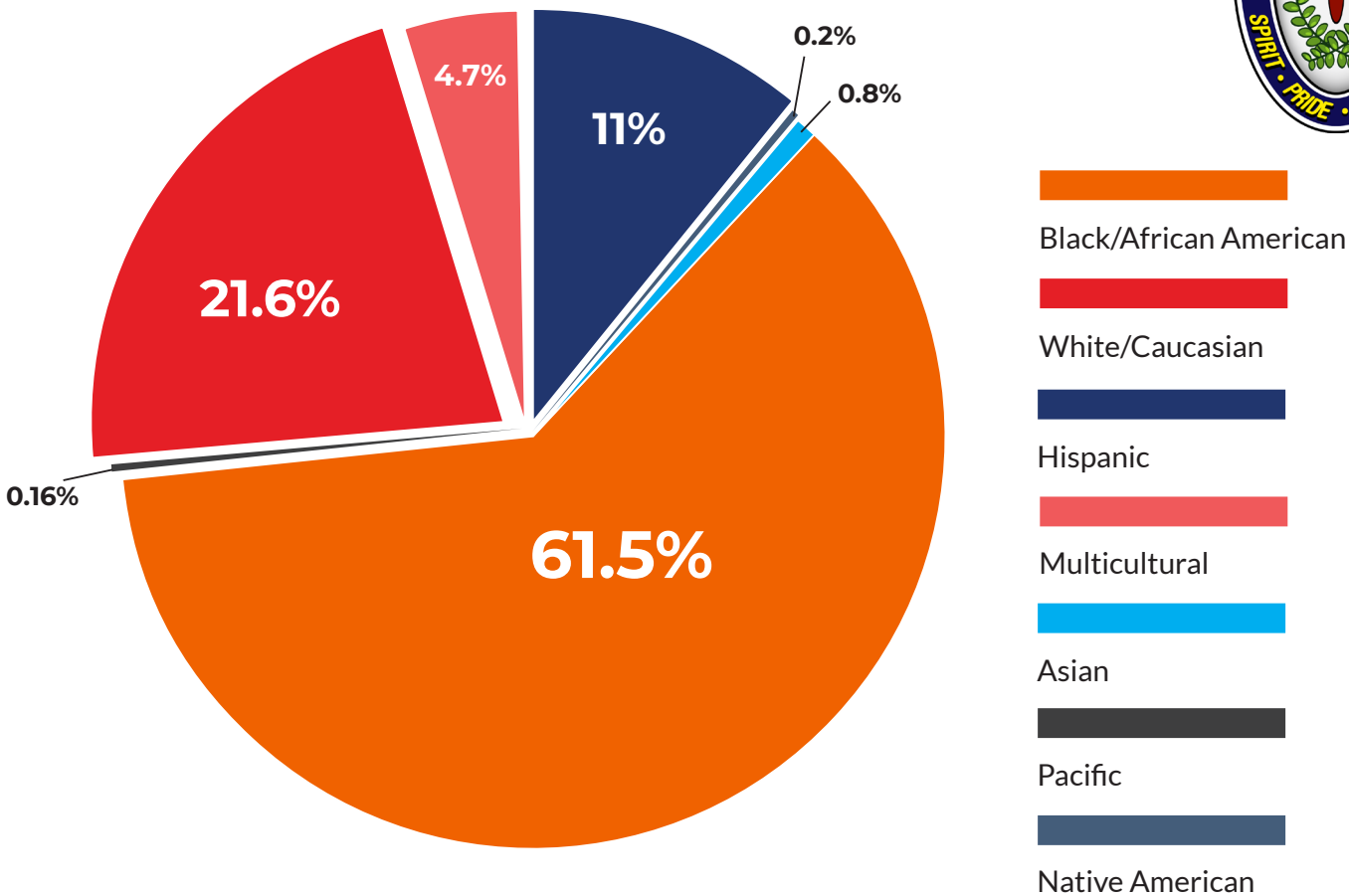
## **NCSS Class of 2023 earns \$98.9 million in scholarships**

We are thrilled to announce the remarkable achievements of our graduating seniors in the Newton County School System for the 2022-2023 school year. The Alcovy High School Class of 2023 has earned an impressive \$14.9 million in scholarships, while the Eastside High School Class of 2023 secured an outstanding \$19.7 million. The Newton High School Class of 2023 brought in an extraordinary \$64.3 million in scholarships. Collectively, the Newton County School System Class of 2023 has achieved an incredible milestone, amassing a grand total of approximately \$98.9 million in scholarships. This outstanding accomplishment speaks volumes about the dedication, hard work, and potential of our graduating students, showcasing their bright futures and the impact they will undoubtedly make in their respective fields



# Department Data

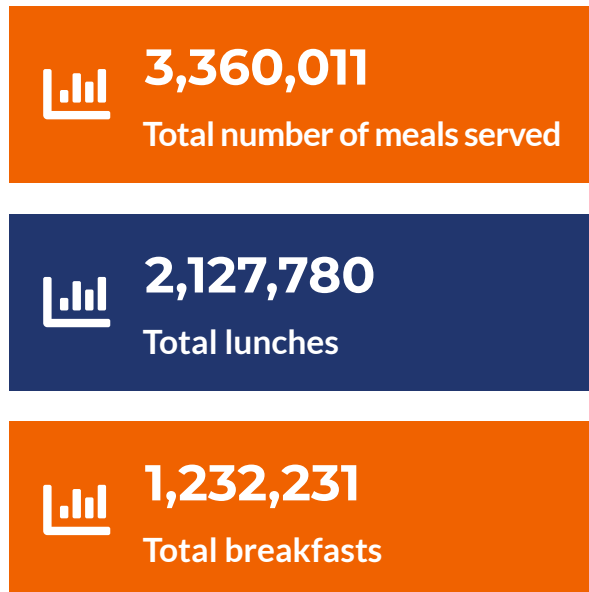
## Student Demographics Report 2023



### Languages Spoken »

- » Albanian
- » Amharic
- » Arabic
- » Cantonese
- » Chinese
- » Dari
- » Dutch
- » Fante
- » Farsi
- » French
- » German
- » Gujarati
- » Haitian Creole
- » Hindi
- » Hmong
- » Itsekiri
- » Khmer
- » Krio
- » Kosraean
- » Lao
- » Mandarin
- » Moldovan
- » Nepali
- » Patois
- » Portuguese
- » Punjabi
- » Russian
- » Samali
- » Spanish
- » Tagalog
- » Tamil
- » Telugu
- » Turkman
- » Ukrainian
- » Urdu
- » Vietnamese
- » Yoruba

### School Nutrition Program





# Department Data

## HR Data in 2023



# of Certified Staff  
**1,409**



# of Classified Staff  
**1,108**



Total Active Employees  
**2,517**

## Education Status



# Bachelor's Degrees  
**400**



# Master's Degrees  
**591**



# Doctorate  
**76**



# Associate  
**2**



High School and less than associate  
**1**

### » School Bus Ridership 2022-2023

Description	Amount
Regular Education Elementary	4,489
Regular Education High	3,474
Regular Education Middle	2,780
Special Education Elementary	289
Special Education High	96
Special Education Middle	70
AASD	5
Mainstay	14
Rise	35
Theme School	219
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11,471</b>

### » (2022-23) NCSS School Bus Mileage

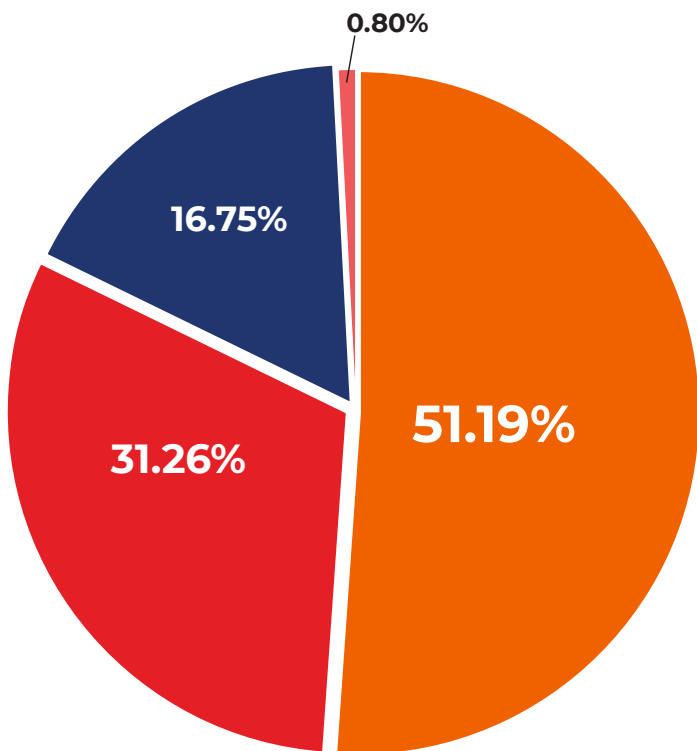
Annual Mileage = 2,855,551

July 1 - 31	9,326
August 1 - 31	340,582
September 1 - 30	331,854
October 1 - 31	243,388
November 1 - 30	257,775
December 1 - 31	237,480
January 1 - 31	251,034
February 1 - 28	241,908
March 1 - 31	372,442
April 1 - 30	239,143
May 1 - 24	274,640
June 1 - 30	55,979



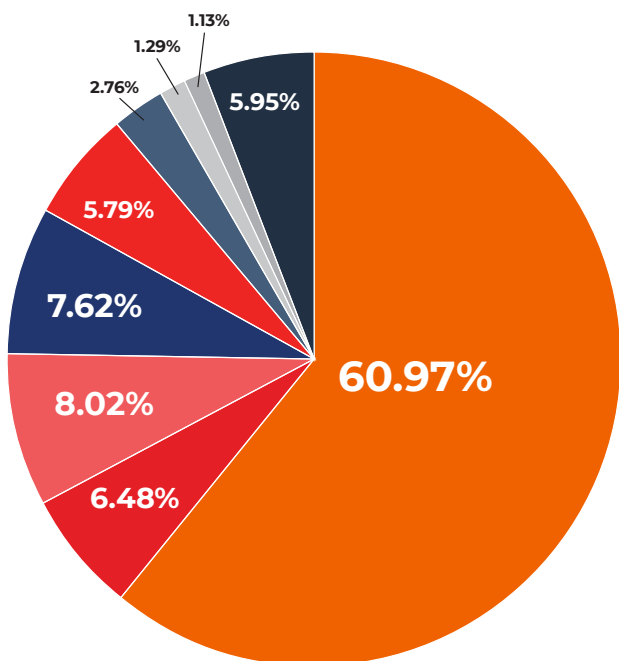
## Department Data

# Unaudited Revenues for Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2023



Description	Amount
Local Revenues	\$ 79,425,122.00
State Grants	\$130,071,287.00
Federal Grants	\$ 42,559,108.00
Other	\$ 2,038,698.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$254,094,215.00</b>

## » Unaudited Expenditures for Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2023



Description	Amount
Instruction	\$148,230,100
Pupil Services	\$ 14,460,557
Staff Services	\$ 18,535,255
Media Services	\$ 3,133,371
General Administration	\$ 2,747,363
School Administration	\$ 15,756,210
Transportation	\$ 14,065,726
Maintenance & Operations	\$ 19,493,266
Central Support & Business Services	\$ 6,705,885
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$243,127,733</b>



## Department Data

# Tax Digest History FY 2009 to Present

Fiscal Year	Tax Digest	Millage Rate	Gross Taxes	Change from 2009
2008-2009	\$2,955,093,084	18.210	\$53,812,245	
2009-2010	\$2,844,952,913	18.210	\$51,806,593	(\$2,005,653)
2010-2011	\$2,365,056,068	20.000	\$47,301,121	(\$6,511,124)
2011-2012	\$2,177,437,258	20.000	\$43,548,745	(\$10,263,500)
2012-2013	\$1,951,639,208	20.000	\$39,032,784	(\$14,779,461)
2013-2014	\$1,848,940,820	20.000	\$36,978,816	(\$16,833,429)
2014-2015	\$1,975,479,218	20.000	\$39,509,584	(\$14,302,661)
2015-2016	\$2,064,418,136	20.000	\$41,288,363	(\$12,523,882)
2016-2017	\$2,166,406,608	20.000	\$43,328,132	(\$10,484,113)
2017-2018	\$2,367,504,096	20.000	\$47,350,082	(\$6,462,163)
2018-2019	\$2,585,783,528	20.000	\$51,715,671	(\$2,096,574)
2019-2020	\$2,826,853,995	19.788	\$55,937,787	\$2,125,542
2020-2021	\$3,032,654,860	19.788	\$60,010,174	\$6,197,929
2021-2022	\$3,470,927,362	18.288	\$63,476,320	\$9,664,075
2022-2023	\$4,220,726,899	16.788	\$70,857,563	\$17,045,318
2023-2024	\$5,276,257,324	16.000	\$84,420,117	\$30,607,872

### » Newton County BOE Reduces Millage Rate

At their July 2022 combined work session/monthly meeting, the Newton County Board of Education reduced the local millage rate for the coming fiscal year from 18.288 to 16.788—a reduction of 1.5 mills. The new rate marks the lowest education millage rate for Newton County residents in almost a quarter century.

The Newton County Board of Education held three public hearings to obtain feedback on the millage rate and its impact on local residents. All members of the school board were in favor of reducing the millage rate for Newton County residents. Ultimately, Mrs. Shakila Henderson-Baker, Mrs. Abigail Coggin, Mr. Eddie Johnson, and

Mr. Anderson Bailey voted to approve the 16.788 millage rate. Mr. Trey Bailey, who approved a reduction in the millage rate, voted against as he was in favor of a full rollback.



## School Data

# All Three NCSS High Schools Named 2023 Advanced Placement Honor Schools



**All three Newton County School System high schools—Alcovy, Eastside, and Newton—were named 2023 Advanced Placement (AP) Honor Schools by Georgia School Superintendent Richard Woods.**

All three schools were recognized as AP STEM schools. In addition, Eastside and Newton were named AP Expansion Schools and Newton High School was also named a 2023 AP Humanities School. According to the Georgia Department of Education, AP STEM schools are schools with a minimum of five students testing in at least four AP STEM courses (AP Calculus AB, AP Calculus BC, AP Statistics, AP Biology, AP Chemistry, AP Environmental Science, AP Physics 1, AP Physics 2, AP Physics C, AP Computer Science A, AP Computer Science Principles). AP Humanities schools are schools with at least five students testing in each of the following AP Categories—one ELA course, two history/social science courses, one fine arts course and one world language course. AP Expansion Schools are schools with 25 percent growth in AP student participation from May 2021 to May 2022 and a minimum of 25 students testing in May 2020.

Advanced Placement (AP) classes and exams are administered by the College Board, which also administers the SAT. AP classes offer rigorous college-level learning options to students in high school. Students who receive a 3, 4, or 5 on AP exams may receive college credit.





## School Data

# NCSS Announces 2023 SAT Scores

Group	2023 #Test Takers	2023 Evidenced-Based Reading and Writing	2023 Math	2023 Composite
Alcovy High	123	487	440	927
Eastside High	120	525	493	1018
Newton High	167	497	461	958
NCSS	411	502	464	966
Georgia-Public Schools Only	--	534	511	1045
USA-Public Schools Only	--	510	493	1003

Newton County School System (NCSS) students scored a 966 composite on the 2023 SAT including a 502 Evidenced-Based Reading and Writing score and 464 score on Math. Alcovy High School test takers compiled a 927 composite score with a 487 score in Evidenced-Based Reading and Writing and 440 in Math. At Newton High, students attained a 958 composite score, including a 497 in Evidenced-Based Reading and Writing and 461 in Math.

### HIGHLIGHTS:

Newton High School students posted increases across the board in 2023, raising both their Evidenced-Based Reading and Writing and also Math scores significantly. As a result, the school's composite score also saw gains in 2023. In addition, with their results, Eastside High School students bested the nation's public school system students in both Evidenced-Based Reading and Writing and the composite

score and matched the national score for Math.

The SAT is a national college entrance exam some colleges and universities utilize to measure critical thinking skills students need for academic success in college. The SAT assesses how well students analyze and solve problems. It is typically taken by high school juniors and seniors.

## » Newton County School System Enhances Safety Measures with School Safety Officers

The Newton County Board of Education approved a school safety initiative to enhance student safety. The school system will employ School Safety Officers to be assigned to the district's 13 elementary schools and the Newton County STEAM Academy.

These highly trained individuals will be certified law enforcement officers, carefully selected for their expertise, professionalism, and dedication to fostering a safe and inclusive learning environment.

Dr. Michael Barr, chief operations officer for the school system, stated, "The primary focus of the School Safety Officers will be to promote conflict resolution, serve as mentors, and build positive relationships with our students. Building strong connections and fostering open lines of communication will help empower our students to address conflicts constructively and create a positive school climate. These officers will provide support, guidance, and promote responsible decision-

making, ultimately creating a sense of belonging and trust within the school community."

Barr added, "It is important to note the school system will continue partnering with the Newton County Sheriff's Office to provide School Resource Officers (SROs) at the middle and high schools. These experienced SROs have been instrumental in maintaining a safe and secure environment, and their presence will continue to benefit our students."

## School Data

# Newton County School System Announces 2023 ACT Scores



Group	English	Math	Reading	Science	Composite
Alcovy High	15.5	16.5	17.1	17.3	16.8
Eastside High	18.3	18.6	20.1	19.1	19.1
Newton High	15.3	16.3	17.7	17.3	16.8
NCSS	16.7	17.4	18.7	18.2	17.9
Georgia	20.7	20.6	22.2	21.2	21.3
Nation	18.6	19.0	20.1	19.6	19.5

The Georgia Department of Education released Newton County School System's (NCSS) district and school-level ACT Scores for the 2022-2023 school year. As with their state and national counterparts, NCSS district scores decreased slightly compared to 2022, when the average composite was 18.9.

Unlike the SAT, a reasoning test that measures critical thinking skills and assesses how well a student analyzes and solves

problems, the ACT is a series of curriculum-based, multiple-choice tests that cover content knowledge in four basic skill areas: English (College English Composition), Math (College Algebra), Reading (College Social Science), and Science (College Biology). Students also receive a composite score on the exam, which is scored on a scale from 0 to 36. The ACT also has an optional writing test.

## » NCSS Graduation Rate Tops State

According to data released by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), Newton County School System's (NCSS) four-year, cohort graduation rates continued to best the state rate in 2023. The district's overall graduation rate for 2023 was an impressive 92%. All three high schools, Alcovy, Eastside, and Newton also topped the state rate.

The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate defines the cohort based on when a student first becomes a freshman. The rate is calculated using the number of students who graduate within four years and includes adjustments for student transfers. According to the GaDOE, the state calculates a four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate as

required by federal law. This rate is:

- The number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma, divided by
- The number of students who form the adjusted cohort for the graduating class

Graduation rates for the schools, district, and state, are listed below:

SCHOOL/ GROUP	2019 GRADUATION RATE	2020 GRADUATION RATE	2021 GRADUATION RATE	2022 GRADUATION RATE	2023 GRADUATION RATE
Alcovy High	85%	89%	85%	89%	89%
Eastside High	87%	89%	91%	91%	93%
Newton High	88%	91%	91%	92%	92%
NCSS	87%	90%	89%	90%	92%
State	82%	84%	84%	84%	84%



# NCSS Earns GSBA **Leading Edge Award**

The Georgia School Boards Association (GSBA) presented Newton County School System (NCSS) officials with a Leading Edge Award for the district's work in supporting the development of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

According to NCSS chief strategy and support services officer Dr. Shelia Thomas, "the school system's strategic plan includes ensuring that each school becomes a high-performing professional learning community. The strategic planning process involved engagement with the community and various stakeholder groups through action and planning teams and was officially adopted by the Newton County Board of Education."

Dr. Michael Barr, NCSS chief operations officer, said that in November 2021, "district and school leaders began working together to create a plan to support PLC development. These leaders formed a guiding coalition to lead this change effort." John Kotter, a leading change expert, identifies a guiding coalition as critical to successful change initiatives. By working together to generate new ideas, build support, and implement change, guiding coalitions can help organizations navigate complex change processes and achieve successful outcomes. In addition to the district guiding coalition, each school has formed a guiding coalition to help ensure systemic success.

Barr explained, "The district guiding coalition has established sixteen subcommittees that are working to eliminate barriers to success. A few of the subcommittee's focus areas include implementation planning, identifying essential learning standards, developing an assessment plan, effectively using data, monitoring, and celebrations. The district guiding coalition is also working to develop a district PLC handbook that



will be a valuable resource for teachers and others involved in this effort."

"We are currently working to build staff capacity in preparation for our first year of full implementation," said Thomas. "This is the building phase. This year coalition members have spent time developing a common language and collective commitments. They've worked to provide teacher and leader training and establish a culture that will support the work of PLCs."

Barr emphasized the importance of PLCs. "In PLCs, the focus is on improving adult professional practices to enhance student learning outcomes. By aligning the efforts of collaborative teams to the right work, we can ensure that students master essential standards and receive extra help as needed. PLCs create opportunities for teachers to collaborate and learn from one another,

which supports ongoing professional growth and development. Ultimately, by promoting high levels of learning for all students and facilitating teacher collaboration, PLCs play a crucial role in improving the quality of education."

The district has partnered with Solution Tree, a professional development company and publisher of educational material for K-12 educators, to support this project. The company provides a comprehensive approach to implementing PLCs, including training, coaching, and ongoing support.



FEATURE STORY

A professional headshot of Superintendent Samantha Fuhrey. She has shoulder-length, wavy brown hair with blonde highlights and is wearing a grey blazer over a patterned top. She is smiling slightly and looking directly at the camera. A blue diagonal graphic element with an orange stripe is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

**Superintendent  
Samantha Fuhrey  
Announces  
Retirement**



# Newton County School System Superintendent Samantha Fuhrey announced her retirement effective June 30, 2023

*“One of the most fulfilling endeavors of my life has been to serve as the Superintendent of the Newton County School System for the last 10 years,” said Fuhrey. “I am grateful to have had the opportunity to serve our incredible students, families, and community.”*



She continued, “Additionally, I owe a debt of gratitude to the NCSS team and board. Together, we have made a difference in the lives of the children we serve. It is my hope that in any future endeavors I may undertake, I will continue to positively impact public education as I so strongly believe in the immense benefit to the citizenry of our county, state, and nation.”

Mrs. Fuhrey is the first woman to hold the position since the inception of the school system over 150 years ago. Throughout her ten years at the helm, Superintendent Fuhrey has earned numerous awards and accolades. In 2017, 2018, and 2019, Mrs. Fuhrey was named one of four finalists for Superintendent of the Year for the state of Georgia. In 2020, she was named Georgia’s Superintendent of the Year and one of four national finalists for National Superintendent of the Year.

In 2023, Superintendent Fuhrey received the Outstanding Citizen Award presented by State Representative Sharon Henderson. She was also recognized by Georgia College and State University as the 2021 Alumnus of the Year for the College of Education and was also recognized by Congressman Hank Johnson with the Fourth Congressional District of Georgia Trailblazer Award. Mrs. Fuhrey was the recipient of the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders 2021 Vision Award. Superintendent Fuhrey was also recognized by the University of Georgia’s Mary Frances Early College of Education when she was awarded the Johnnye V. Cox Award in June, 2020. Marywood University, where Mrs. Fuhrey earned her undergraduate degree, recognized her with the Distinguished Alumni Award in June 2019. Additionally, Mrs. Fuhrey’s exceptional leadership abilities were recognized by the Georgia School Superintendents Association when she

was awarded the President’s Award in 2016.

Overall, Mrs. Fuhrey served the Newton County School System for well over twenty years. She previously served as the Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, the Executive Director for Secondary Education, the Director of Secondary Education, and the Director of Professional Learning. Mrs. Fuhrey also served as the principal of Indian Creek Middle School in Newton County after having been promoted from the assistant principal position. Prior to her employment with the Newton County School System, Mrs. Fuhrey worked with the DeKalb County School System as an assistant principal and English teacher.

During her tenure as superintendent she was an active supporter of the broader education community and her local community. She served on numerous education and community boards, including the Board of Directors for the Georgia School Superintendents Association; Georgia Piedmont Technical College; the Newton County Chamber of Commerce; the Gwinnett, Newton, Rockdale Board of Health; the Arts Association in Newton County; Newton County Tomorrow; NAACP; the Newton County Library System, and Griffin RESA. Mrs. Fuhrey served as a member of the Superintendent’s Advisory Council for the Executive Director of the Georgia School Boards Association, the Georgia School Boards Association Rural Community Task Force, the Georgia Education Coalition, and she was also a chartering member of Ford Next Generation Learning Communities’ Superintendent’s Council. She also served on the State School Superintendent’s Innovative Assessment Pilot Task Force.



## » Bria Janelle Foundation Named 2023 NCSS Partner of the Year

The Bria Janelle Foundation was named the 2023 Newton County School System Partner of the Year. The foundation is a partner in education with Newton High School. School principal, Dr. Shannon Buff, nominated the foundation for the annual award. Bria Janelle serves as the emcee for the Chicago Bulls but still volunteers countless hours with her foundation at Newton High School, where she serves as the first female PA announcer for the school basketball team.

Janelle created a foundation whose mission is to build a stronger community through youth empowerment and community development. That mission was exemplified in her work throughout the school year with Newton High School, its students and staff.

Janelle hosted a “We are One Community Weekend” during which students got the opportunity to shine and participate in experiences that, otherwise, would not have been possible. Through her connections to



**What I do is bigger than me and I understand my purpose and my calling, and I wanted to bring that to Newton High School.** ”

professional basketball, she brought former NBA star, Dwight Howard, and current WNBA star, Monique Billings, to the school to meet with students. Additionally, she was able to connect with radio station Hot 107.9 to have a lunchroom takeover to help students promote positive behaviors and community involvement at school.

The Bria Janelle Foundation has also sponsored other events at the school, including Newton High School’s first

annual Sneaker Ball, to help bring awareness to mental health issues in teens. In addition, Janelle’s foundation also sponsored 25 seniors to receive soft skill training, valued at \$1,000 each, to help them prepare for post high school job interviews and jobs.

“The students were extremely excited to participate in the program as it allowed them to receive a certificate and endorsement as a resume builder,” explained Dr. Buff.

She added, “even while serving as the emcee for the Chicago Bulls, Bria has given countless hours to our school. While the job forces her to be in Chicago for much of the work week, Bria always finds time to fly back to town to be at Newton High School for the students and teams—and that level of dedication is far beyond that of a typical partner. We are so appreciative of the Bria Janelle Foundation because this partnership has allowed our students

*continued on next page*



*continued from previous page*

to have experiences beyond what they would receive on a normal school day.”

“I wanted to change the culture and landscape of how people view Newton basketball,” Janelle explained. “I wanted to do more than just be a PA announcer. I wanted to make an impact not only on the school but in the community. For me it was very important to come in and make a difference. Newton High School has never seen a female PA announcer, so I knew that was one step to making history. But then I understood the value of how important this county is. Understanding that this school is one of the largest schools between Augusta and Atlanta—I realized I wanted to leave a mark in this community, and I wanted to make sure that it was done in such a way that kids can say, ‘I’m

a product of Newton High School’ because I understand that some of these kids will come back and live in this community. Some kids will invest in this community. Some kids will be teachers and so much more. And I wanted to do my part. I’m a product of private school and so I had a lot of access to resources and things, and I just realized that the things that I had access to in high school some of these kids didn’t.” Janelle noted her volunteerism has everything to do with her passion and calling.

“What I do is bigger than me and I understand my purpose and my calling, and I wanted to bring that to Newton High School,” she explained. “That is why I started the Bria Janelle Foundation. I wanted to build a stronger community and I knew that it could be done starting with Newton.”

## » Newton High School Principal Named Finalist for GASSP Georgia Principal of the Year



Newton High School principal, Dr. Shannon Buff, was named a finalist for Georgia Principal of the Year by the Georgia Association of Secondary School Principals (GASSP)! The Principal of the Year program recognizes outstanding middle level and high school principals who have succeeded in providing high-quality learning opportunities for students as well as demonstrating exemplary contributions to the profession.

Dr. Buff has served as principal of Newton High School since 2017. She previously served as a teacher and assistant principal at the school before moving to the district office as the Director of Secondary Education. When the opportunity arose to return to Newton High School as principal she didn’t hesitate.

“Newton High is like home to me,” said Dr. Buff. “The students and staff there are family, and I can’t imagine working anywhere else.”

## » NCSS Public Relations Department Wins 55 State and National Awards



The Newton County School System (NCSS) Public Relations Department, comprised of Sherri Partee and Derrick Barnes, won 55 state and national awards for publications during the 2022-2023 school year. These included 25 awards from the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) and 30 awards

from the Georgia School Public Relations Association. The NCSS PR department earned national Awards of Excellence for a wide variety of submissions, including branding and imaging, electronic newsletters, writing, marketing, and videos. Every publication submitted in the national contest earned an award last year.



## » NCSS Teacher of the Year Laura Lambert Named Finalist for Georgia Teacher of the Year

Newton County School System's 2023 Teacher of the Year, Ms. Laura Lambert, a biotechnology instructor at Newton College & Career Academy, was named a finalist for Georgia Teacher of the Year! State School Superintendent Richard Woods surprised Ms. Lambert and her students in their classroom to share the good news!



Superintendent Woods explained the qualities the Georgia Department of Education is looking for in the state's next Teacher of the Year.

"We are looking for teachers who have a passion and love for kids," he noted. "That comes without saying. But we're also looking for someone with high integrity who is very skilled in the subject that they teach as well. We're looking for someone that is willing to be out there representing us as a state...they will be traveling and engaged with a lot of different groups and a lot of different people and eventually they will be stepping on the national stage as well....so definitely someone that stands out and obviously Ms. Lambert has at her time here at the Career Academy."

Ms. Lambert began her career in education as a chemistry and biology teacher at Monroe Area High School before joining the Newton County School System and NCCA team in 2019. She earned her undergraduate degree in neuroscience from Georgia State University and her master's degree in Education from Piedmont University in 2017. Also certified in both Gifted and STEM, Ms. Lambert has since promoted and now serves as Program Director for the NCCA STEM Institute.



## » NCTS Teacher Georgia Finalist for Presidential Awards for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching

Newton County Theme School (NCTS) teacher, Ms. Jessica Tamburro, was one of three state finalists for the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching. This is an award given to one Science and one Math educator a year at the state level, as chosen by the United States Department of Education. Her status was announced during the National Science Teaching Association's National Conference at the Georgia Science Teachers Association awards luncheon.

The Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) are the highest honors bestowed by the United States government specifically for K-12 science, technology, engineering, and mathematics teaching. The Awards were established by Congress in 1983. The President may recognize up to 108 exemplary teachers each year.



## » NCSS Announces 2023 Media Specialist of the Year



Ms. Andrea Dowdy of Oak Hill Elementary School was named the 2023 District Media Specialist of the Year! As such she represented Newton County School System in the Georgia Library Media Specialist of the Year regional competition.

Ms. Dowdy earned her Bachelor of Science in Middle Grades Education from Georgia College and State University and a Master of Science in Early Childhood Education from Georgia Southwestern State University. She later obtained an Education Specialist degree in Teaching and Learning from Piedmont College.

Ms. Dowdy began her career in education with the Jasper County School System at Washington Park Elementary in 1997. She taught fifth grade there for four years before joining the Newton County School System team at Oak Hill Elementary. Ms. Dowdy taught fifth grade at Oak Hill for over 20 years before moving to the media specialist position.



## » NCCS Receives Approximately \$65,000 in Meta Grants Program

The Newton County School System was the recipient of two community action grants from Meta totaling approximately \$65,000. The Newton County School System received \$40,000 for its STEM on the Go project to foster STEM and reading in elementary schools and the Newton College and Career Academy Technology Student Association (TSA) was awarded \$24,299 to purchase Meta Quest Pros to enhance workforce readiness through the addition of virtual reality applications in the classroom.

According to Dr. Tiffany Merriweather, the school district will purchase STEM on the Go kits to provide teachers with ready to teach STEM lessons and materials to implement hands-on lessons. The STEM lessons embed reading-comprehension strategies that integrate the STEM subjects and English language arts through high-quality picture books.

At the high school level, Newton College and Career Academy's Technology Student Association will use the grant funding to purchase 15 Meta Quest Pros for students. These offer an avenue for high school students to experience workforce development techniques and skills without any of the traditional risk associated with those skill developments. Virtual reality technology offers training in safety and professional skills through modern innovations and creativity.



## » Newton County School District's NCCA STEM Institute Honored with Prestigious STEM School of Excellence Award by the International Technology and Engineering Educators Association (ITEEA)

Newton County School System's NCCA STEM Institute was awarded the highly coveted STEM School of Excellence Award by the International Technology and Engineering Educators Association (ITEEA) for the year 2023. This distinguished recognition solidifies NCCA STEM Institute's commitment to delivering exceptional STEM education in the district.

The ITEEA STEM School of Excellence Award is a testament to the unwavering dedication and remarkable achievements of NCCA's STEM Institute in inspiring and empowering the next generation of innovators, scientists, and engineers. NCCA's STEM Institute's relentless pursuit of excellence has proven it as a leader in STEM education in the state of Georgia.

The ITEEA selection committee thoroughly evaluated the STEM Institute against rigorous criteria, including a comprehensive review of curriculum, instructional strategies, community engagement, professional development programs, and overall impact on students' educational experiences. NCCA's STEM Institute emerged as an exemplar, excelling in every aspect evaluated by the esteemed panel of judges.



## » Newton County School System Announces School-Level Teachers of the Year

The Newton County School System and the Newton County Chamber of Commerce announced the 2022-2023 school level teachers of the year.

School	TOTY
East Newton Elementary	Blake Alexander
Fairview Elementary	Lisa Allgood
Flint Hill Elementary	Juli-ette Goldston
Heard-Mixon Elementary	Angie Craver
Live Oak Elementary	Simone Lawrence
Livingston Elementary	Shameka Smith
Mansfield Elementary	Becky Smallwood
Middle Ridge Elementary	Stacy Jaime
Newton County Theme School	Amanda Kirkham
Oak Hill Elementary	Ana Escorza
Porterdale Elementary	Taya Combs
Rocky Plains Elementary	Jill Rodriguez
South Salem Elementary	Brenda Shepherd
West Newton Elementary	Tiffany Pinnock
Clements Middle	Tomeka Daugherty
Cousins Middle	Tawanna Griffin
Indian Creek Middle	Adrian Stone
Liberty Middle	Nicole Foster
Veterans Memorial Middle	Tonique Robinson
Alcovy High	Bobby Maddox
Eastside High	Kayla Stoddard
Newton High	Demetrice Perry-Stokes
Newton College & Career Academy	Laura Lambert





# Eastside High School Academic Team Earn Invite to Compete at Georgia Regional Academic Bowl State Championship

Eastside High School's Academic Team earned an invite to compete in the Georgia Regional Academic Bowl (GRAB) State Championship after their third-place win in the varsity competition at the Griffin RESA Regional Academic Bowl. High school teams from Butts, Fayette, Henry, Lamar, Newton, Pike, Spalding, and Upson counties competed at the regional event for bragging rights—and the chance to compete at the state competition. All varsity and junior varsity teams finishing first, second, or third earned a chance to represent the Griffin RESA region at the GRAB Academic Bowl

Members of the Eastside Academic Team include: Colin McGowan, Simon Reid, Breanna Epps, Daniel Bartello, Aaron Mull, Katie Bryan, Alexander Amerson, Jessica Wilson, Jonathan Crawford, and Trevor Hay.



## » Eastside Student Selected for All State Chorus

Eastside High School senior, Gracie Bates, was selected to perform in the prestigious 2023 All State Chorus.

"Students selected to perform in the All-State Chorus must successfully compete in two rounds of auditions," explained Joel Singleton, choral director for Eastside High School. "During the audition process, students are required to perform a solo, sight read, and sing from memory, their major, minor, and chromatic scales. If students pass the first audition, they must learn a pre-selected list of songs and sing selected passages for the judges in the second audition."

"Gracie is a very talented musician," said Singleton. "She's a great singer and piano player. One of her strengths is she is naturally talented and has continued to grow that talent in her learning, studying, and performing of music."



## » NCCA Students Prevail in 2022 Congressional App Challenge

The first time was the charm for Newton College & Career Academy as not one, but two students placed in the 2022 Congressional App Challenge. In fact, senior Kevin Wadsworth won Congressman Hank Johnson's App Challenge and junior, Joshua Moreland was the first runner-up in Congressman Jody Hice's Challenge. This marked the first year students from the school competed in the Congressional Challenge.

The Congressional App Challenge is an annual competition showcasing the value of computer science and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics) education by encouraging students to learn how to code through the creation of their own apps.



Students competing in the Congressional App Challenge were judged on the following criteria: quality of the idea, including creativity and originality; implementation of the idea, including user experience and design; and the ability to demonstrate their coding and programming skills.

Officially launched by the U.S. House of Representatives in 2015, this nationwide effort allows students to compete against their peers by creating an application (app), or game for mobile phones, tablets, or computer devices. The challenge is designed to promote innovation and engagement in coding and computer science.



## » Dhakiya Knights Named 2023 Georgia Scholar

Newton High School and NCCA STEM Institute senior, Dhakiya Knights was named a 2023 Georgia Scholar by Georgia School Superintendent Richard Woods. Knights is one of only 154 graduating seniors from across the state of Georgia to earn the prestigious recognition.

The Georgia Department of Education identifies and honors high school seniors who have achieved excellence in school and community life through the Georgia Scholar program. Each Georgia Scholar receives a seal for their diploma.

Georgia Scholars carried exemplary course loads during their four years of high school, performed excellently in all courses, successfully participated in interscholastic events at their schools and communities, and assumed leadership roles in extracurricular activities sponsored by their schools. In addition to course requirements, Georgia Scholars must have a minimum combined score of 1360 on the SAT at one sitting or a composite score of 31 at one test sitting on the ACT. The student must also have a non-weighted, cumulative grade point average of at least 3.75 on a 4.0 scale in core courses. Georgia Scholars are required to be registered to vote, must show evidence of self-esteem and concern for others in day-to-day activities, and must have participated in at least three different competitive interscholastic activities such as athletics, music and literary events, fairs, exhibits and more. Finally, Georgia Scholars must have been appointed by a school official or elected to positions of leadership in a minimum of two different organizations sponsored by the school and also show evidence of leadership in a minimum of two different organizations outside of school.

## » NCCA STEM Student Earns Full-Ride Stamps Scholarship

Newton High School and NCCA STEM Institute senior, Dhakiya Knights was awarded the full-ride Stamps Scholarship to attend Mercer University. The Stamps Scholarship program will pay both full tuition and fees plus room and board, and also provide Dhakiya with a free Apple iPad. In addition, the Stamps Scholar benefit includes up to a \$16,000 enrichment stipend over four years to support study abroad, undergraduate research, unpaid internships, and conference fees and travel.

Mercer University is a selected partner institution of the prestigious Stamps Scholars Program, funded by the Strive

Foundation. Each year, Mercer selects five members from the first-year class as the University's incoming Stamps Scholars. These students are among the highest achieving applicants in the University's entering class. Dhakiya was one of those five students.

The Stamps Scholars Program emphasizes the students' initiative, from engaging in philanthropic efforts worldwide to conducting research and demonstrating a passion for improving local communities. Mercer's Stamps Scholars embody both academic achievement and effective leadership.



## » NCSS Students Win at Elementary State Science and Engineering Fair

Newton County School System elementary school students brought home several top awards from the 2023 K-5 State Science and Engineering Fair held at Georgia College & State University in Milledgeville, Georgia.

NCSS award winners at the K-5 State Science Fair included the following:

NAME	SCHOOL	CATEGORY	PROJECT TITLE	AWARD
<b>Audrey McGovern</b>	Newton County Theme School	Physical Science	Acidity of Fruit Juice: Fresh vs. Bottled	1st Place
<b>Anthony Watson</b>	Rocky Plains Elementary	Earth and Space Science	Is the World Really Round?	1st Place (also received special recognition for Excellence in Earth and Space Science)
<b>Emma Beam</b>	East Newton Elementary	Life Science	Sanitizer Wars: What brand of hand sanitizers are most effective?	2nd Place
<b>Rufus Bryant</b>	Oak Hill Elementary	Life Science	The Growth Challenge	2nd Place
<b>Journey Johnson</b>	Oak Hill Elementary	Physical Science	Just Bead It	3rd Place

In addition to the individual awards, Rufus Bryant of Oak Hill Elementary and Cooper Maxey of Live Oak Elementary teamed up to win the first place award at the Paper Table Challenge.“





## » Newton High School & NCCA STEM Institute Senior Jenny Rodriguez Honored with Hispanic Heritage Foundation's Public Service and Social Justice Youth Award

Newton High School and Newton College & Career Academy (NCCA) senior Jenny Rodriguez was selected as one of only ten students nationwide to represent Georgia and receive the prestigious Hispanic Heritage Foundation's Public Service and Social Justice Youth Award. Jenny's exceptional achievements, dedication to public service, and commitment to social justice distinguished her as a remarkable individual among a pool of 300 candidates from across the United States.

The Hispanic Heritage Foundation's Public Service and Social Justice Youth Award recognizes outstanding young leaders who have made significant contributions to their communities and are dedicated to creating positive change in society. With her unwavering passion and commitment, Rodriguez has demonstrated these qualities throughout her academic journey.



## » International Science Fair

NCCASTEM Institute senior, Briana Jones, earned the highest honor possible for high school students at the regional science fair—the Regeneron ISEF Award. As such, Briana earned the opportunity to compete and represent Newton County School System and our region at the Regeneron International Science & Engineering Fair (ISEF)!

According to Dr. Vicki Meeler, NCSS Secondary Science Curriculum & Instructional Specialist, while tens of millions of students participate in science fairs around the globe, only about 1,800 earn the right to compete for nearly \$5 million in awards at the ISEF. Briana was one of only three at the regional competition to win the all-expenses paid trip to the ISEF.



## » Liberty Middle School FCCLA Earns Awards at National FCCLA

The Liberty Middle School FCCLA Knights brought home numerous awards and medals from the FCCLA National Leadership Conference in San Diego, California. The team joined more than 7,000 Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) student members, advisers, and guests at the San Diego Convention Center to participate in the annual National Leadership Conference (NLC).

In Competitive Events, Liberty Middle School FCCLA Knights placed in the Top 3 in two categories, Top 10 in one Category and Top 20 in two Categories!

Individual results for team members include the following:

- **Nina Ware & Clarkston Lowe**—Nina and Clarkston placed fifth in the nation for their Chapter in Review display and earned silver medals.
- **Alexcia Delamar**—Alexcia placed second in the nation in her category, “Digital Stories for Change” and brought home a gold medal and a second-place plaque.
- **Kanya Kossonou**—Kanya placed in the top 20 in the nation



and 14th place overall in her category, “Entrepreneurship.” She brought home a silver medal for her efforts.

- **Tamaya Duncombe & Kylah Thomas**—Tamaya and Kylah earned second place honors at National FCCLA in her category, “Food Innovations.” They each won gold medals and second place plaques.
- **Emily Armendariz & Lauren Parsons**—Emily and Lauren placed in the top twenty in the nation in the “Repurpose & Redesign” category, earning them each a silver medal.

## » Eastside Student Wins State Young Georgia Authors Competition



Eastside High School junior, Jayda Payne won first place honors in the 11th-grade competition of the Young Georgia Authors Contest. Jayda earned the state award for her submission, “I Lie.” She previously won her school, the district, and regional competitions.

Students participating in the Young Georgia Authors Contest could submit entries in the form of short stories, poetry, essay, research reports, or other original student writing. Submissions were judged on four domains as reflected in the Georgia Standards of Excellence—ideas, organization, cohesiveness, and language.

The purpose of the Young Georgia Authors writing competition is to encourage students to develop enthusiasm for and expertise in their writing, to provide a context to celebrate their writing successes, and to recognize student achievement in arts and academics.



# NCCA Robotics Team Wins State Championship and Excellence Award

Newton College & Career Academy's Team 8682N won the 2023 VRC High School State Championship and also walked away with the State Championship Excellence Award. The Excellence Award is the highest award presented in a VEX Robotics Competition. That award is reserved for a team that exemplifies overall excellence in building a high-quality robotics program and is a strong contender in numerous award categories. Judges consider the team's design notebook, team interviews, qualification rankings, and skills rankings as they choose the Excellence Award winner. As a result of their tremendous accomplishments, the team qualified to compete in the World Championships!



## » NCSS Students Win Big at Georgia Science and Engineering Fair

Newton County School System middle and high school students brought home multiple awards from the Georgia Science and Engineering Fair held at the University of Georgia, Athens.

It's important to note that each of these students was a champion at both the district and regional science fairs. As a result of the rigorous science fair competitions and procedures, each of their projects was thoroughly vetted by multiple judges.

Student awards winners at the state fair included:

NAME	SCHOOL	GRADE	TITLE	AWARD
<b>Oliver Reid</b>	Newton County Theme School	7	Determining the Effectiveness of Traffic Calming Signs	3rd Honors
<b>Sabrina Stokes</b>	Newton County Theme School	6	Which Brand of Nail Polish Dries Fastest?	4th Honors
<b>Jamaya Davis</b>	Indian Creek Middle School	8	Investigating Cheer Sounds	State Competitor Recognition
<b>Najja McGee</b>	Newton College & Career Academy	12	Comets Grazing the Sun	State Competitor Recognition; UGA Physics & Astronomy Department Award
<b>Bethany McGowan</b>	Newton College & Career Academy	12	Micro-Fuser: Compact Nuclear Energy Generator	State Competitor Recognition; Senior Division Best in Category for Physics/Astronomy
<b>Briana Jones</b>	Newton College & Career Academy	12	Algae Science: Photosynthesis Rates	4th Honors: ISEF Competitor
<b>Chiara Chie &amp; Dhakiya Knights</b>	Newton College & Career Academy	12	Bias and the Body: Blinking and Political Science	2nd Honors
<b>Christopher Jones, Jocelyn Kilgore, &amp; Kendyl Maddox</b>	Newton College & Career Academy	12	You're Not the Bird You Think You Are	2nd Honors
<b>Kayla Archibald &amp; Milo Baker</b>	Newton College & Career Academy	12	Ultrasonic Transformation: Heat Shock and Bacterial Transformations	3rd Honors
<b>Rhin Eubanks, Elisabeth Kelly, &amp; Grace Knowles</b>	Newton College & Career Academy	12	Microscopic Gardeners: Brassica Hydroponics	State Competitor Recognition

## » NCSS Student Selected to Serve on Georgia School Superintendent's Student Advisory Council

Newton County School System junior Janiyah Wallace was one of only 67 Georgia students selected to serve on State School Superintendent Richard Woods' 2022-2023 Student Advisory Council. Janiyah attends Eastside High School and the Newton College and Career Academy (NCCA).

Members of the Student Advisory Council discuss education-related issues, serve as the Superintendent's ambassadors to their respective schools, and participate in service projects to benefit schools and students.



## NEWTON COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

[www.newtoncountyschools.org](http://www.newtoncountyschools.org)

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