



2025-2026

Houston County
Education Assistance Fund

Established by
Dr. & Mrs. Shah





"The honors programs and Advanced Placement in the Houston County School District offer motivated students unique opportunities to further their education. These programs have been extremely successful over the years and have produced a countless number of outstanding students. From the sciences to the humanities, dedicated teachers have been paramount in the success of these advanced classes. To further promote and facilitate the opportunities that advanced classes offer students; we wish to provide additional funds...to enhance classroom opportunities and support dedicated educators..."

Dr. & Mrs. Shah

2025-2026

DR. SHAH GRANT RECEPTION

Welcome

Dr. Richard Rogers, *Superintendent of Houston County School District*

Dr. Olethia Calhoun, *Director of Gifted Education, HCSD*

Introduction of the Guest of Honor

Dr. Elgin Mayfield, *Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, HCSD*

Guest of Honor

Dr. Manoj Shah

Presentation of Principals & Shah Grant Recipients

Mrs. Cathi Selph, *District Lead Gifted Teacher, HCSD*

High School Remarks of Appreciation

Dr. Jay Jones, *Houston County High School Principal*

Middle School Remarks of Appreciation

Mrs. Rebecca Oakley, *Bonaire Middle School Principal*

Elementary School Remarks of Appreciation

Dr. Andy Payne, *David Perdue Elementary School Principal*

Primary School Remarks of Appreciation

Dr. Ashley Watkins, *Bonaire Primary School Principal*

'Thank you' Presentation & Closing Remarks

Dr. Richard Rogers and Dr. Olethia Calhoun

*****Light refreshments will be served following the program*****

FY26 Shah Grant Recipients

High Schools & Career Academy

School	Recipients			Administrator(s)
HCHS	Mrs. Randi Collier	Mrs. Cassie Ingram	Dr. Tammy Strickland	Dr. Jay Jones & Mrs. Trinidad Rawlins
NHS	Ms. Thalassia Harris	Mr. Patrick Leahy	Dr. Washella Simmons	Dr. Dusty Dykes & Mrs. Jenny Gutshall
PHS	Mrs. Tiffany Frank	Mrs. Brianna Walker	Ms. Melissa Westphal	Dr. Art Billings & Mrs. Nicole Stone
VHS	Mr. Clint Abbott	Mrs. Sarah Harlow	Dr. Megan Jones	Dr. Amy Barbour & Mrs. Ashley Brock
WRHS	Mr. Andy Bailey	Mrs. Kayla Martinez	Ms. Shakeira Parsons	Dr. Brett Wallace & Mrs. Shelley Holmes
HCCA	Mr. James Brock			Dr. Sherry Johnson & Dr. Tonya Wallace

Middle Schools

School	Recipients		Administrator(s)
BMS	Mrs. Jeanne Kirk	Mr. Griffen Nauss	Mrs. Rebecca Oakley & Mrs. Heather Schmanski
FMMS	Mr. John Harrell	Mrs. Meara Lesho	Mrs. Elizabeth Foster & Mr. Matt Topping
HMS	Ms. Lacey King	Ms. Daphne Todd	Dr. Marlon Robinson & Mrs. Tamara Wildes
MCMS	Mrs. Suzanne Ganas	Mrs. Natalie Rainwater	Dr. Jody Dean & Mrs. Kelly Sharp
NMS	Ms. Neandra Thomas	Ms. Trina Wright	Dr. Alma Mundy & Mrs. Trathenia Evans
PMS	Mrs. Whitney Dady	Mrs. Susan Payne	Dr. Heath Burch & Dr. Christie Wall
TMS	Ms. Amanda Coggins	Mrs. Rachel Smith	Dr. Scott Wynn & Dr. Jami Moore
WRMS	Mrs. Candace Henderson	Mrs. Kayla LeVieux	Mr. Steven Ruzic & Mrs. Brandy Farrell

Elementary & Primary Schools

School	Recipients	Administrator(s)	School	Recipients	Administrator(s)
BES	Ms. Maggie Angel	Dr. Tonya Pinckley & Ms. Emilee Coody	MAES	Mrs. Brittany Campbell	Mrs. Kasey Hopkins & Mrs. Robin Rooks
BPS	Ms. Lara Stanley	Dr. Ashley Watkins & Dr. Christie Bergh	MAPS	Dr. Tracy Gordon	Ms. Alicia Conner & Mrs. Brandi McIntyre
CBWP	Ms. Rakiya Hunter	Mrs. Monique Dawsey & Mrs. Phyllis Toliver	MES	Ms. Sandra Williams	Dr. Dana Brock & Dr. Engracia Bautista
CES	Mrs. JaKisha Jackson	Mrs. Marcie Shaw & Ms. Bridget Snooks	MSES	Dr. Felicia Hunlen	Dr. Kasandra King & Mrs. Yolanda Felder
DPES	Mrs. Lauren Stephens	Dr. Andy Payne & Mrs. Tiana Johnson	NES	Ms. Amy Brown	Dr. Kristina Cummings
DPPS	Mrs. Tosha Wright	Mrs. Kathy Gibbs & Mrs. Keturia Williams	PWES	Ms. Heather White	Mrs. Cristina Betancourt
ESES	Ms. Brittney Johns	Dr. Jeff Washington & Mrs. Stephanie King	PSES	Mrs. Kandice Jackson	Mrs. Kelly Munn & Mrs. Amanda Bennett
HES	Mrs. Nicole Hallman	Dr. Ovedia Glover & Mrs. Dara Seamans	QRES	Mrs. Caroline Terry	Mrs. Gloria Smith & Mrs. Jessica Teemer
KCES	Mrs. Mary Kratz	Mrs. Shelley Shillcutt & Mrs. Kalesia McKnight	RES	Mrs. Jana Miller	Dr. Amanda Miliner & Mrs. Jessica Augsburg
LJES	Mrs. Sheree Hyde	Dr. Tami Godman & Dr. Sandra Crow	SHES	Mrs. Danielle Hall	Mr. William Wilson & Mrs. Heather Henslee
LJPS	Mrs. Robin Burks	Dr. Sonya Kiefer & Mrs. Morgan Aeschlimann	TES	Ms. Holly Owen	Mrs. Kristen Brooks & Mrs. Charlotte Dunlap
LRES	Ms. April Rainey	Mrs. Kyon Cobb & Dr. Erin Gramley	WES	Ms. Jimya Oglesby	Mrs. Eddie Williams & Dr. Grace Watson
LRPS	Mr. Allan Lee	Dr. Kelly Rush & Mrs. Kayla Shumway			Mrs. Angienik Allen & Dr. Artia Shorter



Houston County High School

Dr. Jay Jones, Principal
Mrs. Trinity Rawlins, API



Mrs. Randi Collier

Mrs. Collier, AP Environmental Science teacher at HCHS, is a passionate and innovative educator who excels at building relationships and engaging students in meaningful learning. As a member of the HCHS Leadership Team and the school's Gifted Lead Teacher, she provides valuable guidance beyond her classroom and supports schoolwide initiatives. Her students have shown consistent growth, with AP Environmental Science scores increasing every year for the past five years, a reflection of her high expectations and effective instruction. Known for connecting learning to the real world, she even takes students to swim with manatees to deepen their understanding of environmental science in unforgettable ways. Students love her enthusiasm, energy, and ability to make challenging content exciting and accessible. Mrs. Collier's passion for teaching and genuine care for her students make her a favorite at HCHS and someone who leaves a lasting impact on everyone she teaches.



Mrs. Cassie Ingram

Mrs. Ingram, an AP Precalculus teacher at HCHS, is a highly dedicated educator who consistently demonstrates excellence in both instruction and leadership. Her students achieved an outstanding 99% pass rate on the AP Precalculus exam. She is known for building strong, supportive relationships with her students while simultaneously holding them to high standards.

Mrs. Ingram's classroom is characterized by an engaging learning environment where students feel both challenged and supported to reach their fullest potential. Beyond the classroom, she serves as a valued member of the HCHS Leadership Team and contributes her expertise to the PBIS team. With a strong command of data analysis and implementation, she plays a key role in driving data-informed decisions that positively impact instruction and schoolwide initiatives. Her dedication, knowledge, and leadership continue to make a significant difference for students, colleagues, and the school community as a whole.



Dr. Tammy Strickland

Dr. Strickland, an AP Precalculus teacher at HCHS, is a dynamic and inspiring educator who brings positivity and encouragement to every aspect of her work. Her students achieved an exceptional 99% pass rate on the AP Precalculus exam, with an impressive 92% earning a score of 4 or 5, reflecting both her expertise and her ability to motivate students toward excellence. Known for the joy she brings into the classroom, Dr. Strickland creates an atmosphere where students feel supported, challenged, and eager to learn. Her enthusiasm and uplifting spirit extend beyond instruction, making her a source of encouragement for both students and colleagues alike. Through her dedication and passion for teaching, Dr. Strickland continues to have a lasting and meaningful impact on the HCHS community.



Northside High School

Dr. Dusty Dykes, Principal
Mrs. Jenny Gutshall, API



Ms. Thalassia Harris

At Northside High School, Ms. Harris draws on 17 years of experience to guide Honors 9th Grade Literature students through a strong foundation for the rest of their high school career. She views teaching not as a single favorite aspect, but as a dynamic experience where every day offers something new. Building meaningful connections with her students is especially important to her, as she wants them to feel secure, valued, and encouraged to succeed. Her greatest reward comes when she notices her students applying their knowledge from literature to everyday life, a sign of the lasting influence she has as an educator.



Mr. Patrick Leahy

Patrick Leahy has 13 years of teaching experience and currently inspires students at Northside High School, teaching both Honors Civics and AP World History. One of the most rewarding parts of his work is seeing students make new connections in their learning. He especially enjoys those lightbulb moments when understanding suddenly clicks, reminding him of the deep value and impact teaching has on shaping students' perspectives of the world.



Dr. Washella Simmons

Dr. Simmons has been dedicated to shaping student success through both academic growth and confidence-building for 26.5 years. Her favorite part of teaching is seeing students truly learn, especially when their hard work shows steady improvement over time. For Dr. Simmons, encouraging confidence is just as important as academics, and she takes pride in watching her students believe in themselves as they succeed. This year, she is especially excited to take on a new challenge by teaching AP African American Studies, offering students a powerful opportunity to connect with history in meaningful ways.



Perry High School

Dr. Art Billings, Principal

Mrs. Nicole Stone, API



Mrs. Tiffany Frank

Mrs. Frank is an exceptional educator who serves Perry High School as the AP Statistics and Honors Geometry teacher, as well as the Math Department Chair. She is also a valued member of the school's Guiding Coalition team and sponsor of the Prayer Club. Under her leadership, AP Statistics students achieved remarkable success this year, with a 98.2% pass rate—an increase of 3.3%—and 11 students earning a five. Mrs. Frank's students outperformed the global average by 37.9% and the state of Georgia by 40.4%. Known for her reflective practice and commitment to innovation, Mrs. Frank continually seeks new strategies to help her students excel. She brings caring, consistency, and collaboration to all she does, and her calm, steady leadership makes her an invaluable part of the Perry High School family.



Mrs. Brianna Walker

Mrs. Brianna Walker is a shining example of excellence at Perry High School. She teaches AP Art and Design, along with six additional art-related courses, and her impact extends far beyond the classroom. As a dedicated member of the school leadership team, sponsor of the National Art Honor Society, co-sponsor of Student Council, a member of the PHS Safety Committee, and lead for the High School Art PLT, Mrs. Walker gives tirelessly of her time and talents. Under her leadership, AP Art and Design students have achieved a remarkable 100% pass rate for four consecutive years, with one student even earning a perfect portfolio score. This year, her students outperformed the state average by 13.9% and the global average by 17.1%. Beyond the data, Mrs. Walker is always willing to lend a hand—whether supporting United Way, helping with homecoming decorations, or welcoming new teachers into our community. Her kindness, creativity, and dedication have brought a true sense of joy and accomplishment to the art program at Perry High School.



Ms. Melissa Westphal

Melissa Westphal is a true Perry Panther, who not only graduated from Perry High but has now spent the past seven years giving back to her alma mater as a dedicated teacher and coach. She teaches Honors Geometry and Honors Advanced Algebra with skill and passion, making even the most challenging concepts meaningful and understandable for her students. Known for her calm demeanor, positive attitude, and exceptional work ethic, she creates a classroom environment where students feel supported and inspired. As one of our cheerleading coaches, she brings the same spirit and enthusiasm to the sidelines that she does to her teaching. Always approachable, always smiling, and always willing to lend a hand, she is loved by her students and admired by her colleagues. Perry High is truly fortunate to have her on our team.



Veterans High School

Dr. Amy Barbour, Principal
Mrs. Ashley Brock, API



Mr. Clint Abbott

Mr. Abbott has his Bachelor of Arts degree from Clayton State University and his Master of Arts in Teaching degree from Georgia College. A teacher with over 17 years of experience, he is a true renaissance man; he has taught high school math, science, English, social studies, and interrelated and gifted. Currently, he teaches Dual Enrollment US History and AP World History. This past spring, 93 tenth graders from Veterans High School took the AP World History exam, and Mr. Abbott's students boasted an almost 81% pass rate, which was 10% higher than the state pass rate. Twelve of his students scored a 5, with 39 scoring a 4; the overall average score for his students was 3.47. Current junior Rainey Wade said, "The mutual sense of curiosity he shared with his students made his class all the more engaging." Of Mr. Abbott, she stated that he "was one of the most understanding and sweet teachers I have ever had the privilege of interacting with. He is an incredibly smart person who has clearly worked extremely hard for all the knowledge and successes he has."



Mrs. Sarah Harlow

Mrs. Harlow grew up in Texas and has been teaching for 23 years. A National Board-Certified teacher, she completed her Master of Art Education degree in 2020 and has since completed both her Teacher Support and Coaching and Gifted endorsements. She has been teaching at Veterans High School for 10 years now, and she currently teaches all levels of Art, including AP 2-D, 3-D, and Drawing. She sponsors the National Art Honor Society and Art Club; additionally, she oversees our Fine Arts Diploma Seal process and showcase, with nearly 70 students qualifying this past spring. Current AP Art student Madison Sanders said, "Mrs. Harlow has given me countless opportunities to grow as an artist. In her class, I've been able to blossom through my own creativity because she nurtures each student's true potential rather than trying to mold us into something we're not. She inspires us to discover our inner capabilities and shine in our own unique ways." This inspiration manifests in Mrs. Harlow's AP scores: her students had a 100% pass rate in all areas.



Dr. Megan Jones

Dr. Jones earned her Bachelor of Science in Language and Literacy Education from the University of Georgia, her Masters in Secondary Education and Educational Specialist in Curriculum from Georgia College & State University, and her Doctorate of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from Columbus State University. She currently teaches Dual Enrollment English and AP English Literature and serves as the school's gifted lead teacher. Both her AP scores and enrollment have grown tremendously in the five years she has taught this course at VHS; this year, of the 99 students who tested, her students held almost a 94% pass rate, which is 16% higher than the state pass rate. Graduate Jackson Sawyer said, "It's hard to put into words how much her class impacted the way I look at the world now, but the true sense of community that I felt every single day in her class will forever be completely unmatched. She connects with students on a level that feels both so professional and personal at the same time. If it weren't for her class, I honestly don't know where I would be today."



Warner Robins High School

Dr. Brett Wallace, Principal

Mrs. Shelley Holmes, API



Mr. Andy Bailey

Mr. Bailey is a 1989 graduate of Warner Robins High School and is in his twenty-ninth year of teaching, twenty-seven of them being at WRHS. He received his undergraduate degree in secondary education and history from Georgia College and State University and his master's degree in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment from Walden University. He has taught honors Government, Economics, and US History as well as AP US History, World History, and Humanities. Coach Bailey has been the head coach of the WRHS men's soccer team since 2001. He is currently teaching honors World History and AP Human Geography.



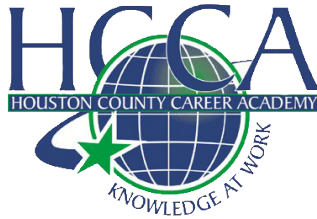
Mrs. Kayla Martinez

Mrs. Martinez is in her sixth year at Warner Robins High School. She currently serves as the Foreign Language Department Chair and teaches Spanish 2, 3, 4, and AP Spanish. Mrs. Martinez is passionate about helping her students strengthen their language skills while deepening their understanding of Spanish-speaking cultures. She strives to challenge her students to reach their fullest potential, whether in mastering grammar and vocabulary or in expressing themselves confidently in the target language. In her AP class, she guides students toward success on the exam and equips them with the skills they need to excel in college and beyond. Mrs. Martinez also works to foster an appreciation for global perspectives, encouraging her students to see language learning as a bridge to new opportunities and deeper cultural connections. She is dedicated to creating an engaging and supportive classroom where creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking thrive.



Ms. Shakeira Parsons

Shakeira Parsons is a high school graduate of East Laurens High School. She received her undergraduate degree in Radiologic Sciences with a concentration in Nuclear Medicine Technology from the Medical College of Georgia. She practiced nuclear medicine for eight years before venturing into education. She earned her MAT from Georgia College and State University and then went on to earn her specialist degree and gifted endorsement from Augusta University. She is currently in her eighth year of teaching and fourth year with Warner Robins High School. Additionally, Shakeira coaches eighth-grade girls' basketball at Warner Robins Middle School and is an assistant coach for varsity and junior varsity girls' basketball for Warner Robins High School. She teaches Honors Biology, Biology, and Human Anatomy and Physiology. In 2023-2024, 100% of her honors Biology students achieved proficient or distinguished level learners on the Georgia Milestone. Last year, 97% of her honors students achieved proficient or distinguished level learners on the Georgia Milestone. She definitely sets the tone for learning in a safe environment in her classroom daily. She hopes that every one of her students and ball players feels loved and knows that they can accomplish anything that they set their minds to do!



Houston College & Career Academy

Dr. Sherry Johnson, Principal
Dr. Tonya Wallace, API



Mr. James Brock

Mr. Brock currently serves as one of the Advanced Math Instructors of the HASP program housed at the Houston College & Career Academy (HCCA). He has a rare talent for making complex mathematical concepts accessible and engaging for all students. He has developed rigorous and engaging lessons that challenge students to think critically, apply mathematical concepts to real-world problems, and pursue academic excellence.

Mr. Brock works tirelessly to expand access to advanced courses and mentor students in STEM. As a result, enrollment in the advanced math courses through HASP has increased from last year. He sets high expectations for students, and his students find success in participating in the expected high levels of mastery in the courses that he teaches. He has a great understanding of the intellectual and social development of his students and does excellent preparation for his students for their next level of mathematics.



Bonaire Middle School

Mrs. Rebecca Oakley, Principal
Mrs. Heather Schmanski, API



Mrs. Jeanne Kirk

Jeanne Kirk is a dedicated and inspiring middle school science teacher who exemplifies everything the Shah Grant was designed to support. Her teaching philosophy is rooted in the belief that every gifted child deserves to be challenged, engaged, and inspired to reach beyond what they believe possible. Mrs. Kirk is particularly passionate about hands-on, inquiry-based learning. She knows that gifted students thrive when their curiosity is ignited and their problem-solving skills are put to the test. Whether through laboratory explorations, real-world applications, or collaborative projects, she creates opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning. Her intentional focus on igniting intellectual curiosity cultivates an environment where gifted students not only ask questions but also seek out the answers with perseverance and creativity.

What makes Mrs. Kirk exceptional, however, is not just her rigorous approach to academics but her holistic care for her students as individuals. She is deeply invested in their growth not only as scholars, but as people. In her classroom, students learn resilience, teamwork, and empathy just as much as they learn scientific principles.

Mrs. Kirk strongly believes that school should be a place students look forward to attending each day. She has worked tirelessly to create a classroom that feels like a sanctuary for learning—a safe, supportive, and inclusive space where gifted students are encouraged to take risks, explore big ideas, and express themselves fully. Under her guidance, students feel valued, capable, and excited about their potential.



Mr. Griffen Nauss

Griffen Nauss is an outstanding 8th-grade Georgia Studies teacher who is dedicated to academic rigor, student engagement, and meaningful connections. His approach to teaching gifted learners demonstrates not only a deep understanding of their unique needs but also a heartfelt commitment to preparing them to succeed in both school and life. Mr. Nauss consistently raises the level of rigor in his classroom to ensure that students are not just memorizing facts but truly thinking critically and analytically. He views his role as essential in shaping the next generation of informed citizens, guiding students to analyze history and government in ways that connect to their world and future responsibilities. By challenging students to think more deeply, he instills skills and habits of mind that will serve them well beyond the classroom. A hallmark of Mr. Nauss's teaching is the way he puts learning directly into the hands of his students. He provides creative and immersive experiences, including virtual field trips, candy maps, and collaborative group projects, that make content come alive while encouraging inquiry, problem-solving, and teamwork. These interactive opportunities allow his students to take ownership of their learning and to engage with Georgia Studies in fresh, dynamic ways.

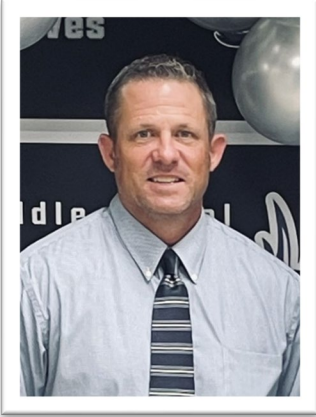
His commitment to rigorous instruction, student-centered learning, and genuine relationship-building makes him a powerful advocate for gifted education and an invaluable influence on his students' futures.



Feagin Mill Middle School

Mrs. Elizabeth Foster, Principal

Mr. Matthew Topping, API



Mr. John Harrell

As a 6th-grade Gifted Social Studies teacher, Mr. John Harrell exemplifies the qualities of an exceptional educator: engaging, patient, and unwavering in his commitment to high expectations and academic rigor.

Mr. Harrell teaches with both precision and passion. He consistently designs lessons that not only align with the standards but also challenge students to think critically, make meaningful connections, and apply their knowledge beyond the classroom. Mr. Harrell enriches the curriculum in ways that deepen student understanding and spark curiosity. His gifted learners benefit from his ability to create a classroom culture where engagement, high expectations, and academic excellence are the norm. At the same time, his patience and supportive demeanor foster an environment where students feel safe to take risks and grow as independent thinkers.



Mrs. Meara Lesho

As the teacher of our 8th-grade gifted students in the high school Physical Science course, Mrs. Meara Lesho demonstrates a rare combination of deep content expertise, instructional creativity, and an unwavering commitment to student success.

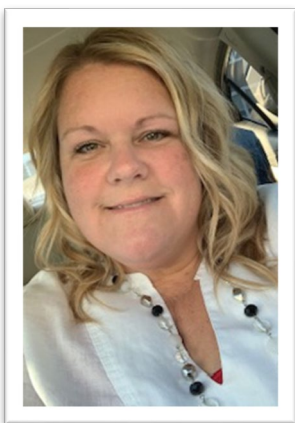
Teaching a high school class to middle school students is no small task, yet Mrs. Lesho makes the rigorous concepts of Physical Science accessible without ever lowering expectations. She brings the standards to life through hands-on investigations, demonstrations, and discussions that encourage students to question, analyze, and apply what they learn.

Beyond her teaching, Mrs. Lesho serves as the Student Council sponsor, where her influence extends far beyond academics. In this role, she develops student leaders, focusing on collaboration, responsibility, and service. Under her guidance, Student Council members take ownership of school events, engage in community service, and learn the value of leadership rooted in integrity and teamwork.



Huntington Middle School

Dr. Marlon Robinson, Principal
Mrs. Tamara Wildes, API



Ms. Lacey King

In her thirteenth year at Huntington Middle School, Ms. King continues her daily quest to provide students with a high-quality education in a positive classroom environment. As an 8th Grade Algebra I teacher, Ms. King focuses on three essential ingredients – relationships, rigor, and relevance. She understands that establishing and including all three are keys to her students' success.

While building relationships with her students, Ms. King teaches them the importance of their own accountability for their learning and behavior. She meets students at their level and works with them to get them where they need to be academically. She makes a point to differentiate lessons by including high-interest activities and connecting lessons across content areas. Students meet and exceed high expectations with minimal effort because they are excited and engaged. In FY25, Ms. King had the highest Algebra I EOC scores out of the eight middle schools in Houston County, a testament to her hard work and dedication to her students.

Ms. King is also a big supporter of Huntington's school initiatives. She serves as the Gifted Lead teacher and is on the Committed Hawks Leadership Team. Ms. King is a team player and understands it takes true teamwork to be successful.



Ms. Daphne Todd

Ms. Todd is a 7th-grade gifted Science teacher. She is a dedicated educator who values her students' academic success, as well as her effectiveness in meeting the needs of her diverse group of learners each year. Ms. Todd's well-designed lessons and instruction reflect high-learning expectations for students both in and out of the classroom. She listens responsively to her students and treats each one with dignity and respect.

Ms. Todd also actively supports Huntington's school initiatives. She is a coach for the Huntington Middle School cheerleading squad and serves as the 7th-grade Science PLT chairperson. She is a team leader, a member of the Committed Hawks Leadership Team, and an active member of the PBIS team.

Ms. Todd has a lot of pride in her school and shows that pride through her hard work every day.



Mossy Creek Middle School

Dr. Jody Dean, Principal

Mrs. Kelly Sharp, API



Mrs. Suzanne Ganas

Suzanne Ganas is a seventh-grade gifted teacher at Mossy Creek Middle School. She has taught for 23 years, and her love of learning is still contagious. Mrs. Ganas is always finding engaging ways to bring classroom learning to life by allowing her students to blend their interests and passions with academic content to solve meaningful challenges. It is her hope that each of her students leaves her classroom in May with improved confidence and independence while having learned not to shy away from complex problems but to tackle them head-on.



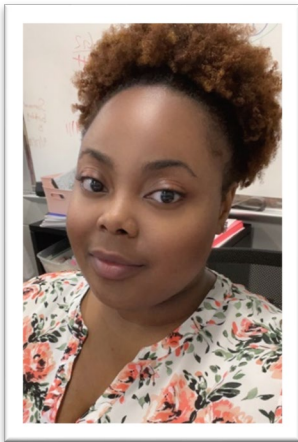
Mrs. Natalie Rainwater

With 25 years of experience teaching language arts in Houston County, Natalie Rainwater has dedicated her career to helping students grow as critical thinkers, communicators, and lifelong learners. Throughout her journey in education, she has consistently sought to bring energy and relevance to her classroom, designing lessons that not only meet academic standards but also connect deeply with students' lives outside of school. Over the past four years, Natalie has focused her expertise in gifted education, where she continues to challenge and inspire advanced learners through creative, thought-provoking instruction. Her approach centers on engagement—using real-world topics, current events, and meaningful texts to bridge the gap between ELA concepts and students' everyday experiences.



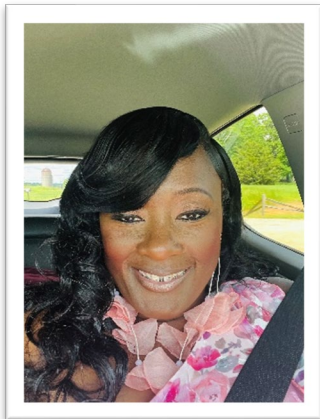
Northside Middle School

Dr. Alma Mundy, Principal
Mrs. Trathenia Evans, API



Ms. Neandra Thomas

Ms. Neandra Thomas is an awesome teacher at Northside Middle School. She has been teaching for 10+ years, either in Math or Science. She currently teaches 8th-grade math and Algebra I. Last year, nearly 90% of her Algebra I and 8th-grade math students passed the GMAS through consistent data-driven instruction, targeted interventions, and strong student engagement strategies. In addition to being an awesome teacher, Ms. Thomas also serves as team leader and Jet Leadership member. She initially became inspired to teach because of her high school Biology teacher, the late Mrs. Grimes. Her class is where Ms. Thomas first captured a genuine spark for learning. That experience changed how she looked at the world and made her truly feel like she could accomplish anything. Throughout Ms. Thomas' adult career, she has used the skills and knowledge acquired since then to better her life. That spark is something Ms. Thomas strives to give her students. No matter where students are in their learning, Ms. Thomas tries her best to provide everything they need to be successful and to strive for their future goals. What Ms. Thomas loves about teaching is spreading hope for a brighter future through education and hard work. It is truly a privilege to have such a dedicated and impactful teacher at Northside Middle School.



Ms. Trina Wright

Ms. Trina Wright is an amazing teacher at Northside Middle School. She has 28 years of experience in education, having taught mostly ELA and some science and social studies. Currently, Ms. Wright serves as the Gifted Lead teacher, Guiding Coalition member, and supervisor for the Drama Club. Ms. Wright believes that each opportunity has afforded her growth in her personal goals and aspirations. Her inspiration to become a teacher began in fourth grade, thanks to an incredible reading teacher who made a lasting impact on her life. That teacher did not just teach students how to read; she helped students discover a love for stories, learning, and themselves. Now that Ms. Wright is an educator, she wants to be the person who helps students realize their potential, especially those who might not yet believe in themselves.

What Ms. Wright loves most about teaching gifted students is their curiosity and capacity for deep thinking. She enjoys creating lessons that challenge them and give them the freedom to think creatively and independently. Ms. Wright integrates opportunities for students to select topics, formats, and paths within projects and units. For students who have already mastered the grade-level content, Ms. Wright compacts the curriculum and replaces it with enrichment or acceleration opportunities. Projects often include open-ended tasks where students can synthesize knowledge through innovative solutions, designs, or performances. Ms. Wright teaches students to set goals, reflect on progress, and advocate for their needs. Northside Middle School is grateful to have Ms. Wright shaping young minds and is among our dedicated teachers.



Perry Middle School

Dr. Art Billings, Principal
Mrs. Nicole Stone, API



Mrs. Whitney Dady

Whitney Dady is a passionate educator who has taught gifted science courses for 17 years and served as the Gifted Lead Teacher at Perry Middle School for over a decade. She currently teaches 8th-grade Gifted Physical Science. Her classroom is a space where inquiry, creativity, and critical thinking thrive. Students regularly engage in hands-on experiments, collaborative problem-solving, and real-world applications of science concepts, making learning both rigorous and exciting. This approach has consistently yielded outstanding results, with over 98% of her 8th-grade gifted students meeting or exceeding expectations in high school-level Physical Science. Additionally, Mrs. Dady is a leader and advocate for gifted education, mentoring other gifted teachers, re-delivering professional learning, and serving on the District Gifted Advisory Committee. Her ability to build lasting relationships with students and colleagues, combined with her tireless commitment to excellence, makes her a standout educator.



Mrs. Susan Payne

A proud graduate of the Houston County School System and with over 30 years in the classroom, Susan Payne brings both heart and expertise to her role as the 7th-grade gifted Life Science teacher at Perry Middle School. Her classroom is a place of discovery, where students are encouraged to explore scientific concepts through active, hands-on learning. Mrs. Payne believes that students learn best by doing, and she designs lessons that spark curiosity, promote collaboration, and deepen understanding through real-world applications. She is also a passionate advocate for equity in gifted and science education. Through her dedication to both academic excellence and inclusive opportunities, Mrs. Payne continues to shape a learning environment where students feel empowered, supported, and inspired to reach their full potential.



Thomson Middle School

Dr. Scott Wynn, Principal
Dr. Jami Moore, API



Ms. Amanda Coggins

After earning her bachelor's degree in early childhood education from Valdosta State University, Ms. Amanda Coggins entered the field eager to make a meaningful impact on the lives of students and the future of education. Over the years, she has taught fourth, fifth, and now sixth grade, gaining valuable experience with a wide range of subjects, classes, and student abilities. Beyond the classroom, she's coached Science Olympiad teams, math teams, and athletic teams, further supporting students' growth and confidence. She has continued to advance professionally by earning a master's degree in Middle School Math and Science, completing a specialist degree in Curriculum and Instruction, and serving in leadership roles at her current school and in the county. She believes that learning should be engaging, hands-on, and fun, creating an environment where all students can thrive.

Working with gifted students has been a true calling, one that she is grateful to have embraced. Throughout much of her career, she has had the privilege of teaching these exceptionally talented learners. Their unique perspectives, eagerness to explore new ideas, and dedication to academic excellence are both inspiring and contagious. She often finds that she learns just as much from them as they do from her, and she cherishes the opportunity to help shape and support the future leaders of our world. Teaching is not just her career, but her passion, and she takes great pride in helping her students reach their full potential.



Mrs. Rachel Smith

Rachel Smith has been teaching for sixteen years. She began her career as a physical education teacher and moved into teaching middle school science six years ago. Before becoming a Gifted science teacher at Thomson Middle School, Mrs. Smith taught sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade science in a private school setting, working with gifted thinkers for over five years.

Mrs. Smith finds working as a Gifted teacher is very satisfying, as her students always have unique ways of problem-solving and presenting information. Watching how her students interact with materials, labs, and their classmates makes each day different, *and* she believes that she learns from them just as much as they learn from her!



Warner Robins Middle School

Mr. Steven Ruzic, Principal

Mrs. Brandy Farrell, API



Mrs. Candace Henderson

Mrs. Candace Henderson teaches 8th-grade gifted science at Warner Robins Middle School. She has a gift for sparking curiosity and encouraging students to explore the world around them through questioning, discovery, and hands-on learning. In her classroom, students are challenged to think critically, investigate scientific phenomena, and make meaningful connections between science and everyday life. Mrs. Henderson not only prepares her students for the rigor of future honors and AP courses, but she also fosters confidence and a genuine love of learning. Beyond the classroom, she serves as a member of the school leadership team and the PBIS team, where she helps build a positive and supportive culture for all students.



Mrs. Kayla LeVieux

Mrs. Kayla LeVieux teaches 8th-grade gifted English Language Arts at Warner Robins Middle School. Her excitement for reading and literature is contagious, and she passes that passion on to her students every day. In her classroom, students are encouraged to dive into texts, think critically about ideas, and develop their own voices as confident writers and communicators. She creates an environment where students feel both supported and challenged, inspiring them to grow academically while also building the skills necessary for future honors and AP coursework. Beyond her classroom, Mrs. LeVieux serves as the ELA department chair and a member of the school leadership team, where she shares her expertise and energy to strengthen instruction and student success schoolwide.



Bonaire Elementary School

Dr. Tonya Pinckley, Principal
Ms. Emilee Coody, API



Ms. Maggie Angel

Ms. Angel exemplifies the very best of our profession — a dynamic leader, tireless advocate for students, and a collaborative team member whose influence extends beyond the walls of her classroom.

In her role as grade-level team leader, Ms. Angel has been instrumental in organizing day-to-day events, from coordinating field trips that enrich the educational experience of students to year-end activities such as fifth-grade day. Her ability to manage logistics while maintaining a focus on instruction reflects a rare balance of organizational talent and educational insight.

Beyond her leadership on grade level, she serves as the facilitator of our ELA Coalition, guiding a team of teachers across grades 3 through 5 to strengthen curriculum alignment and vertical planning. Ms. Angel contributes to our school community in ways that demonstrate her passion and dedication. She serves as a mentor to new educators, offering guidance, feedback, and encouragement. She also co-coaches our academic bowl team and consistently attends school extracurricular activities—further showing her commitment to our students beyond the school day.

Ms. Angel is an exceptional educator, a leader among her peers, and a cornerstone of our school's success. She is very much deserving of this recognition.



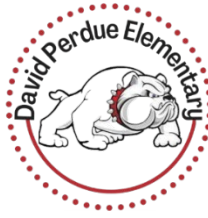
Centerville Elementary School

Mrs. Marcie Shaw, Principal
Ms. Bridget Snooks, API



Mrs. JaKisha Jackson

Mrs. Jackson teaches our 3rd-grade gifted and high-achieving students at CES. Mrs. Jackson challenges her students each day to be critical thinkers. She has a unique ability to bring engagement to challenging concepts and creates an inclusive classroom environment where everyone feels confident and comfortable being a risk-taker. Her enthusiasm and sweet smile give us all a boost each day. She is a team leader and will participate in the 25-26 HCSD Teacher Leader Cohort. Mrs. Jackson strives to build positive relationships with her students and staff. We appreciate how she works tirelessly to help her students reach high achievement while fostering authentic learning and creativity across the curriculum.



David Perdue Elementary School

Dr. Andy Payne, Principal
Mrs. Tiana Johnson, API



Mrs. Lauren Stephens

Lauren Stephens has been a dedicated member of the DPES faculty for eight years. She began her journey in 5th grade, where she taught for two years, and has spent the past six years as one of our 4th-grade GTE (Gifted and Talented Education) teachers. Mrs. Stephens is a joy to watch in action. Her energy, enthusiasm, and passion for teaching are evident in every lesson. She infuses her classroom with creativity, integrates technology and STEM initiatives, and consistently challenges her students to think critically and deeply about academic concepts. In addition to her classroom excellence, Mrs. Stephens serves as a leader on our Lego Club (robotics) team, where she continues to inspire students through hands-on innovation and teamwork. Everything about Mrs. Stephens reflects creativity, innovation, and enrichment, and we are incredibly fortunate to have her at DPES. We don't just appreciate the work she does, but we admire who she is. She is amazing, and we are lucky to call her a Bulldog.



Eagle Springs Elementary School

Dr. Jeff Washington, Principal
Mrs. Stephanie King, API



Ms. Brittney Johns

Brittney Johns is the kind of teacher every parent hopes their child will have and every colleague loves to work alongside. As a 1st grade teacher, she radiates energy and positivity, creating a classroom where learning is joyful and every child feels valued. Her contagious spirit inspires her students to take risks, explore new ideas, and believe in themselves. Brittney's warmth, dedication, and love for teaching extend far beyond academics; she builds connections that nurture both hearts and minds. These qualities, combined with her passion for excellence, make her exceptionally deserving of the Shah Grant.



Hilltop Elementary School

Dr. Ovedia Glover, Principal
Mrs. Dara Seamans, API



Mrs. Nicole Hallman

Mrs. Nicole Hallman, 5th-grade teacher at Hilltop Elementary School, exemplifies what it means to be a creative and innovative educator. She brings her classroom to life with engaging lessons that go beyond the textbook, using hands-on activities, technology, and real-world connections to spark curiosity and excitement in her students. Her forward-thinking approach to teaching ensures that every child is challenged, supported, and inspired to reach their full potential. Whether she's designing interactive projects or integrating new instructional strategies, Mrs. Hallman consistently finds ways to make learning meaningful and memorable.

In addition to her dynamic teaching style, Mrs. Hallman is a respected teacher leader who positively influences the entire school community. She builds strong, trusting relationships with her students, their families, and her colleagues, creating a welcoming and inclusive environment where everyone feels valued. Her willingness to collaborate and support others, combined with her deep dedication to student success, makes her an integral part of Hilltop Elementary. Mrs. Hallman's passion, professionalism, and leadership continue to have a lasting impact on all those fortunate enough to work and learn with her.



Kings Chapel Elementary School

Mrs. Shelley Shillcutt, Principal
Mrs. Kalesia McKnight, API



Mrs. Mary Kratz

Mrs. Mary Kratz is a dynamic and passionate fifth-grade gifted teacher at Kings Chapel Elementary whose energy and commitment to excellence elevate everyone around her. In addition to leading a high-performing classroom, she serves as our Grade Level Chair, Academic Bowl Coach, Econ Games Coach, and Head Coach of the Kings Chapel Kicking Cougars dance team. Her ability to juggle these responsibilities with grace and professionalism is a testament to her leadership and deep devotion to our school community.

Mrs. Kratz holds both her Gifted and Reading Endorsements, and she is a graduate of the Houston County Teacher Leadership Program. She leads professional learning with confidence and purpose, inspiring her colleagues and helping to strengthen instructional practices schoolwide. Her creativity, flexibility, and student-centered mindset shine through in everything she does. She is known for making learning engaging, rigorous, and fun. Her students eagerly enter her room each day, excited to learn, participate, and grow. Through creative lessons and thoughtful integration of relevant topics, she brings reading to life and fosters a genuine love of literature among her students. Whether through a dynamic book study or an innovative classroom challenge, Mrs. Kratz ensures that each child feels seen, supported, and inspired.

Mrs. Kratz is a joyful presence on our campus, always smiling, encouraging others, and leading with kindness. She loves Kings Chapel, and her dedication to our students, staff, and families is felt deeply by all who work with her.



Lake Joy Elementary School

Dr. Tami Godman, Principal

Dr. Sandra Crow, API



Mrs. Sheree Hyde

Mrs. Hyde is an exceptional teacher who has dedicated herself to meeting the needs of ALL learners while also serving as a leader and mentor within our school.

Currently serving as our Gifted Lead Teacher, Mrs. Hyde demonstrates an impressive depth of knowledge in instructional practices, especially with math standards and success criteria. She has a remarkable ability to design and deliver engaging, challenging lessons that not only meet her students' unique learning needs but also push them beyond what they thought possible. Her strong command of instructional strategies ensures that all learners are provided with opportunities for growth, creativity, and critical thinking.

What sets Sheree apart is her consistent record of student growth. Year after year, her data shows measurable gains across her classroom, reflecting her high expectations and effective instruction. Her students thrive academically under her guidance. Beyond the classroom, she has served in several leadership roles throughout our school. Her leadership has been instrumental in strengthening our instruction, supporting her colleagues, and ensuring that best practices are shared and implemented schoolwide. She is respected by her peers, admired by her students, and valued by our entire school community. She exemplifies what it means to be an outstanding educator.



Langston Road Elementary School

Mrs. Kyon Cobb, Principal

Dr. Erin Gramley, API

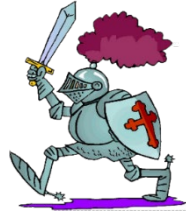


Ms. April Rainey

Ms. Rainey is an exceptional teacher of gifted students because she understands that gifted learners need more than just accelerated content; they need depth, challenge, and emotional support. She consistently differentiates instruction to match each student's readiness level, interests, and learning profile, fostering both intellectual growth and a love for learning.

One thing that truly sets Ms. Rainey apart is her ability to create a learning environment where curiosity is encouraged, critical thinking is nurtured, and students feel seen and understood. She doesn't just teach content; she cultivates minds—recognizing potential and helping students explore it fully. Her high expectations are matched by compassion and insight, making gifted students feel both challenged and supported.

Whether it's through innovative projects, Socratic dialogue, or opportunities for independent exploration, Ms. Rainey engages students in meaningful, relevant, and rigorous learning. The result is a classroom where gifted learners thrive not only academically, but also socially and emotionally.



Matt Arthur Elementary School

Mrs. Kasey Hopkins, Principal
Mrs. Robin Rooks, API



Mrs. Brittany Campbell

Brittany Campbell has served the Houston County school system since 2014. She is a dedicated and hard-working teacher who works diligently to ensure all students succeed. She measures mastery by student by standard each and every day. She enriches her students each day by teaching deeper into the writer's craft and stretching the gifted child's mind through literature and nonfiction pieces. The students she serves are constantly level 4 Georgia Milestones performers and continually grow in MAP mastery. Mrs. Campbell believes in building relationships with each student and wants all her children to feel respected and supported. She knows each child will rise to the expected expectation when they know they are loved.



Miller Elementary School

Dr. Dana Brock, Principal
Dr. Engracia Bautista, API



Ms. Sandra Williams

Ms. Williams is a dedicated fifth-grade teacher who leads with passion and purpose. She teaches gifted math, providing students with engaging, rigorous, and challenging instruction that builds critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

In addition to her classroom role, Ms. Williams serves as grade chair, academic bowl coach, and mentor teacher. These positions reflect her leadership and commitment to excellence. She is also an active member of the PBIS team, where she helps strengthen school culture and promote initiatives that support student success.

Known for her caring nature and enthusiastic spirit, Ms. Williams builds strong relationships with both students and colleagues. She is a true team player who collaborates seamlessly across grade levels and consistently steps into leadership roles when needed. Her ability to inspire others, combined with her dedication to student growth, makes her a valued colleague and a respected leader within the school community.

MORNINGSIDE



Morningside Elementary School

Dr. Kasandra King, Principal
Mrs. Yolanda Felder, API

Dr. Felicia Hunlen



With her enthusiasm and sincere concern for her students, Dr. Hunlen is the type of educator who brightens the classroom. She establishes a personal connection with each child, finding out what interests them and using that to encourage creativity and a love of learning. Her classroom is a happy place where students feel free to express themselves and take chances. She inspires her students to believe in themselves, maintain their curiosity, and confidently follow their passions by providing them with supportive and considerate guidance.



Northside Elementary School

Dr. Kristina Cummings, Principal
Mrs. Cristina Betancourt, API

Ms. Amy Brown



Amy Brown is a phenomenal educator for the gifted students at Northside Elementary School and an invaluable asset to the entire school. She is a leader of her grade level team as well as a guiding force on the Northside Elementary School Math Improvement Team and Guiding Coalition, and she was recognized as the NES Teacher of the Year in 2022. Ms. Brown contributes to the enrichment of all Houston County students by writing the science and STEM curriculum used throughout our district. Ms. Brown's instruction is hands-on, collaborative, active, and always fun! She challenges students to think critically, take ownership of their learning, and solve student-identified, everyday problems. She understands and appreciates all the unique needs of her gifted and talented students. Ms. Brown's students develop grit and determination as she encourages them to learn from failure and to be tenacious and ambitious in their search for excellence. Her students know that her favorite book is "Rosie Revere, Engineer," and she teaches them to live by its central theme: "The only true failure can come if you quit." Northside Elementary School is blessed by the talents and dedication of Ms. Brown.



Parkwood Elementary School

Mrs. Kelly Munn, Principal
Mrs. Amanda Bennett, API



Ms. Heather White

Ms. Heather White is a dynamic and innovative educator who exemplifies what it means to inspire creativity, curiosity, and a passion for learning in young scholars. As a gifted-endorsed teacher, she consistently integrates advanced content into her classroom in ways that challenge students to think critically, explore deeply, and connect their learning to the world around them.

Ms. White is highly skilled at using data to drive her instruction, ensuring that every student receives the support and enrichment needed to reach their highest potential. Beyond her instructional expertise, Ms. White's energetic spirit is contagious. She brings joy and enthusiasm to her teaching, creating a classroom environment where students feel encouraged to take risks, ask questions, and pursue new ideas.

Through her dedication, innovation, and unwavering commitment to student success, Ms. Heather White embodies the mission of the Shah Grant. She is not only deserving of this recognition but also a powerful example of the impact one teacher can have in igniting a lifelong love of learning.



Pearl Stephens Elementary School

Mrs. Gloria Smith, Principal
Mrs. Jessica Teemer, API



Mrs. Kandice Jackson

Mrs. Jackson is an enthusiastic 5th grade gifted teacher who is passionate about creating a challenging and supportive learning environment that encourages students to think deeply, ask meaningful questions and engage in inquiry-based learning. When asked what she loves best about teaching gifted students, her response highlighted their ability to engage in discussions that challenge them to think analytically as they problem-solve to gain different perspectives and new learning. Mrs. Jackson promotes high levels of engagement and achievement each day by holding her students to high academic standards.

Her leadership skills are a tremendous asset to our school. Currently, she serves on our PBIS team, is a member of our guiding coalition and a mentor for teachers who are new to Pearl Stephens. She is also a teacher leader who leads her ELA team through established data protocols for analyzing student data and developing high-quality ELA instruction to meet the needs of our diverse learners. She is a role model for many and is well respected by her colleagues and school community.



Quail Run Elementary School

Dr. Amanda Miliner, Principal
Mrs. Jessica Augsburger, API



Mrs. Caroline Terry

Mrs. Terry is a truly exceptional educator whose passion, creativity, and dedication have transformed the learning experiences of 3rd-grade gifted students at Quail Run Elementary School.

From the moment you step into Mrs. Terry's classroom, it is a place where curiosity is celebrated, thinking is stretched, and students are empowered to take ownership of their learning. She creates opportunities for students to explore their passions and push beyond traditional curriculum boundaries. These experiences not only deepen academic understanding but also foster creativity, resilience, and a love of lifelong learning.

Mrs. Terry's work exemplifies the very best in gifted education, and I am confident she will continue to make a lasting impact on the lives of gifted learners for years to come.



Russell Elementary School

Mr. William Wilson, Principal
Mrs. Heather Henslee, API



Mrs. Jana Miller

Mrs. Miller's classroom is truly something special. From the moment you walk in, you can feel the positive energy and sense of purpose. She creates a well-structured environment where students feel safe, supported, and excited to learn. Her lessons are thoughtfully planned and full of enriching activities that spark curiosity and keep students actively engaged. She encourages her students to ask questions, explore new ideas, and really think for themselves, helping them grow into confident, independent problem-solvers.

In just three years at Russell, she's already made a huge impact—not just in her own classroom, but throughout the school. She's stepped into a leadership role with such grace, offering guidance and support to her colleagues as an instructional mentor. Her school bio describes her teaching philosophy perfectly, "I truly believe that students are not vessels to be filled but lamps to be lit. It is my goal to help students develop their maximum potential not only academically but as well-rounded citizens."

We are incredibly fortunate to have Mrs. Miller as part of the Russell family. Her passion for teaching and commitment to her students shines brightly every day!



Shirley Hills Elementary School

Mrs. Kristen Brooks, Principal
Mrs. Charlotte Dunlap, API



Mrs. Danielle Hall

Mrs. Danielle Hall is a veteran teacher with 17 years of experience. She has proudly served the Shirley Hills Elementary community for 11 of those years and is currently a 4th grade teacher. She truly goes above and beyond for not just her gifted and high-achieving students, but all learners. Her classroom is a place where curiosity is encouraged, challenges are welcomed, and every student feels seen and supported. Mrs. Hall has a special way of connecting with learners, pushing them to think deeper while making learning exciting and meaningful. Whether it's through creative projects, advanced lessons, or just being a constant cheerleader for her students, she makes a lasting impact every single day. Mrs. Hall has coached our Academic Bowl Team for two years. In addition, she serves on our school's Guiding Coalition, PBIS Team, and is the ELA Cadre representative for her grade level. She is a valuable member of our Mustang family and absolutely deserves this honor.



Tucker Elementary School

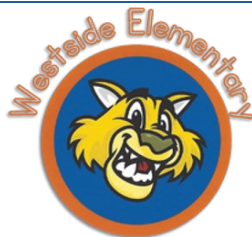
Mrs. Eddie Williams, Principal
Dr. Grace Watson, API



Ms. Holly Owen

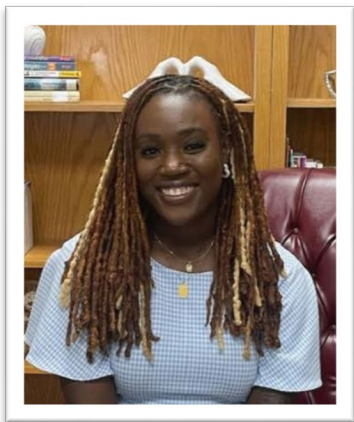
Holly Owen has been an elementary teacher for 14 years. She has a master's degree, a specialist degree, a leadership degree, and is GTE Endorsed. Additionally, she holds an Instructional Design and Technology Certificate and a Master's in Curriculum and Instruction. She serves on our Guiding Coalition and Job Fair Committees. She is a sponsor of the STEM Club, Beta Club, and Academic Bowl. She is the school's go-to for everything Technology.

Holly believes all students can learn at high levels and goes out of her way to engage students in authentic learning. She pushes her students to be the best they can be and provides many opportunities to showcase their talents and skills. She "thinks outside of the box" and encourages her students to do the same. She is creative and innovative, finding ways to provide learning experiences that will impact her students throughout their lives.



Westside Elementary School

Mrs. Angienik Allen, Principal
Dr. Artia Shorter, API



Ms. Jimya Oglesby

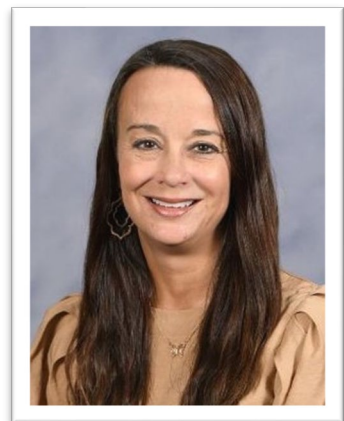
Ms. Jimya Oglesby is an outstanding choice for the Shah Grant because of her dedication to fostering high-level thinking in her first-grade classroom. Ms. Oglesby implements interactive activities and hands-on learning experiences that challenge her students to think critically and creatively.

She encourages them to ask questions, explore new ideas, and collaborate with their peers, all while fostering a love of learning. Her ability to differentiate instruction ensures that she meets the unique needs of each student, pushing them to develop their skills and confidence. Teaching is truly her passion, and she thrives on connecting with her students and making a meaningful impact in their lives. As the thirteenth educator in her family, Ms. Oglesby carries on a proud legacy of teaching and inspiring young minds every day. She is, without a doubt, the perfect recipient for this grant.



Bonaire Primary School

Dr. Ashley Watkins, Principal
Dr. Christie Bergh, API



Ms. Lara Stanley

Lara Stanley is currently a 2nd-grade gifted teacher at Bonaire Primary School. She has been an educator for 25 years, with 20 of those dedicated to teaching gifted students. For 17 years, she served as a Gifted Lead Teacher, guiding and supporting both students and colleagues in gifted education. She worked as a FOCUS teacher in the fall of 2006 and continued in that role until 2012, when the district transitioned its gifted programming. Throughout her career, she has been passionate about engaging and challenging students, fostering their potential through critical and creative thinking activities as well as project-based learning. Her commitment to gifted education reflects her belief in nurturing curiosity, innovation, and a lifelong love of learning in every student she teaches.



C.B. Watson Primary School

Mrs. Monique Dawsey, Principal
Mrs. Phyllis Toliver, API



Ms. Rakiya Hunter

Ms. Rakiya Hunter has been a valued member of CBWPS for the past 11 years and has served as our 1st Grade Gifted Lead Teacher for the last 4 years.

Ms. Hunter is an outstanding teacher leader who demonstrates a deep knowledge of curriculum content and best instructional practices. Beyond the classroom, she has been an active member of our School Leadership Team, PBIS Team, and School Council, making meaningful contributions that have positively impacted our school community.

She is an effective communicator and plays a vital role in facilitating PLCs, where she helps guide school improvement initiatives through thoughtful collaboration. Ms. Hunter is a dedicated educator who works tirelessly to ensure her students achieve high levels, while also fostering creativity and authentic learning experiences across the curriculum.



David Perdue Primary School

Mrs. Kathy Gibbs, Principal
Mrs. Keturia Williams, API



Mrs. Tosha Wright

Mrs. Wright is an experienced educator who has taught grades K-5 over the past thirty years. She holds a degree in Early Childhood Education from Georgia College and a master's degree in the Foundations of Education from Troy University. Mrs. Wright earned a specialist degree in Teaching and Learning from Georgia Southern University. To further enhance her teaching, Mrs. Wright also received endorsements for GTE students and for providing specialized reading instruction. Her qualifications and dedication make her a remarkable asset to Panda Land!

Mrs. Wright is a dedicated first-grade teacher who goes above and beyond for her students and colleagues each day. She serves as the professional learning team leader and has served as a science ambassador for over five years. As an ambassador, she actively engages with first-grade teachers at the district level, sharing innovative strategies and inspiring best practices. Mrs. Wright presented at the HCSD new teacher orientation, Georgia Science Teachers Association, and facilitated professional learning within our school system, which includes writing and editing science curriculum. Her commitment to enhancing educational programs greatly benefits both her colleagues and her students, demonstrating her passion for teaching.



Lake Joy Primary School

Dr. Sonya Kiefer, Principal
Mrs. Morgan Aeschlimann, API



Mrs. Robin Burks

Mrs. Robin Burks is a shining example of excellence in education. With her positive and encouraging approach, she creates a classroom where students are inspired to reach their fullest potential. Mrs. Burks is an instructional leader who sets high standards and structures her learning environment to ensure every child has access to rich, meaningful enrichment opportunities. Her ability to blend rigor with support allows her students to thrive academically and personally.

Beyond her own classroom, Mrs. Burks has impacted the teaching profession by mentoring numerous student interns, modeling best practices, and cultivating the next generation of educators. She is deeply respected by families, colleagues, and students alike for her warmth, professionalism, and dedication. Her work reflects not only a passion for gifted education but also a commitment to fostering a community where every learner is challenged and celebrated.



Langston Road Primary School

Dr. Kelly Rush, Principal
Mrs. Kayla Shumway, API



Mr. Allan Lee

Allan Lee is an enthusiastic educator who has dedicated the past four years to teaching first grade and is now in his first year working with second-grade gifted and talented students. With a passion for fostering creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving, Mr. Lee engages students in dynamic and meaningful learning experiences. Beyond the classroom, he sponsors both the Lego Club and Cooking Club, providing opportunities for students to explore hands-on learning, collaboration, and innovation. Mr. Lee continues to look for ways to develop community partnerships, which will further support his mission of creating engaging, challenging, and enriching opportunities to strengthen student learning. We appreciate the work he does for our students and our school.



Matt Arthur Primary School

Ms. Alicia Conner, Principal
Mrs. Brandi McIntyre, API



Dr. Tracy Gordon

Matt Arthur Primary would like to recognize Tracey Gordon as an outstanding leader in gifted education. Her passion for nurturing the talents and potential of gifted learners is evident in everything she does. She consistently goes above and beyond to create an environment where students feel both challenged and supported, encouraging them to embrace their strengths while striving to reach new levels of achievement.

As one of our lead-gifted teachers, Dr. Gordon demonstrates a deep commitment to advancing gifted education. She not only inspires her students to believe in themselves and pursue excellence, but she also advocates tirelessly for the unique needs of gifted learners across our school. Through her dedication, creativity, and unwavering belief in her students' abilities, she empowers them to take risks, think critically, and grow into confident, self-motivated individuals.

Dr. Gordon's work reflects a true passion for teaching and a genuine desire to make a lasting impact. She embodies the qualities of a leader in gifted education: a visionary, a supportive colleague, and is deeply invested in the success of her students. Dr. Gordon is more than a teacher; she is a mentor, an advocate, and an inspiration to all who have the privilege of working with her.

