



# Williamsburg County School District

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Dr. Kelvin Wymbs, Superintendent

## IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **KINGSTREE HIGH SCHOOL WELCOMES ATHLETIC TRAINER TAYLOR-RAE DANFORTH**

Ms. Taylor-Rae Danforth is originally from Syracuse, NY. She has also lived in Virginia, Florida, and Delaware, where she spent the last five years. In July, she moved to South Carolina to begin her current position.

Ms. Danforth graduated from Wesley College with a Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology and earned her Master of Science in Athletic Training from Bridgewater College. She has been certified and licensed since 2019 and has worked with various organizations, including Appoquinimink High School, the University of Central Florida football team, Sussex Central High School, Delaware State University (primarily with football, women's soccer, cheerleading, tennis, and women's basketball, as well as rehabbing all 20 sports), the Philadelphia Eagles, and she provided personal training and athletic training with the Forever Fit Foundation. She is certified in CPR/BLS and Adult Mental Health First Aid. Additionally, Ms. Danforth is licensed to practice athletic training in Delaware and South Carolina.

When she was just two months away from graduating, the Physical Therapy clinic where she was working offered to support her in pursuing a Doctorate in Physical Therapy, provided she stayed with them. Unsure about her future and knowing she did not want to pursue physical therapy, she spoke with her academic advisor about her uncertainty. During this conversation, the director of the Kinesiology department overheard them. The director suggested that Ms. Danforth consider athletic training. At that time, her only experiences with athletic trainers had been negative, so she initially declined the idea. However, the director encouraged her to think about it and offered to recommend two students. Since she was uncertain about her career path, Ms. Danforth decided to give it a try. She interviewed for the Master of Science in Athletic Training (MSAT) program at Bridgewater College, and on the drive home, she received a call informing her that she had been accepted. This pivotal moment led her to the field of athletic training.

Ms. Danforth has not been in Williamsburg for long, but she has found the staff she has interacted with to be mostly wonderful. She is still working to gain the trust of the athletes in her new role, but thus far, she has only encountered respectful behavior from them. She has also had productive conversations with the parents of the athletes.

Ms. Danforth aims to elevate the Kingstree High School Athletics program to be the gold standard across the lower state of South Carolina. She aspires for both the Athletic Training and Strength and Conditioning programs to become the envy of other schools, ultimately strengthening both programs within the state.

This year, Ms. Danforth is dedicated to listening and learning. Based on her observations so far, she believes that effective communication and gaining buy-in from all stakeholders—athletes, coaches, parents/guardians, administration, teachers, boosters, and school board members—are crucial. She feels that increasing awareness of her role in athletic training will help everyone recognize its significance.

To promote the physical and mental well-being of student-athletes, she intends to start with discussions involving the administration and coaches. They will review problems related to injuries observed in previous years and those seen this year, allowing them to develop effective injury protocols. Furthermore, she wants to highlight the connection between strength training and injury prevention and strategize ways to encourage student-athletes to regularly use the school's exceptional weight room, which is overseen by a certified Strength and Conditioning coach—a rarity at the high school level.

Ms. Danforth also wishes to organize meetings where coaches, the strength coach, and herself can connect with all athletes. She believes that unity within the athletics program is vital, and showing athletes that the adults involved support and stand by them will help motivate them. During these meetings, she also plans to address the importance of nutrition and hydration. Many student-athletes consume energy drinks and junk food from places like McDonald's while neglecting healthier options. To engage their attention, she often conducts interactive presentations involving coaches and staff, who can share their experiences with the young athletes. This collaborative approach can also inspire coaches to advocate for healthier choices.

Furthermore, Ms. Danforth is enthusiastic about establishing weekly or biweekly workshops to conduct assessments that reveal the areas in which athletes may need improvement, such as balance or flexibility. She believes that while education is crucial, it is essential to foster genuine interest in learning. By encouraging athletes to participate in challenging tasks, they can instigate a sense of self-correction. Given their competitive nature, she hopes to channel that drive into self-improvement, motivating them to exceed their previous performances.

Addressing mental health is a delicate matter, so she plans to consult with the counseling service before implementing any initiatives related to this topic. She envisions conducting interactive sessions for all athletes to avoid singling anyone out. Building trust and an open dialogue is vital in this context; if athletes find the discussions relatable, they may be more inclined to express themselves in healthy ways. Ms. Danforth wants the Athletic Training Room to serve as a safe space for student-athletes, where they feel heard and free from judgment. Collaborating with counseling services will help create effective strategies to address mental health appropriately.

