



# The Buzz

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Thomas County Board of Education Monthly Newsletter

## Governor Deal names Thomas County Central Recipient of Major Technology Grant



Instructional Technology Specialist Lindsay Thompson and TCCHS Principal Trista Jones observe Jackson Groom working on a Chromebook in Ryan Strickland's Physics classroom. The recently awarded technology grant will provide a Chromebook for every TCCHS student as part of the new blended learning initiative.

Governor Nathan Deal awarded Thomas County Central High School (TCCHS) a technology grant of \$699,312 to expand its blended learning program.

Blended learning-- also known as hybrid or mixed-mode courses-- consists of classes in which a portion of the traditional face-to-face instruction is replaced by web-based online learning.

Thomas County's Bishop Hall Charter School was an early-adopter of blended learning. Thomas County has utilized Bishop Hall in the classic way that charter schools were intended, as a laboratory to develop new and innovative teaching techniques. The successful elements of the blended learning model

cultivated at Bishop Hall which have resulted in increased academic performance there will be "scaled" or expanded to classes at TCCHS.

In addition to completing Thomas County's one-to-one computer-to-student initiative, the grant will provide funds for extensive professional learning for staff and will provide after-school tutoring for students who experience academic difficulties.

"TCCHS has a tradition of providing students with an exceptional education," said Principal Trista Jones. "This grant will equip us with the resources and support to continue that tradition with the most up-to-date technology and instructional strategies to prepare our students for future

success in any endeavor." Program implementation will begin in the high school's math department and will spread school-wide over a two-year period.

Associate Superintendent Melanie Chavaux led the grant writing team. "Blended learning is the combination of the best teacher instruction with the best online instruction there is to offer," Chavaux said. "Professional learning at TCCHS will provide the opportunity for teachers to support true individualized learning for students, and it will also provide teachers access to tools that can transform the way in which they deliver their content."

Blended learning has become common place at colleges and universities nation-wide. Giving students this experience at the high school level will better prepare them for academic work after high school.

"Through the grant, Thomas County Schools will provide a wide array of blended learning options to educate, prepare, and inspire students to reach their fullest potential," said Thomas County School Superintendent Dr. Dusty Kornegay. "Students benefit from participating in blended learning by having real-time feedback, control over pace, small-group differentiated instruction,

and individualized online instruction. Teachers benefit by having freedom to manage the classroom to pace instruction for small groups, having real-time student assessment data, and having an engaged student population," Kornegay said.

This is the sixth major grant to have been received by the Thomas County School System within the last two years. Assistant Superintendent for Finance Joey Holland who compiled the budget portion of the grant stated, "Receiving grants totaling nearly \$5 million over the last two years has allowed us to achieve most of our technology vision and has reduced pressure on our operating budget while allowing us to stretch our E-SPLOST revenue."

Assistant Superintendent Lisa Williams served on the

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The Buzz is a monthly publication of the Thomas County Schools. Send suggestions or comments to Melanie Hester, 200 North Pinetree Blvd., Thomasville, GA 31792; 229.225-4380, ext. 115; mhester@thomas.k12.ga.us. The Buzz is available online at www.tcjackets.net under the News and Events tab.

The Thomas County School System does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin, sex, or disability.

*“The best thing about being a teacher is that it matters.  
The hardest thing about being a teacher is that it matters every day.” - Todd Whitaker*

## ART CONTEST WINNERS GET PRESIDENTIAL GREETING

### Cross Creek third grader wins in state art contest



by Starla Fortier, Junior



by Darius James, Senior



Starla Fortier won first place in the junior division. Her piece depicts “a nice and peaceful scene in the country with a fading sky.”



Darius James, first place in 12th grade, said his win “feels wonderful” and he’s proud that other people noticed his work.



Dru Jones, a third-grader in Delisa Barrow’s class, shares his artwork with Cross Creek Principal Clay Stanaland.



Dru Jones traveled to Plains, Georgia, to receive a certificate from President Jimmy Carter.

### Eight Thomas County Central High School students won or placed in the annual post card contest

Budding artists had a chance to grow their creativity during a competition featuring the only American President from Georgia. Eight Thomas County Central High School students won or placed in the annual post card contest co-sponsored by The Peanut Institute and the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site.

“We’ve participated in this contest for 10 years, but have never had eight winners,” TCCHS art teacher Jocelyn Rivard said. “I am exceedingly proud of our TCCHS efforts this year.”

This year’s theme was “Plains Grows a President.” An awards ceremony was held in Plains on September 24, where winners received recognition and had their photo taken with former President Jimmy Carter.

“Art students participate in this contest as it challenges

them to create a graphic design project on a small scale,” Rivard said. “They must combine text and imagery into a balanced composition. Each year I am delighted to see the students’ resulting interpretations of the theme.”

Though each student honored has different backgrounds and experience, they all got to the competition because of their participation in school art classes. These students say art classes are important for schools to offer because they help youths express themselves in a positive environment, keep the imagination alive, improve artistic abilities, bring out students’ creativity, and offer a place for them to fit in or relieve stress.

The winning post cards (enlarged) will be on display at Plains High School Museum through January 2017.

Dru Jones, a third-grader from Cross Creek Elementary, won second place in the state of Georgia for third-grade in the 2016 Postcard Contest co-sponsored by The Peanut Institute and the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site. The 39th U.S. president and Nobel Peace Prize winner, Jimmy Carter, presented the award to Jones.

“It felt good to meet President Carter,” said Jones, who is in Delisa Barrow’s class. “I’ve never met a President before.”

This year’s theme was “Plains Grows a President.” Three winners were selected from each grade, K-12.

The former President honored Jones’ achievement during an awards ceremony at the annual Peanut Festival in Plains, Georgia, on September 24. He received a certificate and a signed copy of one of President Carter’s books.

Jones designed his postcard with the sun shining above fields of peanuts on each side of the road. When asked where he got his inspiration for the artwork, Jones said, “There are peanut fields beside my house.”

Jones will be honored with a resolution at the next Thomas County Schools Board of Education meeting.



Thomas County Elementary Schools present the  
**JACK O’LANTERN TRAIL RUN**  
**October 22, 2016**  
**5K and Fun Run**

## Thomas County Teachers Teach Teachers



Rebecca Gaskin (foreground) and other teachers learn how to use the Engage & Learn online testing platform from teacher Emily Hotchkiss.

During the recent teacher work day, Thomas County teachers worked together to create a teacher-centered professional development experience. Teachers attended training sessions at Thomas County Middle School (TCMS) to learn how to integrate technology into their classrooms.

Deann Garcia, TCMS assistant principal, organized the event. "We want to support teachers so that they can collaborate with each

other on common practices to better educate our students," Garcia said.

The sessions were conducted by teachers from Thomas County Upper Elementary and Thomas County Middle School. Sessions included strategies on the use of Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS), Magnet Summary, Moby Max, Engage & Learn, and Aimsweb. Presentations also included instructional strategies such as Close Reading and Quad Sets.

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grant writing team compiling data and statistics. "The blended learning model to be implemented at TCCHS will allow our students to receive an education second to none using state-of-the-art technology that will allow for individual attention, customization, and flexibility in learning," Williams said. "We, as a system, are very appreciative for the honor and the opportunity that we have been given."

Thomas County's Instructional Technology Coordinator Erin Rehberg commented, "Receiving this grant will allow us to further our capacity to combine quality instruction with modern technology resources. Our students and teachers will both benefit from the blended learning model we plan to implement at TCCHS."

Thomas County's Technology Director Wes Davis was excited to be able to achieve the district's goal of securing a computer device for every student two years ahead of schedule. "This grant will allow us to complete our one-to-one initiative that will provide devices to our students

district-wide. I feel that this initiative will enable our teachers and students to take advantage of the vast learning resources available," he said.

"I feel very fortunate to have such a gifted team of professionals working for our school district," Kornegay said. "The quality of their work is evident in that we have been awarded several major grants within a relatively short time span. I also want to thank Ms. Julie Sharpe who assisted us in writing the grant. The hard work of our teachers and building leaders in successful implementation of the grants plays a major role in obtaining future grants. I am thankful to the Governor and the legislature for making these competitive grants for schools possible."

Thomas County Central High School was one of only four schools state-wide to receive one of the very competitive scaling grants from the Governor's Office of Student Achievement. Other systems receiving grants were Gwinnett County, Carroll County, and Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School.



### DAREN THE LION FINDS HOME AT TCMS



School Resource Officer Sargent Leila Spires won a "Daren the Lion" mascot costume at a D.A.R.E. Conference this past summer. As the official

mascot of D.A.R.E., Daren teaches children about saying no to drugs and standing up to bullies. The mascot will be used during school activities, such as the D.A.R.E. graduation, and special events at the Thomas County Middle School. Pictured are Spires, Daren, and 5th grade student Triva Clark at a recent D.A.R.E. graduation.



Members of the Thomas County Central High School baseball team packed 245 bags to be sent home with needy students over fall break as part of the Backpack Buddies Program.

## Thomas County's Thornhill Appointed to State Post



State School Superintendent Richard Woods (left) takes time to meet personally with Allen Thornhill who was recently appointed to serve on the 2016-2017 Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council (PAC).

State School Superintendent Richard Woods appointed 16 new parents to serve on his 2016-2017 Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council (PAC). Allen Thornhill, a Hand-In-Hand Primary School representative on the Thomas County School District's Parent Advisory Council, was chosen as one of the 24 members.

Thornhill was nominated by Thomas County Schools at the beginning of this school year. New members are selected each year by representatives of the Georgia Department of Education based on the applicants' responses to questions on engaging parents to ensure their children's success at school and the local school superintendent's recommendation. Thornhill will serve a two-year term on the council.

Thornhill has two children in the Thomas County School System. He decided to apply for this position because of the opportunity to offer input that ultimately could improve the

education that children in this community receive.

As members of the council, parents will meet two times during the school year with Superintendent Woods to give input on the development of Georgia's state plan in implementing the new federal law, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

"I jumped at the opportunity to make sure our area, where my children attend school, is being represented as our new state education plan is being formulated," Thornhill said. "Georgia is more than just Atlanta, and the needs of all parts of the state should be addressed in any statewide plan."

The next meeting is January 30, 2017. Superintendent's PAC will share the information they learn with community members, other families and schools. They will also serve as advisors and ambassadors in their respective communities. For more information about ESSA, visit <http://gadoe.org/essa>.



**HAND-IN-HAND RECEIVES DONATION** - During the month of September, Commercial Bank team members collected school supply items for Elizabeth Johnson's and Sara Frances Liles' classroom. The donation was part of Commercial Bank's Here Matters school supply drive. The students in Johnson's class received snacks and craft supplies. Pictured above are: Daren Touchton (from left, front row) and Raylynn Fykes; Jessica Whitfield (from left, back row), Jeanet Dean, Journee Walker, Elizabeth Johnson, Justin Ross, Sarah Frances Liles and Janet Liles.



**TCS HOSTS CITIZENS ACADEMY** - Thomas County Schools hosted the first session of the 2016 Citizens Academy at Bishop Hall Charter School at the beginning of September. Assistant Superintendent Lisa Williams gave a presentation that covered school system governance, school funding, and the broad spectrum of programs available within the school system. Following the presentation, the group toured Bishop Hall Charter School. Other presentations at the session included County Manager Mike Stephenson who spoke on the organization of county government and Don Atkinson from the City of Thomasville who spoke on the utility department.

**CPR and First Aid will be offered during the from 4:00 - 8:00 p.m. at Hand-In-Hand Primary School on the following dates:**

**10/18 CPR**

**11/15 First Aid**

**Please sign up on PDExpress to attend!**



## Holton Wins GAEA's Middle Level Art Educator of the Year



Thomas County Middle School art teacher Emily Holton discusses art techniques with seventh graders Emily Bishop (from left) and Audrey VanLandingham.

A Thomas County School System teacher recently earned statewide honors from the Georgia Art Education Association (GAEA). Emily Holton, art teacher at Thomas County Middle School, received the GAEA's Middle Level Art Educator of the Year Award for 2016. GAEA is a growing organization with more than 650 art educators throughout Georgia. She will receive her award at this year's fall conference in October.

"Holton is a dynamic teacher who has worked to build an exceptional art program at the middle school," said TCMS Principal Jamie Thompson. "She has also helped to organize major art events in the county."

This is Holton's eleventh year as an art educator. She taught at Mitchell County Middle School for the first seven years where she was awarded Teacher of the Year in 2012. This is her fourth year at Thomas County Middle School.

"I was extremely overjoyed to receive this award," Holton said. "I will always be humbled and honored that I received recognition from my peers.

Receiving this award confirms that all my hard work is making a difference."

Over the years, Holton said she "watched some very deserving art teachers receive this award."

"I was nominated by two different people," said Holton. "First, I was nominated by Cairo High School's former art teacher, Zerric Clinton, who also serves as the president-elect for Georgia Art Education Association. I was also nominated by current GAEA president, Lauren Phillips. For the past eight years, I have served on GAEA board. I am honored and thrilled to have even been nominated. Winning Middle Grades Teacher of the Year was an added bonus."

While in high school, Holton had the desire to live on the coast and sell original seascapes and sea life paintings. After she graduated, she decided instead to pursue a bachelor's degree in art. During her first year at Valdosta State University, she became interested in teaching art.

"On a trip to the local magnet school, I saw how enthusiastic the children were

about their art class," Holton said. "After that experience, my eyes were opened to how great art education in a public school could be. I am very grateful that I changed my mind and became an art teacher because being able to provide art education to students is very rewarding."

Each year, Holton organizes the Thomas County Schools Art Exhibition, kindergarten through 8th grade, at the Thomasville Center for the Arts. This exhibition is a chance to show the public the genres and techniques that the students complete in the art classes. Exhibition themes over the years have included Pop Art, Eastern Art, Hispanic Art and artwork inspired by American artists.

Holton said, "I also organize and teach Thomas County Schools Art After School program, kindergarten through 4th grade. The Art After School program gives students a chance to take art classes after school in addition to during the school day. During these after-school classes students receive in-depth training in different mediums and techniques."

The latest program implemented is Thomas County Middle School's new STEAM "On Tour" program. This program includes a collection of 24 reproductions of famous paintings that are now on display in the hallway outside Holton's classroom.

"I'm excited about

implementing our new STEAM 'On Tour' program," Holton said. "It is like our own personal art gallery. Many of the students in my school have little or no opportunities to visit an art gallery, so the program helps me expose my students to important and influential art."

In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Holton serves as the yearbook sponsor. Eighth grade students who are interested in being on the yearbook staff apply, and those who are chosen are placed in a year-long art class. The yearbook/art class gives Holton the chance to teach graphic design using different computer programs to design the yearbook.

Holton added, "Last year I started a yearbook cover contest at my school. For the contest, any fifth through eighth grade student submits a design for the cover of the yearbook. Their original artwork is used as the inspiration for a graphic designed cover. The student with the winning design receives a yearbook for free."

Holton was recognized by Superintendent of Schools Dr. Dusty Kornegay and school board members at the September meeting.



TCMS recently implemented the STEAM "On Tour" program, made possible by a donation from Thomasville's Junior Service League. The program includes a collection of famous paintings that are on display in the hallway outside of art teacher Emily Holton's classroom.

## TCCHS Students Take Top Honors at International Environmental Youth Symposium

Five Thomas County Central High School students recently attended the International Environmental Youth Symposium. They competed against high school and college students from four continents, and all five students brought home awards.

In the poster presentation category, junior C'lee Kornegay won first place in "Water Degradation" for her research on the effect of silver nanoparticles on algae growth. In the essay competition, senior Eli Kosciw placed first in the category of "Protecting the Atmosphere."

Seniors Maggie Martin placed second with her essay in the "Preventing Air and Water Pollution" category, and Vince Wynn placed second in the category of "Promoting Safe Management of Solid and Toxic Wastes." Junior Hailey Ferrel placed third in the poster presentation category for her research on soil erosion.

"I am overjoyed to see the competitiveness of not only my writing but also my peers'



TCCHS students show their awards from the International Environmental Youth Symposium. Pictured (left to right) are Hailey Ferrel, Vince Wynn, Eli Kosciw, Maggie Martin, and C'lee Kornegay.

writing at the international level," Eli Kosciw said. "It highlights the academic excellence TCCHS always strives for with our student body."

The two-day event was hosted by the Environmental Protection Agency in Atlanta. The theme, "One World, One Environment," emphasized the interdependence of the world when it comes to the health of the environment.

The program included presentations from environmental researchers and from student activists. Earth Saver Girl Brooklyn Wright discussed children's

books that she authored. One More Generation (OMG) founders Carter and Olivia Reis discussed their "One Less Straw" movement and asked attendees to refuse straws in restaurants for the month of October. They were followed by keynote speaker Rohan Patel, a special assistant to the U.S. president.

The presentations left an impression on the attendees. "The symposium provided me with skills to bring back home in not just S.T.E.M.-oriented fields, but also public policy," Vince Wynn said. "Just being in the same room as the

president's special assistant was enough to inspire me to act in a way that benefits generations for years to come."

C'lee Kornegay learned how to network in order to increase job opportunities.

"We also learned the importance of making a change to reduce global warming," she said.

Maggie Martin appreciated the chance to "network and learn from prominent members of the scientific community."

This is the second year that the symposium was open to high school students and their teachers.

"In the two days of this event, students experienced current research, learned about career opportunities and current environmental issues, and mingled with students and experts from across the country and from other parts of the world," TCCHS science teacher Laura Kornegay said. "No matter what students end up studying, the health of the environment will always matter to them."

## Garrison-Pilcher Annual Reading Rally

