

SY 2021–22



SHARING Our Success



Message from Dr. Reid



Dear Team FCPS Families, Staff and Community,

As I begin my first year as superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools, I wanted to share with you my excitement about leading this premier school division which is rightly regarded as one of the best in the nation. It is a privilege and an honor to serve this wonderful community which cares so deeply about the quality of education for our young people. Indeed, this is just one of the many remarkable characteristics that drew me to this role.

The standards and expectations for academics are high and I firmly believe that together, we can continue to forge mountaintop educational experiences for all of our students. Since the moment I accepted this position, I have endeavored to meet with as many community members as possible; our amazing students, our staff, our families, and our community groups. You will find me a listening leader who cherishes the personal connections made every single day. My heart beats strongest inside our schools. As we move forward together in the 2022-23 academic year, these continued conversations will be critical components that help frame the direction of our division journey.

Certainly, I share your hopes and dreams and understand the responsibility that rests upon my shoulders. We are partners in the accomplishments of our students, and the work we do at this moment in history will surely shape our future for the better. No doubt we still face challenges as we emerge from the pandemic, but I remain overwhelmingly optimistic for our young people who have shown resilience and grit in the toughest of times. Keeping an eye firmly on future innovations, I also plan to draw on the strong traditions of excellence from our past.

It is my sincerest wish and deepest commitment to you that when each student leaves FCPS, we will have given them the tools, resources, experiences, and opportunities needed for them to be able to both pursue and accomplish their unique life goals. Together, we must prepare our students now for a future yet to be imagined.

Thank you for your trust and warm welcome you have provided me as I begin my career as superintendent of FCPS, together all things are possible.

Warmest regards,

Michelle C. Reid, Ed.D.

Superintendent of Schools, FCPS



FCPS

BY THE NUMBERS

2023  **181,000**
PROJECTED ENROLLMENT

19%
ENGLISH FOR
SPEAKERS OF
OTHER LANGUAGES

15%
SPECIAL
EDUCATION

32%
ECONOMICALLY
DISADVANTAGED

STUDENTS
FROM
204
COUNTRIES

200+
HOME
LANGUAGES

37% White



19% Asian


6% Multiple Races

0.1% Native Hawaiian


0.3% Native American

27% Hispanic

10% Black

94.6% 
ON-TIME GRADUATION

Class 2021 graduated on-time,
exceeding the state average rate

79%  2021 FCPS TEACHERS HELD
ADVANCED DEGREES

1201 2021 SAT SCORE

FCPS students performed well
above state and global averages

2023 **24,391**
PROJECTED FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES

 **15,816/3,276**
TEACHERS

INSTRUCTIONAL ASSISTANTS
SAFETY AND SECURITY OFFICERS
COLLEGE/CAREER SPECIALISTS



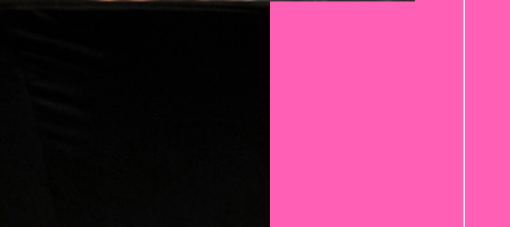
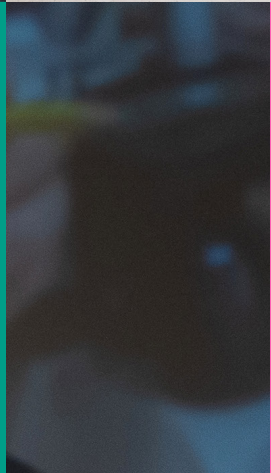
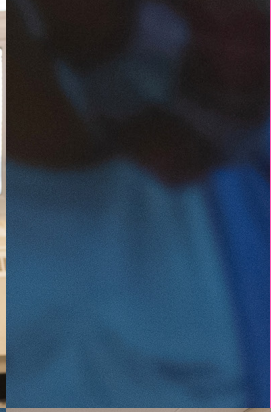
FCPS is proud to welcome Michelle Reid, Ed.D, as our next superintendent. Dr. Reid is recognized nationally for her strong instructional leadership, earning School Superintendent Association's National Superintendent of the Year in 2021 as the leader of Northshore School District in Washington state. With a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) background, Dr. Reid has a proven track record in improving math and science proficiency, but she is also a strong believer that success in these subjects does not happen without equally strong literacy skills. Dr. Reid is committed to ensuring each student has equal access to our world-class curriculum to allow them to reach their greatest potential.



Dr. Michelle Reid: Getting to know FCPS

Dr. Reid knows that one of her first tasks as superintendent will be getting to know the vibrant and diverse community she serves. Prior to beginning her tenure she had already visited several schools, spoken with principals, held student forums, and hosted family and employee town halls. Dr. Reid is known for leading robust community engagement to ensure families and students have a voice. "I want to hear as many voices and perspectives as possible to clearly understand where Fairfax County Public Schools has been, where we are now, and where we want to go together," Dr. Reid said during a town hall at Annandale High School with parents, caregivers, students, and employees.

When asked about balancing STEM courses and the arts, Dr. Reid responded, "The arts are so important. That being said, my background is math and science. In many ways, I think of music as applied math. Math is about patterns and counting and language. I get so excited about both math and music."



A New Era for FCPS: Introducing Superintendent, Dr. Michelle Reid

Around 200 students met Dr. Reid during a forum at Thoreau Middle School where she discussed her vision. “The past few years have brought a health pandemic, a racial reckoning, and the loss of people, properties and professions,” Dr. Reid said. “That’s a lot. We need to think about what’s important. We have a moment in time to be thoughtful about not creating a faster, harder life.”

At a question and answer session with five FCPS student journalists, Meissa Islam, of Luther Jackson Middle School’s Jackson Journal, asked Dr. Reid how she will support diversity. “I will model what I consider to be grace, patience, compassion and openness to new ideas. I would not just hope for, but expect that those in my presence will do the same. As long as I’m here, that’s going to be a standard that’s very important to me,” Dr. Reid said.

At Sangster Elementary School, Principal Allison Jankovich showed Dr. Reid a display highlighting the school’s Month of the Military Child celebrations. Dr. Reid also grew up in a military family and her son served in Iraq.

Down the road at Garfield Elementary School, Dr. Reid visited a kindergarten classroom, where students were taking a movement break before a reading lesson. The class showed Dr. Reid the moves and she jumped right in, learning the steps—and claps—to join the students in rocking to the rhythm.

There will be much more dancing and fun this fall, as well as plenty of hard work, as Dr. Reid leads FCPS to another successful year serving students, family and staff of FCPS. Welcome Dr. Reid!

Back Where We Belong— See Our Innovation Shine

August 24, 2021, was a joyful day. FCPS staff and students returned to class for five days a week, in-person learning. While things were not quite back to usual, we showed resilience, flexibility, and innovation in abundance. When challenges came

our way, we dug deep to overcome difficulties and kept moving forward with learning and recovery. Here are some of our brightest moments from the year that we came together to put the pandemic in the rear view mirror.



From Water Bottles to Lava Lamps: High School Students Lead Elementary School Girls in Science Exploration

In Room 52 at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJ), students are now running the show. The classroom has been taken over by a group of female students who are leading elementary school girls in a hands-on science experiment that starts with empty plastic water bottles and ends with every student creating their own personal “lava lamp.”

The Women Interested in Science and Engineering (WISE) club members at TJ host a group of roughly 20 girls from nearby Weyanoke Elementary School each Friday, with the goal of encouraging more young women to consider STEM studies and careers. Each week, the older students lead the Weyanoke fifth-graders in hands-on science projects, promoting critical thinking and problem solving, while developing friendships along the way. “The biggest hits have been the things they can bring home—like making slime, invisible ink or slingshot rockets—or projects that involve a competition, building the tallest or strongest structure,” says WISE club president Sydney Belt, a senior. The high school students do research on engaging experiments, ensure they have the necessary supplies, and write lesson plans, including prepping for question and answer sessions to ensure the younger girls understand the science behind the work.



What Time is it? It's Innovation Hour at Wakefield Forest Elementary School

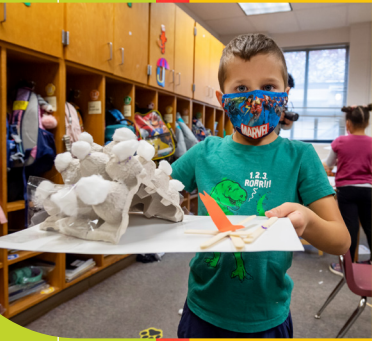
Friday afternoons can be a bit of a struggle at schools everywhere. At Wakefield Forest Elementary School, Principal Sharyn Prindle had a bright idea to keep her students engaged as the week came to an end.

On any given Friday, you would find a pair of girls teaching themselves sign language, while a boy across the aisle is building a replica of a CH-53 military helicopter and another group of students are making clothes for fairies using a tiny fashion bust.

Prindle says she knew from research that giving kids an opportunity to be creative pays off long-term. And she also knew that schools are always looking for ways to improve attendance, especially on Fridays, when absences can be heavy due to family travel plans. And so, "Innovation Hour," was born.

Students from kindergarten to fourth grade bring in materials from home, often turning to the recycle bin to bring in egg cartons, empty cereal boxes, or plastic utensils, or grab other materials laying around the house like yarn, cotton balls, or popsicle sticks. Then, when the clock strikes 2:20 p.m. on Friday, they are free to build, explore, and innovate whatever they like from the materials they brought with them.

"We ask our students to think about something they are interested in, how they can grow and develop, and how teachers can support you in getting there," said Prindle.



Students or Superheroes? Unique Escape Room Teaches Teamwork and Critical Thinking

It was just another ordinary day at Luther Jackson Middle School: A group of students sat around a table tucked in the back of the library watching a video about their next assignment. Suddenly, the thunder roars and the screen is taken over by a shadowy figure next to the school's beloved mascot, who's been kidnapped! Now, Luther Jackson's mightiest heroes must come together and learn to work as a team if they are going to stop the mischievous Evil Twin from enslaving Jackson the Tiger.

It may sound like the beginning of an action-packed blockbuster, but it's actually the mission given to students taking part in Luther Jackson's brand new escape room. The perimeter of the room is lined with eight large wooden boxes, all different colors and different shapes. These heroic students must

move from box to box, solving educational puzzles and collecting 'curriculum stones.' With each puzzle solved, the students jump for joy and cheer each other on. It's no easy task, but together, the students make it to the last challenge, where they must harness the power of an 'Avengers'-style Gauntlet boot to bring Jackson the Tiger home.

The imaginative new escape room is the brainchild of After School Program Specialist Matt Hoffert. He came up with the idea about a year ago, after a computer lab at the back of the school's library became vacant. As a fan of escape rooms himself, he thought building one would be a fun way to get the students engaged and encourage critical thinking.

"I don't necessarily look at it as a curriculum review activity," Hoffert said. "It definitely ties into that, but the bigger idea is the team building aspect of it. Learning to communicate with each other. Learning to collaborate with other thinkers."

The puzzles cover topics like history, math, geography, science, and English. Staff representatives from each core subject helped develop the material from the seventh grade curriculum. The escape room is meant to be an activity for eighth-graders, so it requires students to think back to lessons from last school year. Hoffert says all the information students need to solve the puzzles is either "on the box or in their brains".

Building Our Future: Capital Improvement Projects

Approximately two out of every three Capital Improvement Program (CIP) dollars are earmarked for renovations, modular classrooms, additions of existing school facilities, and construction of new schools. This significant expenditure reflects the age of FCPS facilities and the School Board's commitment to ensuring that all schools contain the world-class facilities necessary to support 21st Century educational programs. Here you will find some of our recently completed, ongoing, and planned projects.

COMPLETED

Herndon High School

Scope: Renovation including additions, totaling approximately 415,700 SF. Additions include science classrooms, administrative offices, library, music rooms, and site improvements.

Funding: 2013 Bond (Planning), 2015 Bond (Construction)



IN PLANNING

James Madison High School

Scope: Addition totaling approximately 64,000 SF and including science classrooms and library.

Funding: 2017 Bond (Planning), 2019 Bond (Construction)

Current Status: Under Construction

Estimated Completion: Fall 2022

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Robert Frost Middle School

Scope: Renovation including additions, totaling approximately 206,000 SF. Additions include classrooms, administrative offices, library, and site improvements.

Funding: 2017 Bond (Planning), 2019 Bond (Construction)

Current Status: Under Construction

Estimated Completion: Fall 2023

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Fox Mill Elementary School

Scope: Renovation including additions, totaling approximately 91,000 SF. Additions include classrooms, administrative offices, library, and site improvements.

Funding: 2017 Bond (Planning), 2019 Bond (Construction)

Current Status: Under Construction

Estimated Completion: Winter 2022/2023

DID YOU KNOW?

FCPS currently has ten schools with solar installations. Although these projects do not supply large amounts of energy to the schools, they serve as valuable educational tools.

Career and Technical Education—A Pathway to Hands-On Success

Our renowned Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs are second to none. From nursing and cyber security, to carpentry and marketing, our talented instructors bring real world skills and career qualifications that are in demand in today's workplace right to the classroom. If they so choose, our students can graduate and walk straight from school into a valued profession. Or they can take what they have learned and continue on to higher education with a flying start in their area of interest.



To the Rescue: Chantilly Academy Students Climb the Ladder to a Firefighting Future

A clear day at the Fairfax County Fire And Rescue Academy turns hazy as the smoke billows from a four-story cinder block structure designed for drills like this. Fairfax County firefighter recruits quickly make their way up the ladder, carefully taking one step at a time. Across the pavement, a group of Fairfax County high school students look on from a distance. But there's no time to waste, as they must get back to their own lesson of the day: laying hose lines and pumping water. "When the students get out there, they excel," said retired Battalion Chief Jerome I. Williams. "Their eyes light up."

Students in the Classroom Today Make Teachers for Tomorrow

Chantilly Academy class Teachers for Tomorrow offers an avenue for juniors and seniors to pursue

their interest in educating the next generations. With two different course levels, Teachers for Tomorrow provides an in-depth look into the teaching profession.

"My mom is a teacher, and I've always had respect for teachers," said Chantilly High School Class of 2022 senior Alyssa Dausch. "I like the satisfaction I get from seeing people achieve what they've been struggling with" Teachers for Tomorrow 1 focuses on building a foundation of how teaching works and classroom management, as well as providing opportunities to observe teachers in a classroom setting. Teachers for Tomorrow 2 allows students to further explore careers in teaching and gain more field experience.



Special Education Instruction at Fairfax County Public Schools Brings Benefits to All

At FCPS, we pride ourselves on providing wrap-around academic services from the first to the last day of school for children with special educational needs. Utilizing best practices, we ensure an individualized approach tailored to the needs of each student. Our staff are versed in the latest advancements and therapies, working to ensure every child reaches their potential, no matter the challenges.



TJ Club Uses Coding Skills and Creativity to Connect with Non-Verbal Elementary Students

As the day winds down at Freedom Hill Elementary in Vienna, students across the building are ready to head home. But in one classroom for students with intellectual disabilities, Wednesdays at 2:30 p.m. are the highlight of the week. It's the time they get to Zoom with their "buddies" from Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJ). Four non-verbal students

light up as they see four older students appear on the big screen at the front of the room. With the help of an aide, one younger student types on his Voice Output Communication Device, carefully tapping the colorful icons laid out on the screen to form a sentence: "Please do a silly dance!" He excitedly flips the device around to the camera, revealing his request. On the other end of the Zoom, the TJ students lean in to read the words typed out and start to laugh. The four



nonverbal students watch the screen in delight and giggle at the funny dance moves. It's a moment of joy for everyone. These weekly meetings are at the heart of the TJ Assistive Technology (AT) Club. The club's goal is to foster communication in a fun interactive way through games, activities, and reading. For the Freedom Hill students, it's an opportunity to practice on their devices in a relaxed setting. For the TJ students,

it's a chance to create games and learn coding tools such as HTML and JavaScript.

For both sides, it's the special connections made that leave the most lasting impact. "I really like helping kids," said junior Vivian Denny. "When they write personal messages to us that are not part of the activity, it's really nice because it shows they're actually learning and they want to use the device on their own."

Strumming for Self-Expression: Ukuleles Help Students Communicate Through Music Therapy



If students in Jenna Grazzini's music therapy class at Woodlawn Elementary School don't feel like talking some mornings, that's perfectly okay. They are learning to communicate through writing songs and strumming ukuleles. Third-grader Kanijah Willingham sits quietly most mornings, but the moment he picks up a bright purple ukulele, his voice shines as he softly sings a song he wrote himself. "Writing music definitely helps kids open up," Grazzini said. "If someone is sharing a story in a normal conversation, it's clearly a personal story. But if you're writing lyrics it can be anyone's story. It can be anonymous. So it doesn't feel as vulnerable."

As a music therapist, Grazzini teaches elements of music including reading notes, following tempo, and rhyming lyrics. But the goal is much bigger than that. All of her students qualify for music therapy through differing diagnoses including Autism Spectrum Disorder, Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities, or other health impairments. Through music therapy, students are able to share their thoughts and feelings in a safe space, while also practicing

social skills and communicating with peers in a respectful way.

Music therapy is available at select FCPS schools and Comprehensive Services Sites. Students are eligible for the program based on their IEP goals.



Special Education Students Dig In to Transform a Green Space and Gain Work Skills at the Same Time

When the pandemic curtailed work placement opportunities for certain West Springfield High School special education students, Rebecca Cousins looked close to home to keep learning alive.

There was a section of the campus that could do with a little beautification, recalled Cousins, who is the school's employment and transition representative. She knew just the work crew to help. So after some planning, and with assistance from community partners and school staff, a cohort of students in the Work Awareness and Transition programs were tasked with transforming an overgrown school courtyard into a space to be proud of.

Over the course of several weeks this spring, new landscaping and gardening skills were taught and mastered. Weeds were pulled, seeds were planted, beds were tended, and mulch was spread. Now, thanks to the hard work of these students with disabilities, a landscaped and lush retreat awaits the returning school community in the fall.



FCPS is a Caring Community

We support and welcome diversity in all forms at FCPS. Our students and staff bring with them differences of religion, race, geography, economic status, and gender identity. We pride ourselves on being a safe space where all can flourish and be appreciated for who they are.

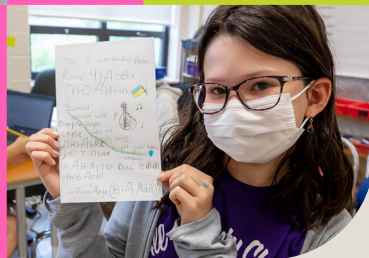
Fairfax County Schools, Students Open Doors and Arms to Afghan Refugees

Sosan Barakzai, who moved to Fairfax County from Afghanistan at the end of fifth grade, has a lot to share with the six Afghan refugee students who enrolled at Annandale High School last year. Sosan, now a 15-year-old sophomore at Annandale High herself, wants the newcomers to understand that at one point, many of their AHS peers themselves were in English language learner classes. She also wants them to know that it's ok to ask questions—of teachers and other students alike—and that Skittles and Sour Patch Kids meet Halal food standards while most American gummy bears and gummy worms don't (but she knows where to find gummy candy that is compliant with Islamic dietary guidelines).



Message of Hope: FCPS Principal Travels to Europe with Students' Handwritten Cards for Refugees

Far from his office in Vienna, Freedom Hill Elementary School Principal Nicholas Zapadka stood waiting in the freezing cold at a train station in Cologne, Germany. Wearing a volunteer vest and holding a sign with a Ukrainian flag on it, he prepared to usher dozens of families to their new temporary home: a Red Cross refugee camp. The train doors opened and exhausted families flooded onto the platform looking for a place to land. "The goal in that moment is to simply be a friendly face," Zapadka said. "I would tell them, 'Come with us. It's going to be okay.'"



Across the Generations, Students Write Letters to Local Seniors

South County High School student John Claude Shaffer knew what it meant to his grandparents to get a letter from him. He wondered if his classmates could bring the same joy to the residents of an assisted living center right across the street from their school. And so, John Claude launched the Elder Outreach Club, a group of roughly 90 students who send letters to local seniors, to help combat loneliness during the COVID-19 pandemic. The group has sent more than 500 letters to local seniors.

Celebrating our Inspiring Students

Our students amaze us every single day.
We encourage them to reach for the stars.



Highlighting Female Figures in History: TJ Student Creates New Curriculum for FCPS Students

Prasidha Padmanabhan, a rising junior at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJ), is making it her mission to highlight more women in history classes at FCPS. Padmanabhan is the founder and president of WEAR (Women for Education, Advocacy, and Rights). WEAR worked alongside FCPS educators to develop curriculum for elementary and middle school students recognizing the accomplishments of women, with an emphasis on women of color.

These women include Sybil Ludington, a 16-year-old girl who spread the word of British attack during the American Revolution; Susie King Taylor, who served as a nurse during the Civil War; and Claudette Colvin, who was arrested for refusing to give up her bus seat in segregated Alabama in 1955.

"I want the next generation of FCPS students to learn about diverse women's history the way I wanted to when I was younger," Padmanabhan said. "It truly felt amazing seeing the curriculum in action this past spring. It was not only incredibly heartwarming but also so inspiring. I saw how much of an impact it made on the students and their learning."

FCPS Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Specialist Deborah March worked with Padmanabhan to develop the female-centered history lessons.

"All of our students deserve to see themselves represented in our curriculum," March said. "Prasidha's contributions remind us that we can and should partner with students to address gaps in the stories our curriculum tells about our past and present."

Fourth-Grader Turns Pandemic Pastime Into Food Network Debut

Finley Sheers, a fourth-grade student at Churchill Road Elementary last year, was just looking for a way to stay busy, safe and out of her parents' hair at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The kitchen, usually off limits for unsupervised fun, was a tempting option as her mother, an FCPS principal, was busy on call after call as schools restructured to adjust to pandemic lockdowns. "I started with plain cakes with sprinkles made from boxed mixes and then turned to baking from scratch," said Finley. Her first original creation was a "COVID cake," Finley says. "I made a cake with pink frosting and a mask with rainbow sprinkles."



'TIME for Kids' Student Journalist Winner Grills Nutrition Director On Pandemic Meals

Ethan Zhang, last year a fourth-grader at Churchill Road Elementary School, was named as a top 10 TIME For Kids student journalist winner after submitting an impressive interview with Maria Perrone, FCPS director of food and nutrition services. Ethan was one of 20 student journalist finalists and his work was featured on the magazine's website.



How ESSER Dollars are Aiding Academics and Emotions

FCPS was awarded \$188.8 million in ESSER III federal funding, aimed at helping public education recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Cute and Calming: Animals at FCPS Help Students Unwind

Chickens, alpacas, and mini horses, oh my! Across Fairfax County Public Schools, animals are helping students destress. Some schools are utilizing ESSER III funds to help pay for therapy animal visits, while others rely on teachers going above and beyond to care for and feed the animals. Students of all ages agree, spending time with animals puts a smile on their face and helps them relax.

DID YOU KNOW?

The services of Tutor.com are available to all FCPS students.

As of May, 2022:

- 6,742 tutoring sessions have been held
- 2,367 students have utilized the platform
- 4.5/5 average student rating
- 93.8% of students who used the service recommend it

Board Games, Backpacks and Boosting Academics: Rocky Run Middle School Taps Pandemic Funds to Assist All Students

In the library at Rocky Run Middle School in Chantilly last year, students played new board games designed to boost critical thinking. Down the hall, five others study how to add fractions, using magnetic fraction tiles to assist them in finding common denominators, an elementary school math standard. Others meet after hours with staff who help them organize their backpacks and binders to boost executive function skills that may have lapsed during the pandemic.



All these students benefited from Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief aid, or ESSER III funding—money given to states by the federal government to help address any pandemic-related issues that may be impacting students. Rocky Run educators reviewed standardized testing data, teacher recommendations, and work samples to decide which students to target for services and materials funded by the federal money. “We extended invitations to students based on data driven identification of their needs, even students enrolled in advanced courses were invited,” Rocky Run’s Student Support Dean Sandra Meador said of the school’s outreach to students.

Seventy students received invitations to small group sessions targeting reading, math, or executive functioning, Meador says, of which about 70% chose to participate.

Annah, a seventh-grader at Rocky Run, says the executive functioning program has really helped her improve academically. She meets in a small group after school once a week with a teacher who kicked off the program by helping the students take all their papers and distribute items by subject into one folder to keep things organized. At the start of each session, the teacher reviewed the students’ folders to ensure they were staying on top of the organization plan, and gave rewards like candy or a pass to skip to the front of the lunch line to keep students motivated to continue, Annah says. “I used to have a lot of late assignments, most of my papers I couldn’t find, but when I started doing the method my teacher taught me, things started turning around,” Annah says.

The Performing Arts

From Phoenix, Ariz., to Mount Vernon High School: The Performance of a Lifetime for Orchestra Students

In the summer of 2021, shortly before the start of the school year, Mount Vernon High School Orchestra Teacher Alberto Rodríguez began to brainstorm ways to introduce his diverse group of students to music that would perhaps have more meaning to their lives. And so he reached for a familiar source.

Scrolling through a music teacher Facebook group comments section, he thought he may have a lead. An up-and-coming composer from Arizona who was also a woman of color, Selena Ryan, was looking for her next gig.

With nothing to lose, Rodríguez reached out to the 24-year-old band director and struck up a conversation. He told her about the Mount Vernon community, the impact that the pandemic had on his school, and the struggles his students continue to face as they attempt to bounce back to normal life. He asked Ryan whether she would be interested in creating a new composition tailor-made for his students. What they could afford to pay, he warned, would not make her rich.

So came "Free Fall," a five-minute original score tailor-made for Mount Vernon students of multiple abilities. The program notes read, "What would happen if just for a moment, you didn't worry? What if we could jump and free fall without caring where we land?" Months later, Rodríguez's advanced orchestra group was getting to grips with a melody that they would soon be giving its world premiere. Students of Violin I, II, Viola, Double Bass, and Cello were all focusing on "Free Fall" written just for them more than 2,000 miles away in Ryan's home in Phoenix, Ariz.

Inspired by electronic dance music and rock, Ryan wanted the music to be "catchy" but also resonate with that age group, only a handful of years younger than herself. "It's cool to be the first to do something and be trusted to bring a piece of music to life." Viola player Godwin Mensah said, "I love that Mr. Rodríguez got this opportunity for us."

In June, the students performed the piece to a packed house and huge applause. "Having this piece composed for us means that our students in the Mount Vernon Orchestra program get the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to diversify the educational music space by performing an exciting and thrilling new work that looks and sounds like them: diverse and vibrant," said Rodríguez, taking a bow.



Keeping Our Schools Safe and Open

Our Vax-UP Campaign Led the Nation

Fairfax County Public Schools kicked off the national rollout of COVID-19 vaccination for children ages 5-11 in November 2021. The school division welcomed First Lady Dr. Jill Biden to a clinic at Franklin Sherman Elementary School, where the first Polio vaccine was administered in 1954. Surrounded by a group of children who had just received their first dose, she urged all parents to follow in the footsteps of the polio pioneers and have their children vaccinated as soon as possible. "This vaccine is the best way to protect your children against COVID-19. It's been thoroughly reviewed and rigorously tested, it's free and it's available for every child aged five and up," Dr. Biden told an audience of parents and their newly vaccinated children.

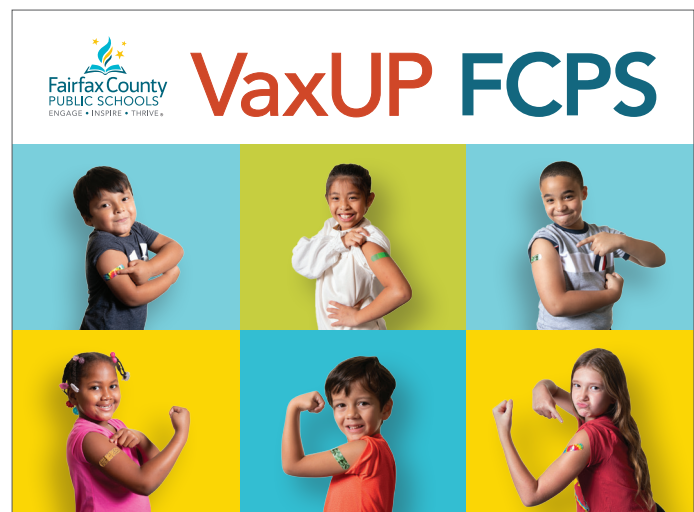
Superintendent Scott S. Brabrand, School Board Chair and Sully District Representative Stella Pekarsky, Vice Chair and At-Large Member Rachna Sizemore Heizer, and Franklin Sherman Principal Kathleen Quigley discussed the historic significance of the school, as well as its VaxUP partnership with the Fairfax County Health Department, Inova, and the Virginia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. The partnership aimed to expedite the vaccination process for its youngest students and ensure access to the vaccination for all.

"Widespread vaccination is key to keeping students learning in-person and preventing school or division closures and keeping our school staff and students safe. We are proud to be leading the way in the vaccination rollout for children ages 5-11, just as we did with the Polio vaccine in 1954," said Dr. Brabrand. At the time of the First Lady's visit, more than 85% of Fairfax County students aged 12 and older had received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

FCPS successfully implemented layered prevention strategies since the start of the pandemic in March 2020, and continued to have both an extremely low positivity rate (0.35%) and transmission rate (0.02%) in its schools.

In collaboration with its partners, FCPS hosted school-based vaccination clinics. The school division partnered with a private vendor to establish in-school clinics where students can be vaccinated with parent or guardian permission and with or without a parent or guardian present. FCPS provided multilingual information to families to help inform them of the many options available to them to vaccinate their children through websites, newsletters, and social media, as well as access to a portal to sign up for clinics.

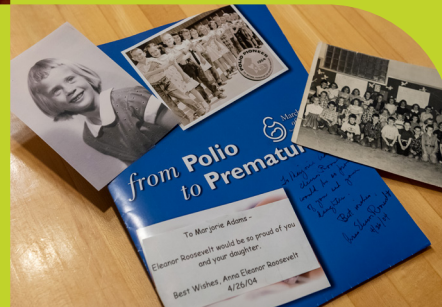
The Fairfax County Health Department, hosted multiple mass vaccination clinics, pop-up clinics at school sites in the evening and/or weekends as well as supporting school-based clinics during the school day. Inova Children's held weekend pediatric vaccination clinics at the Inova Center for Personalized Health and Inova Cares Clinic for underserved communities, while Members of the Virginia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics delivered more than 3,900 vaccines per week through its pediatricians.





Inspired By Our Polio Pioneers, 67 Years Later

In April 1954, Gail Adams Batt, an FCPS second-grader, knew she was a part of something big. Gail says she recalls a car pulling up to transport her and two other classmates to visit a doctor, where they were going to get a shot. Gail remembers that she didn't want to cry. A boy in front of her fainted, but she held strong and remained dry-eyed as she felt the needle delivering a field trial dose of the Salk polio vaccine. Afterwards, there was an ice cream sundae to celebrate.



"I was really honored that I was picked to be part of this group," Gail Adams Batt, says now. "I knew what Polio was and we children were terrified of it. There was a boy who sat next to me at school, and one day he wasn't there. We heard he got polio and we'd walk by his house and wonder." McLean's Franklin Sherman Elementary in particular, can lay claim to a significant role in the fight against polio. Students from across the district became "Polio Pioneers" in nationwide field trials for the Salk vaccine. Those trials kicked off at Franklin Sherman where a group of primarily second-grade students became the first healthy kids in the country to receive the vaccine.

Last year Franklin Sherman's sixth-grade students embraced their school's past, digging into a research project about the role the community played in the eradication of polio. Romona Wright, a sixth grade teacher said, "A couple of students have said this is just like polio, the pandemic we are going through now."

Adams Batt, now 74, remembers hearing many years later from her mother about the contentious PTA meetings that occurred at the time, with some parents vehemently arguing against any participation in the polio vaccine trials. Her mother, she says, admired former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and signed her up, believing in Roosevelt's push for vaccination. She was nervous though, and told Gail later that she watched her "like a hawk" for weeks afterwards.

Others weren't aware of the controversy. "It was a shot, nothing different more or less," says Walt Mallory, a Franklin Sherman Elementary second-grader who became a Polio Pioneer in 1954.



Celebrating Our Exemplary Staff

FCPS is so grateful to the very special staff and teachers that make every day a success.



You Got Mail: How One FCPS Elementary School is Reviving Letter Writing to Help Improve Literacy Rates

When Reading Specialist Jill Norris joined the staff of Stratford Landing Elementary School in August 2021, she brought with her a love of letter writing developed from her childhood days exchanging mail with her grandmother. So when she sat down to consider ways to engage students in reading and writing, she drew inspiration from those memories. Now, outside her office in the Alexandria school sits a mailbox, inside which children drop off hand-written letters each day, sharing everything from their weekend activities to their struggles with school. Even if she has to stay up late each night, Norris makes a point of replying to every letter on brightly colored note paper, delivered the following day to classrooms.

"I really felt that I had something I could offer these students as they returned to school buildings this year, and I wanted to do what I could to help," she said about joining the school. "At Stratford Landing, we firmly believe that reading and writing go hand-in-hand and we have found that our students did not spend time writing during the pandemic. So, the Administration, the teachers, and I initiated a 'writing revolution.'"

Each day, she checked her mailbox to see what had been delivered. Hundreds of letters have now been exchanged. She said, "I receive lovely drawings and stories and the most imaginative, folded-paper envelopes, often with instructions on how to open them! A group of third grade girls even formed a letter-writing club and wrote to several teachers in

"We Became Best Friends Right Away": Two Outstanding New Teacher Honorees reflect on Friendship since College and Path Back to FCPS

When Shelby Press and Amelia Carr walked into their first ever college class at 9 a.m. Monday morning of their freshman year, little did they know they were about to embark on a lasting friendship. As they began talking, they realized they had a lot in common. They had both played field hockey, they both wanted to be teachers, and they graduated from rival schools in Fairfax County: Edison High School and Hayfield Secondary School. The two became so close over the next few months, they decided to become roommates their sophomore year. The pair pursued the same path at the University of Mary Washington, both earning their Masters in Education.

Seven years later, Press and Carr, who are still roommates, now have something else in common. They've both been honored as FCPS' Outstanding Elementary New Teacher. Press, a second grade teacher at Riverside Elementary School in Alexandria, received the honor this year. Carr, a kindergarten teacher at Bucknell Elementary School in Alexandria, received the award in 2021.

"I think you could hear us outside Jiffy Lube Live where the awards were held. We were cheering so loud," Press said about watching her friend win the award. "The excitement was so powerful. And then she got to go back to school and tell her students. That was the most special I think."

the school." Despite her relatively short tenure at the school, she has quickly become a much-loved staff member.

Her work to help increase literacy levels and raise students out of intervention has been impressive. At the beginning of the year, more than 200 students scored below 39% on the iReady reading assessment. In the fall, Norris met with 76 students who required significant intervention; by Spring 22 that number had fallen to less than 20.

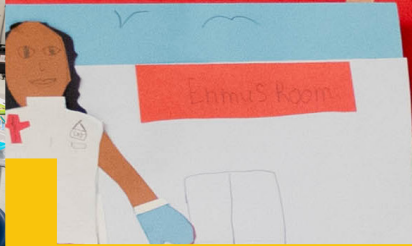
"I was bawling! It was really special," Carr said, describing the moment she watched her friend win the same award one year later. "I wasn't surprised Shelby got it. I live with her and I see how hard she works on a daily basis. We both come home late all the time and work so hard. We've known each other since we were 18 and we've both wanted to be teachers the entire time. It's really nice for Shelby to be honored for all her hard work."

Now both women have two years of teaching under their belt, and they're excited to continue their work with students in the same community that raised them.

"We both really care about our community. Especially since we were born here and went to these schools and our family is here. That adds an extra piece to it," Press said.

Amelia added, "We know how important it is to make sure students know they matter. We are both really silly and love to have fun. I love teaching because kids are the best. They bring us so much joy. We're really lucky."

The Outstanding New Teacher is awarded every year to a teacher in their first three years of teaching.



Super Sub to the Rescue

We are grateful for our army of substitute teachers who helped keep FCPS rolling this year.

Ashley Salas has a job already. The mother of two Fairfax County Public School students works as a photographer, doing shoots primarily on evenings and weekends. And still, she was drawn to becoming a regular substitute in her children's school district.

Salas, a military spouse whose children attend Fort Belvoir Elementary School, says she found herself wondering how she could make use of her weekdays to help her community recover from the pandemic. "During the day, when the kids are at school, I was like, what can I do to help?" Salas said. "My brother and his wife are both teachers, I've seen how the pandemic has affected teachers. They need breaks too, they need to be able to attend medical appointments for themselves and their families."



So Salas signed up to substitute teach at her children's school in September. Since then, she's typically in the building teaching multiple times a week—she's filled in for the art teacher, for individual grade classrooms, and even the librarian, reading books to students. She knows from the volume of requests she gets that there

is a significant need for people like her—interested, motivated, patient and caring individuals who may have some spare time during the week here and there.

In FCPS, substitutes can designate what days of the week they are available, what roles they are comfortable filling, as well as which schools they would like to help.

Salas has taken her commitment a step further. She posts on Facebook to military spouse groups encouraging other parents who have the time to get involved, leading a mini recruitment drive of her own. "I love that I teach where both of my kids go to school—one is in fourth grade here, one is in sixth grade," Salas said. "Honestly, gaining real relationships with other kids who go to school with my children and having them know I'm one other grown up in the building who cares about them and is there to support them means a lot to me."

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2020, FCPS launched the Equitable Access to Literacy program to raise reading and writing standards over the coming years.

Class of 2022 Graduation—Farewell and Congratulations To Our Seniors!



Making Things Happen: How One FCPS Grad Earned Her Associate's Degree Days Before Her High School Diploma



Hayfield Secondary School Class of '22 graduate Eryn Yarrell isn't afraid of doing things a little

out of order. Eryn, who moved seven times before fifth grade as part of a military family, graduated from Northern Virginia Community College with her associate's degree last month—19 days before she crossed the stage to receive her high school diploma.

"My parents always back my crazy ideas, but I had to come up with a plan for this," Eryn said, adding she first learned about the ability to pursue dual degrees from a cousin who did so in North Carolina. "When there was pushback that no one had done this before, or it had been awhile since anyone had done it at least, we went with the mentality of well then, 'I will be the first.'"

Eryn says her experience of attending community college and high school at the same time didn't take anything away from having a traditional teenage experience. She attended prom, was a Girl Scout since kindergarten, played on the Hayfield softball team, was a founding member of Hayfield's student equity council and editor-in-chief for two years of the Hayfield yearbook.

"What it did was allow me to make my high school experience more individual," Eryn says. "I figured out what I had to do, and that not everything that other people want to do is what I wanted to do," Eryn says. "Going through a dual degree program helps shape who you are."

Eryn, who attended Island Creek Elementary School for second, fifth and sixth grades, credits teachers there who

helped her realize she was part of "something bigger" than herself. She chose to study the continent of Africa for a fifth-grade project, exploring how the history of colonialism shaped current-day Africa. "My teacher, who had two biracial children, encouraged me to pursue the topic knowing I am Black," Eryn said. "It felt nice to be affirmed in my Blackness at such a young age, that I had a teacher who encouraged students to look into their cultures and what they felt connected to in the past."

She says she lucked out in finding teachers throughout her FCPS years who encouraged her to be an individual and think outside the box. An 11th grade English teacher, Hendrick Booz, gave her the freedom to explore any subject that interested her for a research paper, she says. Eryn picked disparities in medical care, and how they'd led to ineffective treatment of black women, as well as a review of how medical treatment looks in society today. That project aligned with Eryn's current goal of pursuing undergraduate work in medicine or as an engineer, she says, when she heads to North Carolina A&T State University this fall on a full-ride scholarship.

Hayfield Secondary Principal Martin Grimm says Eryn has been "everything we could ask for in a student: bright, driven and an incredibly hard worker."





'Set a Goal and Work Like Hell': Afghan Refugee Graduates FCPS in Under a Year With College Scholarships

Mountain View High School graduate Eltaf Samim traversed six countries, completed seventh, eighth, and ninth grade multiple times in different nations, and turned in coursework in three languages on the way to get his high school diploma this year.

The Afghan refugee left his home nation in 2015, after his father feared his work with the American military could put Eltaf and his four younger siblings at risk of being kidnapped.

"I remember it was really cold outside, my Mom was packing up, I said, 'What is going on?' She answered, 'There is no time for questions, pack everything and go to bed,'" Eltaf said.

His family's first stop was Iran, where they divided into several cars and "pressed the gas" when they saw police officers who wanted to stop them. They hid in a basement in a small village, where a guide gave them food and water and told them to keep quiet.

Then, when night fell, it was time to walk to Turkey. In the dark. In the snow. "In very narrow places where if you slip, you are going to die," Eltaf says. Six hours later, Eltaf and his group reached another border, where more police officers were looking for refugees, who shouted at them to stop, and then started shooting when they didn't.

"I had a giant backpack. As the oldest child, I wanted to keep an eye on the younger ones," Eltaf says. "I made sure everyone had crossed, then I did too."

Once in Istanbul, it was time again to hide in another house. His family left Turkey in a group of 50 people who traveled over water via air boat, just ahead of a storm, battling big waves to land on the shore of Greece. Then on to Macedonia, Austria, and ultimately, Germany, where Eltaf says he "finally got a bed to sleep on again."



Thank you Dr. Brabrand!

After five years at the helm, Dr. Scott Brabrand has stepped down from his role as superintendent of FCPS. We wish him all the best in his future endeavors and thank him for his dedication to our school division.



DID YOU KNOW?

Dr. Brabrand began his career in FCPS as a social studies teacher at Herndon High School in 1994. He was inspired to become a teacher after time spent as a classroom volunteer.



Fairfax County School Board Members

The 12 School Board members are elected for four-year terms; one member represents each of the County's nine magisterial districts, and three members serve at large.

Rachna Sizemore Heizer	Chair, Member-at-Large
Tamara Derenak Kaufax	Vice-Chair, Franconia District
Ricardy Anderson	Mason District
Laura Jane Cohen	Springfield District
Karen Corbett Sanders	Mount Vernon District
Karl Frisch	Providence District
Karen Keys-Gamarra	Member-at-Large
Megan McLaughlin	Braddock District
Melanie Meren	Hunter Mill District
Abrar Omeish	Member-at-Large
Stella Pekarsky	Sully District
Elaine Tholen	Dranesville District
Pranav Choudhary	Student Representative

Educate Fairfax energizes the power of the community to invest in educational excellence and prepare students for the future. We believe a strong and vibrant school system is part of what makes Fairfax County a great place to live and work.



Educate Fairfax
Our students. Our strength.

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