



Media Contact: Lynn Briggs
Director of Community and Media Relations
lbriggs@iwcs.k.12.va.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Isle of Wight County Schools Featured in 22nd Annual VSBA Showcases for Success Directory

Isle of Wight Co., VA – March 28, 2018: – The Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) has released its 22nd annual VSBA Showcases for Success directory, highlighting successful K-12 programs in Virginia’s public schools. “In addition to highlighting some of the best practices taking place in Virginia’s schools, the VSBA Showcases for Success directory can serve as a starting point to develop similar programs in other school divisions,” said Gina G. Patterson, VSBA executive director, “It is important to highlight choices that students have at all levels in school divisions, and the VSBA Showcases for Success directory illustrates that there are excellent programs and initiatives taking place in Virginia’s public schools.”

Isle of Wight County Schools is one of 45 school divisions from across the Commonwealth featured in the directory. IWCS submitted three programs for consideration and all were selected for inclusion in the directory. The programs from IWCS are:

Agricultural Land Lab

Isle of Wight County Schools established a working farm (Land Lab) to expand the existing agricultural program. A full-time farm manager and agriculture teacher collaborate to provide authentic real-world learning in the areas of agricultural business management and mechanization, along with plant, animal, and soil science. Since opening in September, the students have transformed the Land Lab from six acres of uncut grass, to four fenced pastures, a vegetable garden, and housing for chickens, rabbits and goats. Students receive real world experiences through the Land Lab, such as participation in “farm to table” marketing from the sale of farm products to the public and to the division’s culinary arts program. The lab has welcomed groups of elementary students as teachers introduce science standards in their classes. The working farm has made agriculture come to life for students throughout the division.

Expos of Student Learning

Schools throughout Isle of Wight County are hosting Expos of Student Learning, which provide an opportunity for students to present their work and the process of learning to a wider audience. As part of the transition to deeper learning, teachers are integrating projects that merge academic disciplines.

The projects encourage students to introduce unique solutions to solve real world problems. Project research is hands-on, often involving field experiences and consulting with experts. During an Expo, eye-catching displays capture the process of learning in its entirety, from early drafts to peer feedback and finished products. Students are stationed with their project and eager to discuss the learning process. Parents and the community look forward to Expos and enjoy seeing the pride and passion students have for their work. The addition of Expos has not only added authenticity to student learning, but strengthened the partnership between the school, parents and the community.

Makerspace

At Smithfield High School in Isle of Wight County, students have a unique workshop where they can unleash their creativity. The Makerspace is a vital part of the Manufacturing Systems courses that provide an orientation to careers in various fields of manufacturing. Students create a variety of products that require precision measurement, manufacturing and cost analysis. Class projects progress through the stages of concept development, design, testing and finally production using CNC machines, laser cutters, 3D printers and traditional tools. The Makerspace is a valuable resource throughout the division as schools implement project based learning. Manufacturing students have assisted in creations for other schools, such as cardboard Chinese Dragon Head masks used as part of an elementary school performance. The Makerspace provides the perfect opportunity for students to exhibit resiliency and tenacity to successfully tackle problems by combining a variety of manufacturing equipment with creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking.

The directory is available on the VSBA web site at www.vsba.org/showcases. It includes division-wide programs, as well as those at elementary, middle, and high school levels. The focus of the 2018 VSBA Showcases for Success is *School Choice in Public Schools*, highlighting unique program offerings in Virginia's public schools.

"We realize the benefit each program has to our vision of helping every child discover his or her unique gifts and talents," said Dr. Jim Thornton, Superintendent of Isle of Wight County Schools. "These exemplar programs are all part of our commitment to preparing our students to be college, career and life ready,"

About the Virginia School Boards Association

Virginia School Boards Association, a voluntary, nonpartisan organization of Virginia school boards, promotes excellence in public education through leadership, advocacy, and services. The Association offers conferences, information, training, and counseling designed to meet the needs of the Commonwealth's educational leaders.

###