



Submitted Halifax County Schools robotic teams demonstrated their robots Monday at the Board of Education meeting.

## Robotic teams, grants, early college for Halifax County Schools

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HALIFAX — Halifax County Schools Board of Education and community members celebrated accomplishments Monday night.

At 6 p.m., the board of education members, staff and parents of students recognized the achievements of students participating in the district's first robotics tournament, First LEGO League, held Thursday at William R. Davie Middle School.

Teams awarded were the Astro Bolts for Mechanical Design; Space Hornets for Programming; Quick Galaxies for Strategy and Innovation; Wildcat Trendsetter for Robot Performance; Into Orbit Space Cubs for Research; NASA for Innovation Solution; PELA's Galaxy Stars for Presentation; Elite Stars for Inspiration; Hidden Figures for Teamwork; Panther Scholars for Gracious Professionalism; Krypto-Knights for Against all Odds; The Almighty Griffs for Rising Stars; and PELA's Galaxy Stars for the overall Champion Award.

Afterward, parents and staff were treated to robotic demonstrations from the students.

HCS Superintendent Eric Cunningham said the accomplishments of the district's students were incredible.

"I mean when you talk about robotics, you are talking about problem-solving, collaboration, discovery, intuition — you're talking about everything that's needed to be a successful citizen," he said.

At 7 p.m., the HCS Board of Education meeting officially began. HCS Career and Technical Education Executive Director Gail Powers told board members the district applied for the Golden Leaf Grant of \$200,000.

“We are pleased to announce that we were awarded that grant on April 4,” she said. “This grant will be used to provide STEM education to both middle schools in the county as well as professional development for our stem teachers. The students will engage in real-world activities that include alternative energy, coding, and other topics that are relative to industry demand in our community.”

Cunningham said the grant money will go toward creating two STEM labs at Enfield Middle School and William R. Davie Middle School.

“We will be working with our community business sponsors to expose our children to job opportunities in our schools, problem-based learning in our schools and maker spaces so that they can work with their hands similar to what you've seen with the robotics competition,” he said. “We kind of want to transform our entire library — our media center — into a lab that allows the students to understand STEM-related issues.”

A motion was set and approved by board members to accept the grant.

Also approved was the Public Impact contract for \$100,000 for the 2018-19 school year, involving professional development and technical assistance by implementing the Opportunity Culture Model.

Cunningham remarked during the meeting about the open house of the Halifax County Early College on May 14.

“We are in full student recruitment mode,” he said. “We want all of our students to return to Halifax County. We’re on the rise and we believe that every student should be back here in Halifax County Schools.”

Board member Tyus Few said during the meeting that seeing parents and children excited about the district’s positivity was encouraging for Halifax County Schools.

“I tell people all the time, no matter what they say — I don’t care if it’s KIPP, I don’t care what they are, we’re still the best,” he said. “Even with our supplemental tax, private schools are now trying to piggyback and get our money, after we did all the work. But that’s ok, we’re going to still — as Dr. C [Cunningham] said, we are going to run this race, and we are going to win it.”

After the meeting, Cunningham said he was excited about the opening of the early college.

“That’s going to be the crown jewel in the crown of Halifax County Schools,” he said. “I am just extremely proud that we’re providing our students with the same opportunities that other kids everywhere are having.”

Cunningham emphasized that the early college is for all students who reside in Halifax County Schools.

“We want you back in the Halifax County Schools and we want you to take full advantage,” he said. “Think about this, you can earn your associate’s degree and your high school diploma at the same time. I want parents to think about the thousands of dollars you’re going to save by taking full advantage of this opportunity. This is just awesome for our parents and I want our parents to get excited about this opportunity right now that we’re bringing to every family in Halifax County Schools.”

Others recognized at the meeting were Pittman Elementary School, Markese Harvey for Student of the Month; Northwest Collegiate and Technical Academy, Richard Auka for Employee of the Month; Southeast Collegiate Prep Academy, Tammie Whitaker for Star Driver of the Month; the Rev. Andrew West for Hometown Hero; Northwest Collegiate and Technical Academy, Ethel Crawley Recipient Ariel Northington; Northwest Collegiate and Technical Academy, George and Frances London Educational Foundation Scholarship Recipient Aleah Alston; and Southeast Collegiate Prep Academy, Camira Myrick and Deshawn Smith for being the first students from the school to receive a Career Readiness Certificate Platinum.