



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: Tuesday, April 7, 2026.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. Contact [Gage Harter](#) with any questions.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: _____

Program Title: _____

Program Category: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: _____

Title: _____

Department: _____

Telephone: _____ Website: _____

Email: _____

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Executive Summary

The County-Schools Art CoLab was created from a simple idea: bring student artwork into public spaces. From that idea grew a meaningful partnership between the County and Schools, designed to highlight the creativity and diverse talents of local student artists in highly visible community locations.

Through this collaboration, six commissioned mixed-media pieces were created that highlight the county's character using locally sourced materials. Guided by their art instructors, students researched the community, developed concepts, and worked with county staff to refine their designs.

The program culminated in a public unveiling where students presented their artwork to the School Board and Board of Supervisors. This experience not only showcased their artistic achievements but also strengthened their public-speaking and presentation skills.

The Art CoLab provides students with the opportunity to create one-of-a-kind, community-reflective works, contribute to public spaces, and leave a lasting mark that celebrates Chesterfield's unique and diverse student talent.

Program Description

Internal government spaces often lack warmth, visual interest, and a sense of identity. In early 2023, Chesterfield County renovated its administration offices and public meeting room to modernize these frequently used areas. While the renovations improved functionality, they left the spaces without the softer, human-centered elements that help convey place, purpose, and community connection. County leadership recognized the need to create a more welcoming environment, one that reflects Chesterfield's character and makes public spaces feel accessible and inviting to residents.

At the same time, the county has a responsibility to steward public facilities in a way that supports civic engagement and fosters a positive experience for visitors. Enhancing public spaces with meaningful, community-reflective artwork is consistent with this obligation and aligns with broader goals of promoting transparency, openness, and public trust.

The absence of engaging visual elements presented both a challenge and an opportunity: how to enliven these renovated spaces in a way that not only beautifies but also represents the people and stories of Chesterfield. Partnering with Chesterfield County Public Schools offered a unique solution, one that would showcase local student talent, reinforce community pride, and fill public spaces with art directly inspired by the county's identity.

The County-Schools Art CoLab emerged from this need, transforming previously austere areas into vibrant, welcoming environments and strengthening the connection between county government, public spaces, and the community it serves.

The County-Schools Art CoLab was created to highlight artistic talent within Chesterfield County Public Schools (CCPS), the fifth-largest school division in Virginia with more than 65,000 students. Chesterfield County invests substantially in public education and is fortunate to have both the Specialty Center for the Arts at Thomas Dale High School and strong visual arts programs across its high schools. For the inaugural projects, students and instructors from Thomas Dale, Clover Hill, Matoaca, Midlothian, and Meadowbrook High Schools were invited to participate. Each school's art instructor guided and supervised the work.

The first project tasked students with designing an original artwork to fill a 9-by-6-foot space, inspired by Chesterfield's culture, natural environment, and sense of place. Students conducted research on native plants and wildlife, the James River, local architectural styles, and the county's historic features. Each student produced multiple thumbnail sketches and contributed elements that ultimately shaped a unified final design.

To bring the piece to life, students sourced materials from local businesses and community members. The artwork was built on wooden panels crafted by a student's parent and incorporated diverse media—paint, felt, embroidery, wool from local sheep, and international stamps reflecting Chesterfield's diversity. The final composition included symbolic features such as a tree mirroring the shape of the James River and a color palette inspired by the Board of Supervisors' new logo. A second project followed, involving the creation of five original compositions for the county's public meeting room. Students were given 30-by-30-inch panels and instructed to design pieces representing each of Chesterfield's five magisterial districts. Like the first project, students researched the history, physical landscape, foundational structures, and native wildlife of their assigned district before developing concepts and final artworks.

The County-Schools Art CoLab originated from a county leadership idea and evolved into a meaningful partnership that celebrates the creativity and diversity of CCPS students. Through the program, students gained real-world experience, from research and design to professional-level production and public presentation, while contributing lasting artwork that enriches county spaces and strengthens community identity.

The primary cost of the County-Schools Art CoLab program was materials for creating the student artworks. Across both projects, total expenditures were approximately \$1,000. Because the program relies on existing school art instructors, county staff, and donated or locally sourced items, no additional operating or personnel costs were incurred.

If another county were to replicate this program, the main expenses would similarly consist of art materials such as panels, paint, mixed-media supplies, mounting hardware, and any specialty items needed for the specific artistic concepts developed by students. Costs may vary depending on the size, type, and number of artworks requested, as well as whether materials can be donated or provided in-kind by local businesses or community partners.

The program structure, leveraging existing talent, facilities, and instructional leadership, keeps both operating and capital costs low while maximizing educational and community benefit.

The County-Schools Art CoLab has been highly successful in achieving its goals of activating public spaces, showcasing student talent, and strengthening community connection within government environments. By introducing student-created artwork into previously plain and utilitarian county spaces, the program has transformed these areas into welcoming, vibrant, and engaging environments. Employees and visitors alike have responded positively, noting that the installations make government facilities feel more approachable, warm, and reflective of the community they serve.

The presence of student art has helped foster a stronger sense of place and civic pride. The pieces celebrate Chesterfield's natural features, history, culture, and diversity, elements that resonate with residents and staff. County leadership has used the installations as examples of how public spaces can be enhanced in thoughtful, cost-effective ways while supporting youth engagement.

The program has also delivered significant benefits to students. Participants gained hands-on experience in research, concept development, collaborative design, mixed-media production, and project management. They worked directly with county staff, giving them exposure to professional design processes and public-sector collaboration. Students also presented their final pieces to the School Board and Board of Supervisors, strengthening their public-speaking skills and building confidence in sharing their work in a formal civic setting.

The success of the initial installations has sparked interest from multiple county departments seeking similar partnerships, demonstrating the program's growing impact and potential for expansion. Feedback from staff and community members reflects a consistent theme: the artwork makes county buildings feel more welcoming and representative of Chesterfield's identity.

Overall, the County-Schools Art CoLab has exceeded expectations, elevating student voices, enriching government spaces, and reinforcing the county's commitment to community partnership and creative expression. The program has created lasting visual contributions while providing meaningful educational and professional experiences for Chesterfield's talented student artists.

The County-Schools Art CoLab is innovative because it reimagines how local government, public education, and community engagement intersect. Rather than commissioning external artwork or relying on traditional décor, the program invites students to become creative partners in shaping government spaces. This approach is both cost-effective and uniquely community-driven, transforming public facilities through art that reflects Chesterfield's identity, history, and diversity.

What sets this program apart is the depth of collaboration. Students are not simply producing artwork, they engage in research, conceptual development, design refinement with county staff, and public presentation to elected officials. This provides authentic, real-world experience rarely available at the high-school level, allowing students to build professional portfolios and public-speaking skills while leaving a permanent mark on their community.

The program is effective because it achieves multiple goals simultaneously:

- Enhancing government spaces to make them more welcoming and reflective of the community.
- Elevating student voices and creativity in a highly visible way.
- Strengthening relationships between county government and Chesterfield County Public Schools.
- Delivering measurable value at minimal cost using existing talent and infrastructure.

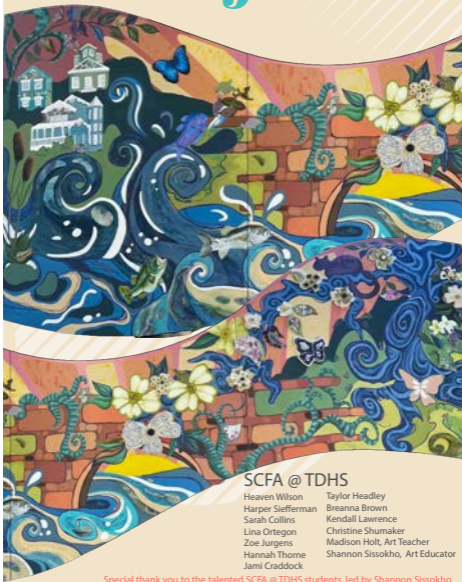
The resulting installations have already inspired staff and visitors, improved the character of government facilities, and generated positive feedback from families, employees, and community members. The model is scalable, sustainable, and easily replicable by other counties seeking to activate public spaces in a meaningful, community-centered way.

This program deserves recognition because it demonstrates how innovation in local government does not require large budgets, just vision, partnership, and a commitment to elevating the community's own talent. The Art CoLab stands as a creative, inclusive, and impactful example of what county-school collaboration can achieve.

***The Specialty Center for the Arts
@TDHS, Visual Art Students present:***

MAY 2024

the way home



SCFA @ TDHS

Heaven Wilson	Taylor Headley
Harper Siefferman	Breanna Brown
Sarah Collins	Kendall Lawrence
Lina Ortegon	Christine Shumaker
Zoe Jurgens	Madison Holt, Art Teacher
Hannah Thorne	Shannon Sissokho, Art Educator
Jami Craddock	

Special thank you to the talented SCFA @ TDHS students, led by Shannon Sissokho.

CCPS DISTRICT ART

Celebrating the artistic talent across all five magisterial districts



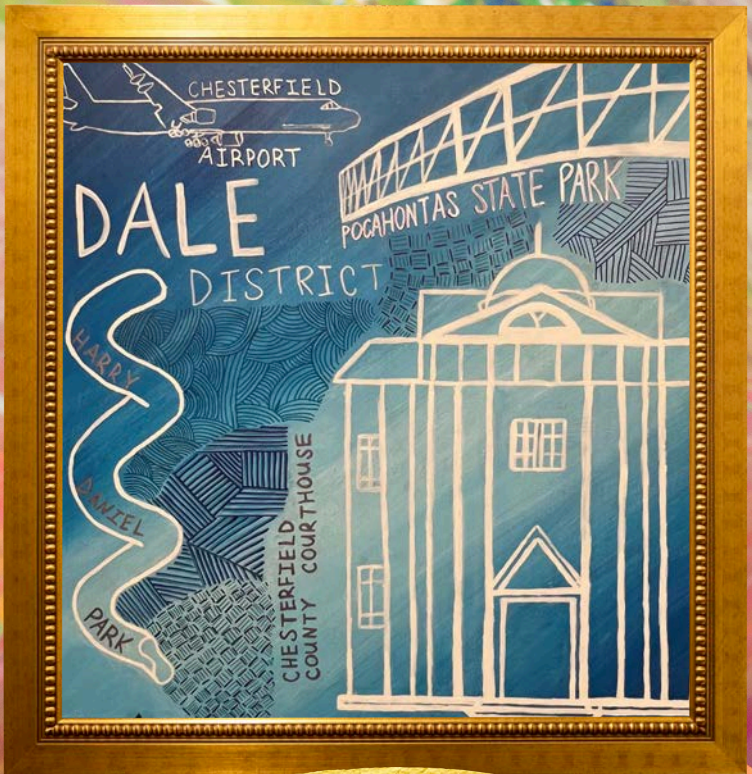
BERMUDA

Created by Thomas Dale High School, Specialty Center for the Arts students: Leilani Bryant, Sydney Harrison, Charlotte Henderson, Charles Potts, Katherine Spradlin, Kiara Vicente; Teachers: Madison Holt, Shannon Sissokho



CLOVER HILL

Created by Clover Hill High School students: Lyric Bloomquest, Kathryn Facquet, Lily Franz Laferriere, Luri Lee, Sarayu Mandalapu, Anna Jane Molis, Hannah Neely, Elizabeth Radgowksi; Teacher: Rachel Principe



DALE

Created by Meadowbrook High School students: My'Kaal Casey, Aiyana Dilligard, Liverin Perez Escobar, Rosemary Bonfilio Hernandez, Mahlet Mulu, Justin Smith, Isaac Delgado Ventura, Ahmad Whitfield; Teachers: Gabe Ferreiro, Megan Lane



MATOACA

Created by Matoaca High School students: Ava Appleby, Mars Beane, Pacey Hatcher, Kenslee Jones, Illiana Pace, Tamiyah Parham, Addison Rivers, Isabelle Rivers, India Smith, Kylie Tucker, Riley White, Annalynn Wingfield, Ambriel Young; Teachers: Matthew Ramirez, Elizabeth Wills



MIDLOTHIAN

Created by James River High School student: Brinkley Porter; Teacher: Anne Constanzer

CCPS DISTRICT ART

Celebrating the artistic talent across all five magisterial districts



BERMUDA

Created by Thomas Dale High School, Specialty Center for the Arts students: Leilani Bryant, Sydney Harrison, Charlotte Henderson, Charles Potts, Katherine Spradlin, Kiara Vicente; Teachers: Madison Holt, Shannon Sissokho

Description: The artwork serves as a tribute to the Bermuda District, a place interwoven by history, industry, and nature. Framed within the borders of a postage stamp, the piece symbolizes the connection- between past and present, land and water, tradition and progress. Through vibrant colors and flowing compositions, the essence of the district is captured, where movement, growth and legacy shape the community.

CCPS DISTRICT ART

Celebrating the artistic talent across all five magisterial districts



CLOVER HILL

Created by Clover Hill High School students: Lyric Bloomquest, Kathryn Facquet, Lily Franz Laferriere, Luri Lee, Sarayu Mandalapu, Anna Jane Molis, Hannah Neely, Elizabeth Radgowksi; Teacher: Rachel Principe

Description: The research for the artwork is deeply rooted in the industries and landmarks that represent the Clover Hill District. Students drew inspiration from outdoor attractions, such as the historic Rockwood House and its surrounding park, as well as the newer sports complex. The design incorporates special elements along with the swift creek Reservoir, representing outdoor beauty and recreation. The students painted the design and framed the composition with relief plaster and wire dogwood flowers, symbolizing the Virginia state flower.

CCPS DISTRICT ART

Celebrating the artistic talent across all five magisterial districts



DALE

Created by Meadowbrook High School students: My'Kaal Casey, Aiyana Dilligard, Liverin Perez Escobar, Rosemary Bonfilio Hernandez, Mahlet Mulu, Justin Smith, Isaac Delgado Ventura, Ahmad Whitfield; Teachers: Gabe Ferreiro, Megan Lane

Description: Artwork was designed digitally, incorporating local landmarks and buildings. Students painted a gradated background using acrylic paint and drew images that represented each location. The group focused on linework to outline the images and included designs between each piece.

CCPS DISTRICT ART

Celebrating the artistic talent across all five magisterial districts



MATOACA

Created by Matoaca High School students: Ava Appleby, Mars Beane, Pacey Hatcher, Kenslee Jones, Illiana Pace, Tamiyah Parham, Addison Rivers, Isabelle Rivers, India Smith, Kylie Tucker, Riley White, Annalynn Wingfield, Ambriel Young; Teachers: Matthew Ramirez, Elizabeth Wills

Description: Matoaca is named after the Pamunkey Princess "Matoaka" better known as Pocahontas. The canoe in the piece represents her and is crafted from leather. The bridge, tree and foliage were created using organic material & collage and represent the land of Matoaca. The cardinal perched on the edge of the canoe symbolizes the state of Virginia.

CCPS DISTRICT ART

Celebrating the artistic talent across all five magisterial districts



MIDLOTHIAN

Created by James River High School student: Brinkley Porter;
Teacher: Anne Constanzer

Description: The artwork was created with a focus on the history and environmental aspects of the Midlothian District. Landmarks such as Midlothian Mines and the Old Bon Air structure are incorporated to reflect the culture of the district. The James River flows through the composition, guiding the viewer's eye to the unique features the district has to offer.