

**For Immediate Release:**  
August 22, 2025

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**Six finalists named for 2026 Richmond County School System Teacher of the Year**

(AUGUSTA, GEORGIA) – Six Richmond County School System (RCSS) teachers received surprising news during the middle of their school day when Superintendent Dr. Malinda Cobb and the school system's Teacher of the Year planning committee announced the top finalists for the annual award on Friday, August 15.

"We had an incredibly competitive selection process this year," said Dr. Melissa Shepard, chief human resources officer. "So many of our 54 school-level Teachers of the Year qualified that we increased the number of finalists from five to six. Each of these teachers represents the very best of Richmond County and the deep commitment our educators have to students."

The 2026 RCSS Teacher of the Year finalists are Audrey Crosby of Jenkins-White Elementary School, Latonya Jackson of John S. Davidson Fine Arts Magnet School, Chef Kanesha Roberts of George P. Butler High School, LaShanda Mills of Richmond Hill Elementary School, Kristina Istre of A.R. Johnson Health Science and Engineering Magnet School, and Andrie McFadden of the Marion E. Barnes Career Center.



**Audrey Crosby** is an art teacher at Jenkins-White Elementary School with 20 years of teaching experience. Crosby began her RCSS career at T.W. Josey High School, where she taught from 2005 to 2014, and returned to the district in 2023 at Jenkins-White. She serves as chair of the art department and the Sunshine Committee and also works as a teacher mentor. She holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from Tennessee State University and a Master of Education in curriculum and instruction from Augusta State University.

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**Latonya Jackson** teaches AP mathematics and computer science at Davidson Fine Arts Magnet School. Jackson has 19 years of teaching experience, including nine years with the Richmond County School System. Jackson previously taught at Cross Creek High School from 2007 to 2011 and joined Davidson in 2021. She serves as the school's mathematics department chair and holds a Bachelor of Science in mathematics from Paine College, a Master of Arts in teaching from Augusta State University, and an Educational Specialist in curriculum and instruction from Columbus State University.



**Chef Kanesha Roberts** teaches culinary arts at George P. Butler High School, where she has worked for four years. She has 10 years of teaching experience, including six years at Jefferson County High School before joining the Richmond County School System. Prior to teaching, Roberts served as a U.S. Army sergeant and culinary specialist. She serves as senior advisor, prom co-director, and homecoming coordinator at Butler. Roberts holds an Associate of Applied Science in culinary arts from Le Cordon Bleu.

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**LaShanda Mills** teaches third-grade English language arts at Richmond Hill Elementary School. She has 13 years of teaching experience and began her RCSS career as a paraprofessional at A. Brian Merry Elementary in 2012. She serves as the teacher in residence for ELA in grades K–3, third-grade chair, a member of the Instructional Leadership Team, and co-chair of the hospitality committee. Mills holds a Bachelor of Science in general studies and a Master of Arts in elementary education from Brenau University, where she is also pursuing a doctoral degree in elementary education.



**Kristina Istre** teaches seventh-grade life science at A.R. Johnson Health Science and Engineering Magnet School. She has 31 years of teaching experience, including 28 years in RCSS. Istre serves as seventh-grade chair, middle school science teacher in residence, and coordinator for multiple student competitions, including EcoMeet and the Science Fair. She is the current executive director of the Georgia Science Teachers Association and served as its president from 2024 to 2025. Istre holds a Bachelor of Science in education from Indiana University, earned her STEAM endorsement from the University of South Carolina, and is pursuing a master's degree in creative arts in education from Lesley University.



**Andrie McFadden** teaches welding at the Marion E. Barnes Career Center and has 11 years of teaching experience, including seven with RCSS. He began his RCSS career at T.W. Josey Comprehensive High School in 2017 before joining Barnes in 2018. Prior to teaching in Richmond County, McFadden worked as a welding teacher in South Carolina and served as a pipefitter and welder in the United States and abroad. He serves as a committee chairperson and team lead at Barnes. McFadden holds a Bachelor of Science in business management and leadership from Capella University and a Master of Arts in career and technical education from Ball State University.

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All 54 Teachers of the Year for the Richmond County School System will be honored at the annual Teacher of the Year Banquet on September 18 at the Augusta Marriott Convention Center starting at 7 p.m., where the district's Teacher of the Year will be announced.

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*Photos courtesy of the Richmond County School System.*