



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mae Eanes Middle merges with Williamson High School in new Middle Grades Preparatory Academy

To strengthen academics and provide students with more opportunities for success, Mobile County Public Schools is relocating Eanes Middle School to the new Williamson Middle Grades Preparatory Academy on the campus of Williamson High School.

Students in grades 6-8 will engage in preparatory programs that support successful transitions into high school and into the Signature Academy program, with the goal being for students to graduate well prepared for college and/or to enter the workforce.

The merger will strengthen the curriculum at both schools, which have suffered from declining enrollment over the last decade. And it will allow the district to add new programs to benefit all students. That includes art, music, engineering, technology and career and technical education.

Over the past decade, Williamson's enrollment has declined from 1,113 students to just 573, and Eanes' has decreased from 764 to 264, resulting in the loss of teaching units and academic and elective programs.

This is part of a district-wide School Improvement Plan, designed to increase academic achievement at schools that have been identified by the Alabama Department of Education as being low-performing. Both Eanes and Williamson have been identified as such.

The move will take place this August.

Highlights of the new program include:

- The creation of a pilot program where middle school students will participate in the high school's Signature Academy, which exposes students to career opportunities. Students in the middle grades will be introduced to Williamson's Signature Academy of Manufacturing, Engineering and Entrepreneurship through career and technical education classes.
- A partnership with the Mobile County Office of Alabama Cooperative Extension Service and its Master Gardeners and the Alabama Department of Agriculture, where students in grades 6-8 will participate in a farm-to-table agriculture elective course. A greenhouse and raised planting beds will be used for students to learn to



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SUPERINTENDENT Martha L. Peek

- grow fruits, vegetables and herbs, which will be sold to local restaurants, used in the Culinary Arts Program, and shared with the community.
- Increased rigor and relevance in academic programs for grades 6-8 and 9-12.
 - Signing bonuses to attract highly qualified teachers for positions that have been hard to staff at Williamson and Eanes, including science and math.
 - More opportunities for students to engage in learning via elective courses. Research shows that students who engage in elective activities are more successful academically, have higher attendance rates and are more likely to graduate from high school.
 - Student support and safety will be enhanced through the addition of mentoring programs, intervention programs and community partnerships as well as a full-time school resource officer.
 - Transition from middle to high school will be eased and a sense of Williamson Lions pride enhanced. For example, eighth-graders may participate in Williamson's marching band and in Signature Academy activities.
 - Students in grades 6-8 will attend classes in a designated wing. They will arrive and leave school separately from the high school students. They will eat during separate lunch waves and have separate physical education classes.