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District Administrator has named Mount Airy City Schools as one of its inaugural Districts of Distinction for its innovative work in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics). District Administrator magazine is a national publication distributed to educational leaders around the country. The annual award was created to honor school districts that are leading the way with innovative ideas that improve student achievement and whose programs can be duplicated in other schools.

Mount Airy City Schools began its STEAM initiative as a response to the high standard set by parents, staff, and business leaders during the strategic planning process. Their goal was to provide a pathway for Mount Airy City Schools to build upon its rich history and tradition of success while moving the district forward into the future. STEAM has impacted children from every grade level. Tharrington Primary and Jones Intermediate put STEAM in place through Exploration Rooms and a STEAM specialist. Mount Airy Middle School created SWAG (Students with Ambitious Goals) which allowed all children to choose, based on their interest, an academic competition class every afternoon and initiated the Google Learning Project, a 1:1 initiative for students. Mount Airy High School implemented STEAM through a program that partners with the local community college and provide an "early college" type experience on campus by teaching scientific visualization. The high school also partners with the prestigious NC School of Mathematics and Science each day to teach Advanced Placement courses and STEAM courses such as forensics and aerospace engineering.

These initial steps have been tremendously successful for the district and significant achievement results have already been seen in literacy and math. The district reports double digit growth in elementary literacy and high school mathematics in just one year. In addition to these numbers, elementary and middle school science saw a significant increase in achievement.

Dr. Greg Little stated, "We want our students to think critically, innovatively solve problems, be confident leaders and responsible citizens with a passion for learning. In short we want to create innovators. Our work with STEAM is designed to cultivate innovative thinking and social responsibility as students seek to make Mount Airy a better place to live."

Mount Airy City Schools will be featured in the November issue of District Administrator magazine.

This is the third national award that the district has received in the last three years.

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