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Local high schools ranked in US News & World Report

By MOLLY WILLIAMS The Winchester Star

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Winchester's John Handley High School was recently named a Best High School by U.S. News & World Report.

Based on criteria including college readiness, college curriculum breadth, state assessment proficiency rank, state assessment performance rank, underserved student performance and graduation rate, Handley was ranked number 3,912 out of 17,945 public high schools across the country.

That, according to a press release from Winchester Public Schools, puts Handley in the top 25% of public high schools nationwide.

A school must rank within the top 40% in order to be considered a Best High School, the release states.

"Being recognized among the nation's best high schools reflects the commitment of our students, staff and families and the high expectations we have for every student at Handley," WPS Superintendent Jason Van Heukelum said in the release. "We are proud to offer students in Winchester an exceptional range of opportunities while maintaining a strong sense of connection and belonging. This recognition reinforces our belief that excellence and opportunity should go hand in hand for every student."

Within the state of Virginia, Handley was ranked number 85 out of 341 public high schools.

Clarke County High School was ranked number 5,562 nationwide in the report, placing the school among the top 31% of public high schools in the country.

Within Virginia, CCHS was ranked number 123.

In an email, Clarke County Public Schools Superintendent Rick Bolling wrote that CCHS's strengths include its 99% on-time graduation rate and strong state assessment results.

He also noted that the U.S. News & World Report rankings are more dependent on advanced placement (AP) offerings, which fewer CCHS students take due to the school's "strong IB (International Baccalaureate) and dual enrollement offerings," both of which Bolling said the school is "fortunate to have."

"I am proud of Clarke County High School and its accomplishments," Bolling wrote. "The results are indicative of our dedicated students, stellar staff and supportive community."

In Frederick County, Sherando High School was ranked number 8,248 nationally and 184 statewide.

Millbrook High School landed at number 9,846 nationwide and number 219 in the commonwealth.

James Wood High School was ranked number 11,882 in the country and number 249 in Virginia.

In an email, Frederick County Public Schools spokesperson Tara Helkowski wrote that FCPS is "proud to see all three of our comprehensive high schools recognized in the U.S. News & World Report rankings, and we appreciate the hard work of our students and staff that contributes to their success."

Helkowski continued that such rankings "provide one measure of school performance," and that the division also looks at "the many other ways our schools are preparing students for their future."

"Across FCPS, we continue to expand rigorous academic opportunities, career and technical education, work-based learning and other pathways that prepare students for enrollment, enlistment or employment after graduation," she wrote.

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