

## WHS Students Headed to Governor's School

Written by Marshal Ashcraft, Watauga Schools  
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Watauga High School students Madison Casey, Sidney Ginn, Jenna Messer, Spencer Schlenker, Sidney Wiswell, and Mary Margaret Zrull have been selected to attend Governor's School of North Carolina, a prestigious five week summer program offered to 550 of the most academically gifted students

from across the state. "We are very proud of our Governor's School students," said Watauga High School Principal Marshall Gasperson. "It is a truly impressive achievement to be chosen to attend and we are certain that these students will make the most of this opportunity."

Students attending Governor's School are nominated and chosen in one of eleven subject areas: art, choral music, dance, English, French, Spanish, instrumental music, mathematics, natural science, social science, and theater. Ginn was selected for choral music, Zrull for instrumental music, Schlenker for mathematics, Casey for natural science, Wiswell for social science, and Messer in theater.

Governor's School is an intellectually rigorous program, yet no grades or tests are given and no course credit is received. The goals of Governor's School courses and activities are to stimulate student creativity, encourage students to question basic assumptions, and develop an acceptance of change. The curriculum emphasizes contemporary theories and new developments in each subject area. Students concentrate their studies in the subject in which they were selected but they also participate in courses and activities that are shared among students from all subject areas. The faculty and staff of Governor's School include leading teachers, professors, and professionals from across the country.

The Governor's School of North Carolina is the nation's oldest statewide summer residential program for academically gifted high school students. Admissions are highly selective. High schools are very limited in how many students they can nominate for the program and only about one-third of the highly accomplished students that are nominated receive an invitation to attend.

Although Governor's School is widely praised by program alumni and educators, it has suffered from state budget cuts in recent years. All expenses of attending Governor's School for a six week program were paid by the state until 2009-10, when the legislature reduced funding in response to the state's budget problems. The reduced state support required the school to

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institute a \$500 tuition fee for each student. Two years later, the NC General Assembly entirely eliminated the program's funding, but Governor's School alumni and other supporters raised more than \$700,000 to sustain operations for 2011-12 with a shorter program and 100 fewer students. State funding was restored for 2012-13 but the tuition fee and the previous reductions in student enrollment and program length remain in effect.

Since the tuition fee was implemented, Watauga High School has paid the fee for its students and the high school will do so again for the six students chosen to attend the program in 2013.

Governor's School operates at two locations, a western campus at Salem College in Winston-Salem and an eastern campus at Meredith College in Raleigh. Casey, Ginn, Messer, and Schlenker will attend Governor's School at Meredith College, while Wiswell and Zrull will be attending on the campus of Salem College.