



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Westdale Middle School to Hold Annual Aquaponics White Coat Ceremony

BATON ROUGE, La. — The East Baton Rouge Parish School System is proud to present the sixth annual White Coat Ceremony, celebrating Westdale Middle School's aquaponics program.

The ceremony will be held at 9:30 a.m. Feb. 11 at the school, 5650 Claycut Road.

Nearly 50 students will receive white lab coats, symbolizing the beginning of a lifelong journey into the world of STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics). The coat is bestowed upon Aquaponics 1 students who have successfully met rigorous academic and performance standards.

Aquaponics 1 is a middle school STEM pathway elective certified by LSU's STEM Cain Center. The program promotes STEM awareness and confidence through nontraditional farming techniques, allowing students to grow plants and fish in an indoor lab setting.

The special guest speaker will be Preston Castille, president and CEO of Helix Community Schools, a network of early childhood, elementary, secondary and postsecondary schools with a strong emphasis on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics). Castille also serves as a member of the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Beyond the classroom, Westdale's aquaponics program continues to make a meaningful impact across the community. Students and staff have contributed to organizations, including St. Vincent de Paul, New Horizons, Poverty Table and other local partners. The program has also donated to Front Yard Bikes and community fridges to support families in need.

Program highlights this year include participation in WHAM STEAM Night exhibits; the Ocean Commotion/Sea Grant Expo; and attendance at the 2025 World Aquaculture Conference.

