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ECSD NEWS RELEASE

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Your Votes Helped the Washington High Wildcats' Library Win Big ***Still One More Layer to the Competition!***

Pensacola, FL: As part of their acknowledgment of the 2017 Celebrate Literacy Week in January, Booker T. Washington High School entered a national contest for a chance to help their Innovation Center by submitting a student-made video about the library's conversion into an Innovation Center and how the library became an activity center that any school would be proud to have on their campus.

Booker T. Washington High School learned in January that they had enough votes -- with an extra concerted effort the last night - to make it to the level of People's Choice, or Top Ten.

"The evening of Jan. 27th was so exciting and stressful," said Alisha Wilson, Booker T. Washington's Innovation Center Specialist (aka librarian). "Around 6:00 I could see that we were a couple hundred votes away from the top ten. We pushed the word out to the media and we put requests to vote one more time on various Facebook pages and asked everyone to share our request."

"When the voting ended that night at midnight, I could see that we were a couple hundred votes in the range for top ten!" added Wilson.

Making it into the top ten meant a guaranteed prize of \$8,000 and a chance to be judged for consideration as the top high school submission.

Today they learned that their video has been selected as the top high school submission! This means two things. One, the \$8,000 prize becomes a \$30,000 prize! Two, they are now competing *again* against the top elementary school and middle school submissions for the \$60,000 Grand Prize! That winner will be announced on Apr. 28.

"We can't thank our community enough for their votes!" said Wilson. "And the local media! We asked for help to get the word out about the contest and even put out an extra request during the last few hours of voting and we got their help, and it worked!"

The votes got us into the top ten, then the votes helped again as part of the judging rubric used to select the top high school.”

There is a lot of excitement in the Wildcat Lounge today as the announcement sinks in and they start to think of what new and exciting innovations will be coming from the \$30,000 prize. Wilson has plans to form a committee of teachers and students to gather input and ideas for the prize money. (Keep your fingers crossed for them that the \$30,000 morphs into the \$60K prize on Apr. 28th.)

To watch a video of the announcement, go to www.follettchallenge.com. Scroll down below the video to see all of the top contenders and to find links to their video submissions. Another way to see it is to use this LINK for download... Copy & paste the link into your browser, when page opens, right click to "save video as"
https://brightcove.hs.llnwd.net/v1/uds/pd/1464976798001/201702/3855/1464976798001_5339813122001_5335759293001.mp4?publd=1464976798001&videoid=5335759293001

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Photo information: Alisha Wilson (left) is Booker T. Washington High School's Innovation Center Specialist. With her is one of her students who produced the video for the Follett Challenge, Madie Mae Sasse, a Washington High senior planning to attend the University of Tennessee in the fall.

About Booker T. Washington High School's Innovation Center

In 2015, aligned with Escambia County School Superintendent Malcom Thomas's Vision 2020, Washington High School's Media Center changed not only its name to Innovation Center but, also its mission. Striving to prepare students for the 21st century, the new Innovation Center opened a Spark Lab, a creative space full of supplies and technology for student use, as well as a Writing Lab partnered with the University of West Florida. In addition, the programs are run by Lead Innovators, student assistants who learn new technologies such as coding and 3D design and teach them to interested students. The program has been popular with the students at Washington and has been a catalyst for getting more students to visit the space.

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Media queries about Escambia County School District topics should be directed to Kim Stefansson, at 850-469-6219 or kstefansson@escambia.k12.fl.us. Like ECSD on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ecsdfi

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