



**Above:** SURROUNDED: The Clarke County School District looks sadly at negative reports about itself. Local news sources and members of the local community often criticize CCSD, in a way that is more harmful than helpful. Illustration by Eleanor Robinson

**We are better than this**

*Media portrayal and discussions surrounding CCSD are unnecessarily negative and give CCSD a bad reputation that it doesn't deserve.*

When one searches for “Clarke Central High School” on local news sources, they are likely to see negative portrayals peppering their news feed.

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It stretches beyond just news outlets. Even CCSD parents can be found disparaging the district in forums such as the CCSD Town Hall on Facebook.

Media coverage and community discussions of high schools in the Clarke County School District focus disproportionately on violence, crime and insufficient resources, creating a negative perception of CCSD in the wider-Athens area.

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A [report](#) by the Response to Intervention Action Center finds that outside perceptions about the quality of an urban education, such as beliefs of race and class as limitations in the classroom, can have a strong impact on students' academic achievement.

This bias contributes to the issue. Schools like CCHS, [Cedar Shoals High School](#) and [Classic City High School](#) have to work twice as hard to maintain an image as “good schools” and be taken seriously.

One only needs to do a quick news search of CCSD or take a look at the CCSD Town Hall on Facebook to see how these stereotypes surround CCSD. While it is important to bring attention to what is going on with the school district and give criticism, there is a line between what is constructive and what is hurting the district as a whole.

“I think we always get beat up in the media. I will say that the fights do tarnish our brand as a school and a district,” CCHS assistant principal Summer Smith said. “We work really hard, and we think this place is great, (but) are we perfect? Goodness no. And so it is frustrating to always be portrayed in that aspect.”

When the conversation around CCSD is exclusively about what is going wrong, all of the amazing students and teachers and administrators, and their hard work, are discredited.

CCSD is so much more than it's problems, and deserves to be portrayed as such.

“I would appreciate it if we got as much positive attention as we got negative attention,” CCHS assistant principal Latinda Dean said. “We got some really awesome things going on in our building, so those things could be pushed out and that would be great.”

Positive change for the CCSD starts at home. Students and parents should be mindful of the difference between voicing issues in the district, and carelessly condemning. If we don’t respect and support our district and schools, who will?

Beyond the bounds of the CCSD, we need support from our community. There are incredible things going on in the district and they should be recognized just as much, if not more, than the negatives.

By Natalie Schliekelman