

essentials

News from Gwinnett County Public Schools

As 2020–21 ends, here's need-to-know info

For families that want to stay in the know... keep up with the latest on GCPS' website (www.gcpsk12.org) and social media accounts. Read [Communiqué](#), subscribe to [GCPS eNews](#), and tune in to the ["Teaching Gwinnett" podcast](#). Use the [GCPS TV app](#) to watch live and on-demand content; stream online at gcpstv.org; and watch programming on cable. **Here's a recap of some of the most requested information in these last weeks of the school year.**

GCPS makes plans for 2021–22 school year

Plans for Fall 2021 call for a [return to in-person learning](#) for nearly all Gwinnett school-children. This decision considers students' academic and social-emotional needs, lower rates of infection, the availability of vaccinations for staff, and guidance from health experts and organizations. GCPS is committed to safety for its students and staff and will continue mitigation efforts such as the wearing of masks, provision of PPE, and strict cleaning regimens. GCPS will continue to rely on guidance from the CDC and other health partners in developing plans for the fall. A small percentage of families opted out of in-person learning for 2021–22 and their children will participate in a modified digital learning option. Over the summer, watch for additional information about the 2021–22 school year posted to the GCPS website. We look forward to welcoming our students to a new school year!

It's time for kindergarten registration!

GCPS is busy planning for our students' return for the 2021–22 school year, including the first day of school for our newest students—kindergartners! If your child or the child of someone you know will be five years old on or before **Sept. 1**, now's the time to register in an easy, two-step process.

Step 1: Complete [online registration](#) on the GCPS website.

Step 2: Before **May 28**, schedule an appointment at your child's [new school](#) to verify information, complete a kindergarten readiness profile, pick up materials, and learn about exciting summer enrichment opportunities for your new kindergartner!

Completing online registration will help schools be ready to welcome kindergartners and ensure that registered children are eligible for summer enrichment activities. Kindergarten information and resources are found on the [Kindergarten Registration page](#) of the GCPS website.

Families interested in the [Dual Language Immersion](#) program available at nine GCPS



elementaries can learn more online. DLI registration closes **May 13**.

Gwinnett sets 2021 grad schedule

GCPS will hold in-person graduation ceremonies for the Class of 2021 between **May 24** and **May 31**! The in-person ceremonies will reflect mitigation efforts, based on guidelines from the state and health partners. Due to the limited seating, GCPS graduations will be live-streamed, allowing families/friends to view the ceremonies. See the GCPS website for [dates, times, and locations of the ceremonies](#). Show your support for the Class of 2021—or feature your own senior—with a profile frame on your social media accounts! (Watch for details on the website and on our social media accounts.) In **May**, look for the special *Communiqué* issue—A Celebration of the Class of 2021!



Spring 2021

VOLUME VI, ISSUE 2

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GCPS shares summer learning plans

Ride the wave of learning... GCPS' re-designed summer learning experience will support all students, specifically addressing learning loss due to the pandemic. [Summer Enrichment+Acceleration \(SEA\) activities](#) will be offered in four formats at no cost to families.



In-Person SEA, designed for students (grades 1–8) who will benefit the most, will accelerate and expand on learning for the current grade and preview what students will learn at the next grade, including enrichment opportunities outside the core subject areas. **Rising K Academy** will use fun, hands-on activities to introduce new kindergartners to school and what to expect in the fall. Both of these in-person sessions will be offered **June 14–July 2**. Class sizes will be small and schools will follow safety practices like masks and physical distancing. Students will receive breakfast and lunch.

All K–8 students will have access to the **Digital SEA Program**, a self-paced digital format accessed through the [MYeCLASS student portal](#). **Career and Technical Education (CTE) Enrichment Camps** will be hosted at **Duluth HS** for interested students in grades 8–12. Participants in the sessions will earn industry-recognized certification in areas like food safety, worksite safety, and CPR. All week-long camps are in **June**.

High School Summer Classes for Credit

GCPS offers high school students [four ways to learn for credit](#) this summer.

- **Online summer classes (June 7–30)**. [Register](#) through **May 30**.
- **Face-to-face summer classes (June 14–July 7)** offered at **Collins Hill HS, Duluth HS, and Parkview HS**. [Register](#) through **June 4**.
- **GCPS Community Schools** summer classes, including Health and PE. Check the [website](#).

- **Credit Recovery** for students who previously took a course and were unsuccessful. Contact your counselor for approval.

To address COVID-related learning gaps, GCPS will pay for up to two summer classes for high school students needing to retake a class previously failed. GCPS students taking a course for the first time pay \$250 per course. Rising 9th graders may take Health and/or PE at **Duluth HS**, online, and through some Community Schools.

BOE votes to transition leadership

At the **March 18** meeting of the Gwinnett County Board of Education (BOE), Board members voted 3-2 to [transition the district's leadership](#) from **CEO/Superintendent J. Alvin Wilbanks** to a successor in preparation for the 2021–22 school year. Mr. Wilbanks' tenure will end **July 31, 2021**. He has served in the role since 1996. The Board is conducting a [national superintendent search](#), led by the [Georgia School Boards Association](#). Students, staff, families, and community members are invited to participate in an [online survey](#) through **May 16**. (<http://bit.ly/GCPSSuper-Survey>) The Board hopes to select the next superintendent this summer.

GCPS suspends Gateway, waives grad requirement for seniors

Due to the pandemic, GCPS suspended High School Gateway testing in both [science](#) and [social studies](#) this spring, waiving these [writing assessments](#) as a graduation requirement for the Class of 2021. The waiver also was extended to students in prior graduating classes who have met all other graduation requirements except passing the High School Gateway. *Questions?* Contact your local school.

Find 2021–22 calendar online

The [2021–22 calendar](#) features a staggered start for in-person learning. Students in grades K, 1, 6, and 9, and students with special needs who are served in a small-group will start in-person learning on **Aug. 4**, with all other students participating in digital learning at home. On **Aug. 5**,

students in grades 2, 3, 7, and 10 will start in-person learning, with remaining students in digital learning at home. On **Aug. 9**, students in grades 4, 5, 8, 11, and 12 will start in-person learning. (Students who opted out of in-person learning will begin digital learning on **Aug. 4**.)

Six digital learning days are scheduled throughout the year, with three occurring in 1st semester (**Sep. 14, Oct. 20, Nov. 9**) and three in 2nd semester (**Jan. 25, March 2, March 22**). On DLDs, all students will learn from home, completing assignments at their own pace, while teachers participate in staff development and planning.

Other dates for students include a fall break set for **Oct. 7–11, Dec. 20–Jan. 5** for winter break, MLK holiday on **Jan. 17**, the addition of a break in February (**Feb. 17–21**), **April 4–8** scheduled for spring break, and an end date of **May 25**.

GCPS builds tech equity

Even before the pandemic, a technology gap existed for many Gwinnett families that did not have access to reliable internet service or devices for their children. With an infusion of federal funds, grants, and local donations in the past year, the district continues to build a robust supply of Chromebooks and hotspots available for families to check out. To date, GCPS has procured more than 75,000 devices and more than 19,000 hotspots. The district will order additional tech resources as needs are determined. While most students will return to in-person learning in the fall, children still will need tech access as GCPS will have several digital learning days during the year. Watch for information on how you can request a device, a hotspot, or both for your student's use during the summer or next school year.

School district is hiring!

- [GCPS drivers](#) enjoy competitive salary (\$17.63–\$24.98/hour), excellent benefits, paid training, and summers off! Learn more at an [upcoming job fair](#) and [apply online](#). (posting #70814)
- GCPS is hiring [substitute teachers](#) at rates from \$108/day to \$120/day. Learn more and [apply online](#). (posting #68471)

Reflecting on all we've accomplished together, looking ahead to the work yet to be done

I have had the privilege and honor to serve as Gwinnett County Public Schools' superintendent for the past 25 years. Education has been my life's work for 56 years and my work in this school district has been the highlight of my career.

As your superintendent, I have had the opportunity to work with the finest leaders, most dedicated educators, and this outstanding community. Together, we have moved this very good school system forward toward our vision of becoming a system of world-class schools and, in doing so, we have served our students well. We have done good work and have successfully overcome challenges that have caused other districts to stumble.

As we look ahead—to the end of this school year, to a leadership change, and to 2021–22—we can't rest on our laurels or become distracted from our mission to pursue excellence for each of our students. Key to that focus is the district's continued emphasis on teaching and learning, on innovation and transformation, and on its people.

I have long said that, while the school district is a huge operation, we can never lose sight of our core business—teaching and learning—and the most important people we serve—our students. To maintain that laser focus on students and their success, we must continue improving our high-quality curriculum, implementing quality-plus teaching strategies, measuring student learning using a balanced assessment program, and supporting our classroom teachers.

Likewise, the district's emphasis on innovation and transformation has ensured that our students benefit from future-focused thinking and transformative practice and partnerships. Examples of that abound throughout the county... work in the soon-to-be-formed **Seck-**



J. Alvin Wilbanks
CEO/Superintendent

inger Cluster around artificial intelligence; the **School of the Arts** opening at **Central Gwinnett HS** next year; theme high schools like **Paul Duke STEM** in the **Norcross Cluster** and **McClure Health Science** in the **Meadowcreek Cluster**; college and career academies in seven high schools, with exciting opportunities like an entrepreneurship focus in the **South Gwinnett Cluster** and pharmacy experiences for students in the **Shiloh Cluster**; **Coleman MS'** arts-infused STEM focus; and, of course, an overall STEM and STEAM push in all of our schools. These initiatives have helped to ensure that GCPS is improving the quality of instruction and preparing students, not for the future of the adults in our district, but for *their* future. However, it is *our* respon-

sibility to ensure that students have the knowledge and skills, the flexibility and resilience, the capacity and commitment to civic engagement that will prepare them for that future.

The success of Gwinnett County Public Schools, and ultimately, its ability to become a system of world-class schools is based on the contributions, collaboration, and progress of its people. We are fortunate that those people—those whom we serve and those whom we employ—are among the best around.

I am proud of all that has been accomplished over the years to benefit our students, families, employees, and the greater Gwinnett community. We can all agree that our students deserve a good education, good schools, and good leaders. I believe that Gwinnett County Public Schools will continue to do all it can to make sure that our team delivers on that commitment.

J. Alvin Wilbanks

CEO/Superintendent J. Alvin Wilbanks

A big 'Thank You' to the school district's nearly 22,000 employees—those who teach and those who support teaching! You all have worked so hard to make a difference for our students and their families this year.

Show your appreciation for a GCPS staff member with an Appreciation eCard!

Now, more than ever, your thanks, encouragement, and celebration of GCPS staff members is a meaningful way to show how much our community values public education and appreciates those who have helped our students through this difficult time.

To send a note of appreciation, visit <http://bit.ly/GCPSStrongEcard> and complete the eCard submission form.

Thank You!



WE ARE
#GCPSSTRONG

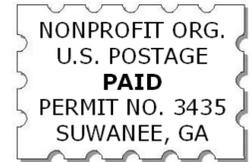
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It is the policy of Gwinnett County Public Schools not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, or disability in any employment practice, educational program, or any other program, activity, or service.

Gwinnett County Public Schools wishes to meet the needs of all of its students and families. If any member of your family needs assistance or has any questions regarding mobility impaired issues or handicapped access, please contact the principal of your local school.

GCPS students, staff **Shine**

While celebrations may have looked different this year—marked by Zoom announcements and mini-events—GCPS students and staff members still had lots to celebrate. Congratulations to all!

State championships, student honors celebrated

Student athletes competed this year with just a fraction of their fans in attendance, but that didn't stop these teams from bringing home state championships—**Grayson HS Football, Mill Creek HS Coed Competition Cheerleading and Competitive Dance, North Gwinnett HS Boys Swim and Dive and Game Day Cheer, and Gwinnett HEAT Adapted Sports Basketball.**

Congratulations to **Gwinnett County STAR Student Cindy Huynh** and **STAR Teacher David Dimsdale**, both of **Brookwood HS**. Two seniors recently received word of big scholarship honors. **Jamal Sayid** of **Grayson HS** is a **2021 Coca-Cola Scholar** and recipient of a \$20,000 scholarship. **Karyn Huang**, a digital learner at **Gwinnett School of Mathematics, Science, and Technology**, was surprised with a \$40,000 **College Board Opportunity Scholarship**. Watch for more senior honors and scholarship awards in the special *Communiqué* issue—A Celebration of the Class of 2021!—and a host of other honors announced in late **April** and into the summer.

Staff members earn Georgia titles

Creekland MS Assistant Principal **Kari Slaten** was named Georgia's **2020 History Teacher of the Year** for her work at **Central Gwinnett HS**. **April Pelfrey**, also of Central Gwinnett, is the recipient of the 2021 Aspirations in Computing Educator Award for Georgia. Representing the state in national competition, **Teshia**

Stovall Dula of **Hull MS** is **2021 Georgia School Counselor of the Year**, and **Ivy Creek ES Counselor Laura Spence** is **1st runner up**. **Norcross HS Assistant Principal Ashley Watson** was named **2021 Georgia Counseling Supervisor of the Year**. **Dr. Keith Thompson** of **Northbrook MS** is the **2021 Georgia Middle School Principal of the Year**. **Principal Will Bishop** of **Norcross HS** earned state honors for his **support of the media center**.

Top district staffers honored

TOTY recognition... **Katie Blum**, a 2nd grade teacher at **Sugar Hill ES**, is the **2021 Gwinnett County Teacher of the Year!** **Kelley Donovan**, a Humanities teacher at **Coleman MS**, is this year's Middle School Teacher of the Year. **Philip Peavy**, who teaches Cybersecurity and Game Design at **Paul Duke STEM HS**, is the system's TOTY at the high school level. The other three Teacher of the Year finalists were **Lena Alonso** of **Lilburn ES**, **Julianne Purnell** of **Five Forks MS**, and **Danielle Swaby** of **South Gwinnett HS**. Learn more about these **honorees and local school TOTYs** online.

Counseling honors... Counselors earned **GCPS recognition** in February, including ES Counselor of the Year **Lauren Butler** of **Ivy Creek ES**, MS Counselor of the Year **Fabiana Fischer** of **Dacula MS**, and HS Counselor of the Year **Dr. Boone Benton** of **Brookwood HS**. **Hull MS Principal Denise Showell** was honored as Administrator of the Year.

Media Center kudos... The media center is the largest classroom in the school and our **Media Center staff** are valuable members of the teaching team. **Brookwood HS' Dr. Angelyne Collins** is 2021 GCPS Library Media Specialist of the Year, and **Allison Thomson** of **Mill Creek HS** is 2021 GCPS Media Clerk of the Year.