



FLORENCE

CITY SCHOOLS



**END OF YEAR
REPORT**

2022-2023

Your System
Our Community
One Florence

www.florencek12.org

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A LIFETIME OF ACHIEVEMENT

FLORENCE BOARD OF EDUCATION



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The Florence City Schools Board of Education is a corporate body comprised of elected members from the six districts across the city of Florence.

The Board of Education oversees and manages a public school district's affairs, personnel, and properties.

Board members conduct a regular public meeting on the second Tuesday of each month at the FCS Central Office located at 541 Riverview Drive, Florence, Alabama.

Each meeting begins at 5:00 P.M.





MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Falcon Family,

There is a familiar tune that says

Should old acquaintance be forgot,
and never brought to mind?

Should old acquaintance be forgot,
and old lang syne (times gone by)?

CHORUS:

For auld lang syne, my dear,
for auld lang syne (times gone by),
we'll take a cup of kindness yet,
for auld lang syne (times gone by).

2022-2023 was a year of new beginnings and joyful but somber endings. It was a year that we welcomed new Falcons, such as our new Football Coach, Kenny Morson, and we joyfully and somberly accepted the retirement and departure of longtime Falcons, such as Dr. Lynne Hice. We saw the diminishing of the impact of COVID, and we saw....It was the end of an era, as our longest serving principal, Dr. Roderick Sheppard, left Florence High School to work at the district office, yet "Hard Work Pays Off" lives on.

We began the year by trying to Make Your Mondays great and ended it with a bang on graduation night at Braly Stadium. And through it all, we Putted Fore the Falcons and celebrated ten years of the Florence Academy of Fine Arts. Five Falcons took flight with both an associate degree from Northwest-Shoals Community College and their high school diploma on the same night. Harlan CLAS Bannered, and Weeden dressed well on Wednesdays. Forest Hills shared their virtues with the world via video, and the Rotary Club helped Florence High School students STRIVE for greatness. Florence Middle School's Technology Student Association (TSA) won the state championship, and W.C. Handy Farm Dayed with the Future Farmers of America (FFA).

We met with community leaders, members, teachers, students, faculty, and staff to begin to create a new Strategic Plan to help guide our plans, and we celebrated the Assistant Principal of the Year at Hibbett Intermediate School. We celebrated the district's first-ever Under Armour All-American, Jahlil Hurley. The Freshmen Center Sparked our imagination for what Falcons could do, and the Kilby Lions celebrated 151 years of existence. And through the new beginning, we should never forget the times gone by. The past of Coffee, Bradshaw, and Burrell-Slater should not be forgotten because those times gone by have created the launch pad for our Falcons to take flight. 2022-2023 is a year to remember; it is a year that we reminisce the old and embrace the new, for auld lang syne.

We are **Your System**. You are **Our Community**. And never forget, should old acquaintance be forgot, and never brought to mind? Remember, from the past to the present and forever more, we are **One Florence**. Go Falcons!

Dr. Jimmy D. Shaw Jr.
Superintendent

W.C. HANDY SCHOOL

PEACE OUT PRE-K

The 2022-2023 school year saw change as Dr. Cindy Jackson stepped into the role of the W.C. Handy School principal. To close out the school year, a teacher suggested to Jackson that the youngest Falcons deserve an end-of-the-year celebration. Jackson agreed, which culminated in the inaugural Peace Out Pre-K celebration.

Per the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education's Office of School Readiness guidelines, pre-K students cannot have an official graduation ceremony; Jackson devised a different approach to send the little Falcons off to kindergarten.

"We decided all the classrooms would have a closing ceremony for their parents," Jackson said. "We tied it in with Field Day, so the parents were already going to be here. Each class ... had their end-of-the-year celebration with their presentation from the students, whether it was a play, a song, or whatever they chose to do."

Jackson added that each child was given certificates to congratulate them on completing pre-K. She said the celebration will now become an annual event.



FOREST HILLS ELEMENTARY

LUKE'S GREATEST WISH

In a school full of stars, one shone a little brighter on an early Friday morning at Forest Hills Elementary. Luke Reaves got ready for school, per his daily routine, and his teacher Megan Keenum wouldn't have even thought about changing it.

"I was on the phone with his mom yesterday and told her it would work better if he didn't come straight to the classroom," Keenum said. "Usually, he gets dropped off in the gym and walks to the classroom with the kids, but I knew I would already have the signs hanging up in the hallway, so we had to come up with a plan to explain to him, 'well, mom's going to help out today at school, and there might be some people that need to ask you some questions about your trip in the office.'"

The trip, a visit to the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, Arizona, was a wish come true for Luke. Keenum described Luke as a young man diligent in his business, so planning a surprise that would shake up the young Falcon's morning was no easy feat, but Luke is no stranger to a challenge.

Luke was born with BARTH syndrome, a rare genetic disorder that affects the heart, muscles, immune system, and growth. At just 18-months-old, he received a heart transplant. And in 2021, he was diagnosed with post-transplant lymphoproliferative disorder (PTLD), a type of lymphoma that normally affects transplant recipients. The PTLD diagnosis qualified Luke to receive a wish through the Make-A-Wish Foundation.



"It's been very touching to see how excited the teachers and the kids have been to want to celebrate Luke and ... make this moment extra special," Luke's mother, Emily Reaves, said. "He just always has loved learning about new things, especially anything with science and astronomy, and so, to be able to have this chance to plan this trip to really embrace what he loves, he is very excited, and I hope it'll just open ... some more doors for him."

For the celebration, Luke's classmates lined the 4th-grade hall with signs and posters in hand, cheering on their champion. It was a fitting sendoff for a student whose light shone brighter than the stars he wished to see.



HARLAN ELEMENTARY

A SCHOOL OF DISTINCTION

The Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS) School of Distinction Award recognizes school programs that serve as outstanding educational models for other schools in Alabama. Each year, the administration at Harlan Elementary School focuses on providing one of those models. For 2022, Harlan introduced its FLEX Intervention program.

"Harlan's FLEX intervention is exactly what it sounds like: flexible," Harlan Principal Dr. Thomas Casteel said. "This extra supportive intervention allows our staff to meet students at their current literacy level."

"Intervention is needed at all levels," Reading specialist Crystal Delano said. "Highfliers need to be challenged where students below grade level need scaffolded support. Groups are fluid as students move based on their academic needs."

Delano added that the FLEX Intervention model is a family approach where all adults are responsible for instruction and have a hand in intervention.

"Every teacher in our building provides support to our homeroom teachers in some capacity for small group learning," Casteel said.

Students benefited from personalized, hands-on, direct instruction that addressed their academic needs. "We are strategic to target what our below, on, and above grade-level students need to move to the next level," Delano said.

Casteel added that the FLEX Intervention program has allowed Harlan students to learn how to read and how to read to learn at all grade levels. Harlan and the FLEX program were recognized with other Schools of Distinction at the annual CLAS Awards Luncheon in May.



WEEDEN ELEMENTARY

B.O.Y.S. DAY

At Weeden Elementary School, students, faculty, and staff are familiar with Geek Glam, an annual event that exposes female students to underrepresented groups in science, technology, engineering, and math. From aerospace engineering to cosmetology and more, the students learned from multiple experts about their respective fields with hands-on activities. In 2022, the male teaching staff got together to brainstorm a similar event for boys, establishing the inaugural B.O.Y.S. Day in April 2023.

"We wanted to make it a day all for the boys just to come up to the school and learn some things, hopefully, some things they could use as they go through their school years and then on into their later years," Weeden Counselor Jon Russell said.

"B.O.Y.S. Day is an acronym that stands for building on our youth's success. Russell said the day allowed the boys to spend the morning and afternoon at the school to learn about life skills and potential careers. More than 20 volunteers from Florence City Schools and The Shoals contributed to B.O.Y.S. Day.



HIBBETT INTERMEDIATE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR

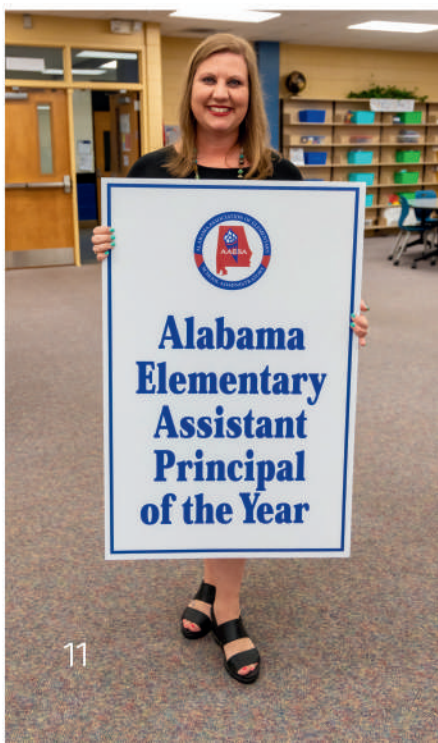
In March 2023, Hibbett Intermediate School Assistant Principal Melanie Harris received wonderful news; the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS) and the Alabama Association of Elementary School Administrators (AAESA) named her the Alabama Elementary Assistant Principal of the Year. Harris's recognition makes her the second Florence City Schools administrator to receive the honor in two consecutive years. Florence Middle School Assistant Principal Ashley Bowling earned the title at the secondary level the previous school year.

"I'm so excited just because it's such a big honor," Harris said. "I know there were a lot of great candidates, and so to know that I was chosen is just a major honor."

Harris said she felt she was adding to a legacy of leaders within the district. "That also shows how amazing Florence City is and the leader that they've helped ... develop me to be. I'm very proud of my time here and all that I do with Florence City Schools. I think it's really awesome that Ashley Bowling was last year and me this year; maybe we can keep it going because that is a great legacy."

Harris said she couldn't do her job without the support and teamwork of the Hibbett family. "I feel like we've built a family, and ... personally, I think it's very important to have that family that can trust each other and love each other when the times are great and when the times are low, to pick each other up and move on."

Harris said it's her personal goal to make a difference in not only student lives but teachers as well.



KILBY LABORATORY SCHOOL

PARTNERS IN EDUCATION

Kilby Laboratory School continues to be a partner in education with Florence City Schools. Located on the University of North Alabama campus, Kilby is the only state-funded laboratory school in Alabama. Celebrating 151 years of existence in 2023, Kilby serves grades pre-K through 6, and continues to serve as a model for other laboratory schools across the globe. With UNA being the oldest four-year institution in Alabama, that makes Kilby one of the oldest schools in the state as well.

The vision of Kilby Laboratory School is to serve as a site for university students to engage in meaningful interdisciplinary teaching, research, and service opportunities. Kilby provides a safe, stimulating, and cooperative learning environment for elementary students promoting cognitive development with an emphasis on thinking, reasoning, and problem solving. Kilby maintains a positive, innovative school climate which respects, values, and embraces cultural diversity and inspires students to maximize their academic potential as life-long learners.



FLORENCE MIDDLE SCHOOL

CPR CERTIFICATIONS

More than 100 Florence Middle School students received CPR certifications in February 2023, thanks to a generous donation from Lambert Ezell Durham Architecture, the company that designed the school. Two charities the architecture firm contributes to are the American Red Cross and the American Heart Association, in honor of a family member who struggles with heart issues.

To amplify that impact, the firm purchased CPR simulators for the FMS Exploring Health Science classes, which are available to eighth graders.

"We're reminded ... how important it is for individuals to know CPR techniques and in the process, could save somebody's life, whether they're healthy or unhealthy," FCS Career Tech Director Layne Rinks said. "You never know when that crisis is going to happen."

Rinks said any eighth-grade student interested in pursuing a healthcare career could greatly benefit from the training the CPR simulators provide. "They're getting their hands on real-world experience," he said. "There's nothing that they can argue that would justify that what they're doing is not important. Everybody knows it's important; everybody knows it's realistic."

District leaders are hopeful that even more students will get on track to receive their certifications.



FLORENCE FRESHMAN CENTER

SHOALS SPARK!

The Shoals Spark competition is an annual idea competition for local students with prizes totaling \$3,000. Career Tech Director Layne Rinks said the Florence Freshman Center and Florence High School have had entries each year that he's been there, but the teams have never placed higher than third. However, in April 2023, the FHS/FFC Engineering program took first and second place with their ideas. Students had to present their ideas in front of a panel of judges and an audience at the Mane Room.

"We've always experienced success in the contest, which I think is a good reflection of our students' intellectual capabilities and inventiveness," Rinks said. "But taking first and second just shows an improvement in that area and trying to hone in on those entrepreneurial and innovation skills that we think can be learned. It's not something you're either born with or not; it can be taught, and they can be learned, and they can be improved upon."

Freshman Will Snyder won \$300 for his innovative solution to finding lost sports equipment with reflective material, which earned him 2nd place. Andrew Ngugi, Matthew Strickland, and Carlos Barrientos won \$500 and took first place with their idea for "Eliminating Food Deserts" in the Shoals area.



FLORENCE HIGH SCHOOL

BEYOND THE FALCON'S NEST

The Florence High School Early College Program collaborates with Northwest-Shoals Community College, allowing students to work toward their high school diplomas and associate degrees simultaneously. The first class of students to go through the program graduated in 2022, but in May 2023, one graduate made history once more.

Kristen Rollins was the first student from the Early College Program to graduate from the Northwest-Shoals Medical Assisting Technology program. Like her predecessors who took different pathways, Rollins graduated first from Northwest-Shoals with her associate degree, then two weeks later from Florence High School with her diploma.

Rollins took advantage of many career readiness and extracurricular programs while enrolled at FHS, including 12 for Life and Launch, providing students with real-world on-the-job work experience. She was also on the track team and a winter guard and dance line member.

Rollins said her motivation for going through the medical pathway began at home. "My mom was ill, and my siblings were all older than me, and I was the one with her, and this program offered hands-on experience, which was invaluable for me," Rollins told the Times Daily. "She raised four of us by herself, and it's my turn to make her proud. That's truly my motivation in all I do because she means so much to me."

After both graduations, Rollins took the fast track again and began summer classes at the University of Alabama-Birmingham to pursue a business degree while also working as a medical assistant.

Dan Busey/TimesDaily



FLORENCE ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS

A DECADE OF CREATIVITY

Looking back at the 2022-2023 school year, the Florence Academy of Fine Arts (FAFA) celebrated its tenth anniversary. One event in February commemorated that occasion by bringing together FAFA students from across the decade for a special "homecoming" at the Shoals Theatre.

The talented lineup included current Florence High School student Tristian Aviles and graduates Savanna Kirby and Cadence Baker, who appeared on American Idol. The headliner for the show was the band Willis, consisting of five Florence High graduates: Glenn and Will O'Steen, Trey Murphy, Edward Armstead Jr., and lead singer Murphy Billings.

Before this show, the band hadn't performed in Florence since 2016. "It's crazy, man. We started right up the street three blocks away, not knowing we were going to be what we are now, but it's definitely nice to know that hard work pays off, like the old Florence saying," Billings said.

The hard work Billings was referring to was a success in the alternative indie and blues genres, garnering the group more than 17,000 followers on social media and more than 100 million streams across all platforms. The band said they appreciate programs like FAFA that help students guide their journeys.



"I'm just glad that something like that exists to give kids and people that are coming up the same hope that we had of trying to make something out of love, trying our best, and being persistent and knowing what you like and what you don't like," Billings said.

The band's message for current FAFA students with a dream is, "Just be yourself, and the results will follow."



FCS CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION

INAUGURAL FFA FAMILY AWARD

Several members of the Falcon Family were honored at the annual FFA Chapter Banquet in May. The Jones family, Jennifer, Lannis, and their three sons, Ben, Evan, and Will, were honored with the inaugural Outstanding FFA Family Award during an emotional presentation.

FFA Sponsor Matt Ball said the Jones' sons all went through FFA during their time at Florence High School for a combined 12 years. "That award was given to them because of the amount of time that all their kids have been in the program, and the amount of time that those parents have contributed to those boys in the program, and amount of time they helped with banquets, competitions, conventions ... and just being a tight family, which unites our FFA family," Ball said.

Ball added that he was inspired to create the award after realizing the Jones' youngest son, Will, would be the last family member to go through the program. Ball said the FFA will award the Outstanding FFA Family Award for years to come as organization sponsors highlight the efforts of even more families.



FLORENCE FALCON ATHLETICS

MORSON'S REFLECTION OF YEAR ONE

The 2022 Florence Falcon Football season was a homecoming for Varsity Head Coach Kenny Morson. A Florence native, Morson was a quarterback at Coffee High School before graduating and beginning his coaching career at Colbert Heights. After Colbert Heights, he moved to Decatur, where he spent 22 years as an offensive coordinator. Following that, he was head coach for three seasons at Fayetteville High School in Tennessee, where he compiled a 34-4 record and led the team to win the state championship in 2020.

However, in Spring 2022, Florence needed a new head coach, and Morson answered the call. He described his first year being back as warm and welcoming.

"Coming back, I got to reunite with much of my long-lost friends and so it's been great," Morson said. "The school system and administration, teachers, everybody has been awesome, very supportive of us trying to build this program."



Morson said being a new coach can be difficult when players and staff are accustomed to differences, so his goal for the season was building relationships. "It was a matter of just building a lot of trust with those guys, and knowing that this staff is here to stay, and I'm here to stay as head coach and want to finish it out here and not looking to leave and go anywhere else."

Trust prevailed as Morson led the team to the Alabama high school football playoffs in his first season. "We were really excited about that; we played extremely well against Hewitt-Trussville on that first round of playoffs—had an opportunity to win that game late," Morson said. "Really proud of our kids and how we turned it around from the start."

Morson said the football roster continues to grow, and as more students show interest, he feels the program is headed in the right direction.





DR. LYNNE HICE

A LIFETIME OF ACHIEVEMENT



2023 began with one of the district's longtime leaders being recognized for her lifetime of achievement. Florence City Schools Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Lynne Hice was surprised to hear that she was the recipient of the Outstanding Curriculum Leader Lifetime Achievement Award. The Alabama chapter of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development presents the award to an individual who has excelled in the improvement of supervision, curriculum development, and instruction.

Working in the Florence City Schools district for more than 15 years, Hice said although the award was in her name, it reflected the hard work of many.

"This award represents a lot of years of a lot of people that I've had to support me, whether it be as a teacher that was passionate about curriculum in the classroom and about student instruction all those years ago," Hice said. "It's also as an administrator being in a school and also the central office. No one wins an award by themselves. It's always because they are surrounded by great people."

Dr. Hice said that even after she was presented with the award, she called some colleagues to let them know that "we" did a good job and were recognized for it.

After winning the award, Dr. Hice announced that after 30 years of dedicated service as an educator, she would retire. A lifetime of achievement, indeed.





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