ISSUE 8 AUGUST 2025

The MakeWaves Monthly

We develop students to become the best versions of themselves, so they can transform the world.



Superintendents' Message

Welcome Back to School!

As we wrap up the first month of the new school year, we want to take a moment to sincerely thank you—our dedicated parents and teachers—for your enthusiasm, support, and hard work. It has been truly energizing to see our schools come alive again with the smiling faces of our exceptional faculty, staff, students, and families.

Your commitment to fostering a positive, engaging, and personalized learning environment sets the tone for a rewarding and inspiring year ahead. We are excited about the opportunities for growth, learning, and shared success that lie before us.

As we move forward together, let's continue working hand in hand to provide our students with the best education and support possible—nurturing an environment where every child can thrive.

Here's to a fantastic school year filled with achievements, laughter, and lasting memories! MakeWaves and be sure to download the new Gulf Shores City Schools Mobile App, available now in the Apple App Store and Google Play Store.

Dr. Matt Akin - Superintendent makin@gsboe.org
Dr. Stephanie Harrison - Assistant Superintendent sharrison@gsboe.org

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

MIDDLE SCHOOL

HIGH SCHOOL

VIRTUAL ACADEMY



Health & Wellness



Athletics



Arts Education



Teaching & Learning

Health & Wellness

Spending time outside in the warm weather with friends is a great way to boost your mood, stay active, and support overall health.



Athletics

Get ready for an exciting season of athletics at **GSMS** and **GSHS**! Come out and support our student-athletes as they compete in football, volleyball, cross country, and more. Let's fill the stands and show our school spirit!



Arts Education

GSES 4th graders are playing Tubano Drums that the amazing Dolphin Foundation bought us last year!



Teaching & Learning

The Walking School Bus crew would like to thank Kelly Bradley from the Thomas B. Norton Library in GS for story time! What a great way to begin our FriYAY!



Elementary School

Mrs. Helms' Class is Celebrating Friendship





Middle School

We kicked off our Properties of Matter unit today! Students tested their background knowledge by sorting everyday items into "Matter" or "Not Matter" categories. They'll find out during instruction if their initial thinking was correct. Test your own knowledge- how would you sort these items: Air, Energy, Heat, Rainbow, and Light?





High School

Students in Ms. Pitts's AP European History course have been working hard analyzing documents about exploration.





Virtual Academy

GSVA students kicked off the weekend with Math and Phonics Bingo!





Connect With Us! Stay informed on what's happening with Gulf Shores City Schools!

District/Schools Websites - Facebook - X - Instagram - You Tube - GSCS Mobile App

Thank you so much, Island Church, for the goodie bags provided to all GSES faculty and staff!



Thank you to Island Orthodontics for umbrellas for carline and snacks/coffee at GSES!!



Join the Gulf Shores City Schools Walking School Bus!
Registration is now open for the 2025–2026 Walking School Bus, and we're excited to get walking! All Gulf Shores City Schools K–8 students are welcome to participate — but don't forget, you must register each school year to join.

Why join the Walking School Bus?
A healthy and fun way to start the day
Promotes independence and builds friendships
Reduces traffic around our schools
Encourages safe walking habits
Parents are always welcome to walk along!
Pre-K students may participate only with a parent or guardian walking with them.

We meet each morning at Meyer Park and walk as a group to school, led by Gulf Shores City Schools staff.

Have questions? Email Krista Fleming at kfleming@gsboe.org
Let's make this year another great one — one step at a time!



GSMS and GSHS teachers participating in the Sailing for STEAM Initiative trained at the Wind and Water Center today! These teachers have committed to a rigorous training process to be able to safely utilize our new sailboats with students. Special thanks to Jackie McGonigal and her team for training our teachers prior to the US Sailing training in September! The new sailboats will be here later this month, and teachers will meet to work on our place-based education curriculum to integrate sailing into their courses (everything from science, math, engineering, sustainability, English Language Arts, to ELL).





Happy National Oyster Day! Meet Krista Fleming, NBCT!

On this National Oyster Day, we're shining a light on a teacher who's rebuilding more than just oyster reefs—she's building future changemakers. Krista Fleming, a National Board Certified Teacher and 2024 Presidential Innovation Awardee, teaches Environmental Science and Marine Biology at Gulf Shores High School in Alabama. She leads students in real-world sustainability projects like oyster reef restoration, microplastics research, and dune rehabilitation—empowering them to protect the coastal ecosystems they call home.

With over 20 years of teaching experience and a passion for inquiry-based learning, Krista connects classroom science to community action. As a mentor, advocate, and leader in STEM education, she's inspiring a generation to become environmental stewards.

Let's celebrate Krista and all the educators making waves in science education!





GSMS participated in back-to-school High Reliability Schools PD with Dr. Mario Acosta and Stop the Bleed / CPR certification trainings!





GSHS MINI CHEERLEADER

Gulf Shores High School Mini Cheerleader Experience

The Mini Cheerleader includes admission to the game as well as participation with the Gulf Shores Cheerleaders during the first half of the game.

Tickets are purchased on GoFan

GAME 1- AUGUST 29TH

GAME 2- SEPTEMBER 12TH

GAME 3- SEPTEMBER 19TH

GAME 4-OCTOBER 10TH

GAME 5-OCTOBER 24TH

GAME 6-OCTOBER 31ST

GULF SHORES CHEERLEADING

esenkbeil@gsboc.org for more information

First grade team wearing their awesome new shirts!!



Congrats to our GSHS All-Americans for the 25-26 school year!



Portia Hollis donated her book “Spreading the Sunshine” to GSES library. Portia is a senior at GSHS & Ms. Weekley’s former kindergarten student. We love the book and your giving heart Portia! Thank you!



We had a great first day on the Walking School Bus! Thanks to everyone who joined us this morning — it was a fun and safe way to start the day while getting some exercise!
It’s not too late to join the walk!
Register here: https://forms.gle/8QDM7r47A8cCP9937
Let’s keep moving together!



Gulf Shores Middle School House System kicked off the year with our very first house meetings! Our houses are more than colors—they're communities where students support, encourage, and inspire one another.
We're so excited for the amazing school year ahead and are especially grateful for our awesome House Leaders who will guide, motivate, and cheer on their house members every step of the way!





WE ARE SO BACK!!!! Here's to the 2025-2026 school year!!! It's already started off strong!! It's going to be a great year with all the new and old faces in the Health Science Academy!!



From Krista Fleming "Gulf Shores City School teachers learning to sail at Fairhope Yacht Club. Excited to start training students in the near future."



Big things are taking flight at our Aviation Academy!
Our students are hands-on with the brand-new Sonex B Quick Build Kit, learning the craft of building an aircraft from the ground up.
Later this year, students will also have the opportunity to begin flight lessons in our donated plane, the TL Sting, taking their skills from the classroom to the cockpit.
And if that's not enough, we're bringing history back to life with a restoration project on the Cherokee.
Every rivet, every lesson, every flight hour is another step toward preparing future aviators and mechanics right here in our community.









We welcome donations to our Blessing Box in the front of GSES. You or your students may add non-perishable items directly to our Blessing Box. Canned goods, dry goods (rice, beans, boxed dinners, pasta, etc.) or necessities you can think of people may need are all welcomed.
Thank you so much for your ongoing generosity for our community.



Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Loper's Pre-K class rode bikes at recess today! We learned how the pedals work. Push the pedal on top.






The Great Southeast Pollinator Census is here! We had classes of GSCS students come and participate in this citizen science initiative. Students identified plants that attract pollinators and counted the amount of each species. All of this data can be used by researchers in the effort to maintain healthy populations of pollinators.





Our middle school cross country team showed up strong at the Admiral Sunrise Invite this morning!
Piper Gates represented as our only girl and CRUSHED her first-ever school event! She ran a 16:02 3k, placing 69th out of 114 overall, 17th among 7th & 8th graders, and an impressive 3rd among all 7th graders!
On the boys' side, our 8th graders put in the work!

- Kysan Deloach clocked a 14:52, finishing 112th overall and 20th among 7th & 8th graders.
- Nolan Redden, in his first-ever school event, ran a 14:59 and finished 113th overall and 21st among 7th & 8th graders.

We are so proud of these athletes for their effort, energy, and determination! The season is just getting started—big things ahead!







A big thank you to Mrs. Jackie Smith, our GSCS Nutritionist, for taking the time to speak with our baseball players today about the importance of proper nutrition for athletes!

She shared valuable insight on fueling their bodies the right way to maximize performance, recovery, and overall health both on and off the field.

We're grateful for her support in helping our players grow not just as athletes, but as young men learning lifelong healthy habits.



Big congratulations to our first round of Culinary 2 students for the 25-26 school year to pass their ServSafe Manager Exam!

This certification is a huge milestone in the culinary world, proving their knowledge of food safety, sanitation, and leadership in the kitchen.



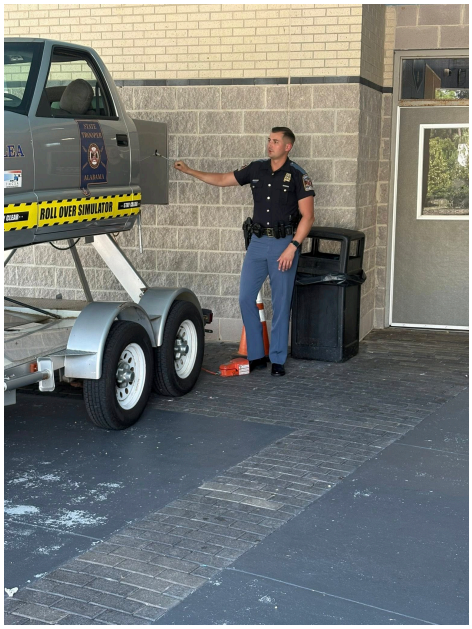


This week, our 6th Grade Social Studies classes had the privilege of welcoming Mrs. Loretta Fulford from the Baldwin County Child Advocacy Center!
On Tuesday and Wednesday, Mrs. Fulford presented the NetSmartz Program, an interactive and engaging lesson designed to empower students with the tools they need to stay safe and smart online.
We are grateful for this partnership and the valuable knowledge shared with our students!

The physical training session at GSHS followed a unique format, with the Petty Officer and Colonel participating in each block alongside the cadets. The Colonel completed the mile run, while the Petty Officer undertook the challenge with a 20-pound backpack, with the goal of staying ahead of the Petty Officer and surpassing the Colonel. All cadets delivered outstanding performances, and more significantly, demonstrated notable leadership and teamwork skills. Parents and guardians of these cadets should take immense pride in their achievements today.



A guest speaker was on campus to address our sophomore Driver's Ed classes. Thank you to Trooper Joshua Thompson from ALEA Troop A who took time out of his day to come to GSHS!









Mrs. Estes's 7th-grade students at GSMS took their math skills outside! They enjoyed the sunshine while practicing rational number operations — making math a little brighter (literally)!



The GSHS Cheer Squad has a fundraising link where you can purchase these bags and support them at the same time. Go Dolphins!
https://www.pretty-work.shop/



We've been blessed! The Blessing Box at GSES is full for those in need!



GSCS is so thankful to the City of Gulf Shores for keeping our grounds so beautiful!



Pictures at GSES will be taken on Thursday, September 11th.



Set Sail GSCS

Our sailing teachers from GSHS and GSMS spent the day at the Wind & Water Learning Center in Orange Beach. Hands-on, place-based training like this not only builds the skills they need to get certified, but it also strengthens the team and builds the resilience they pass on to their students. These educators are passionate and dedicated to providing this amazing opportunity to our students!

Big thanks to the Wind & Water team for guiding them—what a powerful way to connect learning with the waters that surround us.

City of Orange Beach Wind and Water Learning Center











Alabama Coastal Cleanup

Get the trash out of the splash with us on Saturday, September 20, from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. during the 38th Annual Alabama Coastal Cleanup!



Let's go Dolphins!!!! First pep rally of the year at GSHS.

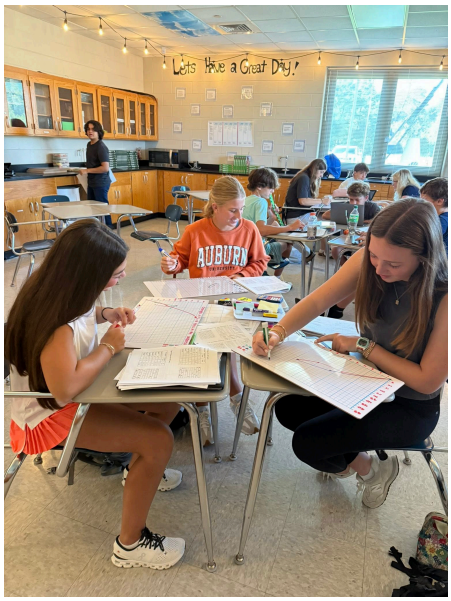




Dr. Hamilton's Honors Biology just wrapped up a jam-packed unit on Ecology! Students explored ecological hierarchy, ecological succession, and cycling of matter (among other topics), and concluded with meaningful discussions on invasive species and positive human impacts. Working in groups, they developed claims, evidence, and reasoning on how we can mitigate invasive species and be strong stewards of our ecosystems.
A special thank you to Carmen Flammini, Cooperative Extension Agent, for closing out our unit with an engaging introduction to monarchs butterflies and the important role our Gulf Coast ecosystem plays in protecting this species. Proud of the hard work and curiosity these students brought to Ecology!







GSMS Red Ribbon Leadership Winner

Congratulations to our 2025-2026 Red Ribbon Leadership Winner, Katelyn Hamilton!
Each year, outstanding students from Mobile and Baldwin County are selected as individuals who exemplify the Six Pillars of Character promoted by the Character Counts initiative and the Drug Education Council: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship.
Katelyn will represent Gulf Shores Middle School at the Superintendent's Red Ribbon Leadership Kickoff on September 8th.
As a Red Ribbon Leader, she will work with our school's coordinator to lead Red Ribbon Week activities on campus and plan a community service project that encourages her peers to make healthy lifestyle choices and build connections within the community.
Gulf Shores Middle School will celebrate Red Ribbon Week October 27–31, 2025.



August is Here...And School Begins!

























Blood Drive at GSHS

Come join in the fun on Thursday, September 4, as HOSA partners with LifeSouth for our 1st blood drive of the year. It's a great day to Save a Life!



Gulf Shores High School
Blood Drive
In the Gymnasium Foyer
Thursday, September 4, 2025
8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
T-shirt for all Donors!
Click on the link Below to Make an Appointment
Gulf Shores High School

All donors will receive a recognition item and a free cholesterol screening. Donors must be 16 or older, weigh at least 110 pounds, and show photo I.D. 16-year-olds require written parental permission.



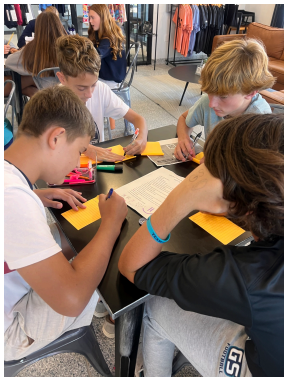
LIFESOUTH
Community Blood Centers

Peer Helpers at GSMS

Our 2025-2026 Peer Helpers are officially trained and ready for an amazing year at GSMS! The training was a huge success as students learned valuable skills to support their classmates, build positive connections, and promote a welcoming school environment—all while enjoying plenty of team building and laughter along the way.
A special thank you to the Alabama Gulf Coast Sports Center for providing such a great space for our training and to Beach Bumz Café for serving up the tasty food that kept our Peer Helpers going strong throughout the day.
We are so proud of this group of student leaders and cannot wait to see the impact they will make on our school community this year.







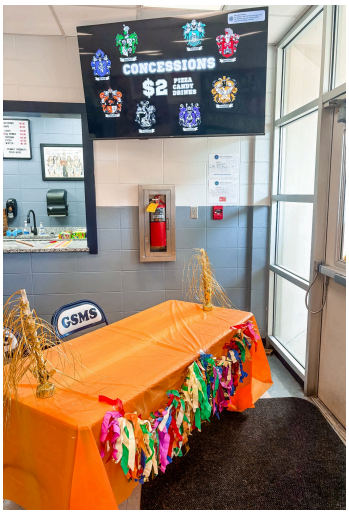



GSMS: House Dance

The Back-to-School House Dance was a huge success! Everyone had a blast showing off their house colors, and the GSHS students did an amazing job with face painting. DJ Ray Ray kept the energy high all night long, while glow-in-the-dark house animals and signs lit up the dance floor. What an unforgettable way to kick off the school year!























Dolphin Dash 5K & Fun Run



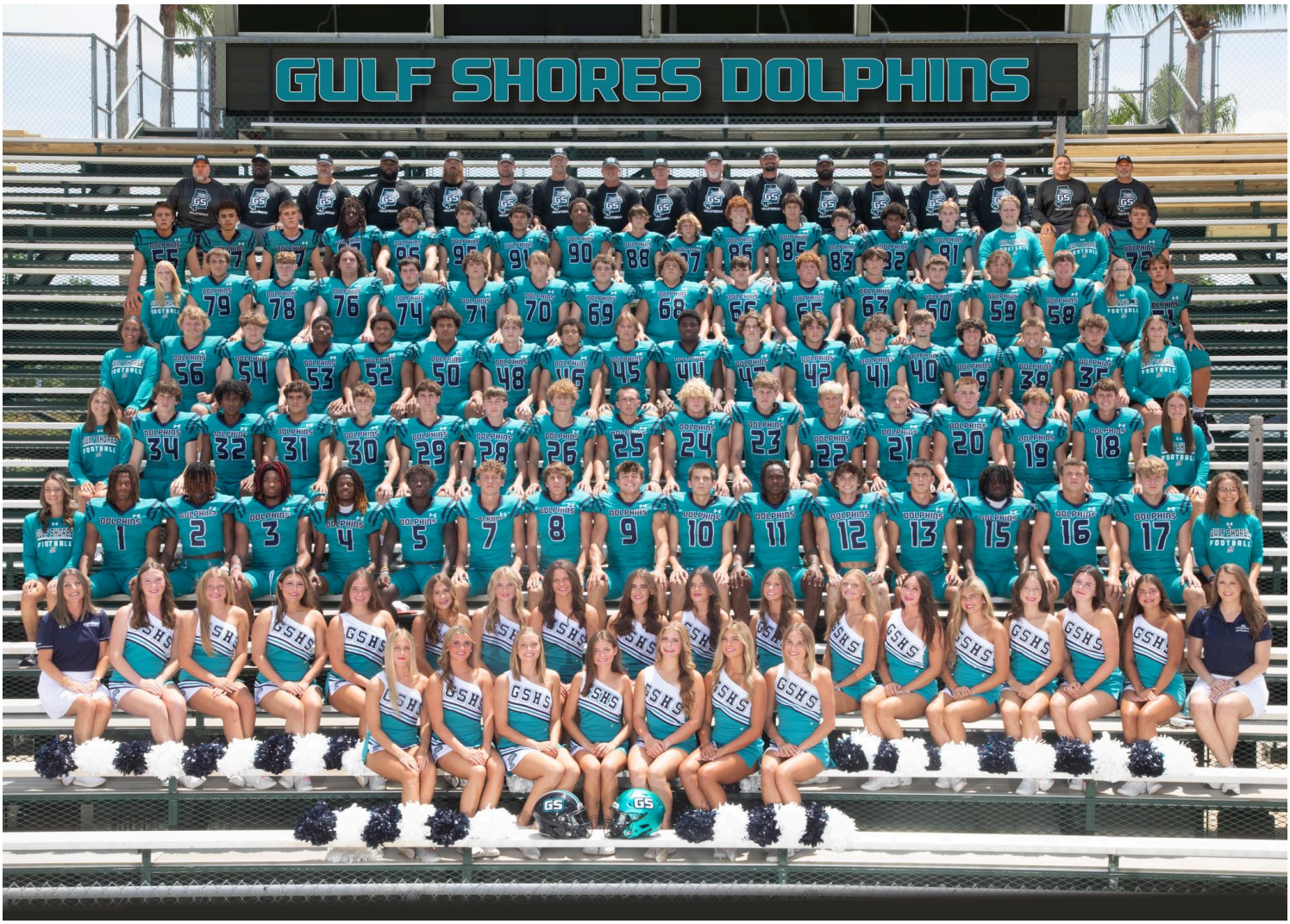
Make Plans To Attend



Individual ticket to the Make Waves Benefit on Friday September 26th 2025. Includes entrance and dinner for one. Click on the picture to purchase!



Introducing Your 2025 Dolphin Team, Staff and Cheer



MAKE WAVES!



GSCS: 9/1 - Labor Day Holiday (No School)
BOE 9/4 - Work Session 4:00pm
GSCS: 9/5 - Q1 Progress Report (Check PowerSchool)
GSES: 9/11 - Spirit Night (Cactus Cantina)
BOE: 9/11 - Regular Board Meeting 5:00pm
GSCS: 9/15-19 - GSHS Homecoming Week
GSCS: 9/16 - Tuesday Tour at GSHS 9:00am
GSCS: 9/20 - 38th Annual Alabama Coastal Clean-Up
GSHS: 9/20 - Homecoming Dance
GSES: 9/25 - Spirit Night (Chick-fil-A)
GSCS: Make Waves Benefit (Gulf Place 6:00pm) Sponsored bye Dolphin Foundation for Education and Arts
GSCS: 9/27 - 9th Annual Miss Shrimp Festival Pageant

Enjoy these new GSCS commercials!

We Believe…

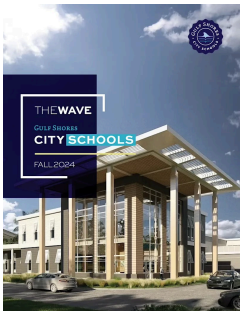
What If…

GSCS Board Meeting Round Up: Too busy to attend school board meetings, but still wanna know more? Check out the episodes of **"Board Shorts"** to stay up-to-date.

Happening at GSCS:

District
Elementary School
Middle School
High School
Virtual Academy

Gulf Shores City Schools has a new magazine - The Wave! Extra copies are available in school offices, most city offices, the visitors center, and the Chamber of Commerce! Please pick up a copy!



Gulf Shores City Schools have a new GSCS Mobile App! Available in IOS and Android Stores, the GSCS mobile app will give you immediate information! Download yours today!

Connect With Us:

Matt Akin - Superintendent
Stephanie Harrison - Assistant Superintendent
Sandi Harris - Office Manager
Chad Green - CSFO
Marcelina Speller - Human Resource Coordinator
Chezley Neth - Data Management & Reporting Analyst
Jason Watts - Athletic Director
Joey Drews - Director of Educational Technology & Student Support Services
Beau Roode - Director of Operations
Sonya Price - Director of Exceptional Education
Carrie Barragan Liz Corcoran - English Second Language
Tanya Hill - Child Nutrition Program Coordinator
Randall Carlisle - Student Engagement, Transportation and Safety Coordinator
Jessica Sampley - Career Tech Coordinator
Karen Pearson - District Testing Coordinator
Laura Goulden - Mental Health Coordinator

MAKE WAVES!

Do you have a suggestion or comment you would like to share with us?

Connect with GSCS

Joe McAleer -Social Media