ISSUE 7 JULY 2026

The MakeWaves Monthly

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



Superintendents' Message

Gulf Shores City Schools hopes you and your family had a wonderful, relaxing summer! Throughout the break, many of our students stayed engaged by participating in a variety of camps hosted across our campuses. As the new school year approaches, excitement is building. School supplies are being gathered, teachers are busy preparing their classrooms, and our band, football and volleyball teams are already hard at work practicing for the upcoming season. Students are picking up their schedules, and signs of a new school year can be seen throughout every campus.

If you have any questions regarding summer assignments or registration for the 2026–2027 school year, please contact your child's school. We are excited to welcome students back on Wednesday, August 12, and look forward to another outstanding year of learning and growth.

As a school system, we are honored that you have chosen to **Be A Dolphin**. We look forward to a year filled with learning, achievement, and meaningful involvement from our students, families, employees, and community members. Your support and engagement play a vital role in creating a strong, connected school community.

Be sure to stay up to date on the many activities and events taking place throughout August by checking the district and school website calendars regularly. Together, let's **MakeWaves** and kick off an incredible school year!

Dr. Matt Akin, Superintendent

Dr. Stephanie Harrison, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction & Innovation

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

MIDDLE SCHOOL

HIGH SCHOOL

VIRTUAL ACADEMY



Health & Wellness



Athletics



Arts Education



Teaching & Learning

Health & Wellness

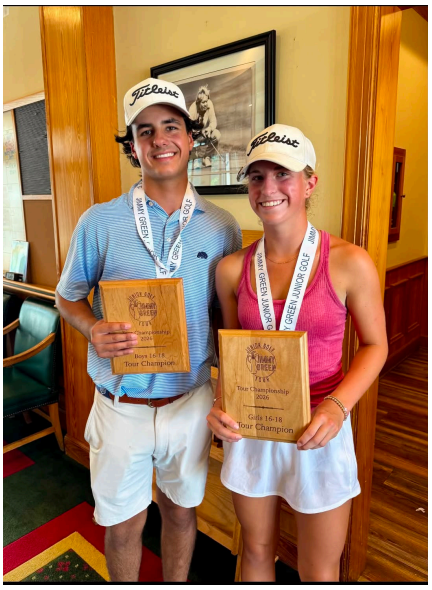
GSES & GSMS: Join The Walking School Bus for 2026-2027 school year! Sign Up Today!
Walking School Bus Registration

WALKING SCHOOL BUS



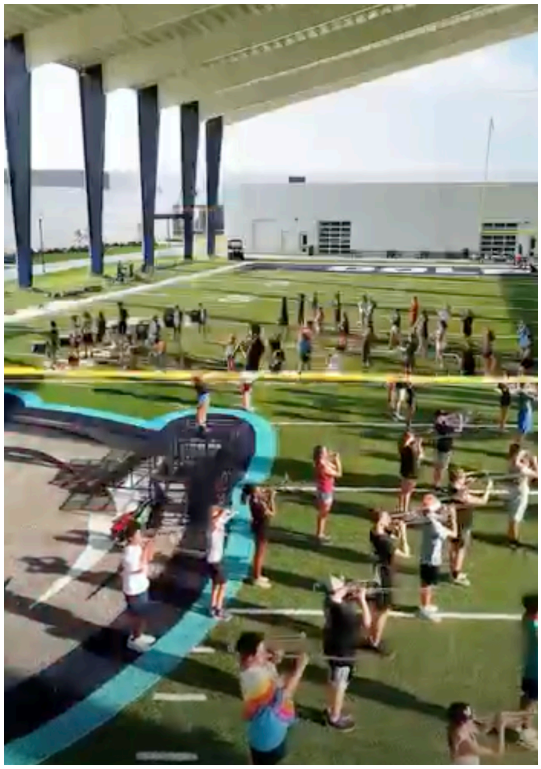
Athletics

Congratulations to Grey Goodman and Evelyn Lamar who shot even par and both won the Jimmy Green Tour Championship at TimberCreek Golf Club



Arts Education

GSHS band getting ready for a new school year!



Teaching & Learning

ALACTE Summer Conference—sharing our journey with Farm to Table!

















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

Little Lifeguards 2026!
Throughout June, participants in our Little Lifeguards Program spent their mornings learning what it takes to stay safe in and around the Gulf.
Designed for children ages 6–9, the Little Lifeguards Program gives participants a hands-on introduction to beach safety and what it's like to be a Gulf Shores Beach Rescue lifeguard.
Over two sessions, they learned Gulf water safety, the beach warning flag system, how to identify beach hazards, introductory rescue skills, and the importance of teamwork and confidence.
A special thank you to @gscityschools for funding this program through the Alabama Gulf Coast Resiliency Project. We're grateful for their partnership in helping us educate the next generation on how to safely enjoy Alabama's beaches.









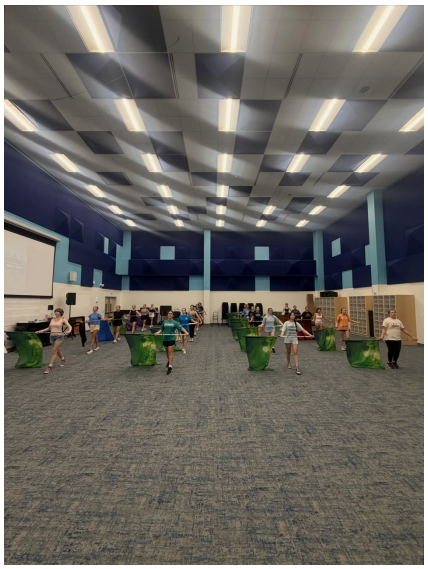








Our GSHS color guard has started learning their new routine for this season's halftime show!


Session 2 is now underway for the Ecotourism & Sustainability Camp!!
Campers tie dyed their camp shirts using indigo dye, explore our garden and adopted an air plant, and got on their bikes for a bike etiquette and safety workshop before we hit the trails!







Online Payments are open for GSES 2026-2027 school year.

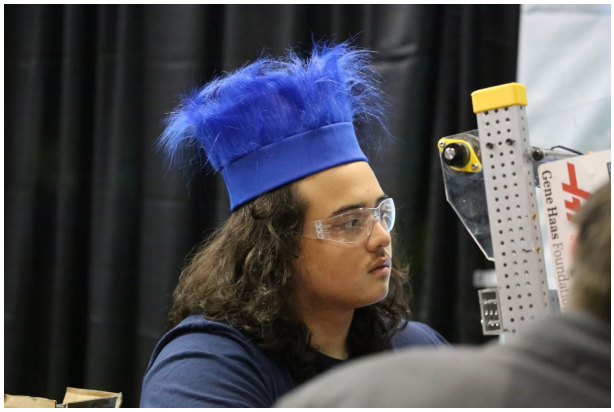
* Pre-pay Pizza will be open until August 21.
* Spirit T-shirts will be open until August 14.
* Birthday Ice cream is available all year for pre-payment. Parents should make payment at least 2 weeks prior to student's birthday. We are not able to take last minute orders due to ice cream must be ordered and delivered in advance.
* Field Day package is available for payment until the cutoff date, which is usually in April.
* Yearbook is available for payment until the cutoff date, which is usually in February.

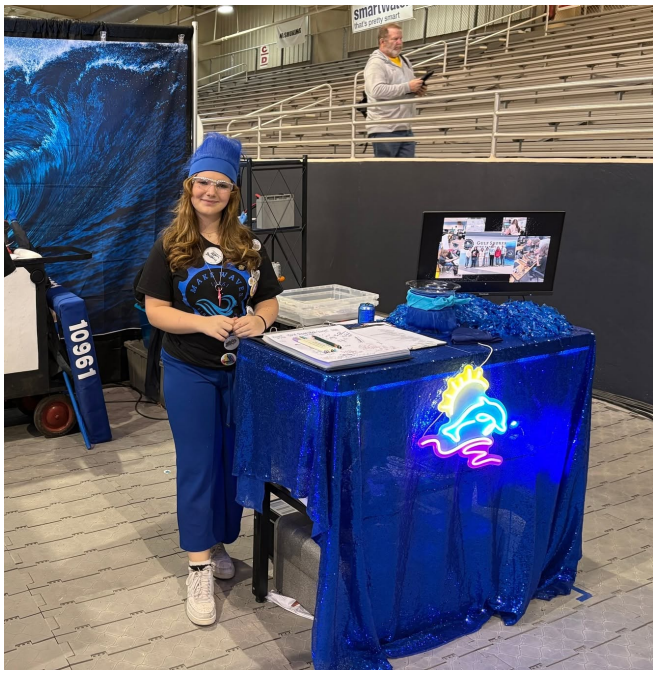
Follow these instructions to pay:
1. Go to **www.gsboe.org**
2. Click on Quick Links, then eSchool Payments
3. Click on Gulf Shores Elementary School
4. Fill out information at top, choose items, complete the transaction.





Excited to share that that Coach McClung, Cody, and Jadelynn are going to represent Alabama at the America's Youth AI Festival at MIT and UMass in Boston and Cambridge. Students will work with the team at the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the U.S. Senate to pass a first-of-its-kind National AI Policy for K-12 classrooms and school leaders will learn about the latest AI breakthroughs from experts, including Dr. Cynthia Breazeal of MIT, one of Time Magazine's 100 most influential people in Alabama.







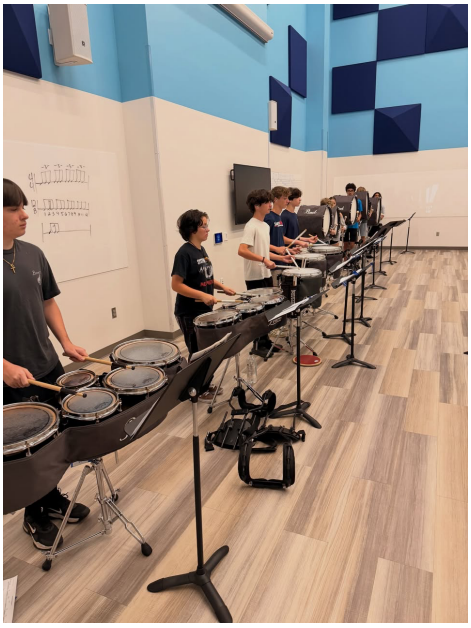
Support Gulf Shores Athletics by purchasing a BJ's membership!



Drum line camp is going great! So exciting putting together a new show!







A few Gulf Shores Elementary School Kindergarten teachers began the journey as some of the first Modiv EDU STEAM Catalysts! They are excited to make learning even more engaging for students!

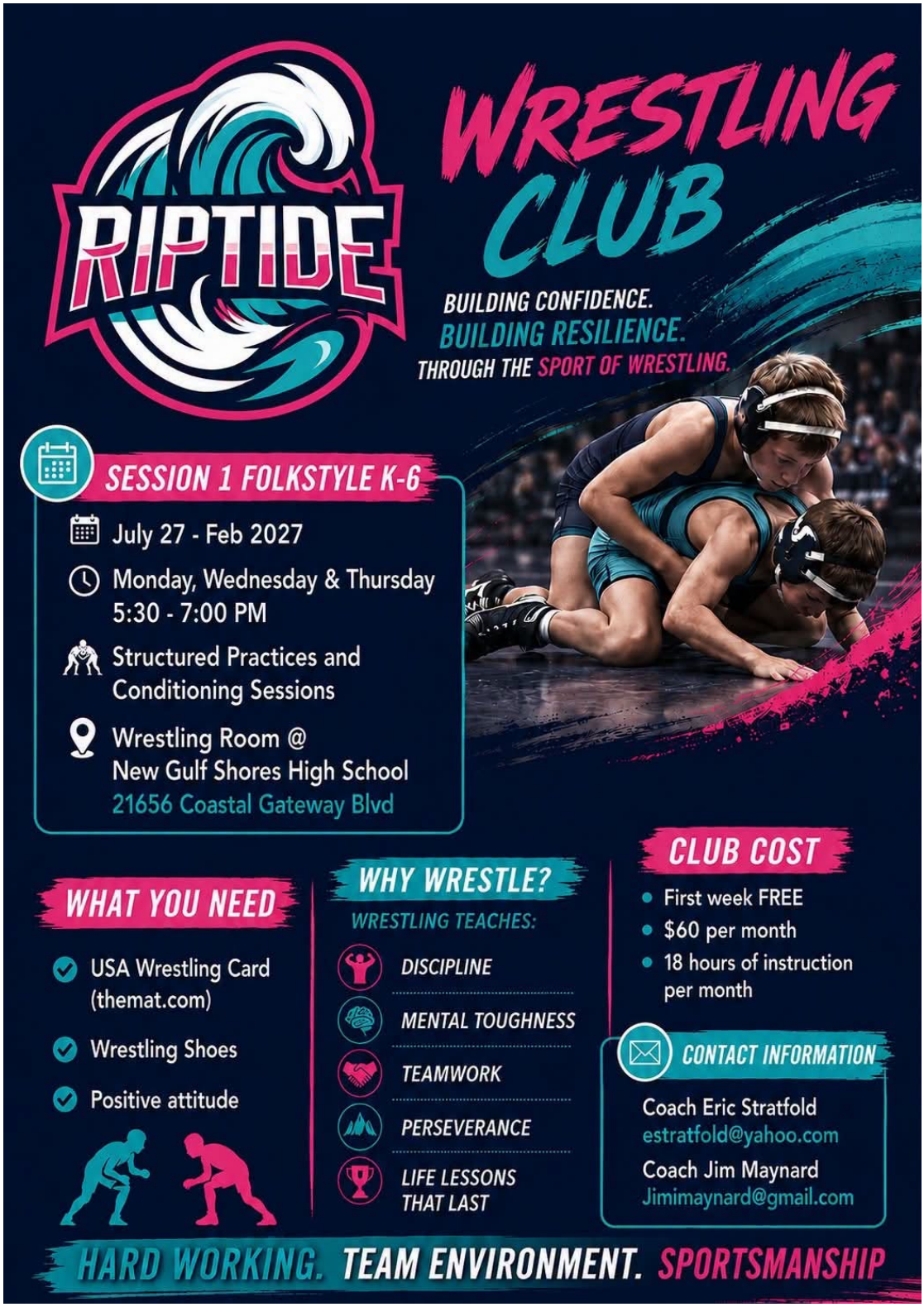


Help us solve a little mystery!
This adorable painted rock was recently found among donated items at Cross Works Thrift Store in Fort Payne, Alabama.
The back of the rock asks that whoever finds it tag Gulf Shores Elementary and share where it was discovered. We thought it would be fun to let them know their little rock made quite the journey!
From Gulf Shores, Alabama all the way to Fort Payne, Alabama—that's pretty amazing!
If you're connected with Gulf Shores Elementary, we'd love for you to see this and know your special rock has been found.
Found at: Cross Works Thrift Store
Location: Fort Payne, Alabama



So fun!! Thank you for letting us know you found one of our painted rocks way up in Fort Payne, Alabama! Mrs. Corlew, one of our talented GSES teachers, has painted many beautiful rocks to hide and share all over Alabama!

Gulf Shores Wrestling Team's Official Youth Club information (grades K-6)

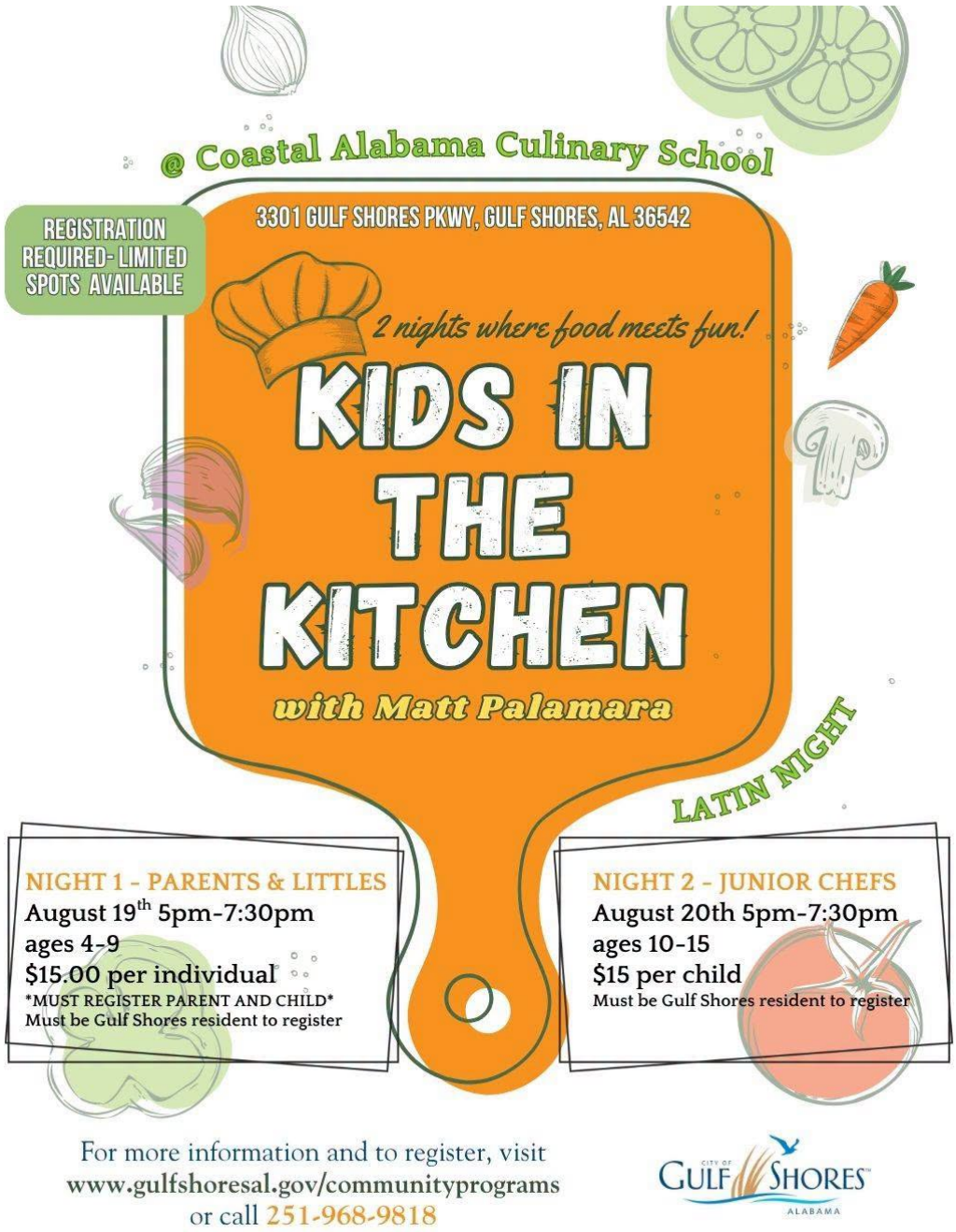


New Program Alert: **Kids in the Kitchen**!

Our Community Programs team is excited to launch Kids in the Kitchen, a brand-new cooking experience with Chef Matt Palamara at the Coastal Alabama Culinary School!
This two-night program gives young chefs the chance to build confidence in the kitchen while learning new skills, creating delicious recipes, and having fun along the way.

Parents & Littles kicks things off on August 19 from 5–7:30 p.m. for children ages 4–9 and a parent or guardian. The cost is $15 per individual, and both the parent and child must register.

Junior Chefs takes place on August 20 from 5–7:30 p.m. for ages 10–15. Registration is $15 per child.
Both sessions are open only to Gulf Shores residents, and space is limited.
For more information or to register, visit **www.gulfshoresal.gov/communityprograms** or call 251-968-9818.



The new band Spirit Wear collection !

Check out our extended selection of merchandise, including hats, hoodies, and more. This year, the store will be open all semester, so you can order when it's convenient for you. Orders ship within a few days of placement. That said, if you want your items in time for the first football game, we suggest ordering by AUGUST 1. That should ensure there will be plenty of time for your order to be delivered.
Our online shop is part of our new Band Parent Association website, so take a look around while you're there! We have lots of information online, with more to come soon. Click the link below to get started:
https://gulfshores.boosterhub.com/store/17534



Our Varsity and Junior Varsity Cheerleaders wrapped up four long days of learning competition choreography, and we were reminded just how blessed we are to be surrounded by such a supportive community!
A Huge THANK YOU to the businesses and individuals who generously provided lunch and drinks for our cheerleaders and coaches throughout choreography week! Your kindness and support kept our athletes fueled, encouraged, and ready to give their very best from 8:00am to 5:00pm each day!
Your generosity allowed our team to focus on learning, growing, and building the foundation for what we hope will be an incredible competition season! We truly could not do it without the support of our community!
Thank you for investing in our athletes and believing in Gulf Shores Cheer! We are so grateful for each of you!
Go Dolphins!
Special thanks to:
Crico's Pizza & Subs
Kountry Cozy
Tacky Jacks









A day full of art and cooking at Gulf Coast Center for Ecotourism & Systainability! Campers went on a bike ride in the morning and came back to paint our mural and their pottery they made. Then sliced strawberries and whipped up whipped cream for fresh strawberry shortcakes.











Come hang out at the **Gulf Shores Public Library** for our Back-to-School Hangout on August 4 and August 6! No registration required.

Get ready for a new school year at Gulf Shores City Schools!

GULF SHORES CITY SCHOOLS

2026-2027 School Calendar

300 East 16th Avenue Gulf Shores, AL 36542

251-968-9873 • 180 Student Days

August 12, 2026 to May 28, 2027

August 2026

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

September 2026

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27	28	29	30			

October 2026

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25	26	27	28	29	30	31

November 2026

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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

December 2026

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13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

January 2027

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

February 2027

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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14	15	16	17	18	19	20
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28						

March 2027

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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28	29	30	31			

April 2027

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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11	12	13	14	15	16	17
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25	26	27	28	29	30	

May 2027

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

2026	
August 5-7, 11	Teacher PD/Work Days
August 10	Institute Day
August 12	First Day of School For Students
September 7	Labor Day
October 8	Early Dismissal
October 9	Fall Break
October 12	E-Learning Day
November 11	Veterans Day
November 23-27	Thanksgiving
December 18	Early Dismissal
December 21-31	Winter Break

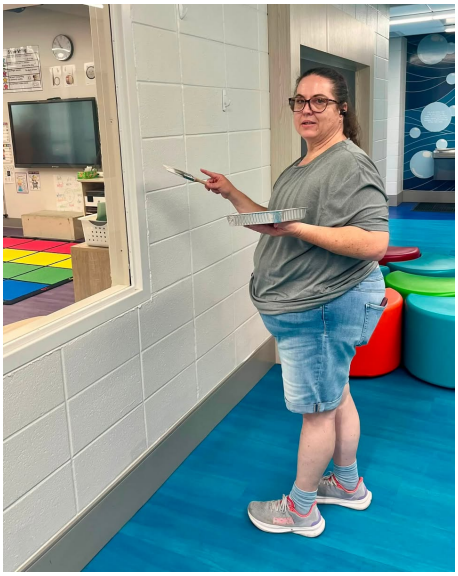
2027	
January 1,4	Winter Break
January 5	Students Return From Winter Break
January 18	MLK Birthday
February 8-9	Mardi Gras
February 10	E-Learning Day
March 12	Early Dismissal
March 26	Holiday
April 12-16	Spring Break
May 28	Last Day of School/Early Dismissal
May 31	Memorial Day

Color Key
Teacher PD/Work Days
Teacher Work Day - Institute Day
School Starts/ Students Return
NO Work - Holiday
Student School Day - Early Dismissal
Student School Day - E-Learning
Last Day of School/Early Dismissal

Quarter Dates	
First Quarter	8/12/2026 - 10/9/2026
Second Quarter	10/12/2026 - 12/18/2026
Third Quarter	1/5/2027 - 3/12/2027
Fourth Quarter	3/15/2027 - 5/28/2027



Mr. Tyrone with the **City of Gulf Shores** and GSES's Ms. Jammie are hard at it early this morning getting the grounds and buildings ready for the new school year!
Go Dolphins!



2026 ALACTE Summer Conference







Summertime is winding down and excitement is building at GSES, preparing for our students to return! **City of Gulf Shores** and **Gulf Shores Fire Rescue** - thank you for all you do for our schools!



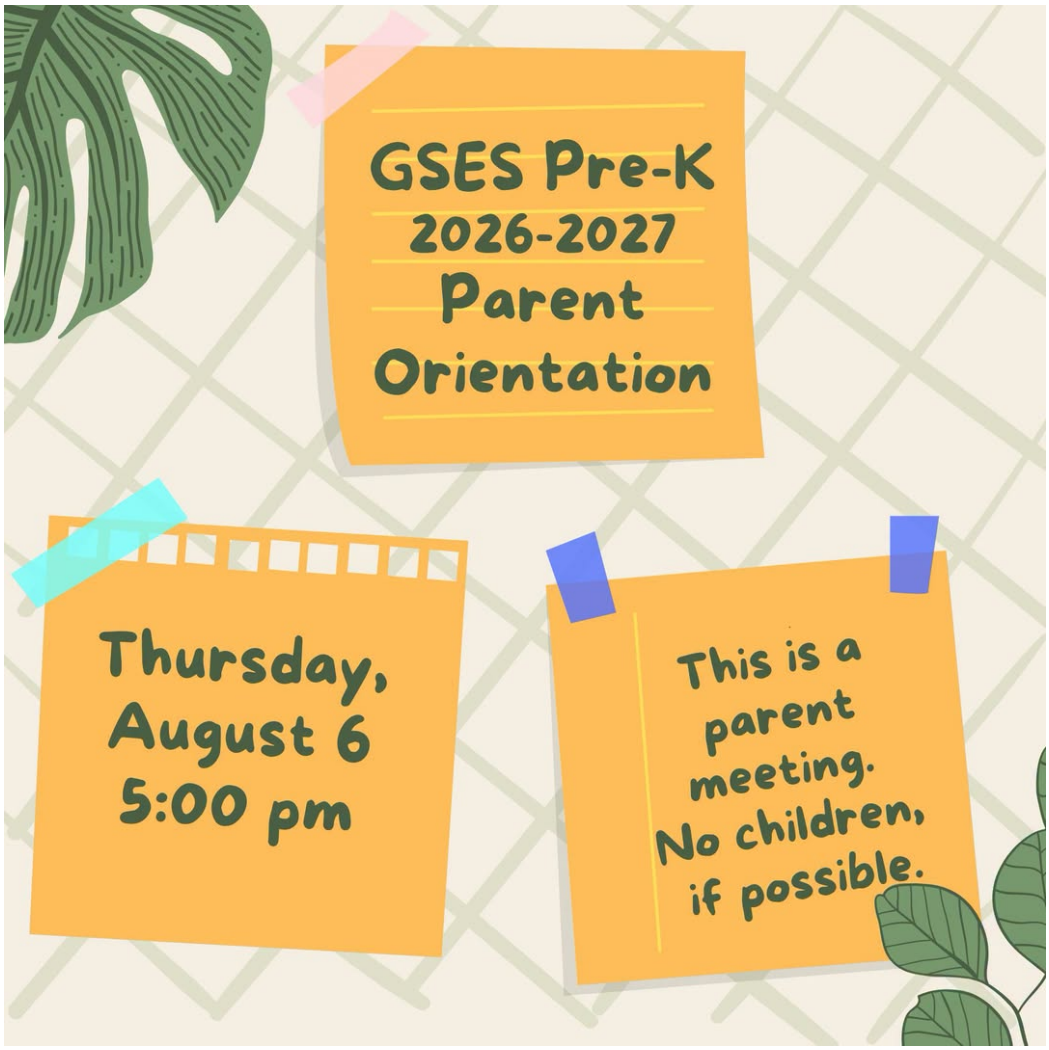








GSES Pre-K Parent Orientation 2026-2027 is Thursday, August 6th at 5:00 pm. This is a parent meeting. No children, if possible.









Youth AI Festival in Boston. How cool is it that our two Hyperwave team members from **Gulf Shores High School** are debating and creating a National AI policy for education.





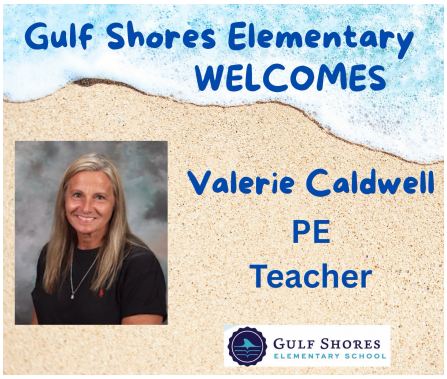


We had the absolute pleasure of touring the new Gulf Shores High School! Thank you to School Board President, **Kevin Corcoran**, and Superintendent, Dr. Matt Akin, for giving us the grand tour.
Our club meets every Tuesday at Noon at Villaggio's in Orange Beach. We hope you'll visit a meeting soon!





Coach Hud, Carter Davis and Elijah Malone represented Gulf Shores at 2026 Media Day at the United States Sports University in Daphne!


Gulf Shores Elementary
WELCOMES
Valerie Caldwell
PE
Teacher
Gulf Shores
Elementary School


Gulf Shores Elementary
WELCOMES
Barton Hodge
Kindergarten
Teacher
Gulf Shores
Elementary School


Gulf Shores Elementary
WELCOMES
Jessica Boler
Second Grade
Teacher
Gulf Shores
Elementary School


Gulf Shores Elementary
WELCOMES
Chris Schmidt
Fifth Grade
Teacher
Gulf Shores
Elementary School


Gulf Shores Elementary
WELCOMES
Kiri McFarland
Pre-K
Teacher
Gulf Shores
Elementary School


Gulf Shores Elementary
WELCOMES
Jessica Driggers
Instructional
Aide
Gulf Shores
Elementary School


Gulf Shores Elementary
WELCOMES
Brittany Walker
Upper Campus
Front Office
Clerk
Gulf Shores
Elementary School


Welcome,
Ken Ard
Gulf Shores
High School
Grounds
System
Specialist
I attended Brewton-Parker College on a baseball scholarship, where I earned my degree in Health, Physical Education, & Recreation. For more than 30 years, I've worked in parks, athletic fields, and landscape management, helping create & maintain safe, beautiful, &functional outdoor spaces. After living in Gulf Shores for the past 15 years, I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve the community in this new role & look forward to helping keep our campuses & athletic facilities in top condition.
My wife, Nicole, & I have four children: our son, KJ, who attends Gulf Shores Middle School, & our three adult daughters, Kirby, Kendal, & Katie. Kirby is a Gulf Shores High School graduate. We also have two grandsons & are excited to welcome our first granddaughter very soon.
I'm looking forward to getting to know the students, staff, & families of Gulf Shores City Schools & being part of a team that takes great pride in serving our community.


Gulf Shores
Middle School
Welcome
to
GSMS
NATE
NICHOLAS
History Teacher


Gulf Shores
Middle School
Welcome
to
GSMS
LINDSEY CLAIRE
WEATHERS
Math Teacher



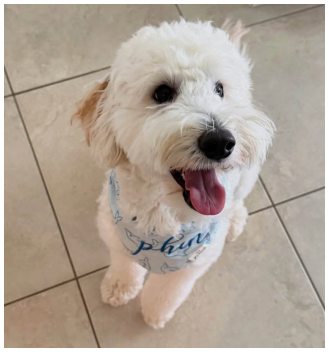
Preparing classrooms for the new school year at GSES is on the agenda for teachers in the upcoming weeks. We spied these first grade teachers with some of them moving into their new classrooms.

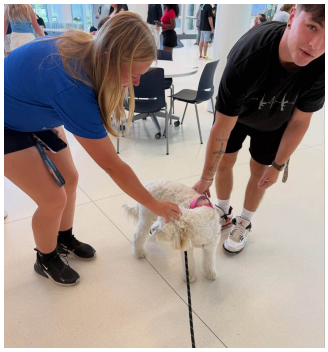


Gulf Shores to Harvard! I'm so proud of this dynamic duo! They started co-teaching Chemistry of Food during the summer a few years ago and have done some of the most delicious and amazing things teaching the science of food and cooking! I can't wait to see all they continue to do now that Chef Jon is a full-time teacher now!
Congratulations to Coach Jason Hill and Chef Jonathan Kastner on being selected for and attending the in-person portion of the 2025–2026 Harvard Science & Cooking for Teachers Program!
This prestigious professional learning experience brought educators together to explore chemical reactions through food, with hands-on investigations with cheese, popping boba, pancakes, and more.
The hybrid program included four days at Harvard University's Science & Cooking Lab, virtual learning, and yearlong collaboration to bring innovative, NGSS-aligned science instruction back to the classroom.
We're excited to see Coach Hill and Chef Kastner bring these engaging, collaborative, real-world STEM experiences to our students.!



It was super pawsome at GSHS!
I got to spend some time visiting with the Class of 2027 and even scored a brand-new bandana from The Paws in Tuscaloosa! I've really missed all of my human friends, but I've been busy behind the scenes helping get all of the high school Apple Neos ready for an amazing school year at our amazing new school! I can't wait to see everyone back on campus soon—it's going to be a tail-wagging great year!





Mark your calendars! S'mores on the Shore - just in time for back-to-school celebrating!



GSHS Seniors: Make the Most of Your Summer!
Summer is a great time to start searching for scholarships and getting organized before the busy school year begins. Creating a scholarship calendar, tracking deadlines, and gathering application materials now can save you time and stress later! Use free scholarship search engines such as **Niche.com** and **Scholarships.com** to explore scholarship opportunities and begin building your list of applications.
Remember: Applying for scholarships should always be FREE. Never pay someone who promises to get you a scholarship or guarantees award money in exchange for a fee. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.



Please join us in welcoming new Director of Athlete Performance at Gulf Shores - Josh Hampton





Public Event! Make Plans to Attend!



View video by selecting the link: **FOX10 Back to School: Gulf Shores City Schools readies for the return of students!**



2026 Gulf Shores Middle School Summer Reading Assignment

Mandatory Assignment for ALL Students entering grades 6th-7th-8th.

Choose **one** of the following novels to read:

Option 1:  ***The Trouble with Heros*** **by Kate Messer** (Mountain adventure, written in verse, dog sidekick)

Option 2:  ***The Right Call*** **by Tommy Greenwald** (Baseball, multi-media format, reluctant readers)

Option 3:  ***Deep Water*** **by Watt Key** (Local Author, set off the coast of Gulf Shores, Alabama, Scuba)

Option 4:  ***The Lost Hero*** **by Rick Riordan** (Fantasy, Greek Mythology, Adventure)

When students return to school...

They will be given a 20-question multiple-choice test on the book they chose to read. This will be a formative 20-point grade.

Students are encouraged to...

Read at least 20 minutes each day. Feel free to check out the other book options once you finish the required one. Take a trip to a local bookstore or our local library. Our public libraries will be holding events throughout the summer for all age groups.







KIDS HOPE USA®

Mentors needed:
Do you want to make a difference in a student's life? Can you find the time to help support our wonderful school system by being present for a student one hour one day a week on Tuesday or Wednesday afternoons during the school year?
Volunteers are needed to build a one-on-one relationship with a student through our Kids Hope, USA mentoring program. Help us support our students by contacting Sandi Harris in the Administrative Office at 251-968-9873. She will be happy to assist you.





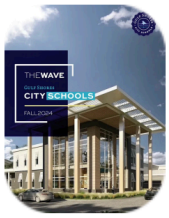
8/4-5 GSHS: Senior Portraits
8/5-7 GSCS: Teacher PD/Work Days
8/6 BOE: Work Session 4:00pm
8/6 GSES: Pre-K Parent Orientation 5:00pm
8/10 GSCS: Institute Day for Employees
8/10 GSES: Meet The Teacher (Last Name Beginning With.... A-H 2:30pm I-P 3:30pm Q-Z 4:30pm)
8/11 GSCS: Teacher PD/Work Days
8/12 GSCS: First Day of School For Students
8/13 BOE: Regular Meeting 5:00pm
8/18 GSMS: Open House 5:00pm
8/21 GSMS: Back To School Dance 5:00pm

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! Get your copy today!



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
Marcelinia Speller - Human Resource Coordinator
Chelsey Neth - Data Management & Reporting Analyst
Jason Watts - Athletic Director
Beau Roode - Director of Operations
Sonya Price - Director of Exceptional Education
Liz Corcoran & Tracy Bennett - English Language Learners
Tanya Hill - Child Nutrition Program Coordinator
Randall Carlisle - Student Engagement, Transportation & Safety Coordinator
Jessica Sampley - Career Tech Coordinator
Karen Pearson - District Testing Coordinator
Laura Goulden - Mental Health Coordinator
Whitney Boggus - Chief Technology Officer
Alicia Early - Director of Federal Programs, Compliance, and Strategic Initiatives

MAKE WAVES!

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

Joe McAleer - Social Media