

THE PATH

A PUBLICATION BY AIKEN COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PURPLE STAR SCHOOL DISTRICT

South Carolina State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman announced a new district and school recognition program celebrating military-friendly schools and districts at a press conference and reception held at North Augusta High School. The State Department's newly-created Purple Star Recognition Program was established to encourage and celebrate schools and school districts making a significant commitment to support military-connected students and families. Aiken County Public School District and North Augusta High School were celebrated as the state's first district and school to receive the honor.

Among the extensive criteria for Purple Star designation are requirements for a dedicated liaison to serve as a single point of contact, student ambassadors to offer peer-to-peer support, a military-friendly website, military-student exceptions to enrollment periods for sports and other extracurricular activities, and school staff training.

"We want every school to have a network of support in place that these students and their families can lean on to help them throughout the process."

*Molly Spearman
South Carolina
State Superintendent*



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DAY OF CARING

On Saturday, September 21, 2019, Aiken County Public Schools' ONE TEAM rolled up their sleeves for a day of service devoted to helping our community.

From washing police cars and assisting with community events, to creating care packages and building blessing boxes, this year's ONE K-12 COMMUNITY DAY OF CARING was an opportunity for the District's students, parents and staff to give back and provide helping hands for a day of service to the community.

"We were excited to switch the format for this year's 'Day of Caring,'" commented Merry Glene Piccolino, Aiken County Public Schools' Director of Communications and Community Partnerships. "Community groups, volunteers and individuals have given thousands of hours over the last three years during this annual day of service, a community volunteer event that has traditionally been devoted to improvements to our community's K-12 facilities. This year, we wanted to demonstrate our collective appreciation by going out into the community just as the community has come into our schools for a little sprucing up and support."



WELCOME

TO INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT, PRINCIPALS & DEPARTMENT LEADERS

King Laurence

INTERIM
SUPERINTENDENT



Experienced Administrator Chosen as District's Interim Superintendent

Veteran Administrator King Laurence was appointed by the Aiken County Board of Education as the Interim Superintendent for Aiken County Public Schools effective Saturday, September 14.

Laurence has an educational career spanning three decades, with 22 years of them in Aiken County Public Schools. He previously served as the District's Chief Officer of Administration and Human Resources.

"During my time in this District, I have witnessed a team of individuals unmatched in its commitment to service," Laurence stated. "I am proud of the things that we have accomplished and am devoted to our continued success."

A graduate of the University of South Carolina Aiken in 1985 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Education, Laurence received his Master's in Educational Administration in 1990 from the University of South Carolina and has attained an additional thirty graduate semester hours. Laurence is licensed and certified to serve as a School Superintendent by the South Carolina Department of Education and has served in varied leadership roles for Aiken County Public Schools, including as an Associate Superintendent (2012-2016), Director of Federal Programs (2005-2012), and as a school Principal (1998-2005). Prior to his service in Aiken County, Laurence was a Teacher and Administrator in Edgefield County School District.

Laurence has represented Aiken County at the state level on the executive board of the South Carolina Association of School Administrators' Instructional Leaders Roundtable, as President of the South Carolina Association of Title I Administrators, and as Conference Chair for the South Carolina Association of School Administrators. He is part of a number of professional organizations and has served on numerous Boards and Committees, including the South Carolina Reading Recovery Advisory Council and the South Carolina Association of School Administrators Instructional Leaders Divisions' Executive Committee.

Locally, he is President of the Sunrise Rotary Club and served on the Education Matters Board of Directors, a group he chaired from 2015-17. Laurence was a Charter Member of Aiken County First Steps and has served as a Board Member and Vice Chair of the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center Advisory Board (2013-16). Laurence is the 2016 Recipient of the Robert E. Alexander Outstanding K-12 Administrator of the Year Award and also received a State Leadership Award from the National Association of Federal Education Program Administrators (2012).

As the District moves forward, Laurence commented that "ONE TEAM" is more than just words.

"It is a promise that we are committed to a common vision to improve the lives of the people of Aiken County through education," he continued. "Our students, parents, and community deserve nothing less, and, together, that's just what we are going to do."

Laurence was appointed Interim Superintendent in September, 2019, after having served the District for 22 years.

Bert Postell

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF HIGH SCHOOLS



New Executive Director of High Schools Has Leadership Experience as an ACPSD Principal

With extensive experience in educational leadership at both the classroom and school levels spanning nearly two decades, **Bert Postell** supervises the District's eight high schools, the Aiken County Career & Technology Center, and the Center For Innovative Learning at Pinecrest.

Prior to working for the District, Postell served as a middle school and high school teacher, assistant principal, and most recently as the principal of Silver Bluff High School.

He also served in the United States Army Field Artillery as a Fire Direction Officer, Fire Support Officer and Battery Supply Officer. He later served as a Transportation Company Commander in the United States Army Reserve.

He began working for Aiken County in July 2017 as Principal of Silver Bluff High School and is committed to the success of all students and employees at the secondary level.

Don Pencille

DIRECTOR
OF TECHNOLOGY



The District's Technology Department Welcomes One of Its Own as Director

Don Pencille has spent nearly two decades serving the expanding technology needs of Aiken County Public Schools, and has been at the forefront of emerging challenges and their solutions.

Pencille began his career in the District in July of 2001 as a Technology Specialist. He was quickly promoted to the role of Network Specialist in 2002 and served in that capacity until March of 2014 when he was named the District's Network Coordinator. In his most recent role with the District, Pencille evaluated, designed and implemented the District's network systems. He has also been responsible for preparing and recommending operational budgets while maintaining all records, in addition to looking ahead at possible system enhancements and upgrades.

"My educational background in finance and computer science and my work experience is well suited for my new role," commented Pencille. "You definitely need both sides."

Micki Dove

DIRECTOR OF
CURRICULUM SUPPORT



Veteran Curriculum Specialist Micki Dove To Lead Curriculum Teams

While serving in Aiken County Public Schools over the past six years as a District-level Content Interventionist and school-based instructional coach, Micki Dove developed a special bond with her colleagues and grew her leadership capacity. She will now take those experiences and relationships to the next level as the school district's Director of Curriculum Support.

"I am very passionate about what I do, and I appreciate the value this position offers to our school district," Dove stated. "We have phenomenal content experts in our Content Interventionists. I have worked with all of them for a number of years and they have so many strengths. I am thrilled to be able to continue our work together."

As the District's Director of Curriculum Support, Dove will monitor, evaluate and manage the development of the school district's curriculum through the curriculum support staff and teacher curriculum writing teams.

**New
Principals**

**...Speak
About Their
New Positions**

“When I learned that we would be opening a new school in our community, I could not resist the opportunity to be a part of starting something new here in Graniteville. We have the very special opportunity to write history in Graniteville and to create a place that is unlike any other for our children to learn and grow.”

Michelle Padgett
GRANITEVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

“I grew up in the rural, small town of Wagener. I actually became an educator with the intent to come back to Aiken County after graduation so that I could positively impact students and families from communities like mine. As a former Oakwood-Windsor teacher, the opportunity to once again serve this community was very appealing. The students and families of Oakwood-Windsor have always had a piece of my heart and I’m greatly looking forward to getting started.”

Davina Truitt
OAKWOOD-WINDSOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

“We will have a great opportunity to have an impact on all students in the city of Aiken and usher them into their middle school years with a positive experience. With my background at the elementary level and experience at the middle school level, I understand what students and parents are going through during this transition.”

Denise McCray
AIKEN INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

“Building positive relationships with students has always been an important part of my educational approach, and will continue to be a focus at Kennedy Middle School. Those positive relationships are especially important when it comes to students. If you are able to develop that trust and they know you support them and care about them by attending their athletic events, robotics matches, chorus and band performances, or whatever they are interested in, that goes a long way toward establishing those relationships and I feel that’s really been a strength of mine during my career.”

Dr. Ryan Ashley
KENNEDY MIDDLE SCHOOL

“I came back home to Aiken County to serve in my own community because education is about building character and meeting your fullest potential. I want teachers, along with students, to map out their career goals and then help get them there. As they grow, I want to help them strive for more and achieve their professional goals. Giving back to the community is really important to me. I was a military kid and we moved around a lot. I never really felt like I was part of those communities or that I belonged. When my dad retired here in Aiken, for the first time I felt welcomed and part of a community.”

Dr. Tiffany Hall
LEAVELLE MCCAMPBELL MIDDLE SCHOOL

“I am personally vested in the success of this community and am so excited about being part of a successful team focused on and passionate about supporting students. With the science and technology focus at Paul Knox, I’m looking forward to facilitating challenging learning opportunities which will make our students ready participants in our future workforce.”

Paige Day
PAUL KNOX MIDDLE SCHOOL

“I am really excited about leading Schofield Middle and potential implementation of elements of the Cambridge Program curriculum at the middle school level. I am also excited to be able to continue the relationships already developed with the sixth and seventh grade students and their families at Aiken Middle, while developing new relationships with students at Schofield Middle I will meet for the first time.”

Scott Floyd
SCHOFIELD MIDDLE SCHOOL

“I am really looking forward to being involved with the Cambridge International program at Aiken High because it really combines High Schools That Work and the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate all into one and that’s very exciting. Having spent the majority of my life in Aiken County, I have always been impressed by the tradition, community and pride that has been present at Aiken High School and displayed by teachers, students and alumni, and being a part of that legacy as an administrator was very attractive to me.”

Dr. Jason Holt
AIKEN HIGH SCHOOL



An employee appreciation event was held in spring to celebrate our District’s ONE TEAM at a district-sponsored family-friendly event, complete with live music, “Downtown Dollars,” and dozens of supporting businesses offering discounts and ACPD “Teacher & Employee Perks” as part of a new employee discount program launched at the event.

For a list of participating businesses in ACPD’s new “Teacher & Employee Perk Program” and/or to find out how to get involved in showing your love to our teachers and staff, visit acpsd.net > Community.

“I love working with students and I am passionate about what it is we are charged to do in education. I believe we have a responsibility to put every student in a position to be successful. It is their life and they will need to make decisions based upon their interests and goals, but as the adults and the schools leaders, we need to be able to put them in a position to reach those goals.”

Dr. KaRon Webb
RIDGE SPRING-MONETTA HIGH SCHOOL

“Aiken County has been consistently recognized for academic excellence over the years, and it has a real sense of community that was very attractive to me as I was pursuing this next step in my career. The secondary level is near and dear to my heart because it is the final opportunity we have to influence students before they enter the real world.”

Dr. Katie Briscoe
SILVER BLUFF HIGH SCHOOL

“I really enjoy serving others, and in this new capacity I will have the opportunity to help people who are striving to improve and be productive citizens and help their families and I just want to help facilitate that and continue to try to impact the community in a positive way. It will be the same thing I have been doing for a long time, just in a different place. I have enjoyed every single year at Aiken High and I love my faculty and the school. This is just a good opportunity for me to move on to the next phase of my career.”

Garen Cofer
DIRECTOR OF AIKEN COUNTY
ADULT EDUCATION CENTER

NEW SCHOOL Dedications

Aiken Intermediate School Ribbon Cutting

The ribbon is cut and the proclamation read. Aiken Intermediate School (AIS), which opened this fall, has been branded the "Home of the Explorers." The new logo features Explorer, the school's mascot, facing outward to a world ready for exploration and discovery.

AIS is the first and only school in the district to focus solely on meeting the academic, social, and emotional needs of sixth graders to help them make the transition from elementary to middle school.

"We just want to thank you for giving us this opportunity to make this happen," AIS' Principal Denise McCray commented at the ceremony. "We will make history and make this the best sixth-grade experience any kid could ever dream to have."



AIS' PRINCIPAL DENISE MCCRAY (CENTER), ASST PRINCIPALS ADAM KELLEY (LEFT) AND JAMIE BYRNE (RIGHT)

Graniteville Elementary Opens Doors

Graniteville Elementary School Principal Michelle Padgett had the honor of cutting the ribbon during the school's dedication ceremony on August 10, 2019. The community showed great support for the school whose mascot, Gregg the Gator, is named after William Gregg, who supervised the construction of the power canal in Graniteville as part of creating one of the first textile company towns in the South.

Rich in tradition, the school's seal honors the historic Graniteville Company mill brand. The color blue in the seal is representative of the "blue granite" in Graniteville, and the reeds in the seal are a nod to the wildlife growing along the Graniteville canal.

The repurposed building, located at 1 Willis Circle in Graniteville, was built in the 1950s as the original Byrd Elementary School.



"We want our students to dream and be inspired and challenged to greatness," Michelle Padgett, GVES' Principal, told The Aiken Standard at the event. "We want to give them the tools they need to be and do whatever they dream to be and do."



JOINING SCHOOLS: Keep Pounding Day

When the Carolina Panthers contacted Merry Glenne Piccolino, the District's Director of Communications and Community Partnerships, about their interest in hosting a field day event at an Aiken County Public School, Piccolino knew just where to take them-Schofield Middle School-to assist in the transition of 6th and 7th graders from Aiken Middle School, which would be closing, to their new school home at Schofield.

The Panthers sponsored "Keep Pounding Day" as a way to celebrate the team's 25th anniversary. The event in Aiken was part of their 25-city event sponsorship tour throughout the Carolinas. The event provided an opportunity for students at both schools to have fun playing games, jumping in bounce houses, eating snow cones, and just get to know one another.

"Unity. Today is about the unity of two student bodies coming together under one roof or, today, on one field."

-Scott Floyd, former principal of Aiken Middle School who moved with his students and a number of faculty to lead Schofield Middle School



#WHYTEACHACPSD

Educators Affect the Culture

The #WhyITeachACPSD campaign, which kicked off in August of 2018, encourages teachers to share via social media what sparked their interest in education and keeps them coming back to the classroom year after year.

Affect the Culture and its founder Darius Robinson were introduced to our District earlier last year when the non-profit led a social media campaign in Aiken County's high schools and challenged students to conduct and share five random acts of kindness.

Following the success of the student campaign, a similar effort was planned for educators. May 1 through May 29, 2019, teachers from each of Aiken's more than 40 campuses challenged one another to #AffectTheCulture by posting inspirational moments with #WhyITeachACPSD. During the campaign period, Aiken County's teachers and staff posted 37,642 times, sharing their passion for education and the students they serve. As a reward for the teachers and staff with the most posts, District leaders partnered with Panera Bread to take over lunch duty at the winning school and treat employees to a catered lunch. With a total of 10,835 posts, Millbrook Elementary School came out on top.



Pictured: Jeanie Glover, Chief Officer of Instruction, and Cassie Cagle, Director of Special Programs, at Millbrook's lunch takeover.

GRAD-2-GREAT

AARON MADDOX

COLORADO BUFFALOES

Q+A

WITH
NORTH AUGUSTA
HIGH SCHOOL
GRAD-2-GREAT
AARON MADDOX



Before Aaron Maddox was a starting safety for the University of Colorado Buffaloes, he was a standout student-athlete at North Augusta High School. Aaron was born in Tuscon, Arizona, in 1997, and moved to Aiken County in the first grade.

He was a stellar student-athlete at North Augusta High. Aaron was named by The Aiken Standard as a First Team defensive back, and he was selected to play for Team South Carolina in Border Bowl III. He was named as a First Team All-Region, All-Area, and All-CSRA selection, and had 71 tackles, four pass breakups, a blocked punt and a forced fumble and recovered fumble in his senior season. Sixteen of those tackles and two interceptions came in a single game his senior season against Lakeside High (Ga.). He excelled in basketball as well for the Jackets, nearly averaging a double-double with 10 points and nine rebounds per game.

Aaron was also named to the North Augusta High School Student Hall of Fame in 2016, and held a 3.3 grade point average as a Jacket.

ACPSD: How did attending Aiken County Public Schools help best prepare you for life and success?

AARON MADDOX: Attending Aiken County Public Schools has prepared me for many things, but one thing I am most grateful for is the academic and competitive pressure of being as successful as possible. The challenges of balancing academia and athletic demands have been known to be really challenging. This is especially true at the highest level. Having the teachers that I did really taught me the skills to manage and excel at the academic side of being a student-athlete. I still use the techniques my teachers taught me in how to study, write, and manage heavy workloads.

ACPSD: What made your personal experiences in elementary, middle and high school so memorable?

AARON MADDOX: Moving from Arizona to South Carolina in the first grade was a challenge at first. Learning the culture of things was a big difference. One thing that made all of those experiences memorable was the ability to go through it all with the people I can still call friends today. Going to school in a smaller area where everyone knows everyone was helpful in making friends and carrying those memories on. I still talk about things my friends and I have gone through to this day.

ACPSD: What would be your advice for current Aiken County Public School District students?

AARON MADDOX: Think outside of the box. Think outside of the South. Find a way to explore other regions and other cultures because there's so much out there. Living in a small city can sometimes narrow your vision and dreams, but nothing is impossible no matter what someone else thinks.

ACPSD: More specifically, what would be your advice for those student-athletes who may have an opportunity to play at the next level?

AARON MADDOX: Never let the words or opinion of anyone depict or determine who you are. Stay true to your work and believe in yourself at all times. Find the right competitive division and lifestyle you want to pursue. Playing at the highest level (Division 1) in college will demand that your sport is your life. Juggling both sports and academics will take extreme discipline and hard work, so take your time in deciding the right place for you.

ACPSD: Following a football game this season against rival Colorado State, you gave your game gloves to a young Buffs fan. Why is it important to you to encourage others, and most especially kids?

AARON MADDOX: I used to be in their position. I know what it feels like to have those goals and dreams. Everyone needs a little push or encouragement. It's a feeling of positivity that makes me feel like I made a difference in their life. Small things like that can make an impact in the lives of others, most especially with kids. Any doubt or disbelief in them can quickly be eliminated with the encouragement of others.



AIKEN COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

4K Evening Program

Aiken County Public Schools launched a 10-week evening developmental program in January 2019 to help pre-kindergarten students prepare for school. Data gathered following the program’s completion and feedback from parents showed that students who participated in the program experienced growth in several measurable skill areas.

The program was held on Tuesday and Thursday evenings between January 29, 2019, and April 4, 2019. Students were instructed utilizing the District’s 4k curriculum. They were also provided with a snack and a nutritious evening meal. District pre-kindergarten teachers led classroom instruction, and early childhood college graduates served as teaching assistants.

The program began at 4:15 p.m. each scheduled day, and was held at Millbrook Elementary School, Mossy Creek Elementary School, Gloverville Elementary School, Jefferson Elementary School, Busbee Elementary School, Ridge Spring-Monetta Elementary School, Greendale Elementary School and Redcliffe Elementary School and served around 100 total students.

The District plans to continue the program, with a goal of increasing the overall number of students served as well as the average number of students served at each school location.



ONE TEAM

Our annual ONE TEAM back-to-school kick-off event, held August 14, 2019, was the Most Exhilarating, Greatest Show in Aiken County, with a never-seen-before Vendor Village and over the top synergy from student performers, including acGATEWAY, Kennedy On Stage, Ridge-Spring Monetta Elementary’s Step Team, and much, much more!

Putting this year’s event together was no small feat, but this year, with the help of nearly 40 employees from a

variety of schools and the District Office serving on the ONE TEAM Planning Committee, the “Impossible Came True.”

The group worked hard to solicit community sponsorship, find vendors and food trucks for the Vendor Village, organize practice times for District Leadership and student performers to work together to perfect their dance number and set up under The Big Top.

STATE CHAMPIONS South Aiken Girls Soccer, Wagener-Salley Golf & North Augusta Girls Basketball

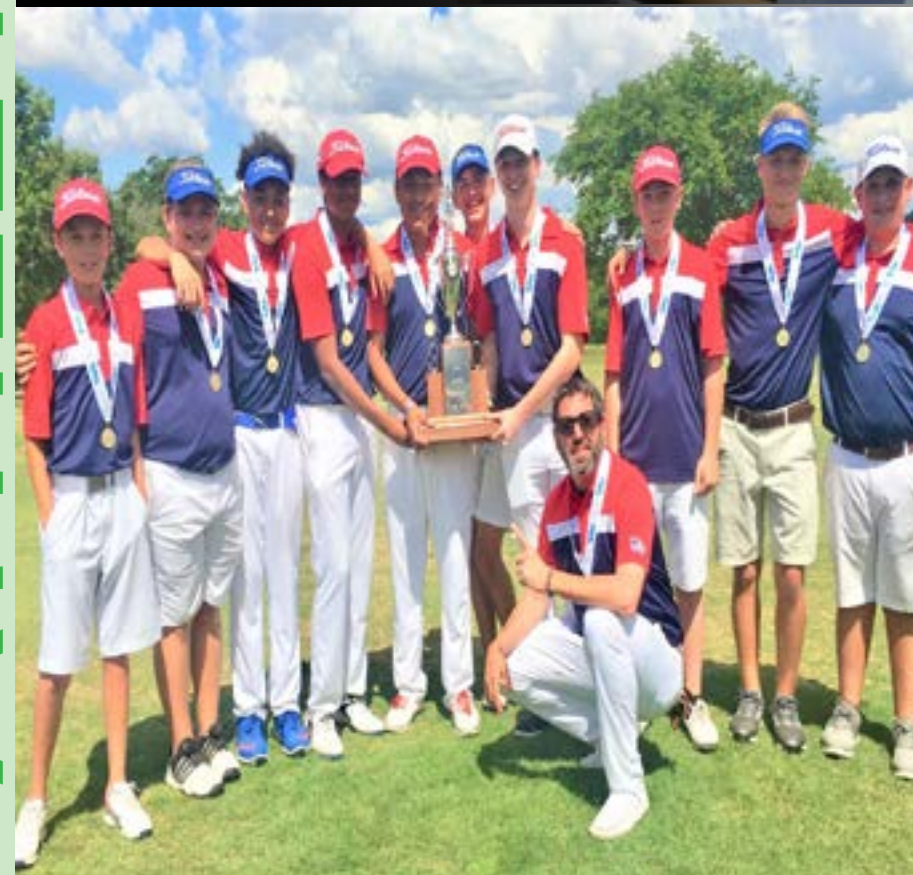
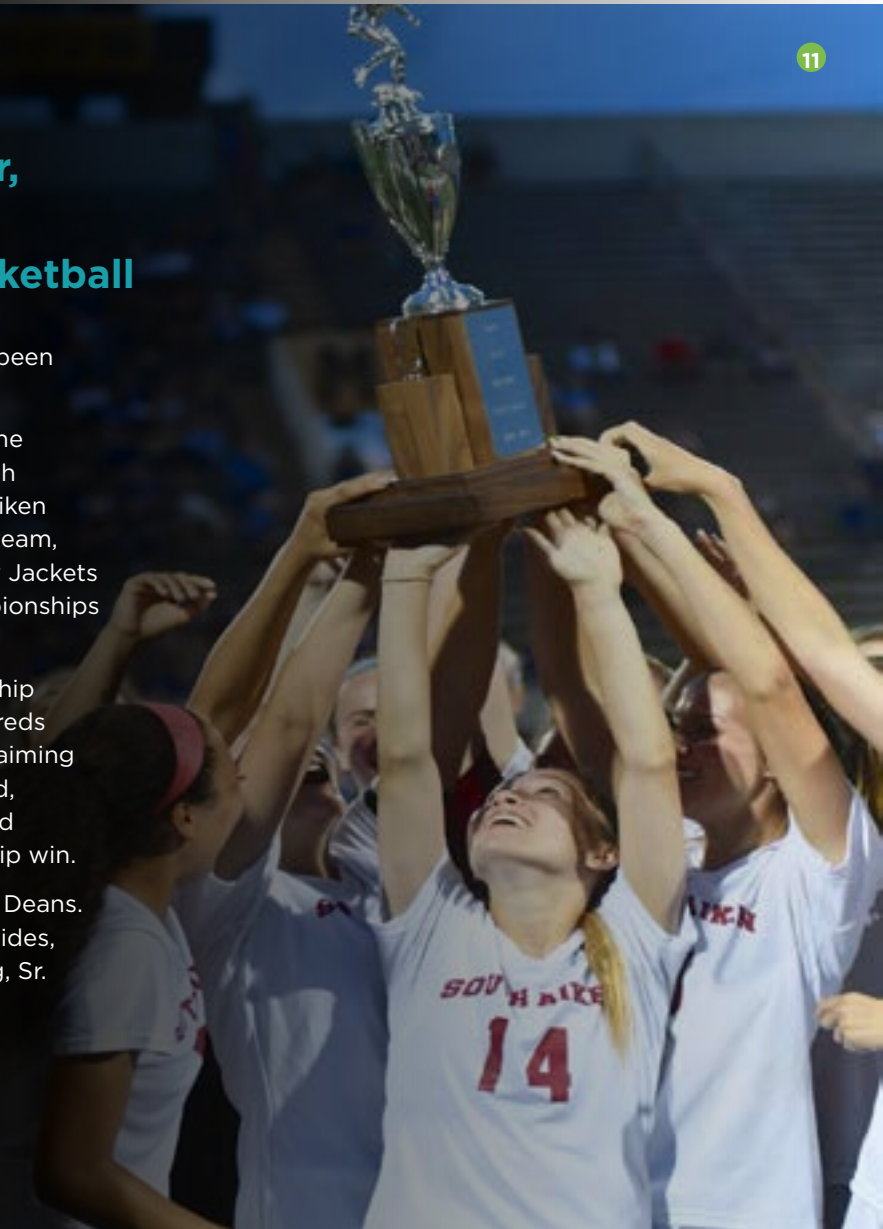
Aiken County Public Schools has always been home to amazing athletic talent.

This was put on full display yet again in the spring of 2019 as the Wagener-Salley High School War Eagle golf team, the South Aiken High School Lady Thoroughbred soccer team, and the North Augusta High School Lady Jackets basketball team all captured state championships in Class A and Class AAAA, respectively.

It was the first-ever golf state championship for the War Eagles. The Lady Thoroughbreds finished the season undefeated before claiming their second state title in three years. And, for the Lady Jackets, this marks their third consecutive state basketball championship win.

The War Eagles were coached by Parrish Deans. The Lady Thoroughbreds by Dave Mihoulides, and the Lady Jackets are led by Al Young, Sr.

Members of The Aiken Standard Sports Department contributed to this feature.



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World Language

From world language, advanced learning and leadership to STEM and STEAM-powered education, unique themed schools have piqued the interest of parents, guardians and educators alike. Beginning in the 2019-20 school year, Aiken County Public Schools expanded its school choice options to 20 thematic educational opportunities to the community, including the unique opportunity for World Language Immersion at three elementary schools-Mandarin Chinese at Belvedere, Spanish at Clearwater, and German at Millbrook. ACPSD is the only district within a 50-mile radius of Fort Gordon to offer elementary language immersion.

For information on these and other thematic programs throughout the county, visit acpsd.net > Schools > School Choice.

The Class of 2019 & Senior Scholars

Aiken County Public Schools' Class of 2019, totaling 1,432 students, was quite an impressive bunch! Total scholarship earnings for last year's graduates totaled \$79 million dollars and 88.4% were accepted to a two- or four-year college or university.

The Class of 2019 had the first Early College graduates, twelve seniors from Midland Valley who earned both a high school diploma and Associate's Degree from Aiken Technical College, without cost to the student or family.

Last year's graduates also included the first three Aiken County students connected with the Governor's School Accelerate Program, an opportunity which provides an intensive engineering track, allowing students to advance their academic pursuits while remaining at their high school and earning up to 52 credit hours from Clemson University.

The now-annual Senior Scholars Banquet celebrated our most academically determined students and their families a few weeks before graduation and honored our scholars for consistent academic achievement.



PREMIER LEARNING SPACES: \$90 Million Oversight Committee Named

Members of the District's \$90 Million Dollar Bond Referendum Oversight Committee met for the first time September 24, 2019, to review revenues, expenditures and construction updates.

The \$90 Million Bond Referendum was approved by Aiken County voters on May 1, 2018.

The Oversight Committee is comprised of two members of the Aiken County Board of Education (Mr. Brian Silas and Mr. Jason Crane), and community representatives from various attendance zones across the District, including: Andrew Hendrix, Ben Harm, Bruce Wheelon, Diana Bowers, Everett Chandler, Kim Martin, Laura Kanagy, Leslie Cobb, Michelle Stevens, Paula Holley, Rev. Chris Wyatt, and Tim Butler. Individuals who are not committee members, but who also attend the meetings include the school district's Chief Officer of Student Services, Dr. Shawn Foster, and Chief Finance Officer Mr. Tray Traxler.

Projects being funded by the referendum include renovations and new construction at Midland Valley High School, renovations and new construction at Hammond Hill Elementary School, Belvedere Elementary School and Millbrook Elementary School, and construction of an Elementary-Middle school in the North Augusta area.

The purpose of the committee is to provide oversight of revenues and expenditures related to projects included in the plan for usage of the 90 million dollar bond through referendum funds.

Duties of the committee include reviews of revenues, expenditures, construction reports, an annual community broadcast and progress reports to the Board of Education. Meetings are held quarterly.

Oversight Committee data includes financial reports and construction reports.



'Call Me MISTER' Program

The Aiken County Public School District, in partnership with Aiken Technical College, The University of South Carolina Aiken and Clemson University, has announced the five members of the school district's first-ever Call Me MISTER cohort of students. The Call Me MISTER program, which was announced in April, seeks to attract minority males, and especially African American males, to the teaching profession (with an emphasis on the Elementary level).

Data from the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention and Advancement (CERRA) shows just 3% percent or 1,461 of South Carolina's 50,863 teachers are African American males. The ACPSD percentage is even lower, as only 2% or 36 of the District's 1,526 teachers are African American males. In Aiken County elementary schools, just eight (one percent) of the school district's 789 elementary school teachers are African American males.

Participating students include Logan Ford (a 2018 graduate of Aiken High); Jabarrik Corley (a 2019 graduate of Aiken High); Daylan Abney (a 2019 graduate of Aiken High); Tavaris Williams (a 2019 graduate of Midland Valley High); and Stephan Rouse (a 2019 graduate of Silver Bluff High).

PHOTO CREDITS: Aiken Technical College Director of Marketing and Public Relations, Nikasha N. Dicks.



PERFECT ATTENDANCE

Aiken County Public School District celebrated four students in the class of 2019 who graduated with perfect attendance records, a hard-to-reach achievement that takes dedication and determination. These outstanding students did not miss a single day of school from kindergarten through 12th grade. Congratulations to Aiyana Holland, Aiken High School; Antonio Hill, Silver Bluff High School; Kyler Jones, South Aiken High School; and Thomas O'Banion, South Aiken High School on your perfect attendance in your academic careers!



Rena Humes: Spelling Bee Star

Correctly spelling the word “boutique” in the tenth round of competition, Kennedy Middle School sixth-grader Rena Humes was named the 2019 Aiken County Scripps Spelling Bee Champion February 4, 2019.

“I definitely studied more this time and my mom helped me to get through it,” Rena stated. “Last year I was so close and this year I finally got it so that was a good feeling.”

Humes represented Aiken County during the 2019 Scripps National Spelling Bee held in Washington, D.C., in May, where she advanced to the second round of the prestigious competition.

“This was my first time going to the national competition in Washington, D.C., and I want to go back! I am already studying for the next county spelling bee.”

Job Shadowing Day

AIKEN WORKS, the Aiken County community’s workforce development collaborative, joined in the excitement of National “Groundhog” Job Shadow Day, providing ACPSD students with an inside perspective on possible career choices in businesses in and around Aiken County and throughout the CSRA. In total, 319 companies and organizations hosted District students, including Cindra McCoy, owner of Art Nook, pictured below.

The initiative connects high school students with area professionals, allowing businesses and organizations to give them the opportunity to experience a typical day working in a field of the student’s choosing, and spanning a variety of industries.

“Job shadowing is a useful way for students to learn about a particular job of interest, and more importantly, shadowing can allow them to identify potential mentors and start building networks of contacts in their field,” commented AIKEN WORKS Lead Larry Millstead.

Visit AikenWorks.org for additional details.



Avara Pharmaceuticals Donation to J.D. Lever

Students at J.D. Lever Elementary School were all smiles when they received a generous donation of 200 computers from Avara Pharmaceutical Services. The idea to donate computers followed last fall’s inaugural Principal For A Day event, in which business, government and community leaders spent a day serving as leaders at each of the District’s public schools. A leader from Avara (then Glaxo-Smith-Kline) served at nearby J.D. Lever, and realized students would benefit from the idle computers at their Aiken campus.

Representatives from Avara, including the Site Director Keith Richardson (left in photo), were invited to a luncheon hosted by the school’s staff and students to see the computers in use. Students in all grades demonstrated how this gift would enhance their learning.

Mr. Truitt (right in photo) explained that students begin completing essays using a computer by third grade, and having these computers will allow students to develop keyboarding skills at an early age.

Mr. Richardson expressed his commitment to the school, saying “We look forward to working with J.D. Lever in future projects like their career fairs and volunteer efforts”



District Honors Top Employees

The Aiken County Public School District (ACPSD) announced Leavelle McCampbell Middle School teacher Allison Verhotz as the District’s 2018-19 First Year Teacher of the Year during a special reception held Wednesday, April 24, 2019, at Aiken High School. All First Year Teacher of the Year award winners and First Year Teacher of the Year Honor Court members were also recognized.

Verhotz, a native of Ohio, said she has enjoyed seeing her students become more productive in their academic work while also making strides as individuals. First Year Teacher of the Year honorees in Aiken County Public Schools are nominated by mentors and selected by each school’s First Year Teacher of the Year Selection Committee.

The Stars of Public Education event, also held at Aiken High, was held June 4. Teachers of the Year, GEMS of the Year (classified staff members honored for Giving Even More), and Principal of the Year nominees from each school were celebrated for their leadership, innovation, and selflessness at the annual banquet and awards ceremony. Dr. Sal Minolfo, Principal at Belvedere Elementary, was named Principal of the Year, Elizabeth Wright, Science Teacher at North Augusta High School, was named Teacher of the Year, and Sarah Padgett, school nurse at Paul Knox Middle, is our District GEM.



“The best thing has been watching my students grow and develop during the school year and become more confident. This year has been great. It’s been a great move for me, being in an environment where everyone wants to be together and work together.”

2018-19 First Year Teacher of the Year:
Allison Verhotz, Leavelle McCampbell Middle School
Seventh Grade ELA



SAHS DECA Top Honors

South Aiken High School award-winning DECA members were recognized at a State DECA competition in Charleston, SC for their great success.

Nineteen of their students also attended the International DECA Conference and Competition on April 13-16, 2019, in Orlando, Florida.

Lydia Terlizzi, South Aiken DECA President, won the SC DECA Scholarship. This award is given to the most outstanding member in the state. DECA advisor Rob Lovejoy was named Advisor of the Year.

South Aiken’s success also earned the chapter the Thrive Level Certificate. This award is the highest level of state recognition and is given to the top performing chapters in the state.

Budget Highlights

The school system’s 2019-20 budget includes pay increases for all staff and additional pay for extra duty work, two new teaching allocations to serve students learning English as a Second Language (ESOL), extended contracts for secretaries in elementary schools to cover the summer months, and increased funds to support teacher supplies, among a number of other highlights.

Staff members received a 4% cost of living adjustment. In addition, those eligible for a step increase also received one, creating about a 6% overall salary increase for most employees.

Aiken County Public Schools was recently awarded the Aiken Standard’s coveted Aiken’s Choice Award for Best Place to Work. With a starting salary for teachers that is among the highest in the state, Aiken County Public Schools is confident this additional increase will continue to position the District as the employer of choice in the education industry and across all industries within the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA).

AIKEN COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
1000 Brookhaven Drive
Aiken, South Carolina 29803

Record Success

The academic gains of school report card ratings by the South Carolina Department of Education show Aiken County Public Schools are succeeding at record levels as all three instructional levels saw marked improvement.

This level of growth in the Aiken County Public School District (ACPSD) is made all the more impressive by its timing.

The gains come at a moment when the state has revised performance criteria to more rigorous levels as part of the Federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This means the difficulty of exceeding year-to-year school performance has increased in an effort to better prepare South Carolina students for the 21st-Century workplace, the college classroom and a global economy.

“Obviously, we’re thrilled with the significant increases in overall performance ratings,” Interim Superintendent King Laurence commented. “It’s clear evidence that we’re delivering on the promise that in Aiken County there will be no ‘have and have not’ schools. Performance has increased at every single level - elementary, middle and high school - and for the first time in a very long time, we have no schools rated as ‘Unsatisfactory’ in Aiken County.”

State report card ratings from 2018 showed there were seven Aiken County schools rated in the bottom two categories of “Below Average” and “Unsatisfactory.” This year, there are no “Unsatisfactory” schools in the District, and only one school is rated at “Below Average,” missing the “Average” cut point score by just three points. These gains mark a 150-percent improvement year over year.

ACPSD Number of Schools by Rating Category

