



# HCS BOARD OF EDUCATION MONTHLY MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

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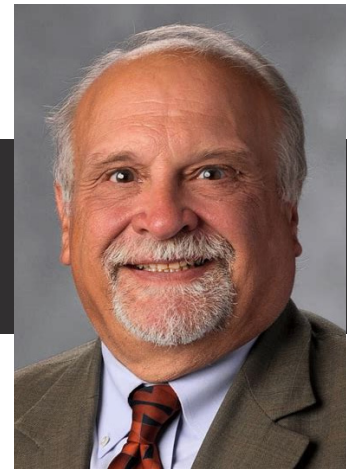
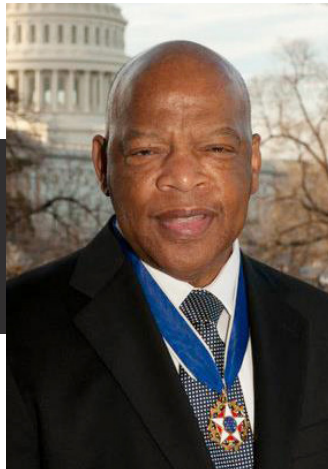
Vol. 4, No. 2 - August 10, 2020

## In Memoriam

Congressman John Lewis, who passed away on July 17, was noted for his role in the fight for equal justice and dignity for all human beings. His influence and outspokenness on rights for all Americans through his many important leadership roles has no doubt touched and positively impacted lives that stretch across many generations and will carry on for many more.

Former HCS Superintendent Michael Surma was also remembered. Mr. Surma passed away at the end of June. He provided many years of service to our school district including two years as superintendent before his retirement in 2010. He then moved on to fill a role with the Georgia School Superintendents Association.

Condolences were shared with both men's families and friends on the recent passings.



## Back-to-School Updates

During the August meeting, board members were able to get a comprehensive update on Back-to-School plans from several members of the Executive Cabinet around important components to a successful start to the school year.

Superintendent Davis started by providing context to the six presentations and noted her appreciation for all of the teachers in the district who started back to work recently and continue with their professional development to be ready for the school year. Teachers weren't the only ones being shown appreciation though. All job families were called out for their efforts in advance of what is a most uncommon start to any school year. The district's 6,000 employees all play an integral role in supporting learning, and they were thanked for their dedication to roles in the organization.

## Better together.

### Board Members

**Josh Hinton (Chair)** District 2  
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**Holly Cobb (Vice Chair)** District 3  
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**Dr. Pam Nutt** District 1  
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**Sophe Pope** District 4  
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**Annette Edwards** District 5  
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**Mary Elizabeth Davis** Superintendent  
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### District Strategic Priorities

#### Unify

Unify Henry County around excellence in public education.

#### Strengthen

Strengthen our core business of student learning.

#### Ensure

Ensure a high performing environment for all students.





## Back-to-School Update (continued-1)

Here you will find a brief recap of what the divisional presentations entailed:

### Facilities and Transportation - Josh Malcom, Chief Operations Officer

Mr. Malcom was able to provide the board with some eye-opening numbers around their physical space preparations, sanitization and cleaning, personal protective equipment, bus inspections, and transportation services.

- Social distancing reminders - 29,000 have been installed.
- Front office shields - 74 have been built and installed.
- Sanitization stations - 500 have been installed.
- Safety/Precaution Signage - 926 signs have been posted.
- Air filtration practices have begun.
- Intense trainings have been accomplished for custodial crews in our buildings, and an increase in routine cleaning has been started.
- Face shields - 5,000 have been distributed.
- Cloth masks - 26,000 have been distributed.
- Sanitizing wipes - 4,425 packs have been distributed.
- 358 bus inspection were complete with only a 7.8 percent out of service (OOS) rate. This rate is one of the best pass rates and is well below the state average of 18 percent. Issues found by inspectors have been fixed and passed re-inspection.
- Training for bus drivers is slated to take place soon with focus on cleaning procedures, loading/unloading techniques, alert systems (Here Comes the Bus), and course/route training.



Board Member Dr. Pam Nutt shared her praises for the operations division with Mr. Malcom.

"I know this has been a huge undertaking," said Nutt. "You all have clearly put out a plan to make sure our schools are safe and ready, and you are following it."

### Employment and Staffing - Valerie Suessmith, Chief Human Resources Officer

Ms. Suessmith provided updates to the board around her division's work to get our workforce in place and ready to serve in the 8th largest district in the state. The district welcomed nearly 400 new teachers as a part of the Educator Launch program during July. This high-impact program gives new educators to the district the opportunity to get acclimated to the Henry way of education and familiar with the processes and protocols they will need to be familiar with in order to become a successful employee. As a part of welcoming new hires, employees must complete important paperwork and visit the office for fingerprinting and a background check to ensure our district has the best employees for students and families. A new employee onboarding website was developed and protective measures were put in place to facilitate new hires coming to district offices to complete the next steps in the hiring process.

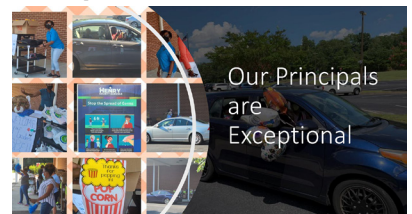


District 5 Board Member Mrs. Edwards shared her appreciation for the HR team and all the excitement she has witnessed while visiting schools during pre-planning.

"I was amazed when I walked through the schools to see the excitement and work taking place," said Edwards. "It was amazing how they were preparing for the students, and I am very proud of that and all the work that your team and all the teams have done. I know it has taken a group effort to put all of this together."

### School Readiness and Athletics - Kirk Shrum, Chief School Leadership Officer

Principals are hard at work all across the district preparing their buildings to welcome back teachers to their classrooms and families to the remote learning environment. Chief School Leadership Officer Kirk Shrum walked the board members through the extensive work principals are engaged in to make this year the best year for all educators, students, and their families. Scheduling, technology distribution, routine communication, and virtual open houses have been at the forefront of their efforts. "Day in the Life" simulations and school





## Back-to-School Update (continued-2)

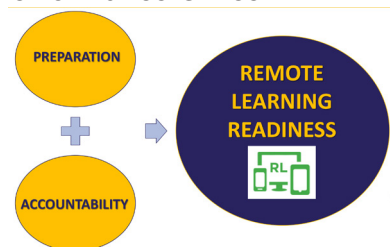
playbooks have been developed to give the school community stakeholders a solid plan of what students, staff, and families can expect.

In a cross-divisional effort, the School Leadership Division has worked with Learning & Performance and Family & Student Support Services to enhance and ensure sound instruction and monitoring student progress while also providing a high level of cultural responsiveness and social/emotional wellness support.

Lastly, athletics has been a focus of the division as we welcome back many of our student-athletes for fall sports. Henry County Schools continues to follow the GHSA guidelines in order to protect against COVID cases impacting team sports and athletic events.

### Remote Learning Readiness - Melissa Morse, Chief Learning & Performance Officer

Our teachers have been preparing for a year like no other with a focus on making the remote learning experience a positive one for employees, as well as for students and their families. Thousands of collective hours have been spent delving into rich professional development to prepare teachers for the challenges that lie ahead. Melissa Morse, Chief Learning & Performance Officer, and her staff have been working since before the calendar turned to summer to set up the necessary resources and trainings to match the plans for a remote start, should it be needed. Due to the current pandemic status, remote learning is needed for the time being.



When teachers returned to work on July 27, it was a time for them to engage in the traditional preplanning. Many teachers had not been in the building since schools shut down at the end of last year. There was a Focused Day of Learning Professional Development day that focused on SEL-Trauma, Crisis-Response, self-care, and resilience; serving special needs students in the general education setting; remote learning instructional structure and assessment tech tools; and a content-based session. Week two of preplanning saw over 300 district-developed professional development sessions. Major topics covered include: remote learning for special populations/circumstances, instructional strategies, remote learning digital tools and appropriate usage, and connectivity. Week three of preplanning saw teachers take the learning from the multitude of professional development sessions back to their schools for robust planning to start the new school year.

An overview was also given by Morse regarding the latest remote learning accommodation for school families. A K-5 Remote Learning Evening Program was detailed as an option for families needing schedule adjustments to evening learning due their job requirements and a desire to help their students learn from home. To round out her presentation, Morse detailed the particulars of Remote Learning centered on three main areas of interest – grading, attendance, and teacher expectations. From the student and family experience, grading and attendance will be central components to the remote learning environment, while teachers have their own set of expectations for providing instruction and regular interaction/interventions with students.

### Technology & Digital Readiness - Dr. Brian Blanton, Chief Information Officer

The crux of remote learning is that all students have a reliable computing device and can engage in classroom lessons and content via Google Meets. Dr. Brian Blanton, Chief Information Officer, was able to provide the board with information around the following key topics: student device distribution; support for teachers; readiness of information systems and processes; protection of student data; and infrastructure for stability, security, and readiness. In tandem with schools, the Information Services team has been assisting in the distribution of new devices for our youngest learners who had not, up until this point, been able to take a computing device home. Over 9,000 devices will have been distributed to Pre-K - 2<sup>nd</sup> graders along with 3,000 Chromebooks for 3<sup>rd</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> graders, plus 300 laptops for new teachers. Additionally, with teachers making their way back into the buildings and preparing for the remote learning environment, there has been additional support to make sure that technology resources are ready to go to



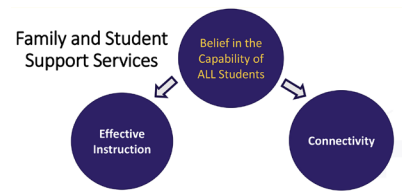


## Back-to-School Update (continued-3)

make the transition a smooth one. Another focus of the Information Services team is that of student and data privacy. The technology infrastructure is secure in protecting our students and the important information that carries across servers.

### Family and Student Support and Exceptional Student Education Readiness - Dr. April Madden, Chief Family & Student Support Officer

Dr. April Madden rounded out the updates for the board as she talked about the organization's focus on Exceptional Student Education, connections with families, and the social-emotional learning (SEL) aspect required for students no matter the learning environment they are in. The organization been entrenched in the work of providing unique ways to connect with students and families; this is a high priority. The Family & Student Support Services Division is intentional in their actions to provide systemic supports to ensure cultural responsiveness, social emotional wellness, and connections to a caring adult.



When it comes to connecting with families, the district has expanded opportunities for registering students in the district thanks to an online registration system. The new registration system was piloted with the younger grades to start before moving to all families. Since it opened, over 5,000 families have used it to become a part of our district family. Another part of the connection for families was the updating of the paperwork process to make it completely digital. Families no longer have to fill out hardcopies of information that the school requires. This newest feature was formulated out of direct feedback from the superintendent's parent advisory council, and it puts families right in the heart of their student's necessary information through Infinite Campus. And with some of the uncertainty and nervousness from parents about how remote learning will look this year, they can find helpful information from a newly designed resource library. Written and video resources are available at any time to help parents navigate this learning model to start the year.

Board member Sophe Pope added, "The work of the organization with regards to Cultural Responsiveness is so important and so timely right now, and I'm grateful. I know that will make huge strides in our environments and our buildings."

Board Chair Josh Hinton thanked everyone for the presentations and noted that the information was important for our employees, families, and community to be able to hear.

"I want to thank all the presenters for all that you shared today, and the staff who made all this possible," said Hinton. "I know that without a doubt Henry County will be more than prepared for our kickoff next Monday for virtual learning. We all are behind that but we are still ready for face-to-face learning when the time comes."

Check out our Back-to-School webpage by [clicking here](#).

**PARENT & STUDENT**  
Campus Portal **Login**

ALL STUDENTS SHOULD REGISTER & UPDATE INFO

NOW PAPERLESS!

1. Log in PARENT PORTAL
2. Click MORE
3. Select ONLINE REGISTRATION

**HENRY COUNTY SCHOOLS**

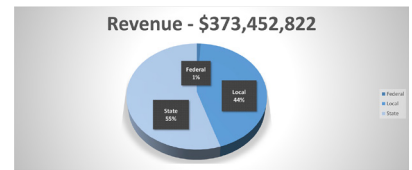
**REGISTER FOR SY2020-2021 TODAY!**



## FY21 Tentative Budget Approved

Chief Financial Officer Christy Willis presented the board of education with the next-to-last step in the process to getting a final budget passed for FY21. She was able to provide an update to the board regarding the district’s financial standing and outlook after considering all funding sources and needed expenditures. After a delayed budget passing by the state legislature, the district was finally able to get the picture on the cuts that school districts would encounter. A 10 percent overall reduction in the state funding source that impacted all Georgia school districts, along with a reduction in the equalization grant and local 5 mills grant from the state resulted in a \$41 million shortfall in state revenue for Henry County Schools. The district has a tentative budget of \$373.5 million dollars of which 55 percent comes from the state, 44 percent comes from local funds, and 1 percent comes from the federal government.

### FY 2021 General Fund



The tentative budget was approved with no furlough days included. A cut in state funding has many districts around the state grappling with this possibility, but the local board of education will not impose any furloughs. Additionally, all salary schedules will be honored, school-level personnel will be supported, and school budgets maintained. There were budget cuts at the district level and the freezing of various positions to help provide a balanced budget.

To help with revenue, there were several sources realized and utilized to help balance the budget. They include funding unused from FY20, the essential spending-only resolution, the CARES act, and a modest use of funds from district reserves.

District 4 Board Member Sophe Pope noted her thanks for the efforts of district leadership in helping craft this budget.

“I am grateful for all the work that went into this presentation,” said Pope. “I am thankful to our taxpayers for trusting us and supporting us, and our community is thriving.”

## Comprehensive Policy Review COMPLETE

A celebratory moment for the board occurred with the final vote on the remaining policies as a part of the comprehensive policy review. Over 170 policies were laid before the board to review with assistance from the Georgia School Boards Association. The actions or recommendations included policies to keep, change, or remove. Over the past year, each meeting has included a new set of policies to review with recommendations for action.

The final set that had been out for public review and comment was formally approved with the recommended actions for them.

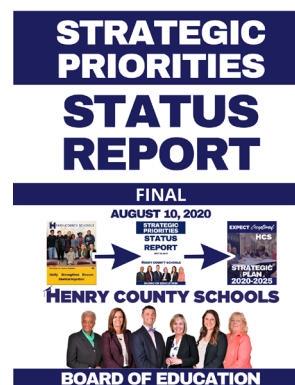
The work now begins to transition to providing the necessary regulations that will accompany the policies that remain to guide the district in its work.

**EXPECT** *Exceptional*



## Strategic Priorities Status Report, Transition to Strategic Plan

Part of the road to becoming a high-performing governance team included the adoption of four key pillars for the board’s work. One of the first pillars is that of a set of strategic priorities to center the work and efforts of the district. In 2018, after many meetings with community stakeholders, families, employees, and students, a set of strategic priorities was established with approval by the board. One year later, a status report was presented before the board to provide them with insight into the progress that had been made around items that had been set forth in the priorities. In 2020, even more progress has been made by district leaders around the strategic priorities. This last review of the status of the work was shared in front of board members during the August meeting. The presentation was noted as a transition between the strategic priorities and the recently approved 2020-2025 Strategic Plan.



The Board of Education will now officially retire the Strategic Priorities and turn the focus of the organization to the strategic plan and the many voices and input from the community that helped construct the blueprint for the next five years.

To view the final status report of the strategic priorities, [click here](#).

To view first community-developed and board-adopted 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, [click here](#).

### Other Agenda Items

The following business items were also unanimously approved as a part of the consent agenda for the evening meeting:

- **Federal Perkins Grant Application** – The board unanimously approved the receiving of federal grant funds to support the CTAE program in our district.
- **Surplus Equipment and Supplies** – The board unanimously approved a resolution to publicly post for bid/sale a list of surplus equipment from the district.

### Leadership on the Move

Name	New Position/Location	Former Position/Location
Kelli Smith	<u>Coordinator of Athletics Leadership Services</u>	<u>Assistant Principal Union Grove High</u>
Kevan Ward	<u>Video Production Specialist Communications and PR</u>	<u>Director/Videographer Georgia Public Broadcasting</u>





## Board Member Remarks



**Dr. Pam Nutt**  
District 1

Dr. Nutt started by thanking principals for their tough work to help get their buildings and staff ready for the challenges that lie ahead. She encourage parents to remain positive during this remote learning experience.



**Josh Hinton**  
Board Chair  
District 2

Mr. Hinton noted his appreciation for all the information shared during the study session around preparing our schools to welcome kids back in a virtual environment. He recognized Brian Keefer, principal of Hampton Elementary. Mr. Keefer was named the president of the Georgia Association of Elementary School Principals. Chief HR Officer Valerie Suessmith was given recognition for her recent awarding of the Jim Puckett Outstanding Educator Award winner. He thanked all district employees for their tireless efforts to prepare our district for the school year. He shared that we have the best employees.



**Holly Cobb**  
Board Vice Chair  
District 3

Mrs. Cobb started by sharing her appreciation for all the information that was shared during the meetings this evening. She shared that the extra time to get ready for the school year has been welcome, and she's looking forward to a strong start. She notes the work that has put great practices in place will help make the school year a great one. She also thanked the community for their support and partnership.



**Sophe Pope**  
District 4

Mrs. Pope started by thanking district leadership for the presentations during the study session. She also shared her excitement to have all employees back and ready to get the school year started. There was thanks given to the school community for the outpouring of support for our families during this unprecedented time. General excitement to kick off the school year was shared, as was the commitment to an excellent start to the year.



**Annette Edwards**  
District 5

Mrs. Edwards started by highlighting BOE Core Belief #3 regarding supportive, safe, and secure learning environments and reminding all employees that they should always feel supported, safe and secure every day. She wanted to make sure all employees are treated equally and with respect. She closed her remarks by referencing the Strategic Priorities Status Report and the section regarding investing in our workforce.



**Mary Elizabeth Davis**  
Superintendent

Supt. Davis took the chance to celebrate the promotion of Captain Duke to Major Duke and his new role in the Henry County Sheriff's Office. Taking his place as the new SRO Commander is Lt. Agan. The newly approved hires in district leadership positions were welcomed. She noted that Communities In Schools had a successful parent expo via drive-thru to provided supplies to families to start the year.