

**Laurens County
School District 55**

301 Hillcrest Drive
Laurens, SC 29360
864-984-3568

www.laurens55.org



**A MESSAGE FROM
YOUR SUPERINTENDENT**
Ameca C. Thomas, Ph.D.

VISION STATEMENT
Empowering and Inspiring
All to be Educated and
Informed

MISSION STATEMENT
Laurens County School
District 55 prepares
students for success in
learning and careers
through engaging,
challenging, and
personalized learning
experiences. Students are
curious, confident in their
own abilities, and
competitive in the local,
national, and global
environment. Students are
safe, valued, and supported
in their learning by highly
effective staff, families,
and community.

OUR THEME

World-Class Champions . . . every child, every chance, every day!

OUR GOALS

- Provide world-class safety and a positive school culture.
- Provide world-class, high-quality instruction to increase student achievement.
- Provide world-class communication and family engagement.

March 20, 2023

Greetings Laurens County School District 55 Family,

Happy first day of spring! I hope you all had a wonderful long weekend, and you are ready for a productive week this week. As we enter the third full week of March, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our students and educators. We are not exempt from challenges, but you continue to persevere and make education a priority. I encourage everyone to stay focused until we reach the finish line.

March is National Women's History Month. Let us take this opportunity to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of women throughout history and in our present day. We can inspire and empower the next generation of women leaders by teaching them about the achievements of women who have blazed the trail before them.

Report cards will be distributed on March 22, 2023. Please contact your child's teacher if you have any questions about your child's progress. On Friday, we celebrated St. Patrick's Day! I know one thing for sure, I feel quite lucky to get to spend my weekdays with some incredible L55 students! As always, thank you for sharing them with us. Thank you for your resilience and

commitment to education. Let's continue to work together to provide a safe and productive learning environment for every child, every chance, every day.

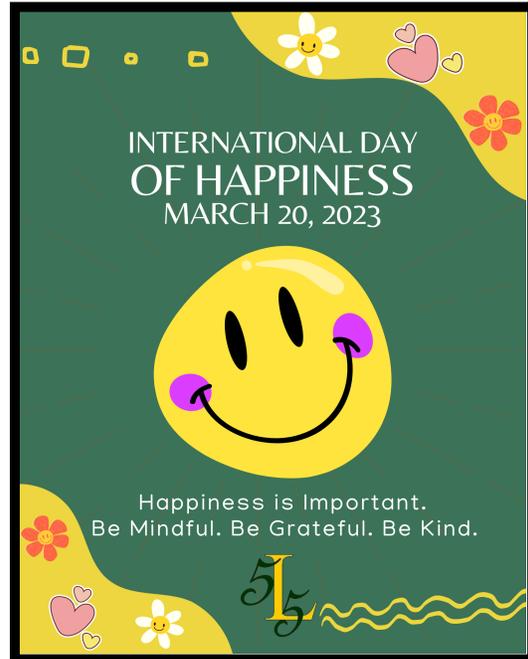
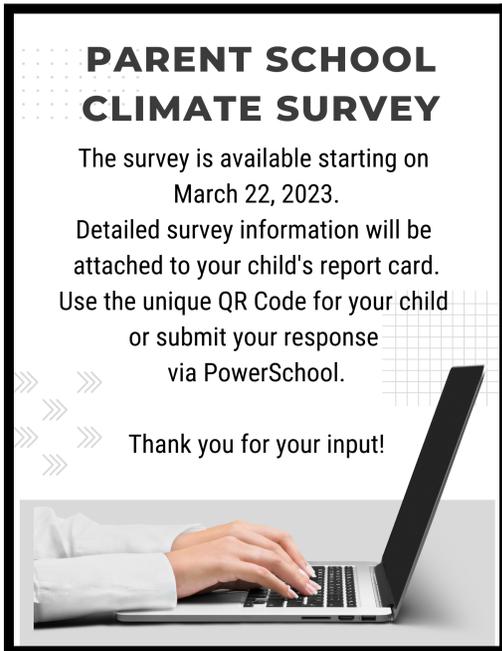
LINKS

[Read Along Time with Dr. Thomas March 17, 2023](#)

[Columbia International Festival April 1-2, 2023 Free Entrance for Title I Schools Flyer](#)

[Kick for Kids Informational Flyer & Kick for Kids Registration Form](#)

[Family Promise Shelter and a Lovie Campaign Flyer](#)



MARCH IS MUSIC IN OUR SCHOOLS MONTH (MIOSM)

The National Association for Music Education (NAfME) dedicates March as Music In Our Schools Month. NAfME says the purpose of MIOSM is to raise awareness of the importance of music education for all children – and to remind citizens that school is where all children should have access to music.

Thank you to all Laurens County School District 55 music teachers! We feature four wonderful educators in this issue.

ASHLEY KING

Ashley King is the Choral Director at Laurens District 55 High School (LDHS). He has been in education for four years and served all years in Laurens County School District 55 (LCSD 55). King's inspiration for becoming a music educator was his experiences with music teachers in his K-12 education in LCSD 55. He wanted to return to his alma mater to share the gift of choral music with others.

King is delighted with watching students' reactions when they recognize an improvement in their sounds or the group's sound, as a whole. "The pure elation that can be seen is practically indescribable," he said. "Music is important in schools because it gives students who might otherwise struggle in conventional classes, find success academically. Students often build confidence and improve self-esteem when participating in music classes," King added.



REBEKAH HINTON

Rebekah Hinton is the Band Director at Laurens Middle School and Sanders Middle School. This is her 20th year teaching, and 18 of those years are with Laurens County School District 55.

Hinton loves music. She enjoys teaching people how to make music and sharing it with others. Her greatest joy as a band director is seeing students not only have fun creating music, but also understand the positive impact they have on others when they share music with them.



She said, "Music is important in schools because it teaches students responsibility, discipline, perseverance, self-confidence, respect, work ethic, teamwork, and creativity. It is cross-curricular with math, language, science, history, and physical education. Learning to play an instrument creates positive opportunities for students to express themselves, have a sense of belonging, and experience success."

SARA GLOGOWSKI

Sara Glogowski (also known as Ms. Glo) is the Director of Bands at Laurens District 55 High School. She is in her 10th year in education and in her third year in Laurens County School District 55. In 8th grade, Glogowski attended the all state band clinic and dreamed of becoming a band director. She said, "I had always wanted to be a teacher, and that's when I decided to teach band!"

Her greatest joy in being a band director is watching students achieve music they thought they wouldn't be able to achieve. She believes music is important in our schools because it reaches students in a way other classes cannot.



Glogowski said, "Music gives students a chance to be a part of the community as they learn real-life skills they can apply later."

KRISTOPHER "KRIS" BRIGGS

Kristopher "Kris" Briggs is the Orchestra Director at Laurens District 55 High School (LDHS). He has been with Laurens County School District 55 all seven years of his teaching career and enjoys every minute of teaching in the district. Having served six years at Gray Court Middle and Hickory Tavern Middle Schools, this year is his first year at LDHS.

Briggs credits his high school orchestra teacher, Ray McGee, for inspiring him to become an orchestra director. He remembers how McGee made performing and learning a delightful experience for students.

Music is part of who Briggs is, and he can't live a day without it. As a teacher, he hopes not just to teach students how to play an instrument, but to also develop life skills that students carry into their future.

This year, his students have worked hard. This past week, LDHS Orchestra received a grade of Excellent at the Concert Performance Assessment held at Spartanburg High School.



SETH BALENTINE HORTICULTURE STUDENT OF THE YEAR AWARD



McHone Family
L-R: Terri, Tucker, Hayden, and Brian

[Tucker McHone](#) is the first recipient of the Seth Balentine Horticulture Student of the Year Award. Seth Balentine was a horticulture student at Laurens District 55 High School (LDHS) whom his loved ones lost to a car accident in July 2022. Seth loved the horticulture program and took great pride in working hard to maintain Laurens 55 athletic fields and paint the football field on Friday nights. Seth's parents, Amber and Adrian Balentine, sponsor the Seth Balentine Horticulture of the Year Award to honor students who demonstrate a similar work ethic as Seth, and are driven to be good people.

"I'm honored and so grateful to receive this award. It means a lot to me because Seth and I were close and worked together on several jobs both at LDHS and in Seth's business," said Tucker.

Horticulture is in Tucker's blood. He has been mowing and gardening since he was big enough to hold a weed eater. He grew up helping his parents, grandparents, and uncles with their yards, gardens, and farms, and helping in his dad's lawn care business.



Tucker completed the horticulture pathway program at LDHS under the leadership of Kyle Penland. "Tucker has great work ethics, loves maintaining our athletic facilities, can operate any equipment we use, and takes great pride in a job well done," said Penland. "Most of all, he is a good Christian young man!"

Tucker's proud parents, Terri and Brian, and older brother, Hayden, attended the Laurens County Spotlight on Agriculture at First Presbyterian Church in Clinton on March 10, 2023, where Tucker was recognized and given a plaque. Mrs. McHone shared, "Tucker is such a hard working young man, especially when it comes to working with his hands and the outdoors."

The McHones want to recognize and thank LDHS staff members. They thank Kyle Penland for loving Tucker like a son, having great patience and leadership with all his students. They thank Brian Lothridge for his guidance, care and support for Tucker. Lastly, they thank Melanie Birchmore for instilling and improving Tucker's knowledge and skills for farming and caring for animals. "We are so grateful for the agriculture/horticulture programs at LDHS and Tucker's involvement with them and the Future Farmers of America," said Mr. McHone.

MEET KYLE PENLAND

Kyle Penland is an advisor for the Future Farmers of America (FFA) and the horticulture instructor at Laurens District 55 High School (LDHS). He is also the Laurens County School District 55 (LCSD 55) sports turf manager. He has served all of his 13 years of teaching at LDHS, having transitioned from owning his own landscaping business for 17 years. Penland loves the opportunity to pass on knowledge to his students. Applying the FFA Motto, 'Learning by Doing', Penland teaches in a hands-on manner. Penland believes horticulture instills a sense of pride in students. He said, "Students learn the importance of producing aesthetically pleasing things, and in agriculture, students learn that they are the next generation that will have to constantly innovate and improve ways to provide food and fiber for the world. Agriculture, in general, is the most essential career in the world!"

SANDERS MIDDLE SCHOOL ACADEMIC BOWL TEAM

The Sanders Middle School (SMS) Academic Bowl Team competed in the Western Piedmont Education Consortium (WPEC) Middle School Academic Bowl on March 6th & 8th. The team members are Chloe Wrobel, Nadalie Allen, Justin Burnside, Calina Boggs, Lisamarie Castro, Holden Bond, Zhy Powers, Adrienne Samuel, Stephanie Bright, Nicole Powers, and Brayden Disabatino. Their coach is Collin Black.



In his fourth year at SMS, Black is the 8th grade science teacher and assistant coach for the school's football team. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Biology and Bachelor of Arts in Spanish from Wofford College. He received his teaching certificate via the PACE alternative teaching program sponsored by the South Carolina Department of Education. Black's interest in teaching began when he served as a classroom assistant and tutor in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He loves building positive relationships and mentoring students during a challenging transition period.

Black decided to coach the SMS Academic Bowl Team since he was part of the Gray Court-Owings School Academic Team as a student and always learned something new. He believes it helps students become more well-rounded. Part of his enjoyment of coaching is the chance to share his love of knowledge. Black wants students to be excited about their intelligence. He says being intelligent is a trait that can sometimes be suppressed by their peers.

With a positive attitude about his team's performance at the WPEC Middle School Academic Bowl, Black noted, "While our season did not end the way we hoped it would, our team did an exceptional job and was persistent throughout the season. With only two members returning from last year, several of our rookies had to step up on the team in order for us to be competitive. I look forward to our returners continuing to improve next year!"



UNITED WAY OF LAURENS ANNUAL KICK-OFF LUNCHEON

Representatives of Laurens County School District 55 (LCSD 55) joined the United Way of Laurens Annual Kick-off Luncheon to join the community in support of an organization who has helped students and families in our district. The United Way of Laurens has funded organizations such as Impact2Purpose and Family Promise, which directly serves many struggling families in Laurens.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The next LCSD 55 Board of Trustees regular monthly meeting will be Monday, March 27, 2023, at 6:30 p.m. The meeting will be held in the auditorium of Laurens Middle School located at 1035 West Main Street in Laurens.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Report Cards & Parent Climate Survey Codes Distribution, March 22, 2023

Spring Break, April 3-7, 2023

STAY IN THE KNOW

	<p><i>A weekly video to share school district news</i></p> <p>March 10, 2023</p>
	<p><i>A podcast of one-on-one conversations</i></p> <p>Michael Cade</p>
	<p><i>A chance to hear how L55 has positively impacted students</i></p> <p>Tucker McHone</p>
	<p><i>A chance to hear about our excellent teachers</i></p> <p>Crystal Arnold</p>
	<p><i>A chance to hear how L55 graduates achieved greatness</i></p> <p>Adam Taylor</p>

CLOSING

On behalf of the LCSD 55 Board of Trustees, administrators, and staff thank you for your partnership, support, and continued engagement as we work together to serve your children and our community. Your input is greatly valued and we love to hear from you. Contact me at athomas@laurens55.org, call 864-984-3568, attend our school and district events, or view our school board meetings. Have a great week!



Sincerely,

Ameca C. Thomas, Ph.D.
Proud Superintendent of
Laurens County School District 55

Laurens County School District #55 is committed to the principle of equal opportunity. It is the policy of the district not to discriminate on the basis of race, religion, sex, color, age, national origin, immigrant status, English-speaking status, familial status, or disability with regard to students, employees, or applicants for admission or employment.