

# THE TIMES IN 55

March 2023

This is a publication of Laurens County School District #55 (LCSD 55) to share information from the monthly meeting of the LCSD 55 Board of Trustees. While this information may not be all inclusive of matters discussed, we strive to provide that which is deemed most informative for district stakeholders. Board meetings are livestreamed and can be watched in real time via a link on the district website.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Greetings Laurens County School District 55 Community,

Can you believe that Spring Break is here? Our students, teachers, and staff members have been working hard to be champions every day, and they all deserve this break. I am thankful that we all get the opportunity to rest, recharge, and enthusiastically face the remaining days of this academic year.

Time is going by quickly, and in a blink of an eye, the end of the 2022-2023 school year will be here. Students will soon be taking state-mandated examinations. I have confidence that our students will do their best to reflect what they have been learning.

As we pause to recharge, I would like to share a condensed version of the information presented at our March 27, 2023, School Board Meeting. Should you have any questions about this information, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or to a member of the district staff at 864-984-3568.

**LAURENS COUNTY  
SCHOOL DISTRICT 55**



### 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.



I appreciate your support!

Sincerely,

*Ameca C. Thomas*

Ameca C. Thomas, Ph.D.  
Superintendent



Ameca C. Thomas, Ph.D.  
Superintendent

[athomas@laurens55.org](mailto:athomas@laurens55.org)

## 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.



# LAURENS MIDDLE SCHOOL REPORT PRESENTED BY MR. CLAY COTNEY, PRINCIPAL



Examples of Laurens Middle School's focus on the district's 2022–2023 goals include the following:

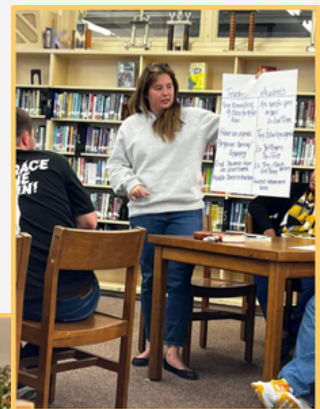
Goal 1: Provide world-class safety and a positive school culture

- Daily use of metal detectors
- Fire/Safety monthly walkthroughs
- Gaggle alerts
- School resource officer on site
- Mental health counselor on site



Goal 2: Provide world-class, high-quality instruction to increase student achievement

- Learning Walks and feedback sessions
- PLC team meetings
- Planning meetings with instructional coach
- Data meetings – HMH & MAP
- Grade level meetings & content specific collaborative sessions
- Relevant, standards-based lessons and activities in all content areas
- Arts programs (visual art, band, strings, chorus), G/T art program
- Professional development



# Laurens Middle School Data

## HMH Growth Measure Math

	BOY	MOY	EOY
Grade Level or above	8.6%	26.6%	26%
Approaching	22.4%	21.5%	23.5%
Below	68.8%	52%	50.4%

## SC READY ELA

Year	% Meets/Exceeds
2018	36.4%
2019	35.6%
2020	COVID Waiver
2021	25.4%
2022	29.9%
2023	35.6% (143 of 401)

## MAP Reading Growth

Grade (EOY Target)	Fall Avg RIT	Winter Avg RIT	Avg Growth in Points
6th (215)	202.4	207.6	+5.2
7th (218)	208.0	209.9	+1.9
8th (222)	213.4	216.9	+3.5

## SC READY MATH

Year	% Meets/Exceeds
2018	35.5%
2019	27.4%
2020	COVID Waiver
2021	18.6%
2022	22.0%
2023	27.4% (110 of 401)

## MAP Math Growth

Grade (EOY Target)	Fall Avg RIT	Winter Avg RIT	Avg Growth in Points
6th (223)	207.0	210.8	+3.8
7th (227)	211.0	213.7	+2.7
8th (230)	218.1	221.6	+3.5

## SC READY SCIENCE

Year	% Meets/Exceeds
2018	47.7%
2019	37.0%
2020	COVID Waiver
2021	24.6%
2022	28.2%
2023	37.0% (50 of 133)



Goal 3: Provide world-class communication and family engagement



- Communication through phone, newsletters, social media
- School Improvement Council (parent & teacher members)
- Parent events (IRIZE Drug Prevention Night, Title 1 Night, open house, 6th grade orientation)
- Can the Principal service project
- Fellowship of Christian Athletes with community guests
- Girls Only & Boys Only Clubs
- Michelin STEM Challenge
- Sanders Alumni Association MLK Oratorical Essay Contest
- Lunch & Learn with community members
- Laurens Christmas parade
- Greenville Drive & Laurens County Library partnerships



## Core Values

HUMILITY

COMPASSION

INTEGRITY

RESILIENCE

REFLECTION

SELF-DISCIPLINE



## CHILDREN'S INTERNET PROTECTION ACT

the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) is a federal law enacted by Congress to address concerns about access to offensive content over the Internet on school and library computers. CIPA imposes certain types of requirements on any school or library that receives funding for Internet access or internal connections from the E-rate program – a program that makes certain communications technology more affordable for eligible schools and libraries.

To be in compliance with CIPA, the school/district must adopt and enforce an Internet Safety Policy in accordance with the following:

- Must include a technology protection measure to block or filter Internet access by protecting against access by adults and minors to visual depictions or images that are obscene, child pornography, or harmful to minors.
- Must be discussed at a public hearing or meeting for which reasonable notice is provided.
- Must include monitoring, and when appropriate, prevention of the online activities of minors including:
  - Access by minors to inappropriate matter on and off campus

- Safety/security of minors when using e-mail, chat room, other direct electronic communications
- Unauthorized access, including hacking and other unlawful activities by minors online
- Unauthorized disclosure, use and dissemination of personal information regarding minors (i.e., name, address, phone number, date of birth, images)

District policies that aligned with CIPA requirements include the following:

- IJNDB – Technology Resources; R1, R2, R3, and R4
- GBEE – Internet and Electronic Communication
- GBEEA – Social Media

LCSD 55 employs iBoss web content filtering, CrowdStrike Falcon antivirus protection, and Palo Alto Firewall in conjunction with the district Cisco Umbrella.

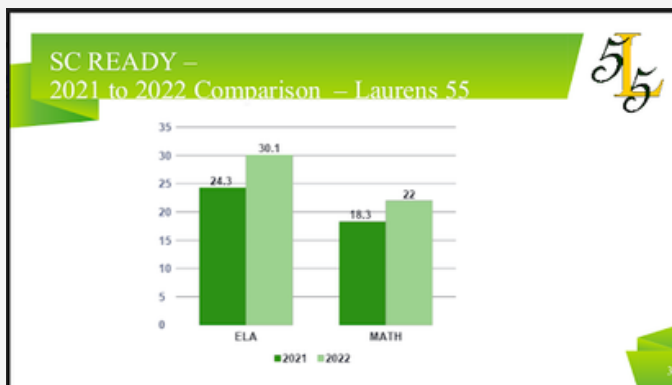
## TRUCONNECT

LCSD 55 is now in partnership with TruConnect to offer eligible families free smartphones or tablets, and free internet service. The overall benefit of the TruConnect partnership is providing reliable and stable mobile/internet service to eligible families in their home. This will help provide students with reliable access to online educational programs that are geared to enhance academic skills. Be on the lookout for additional information soon.

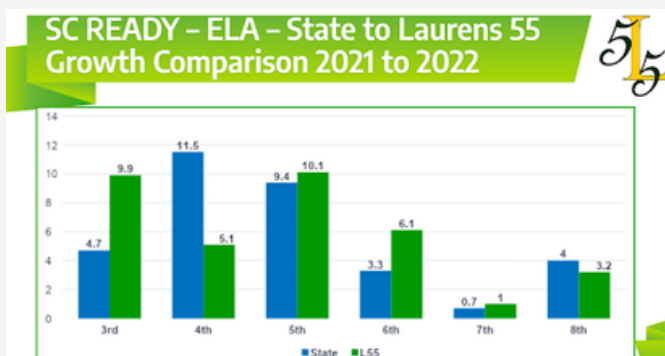
## ASSESSMENT DATA

LCSO 55 assessment data shows growth in all areas. While data shows achievement is moving in the right direction despite the challenges faced, there is still much work to be done in order to continue to improve.

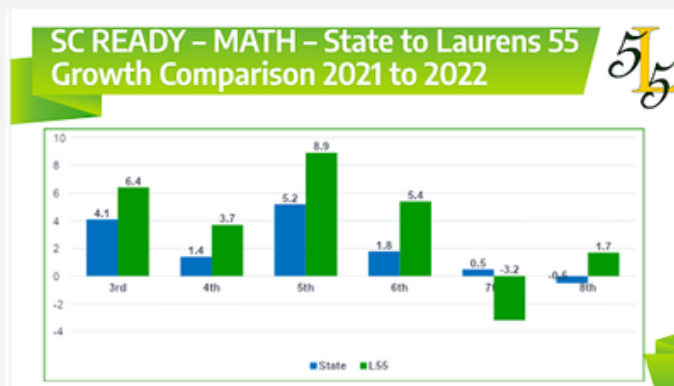
State assessments were not administered in 2020 due to a waiver implemented because of the global pandemic. However, the state data reflects growth from 2021 to 2022 on SC READY as reflected in the following chart.



SC READY data also reflects more growth than the state for ELA in grades 3, 5, 6, and 7 from 2021 to 2022. LCSO 55 did not show more growth than the state in grades 4 and 8.



SC READY data also reflects more growth than the state for math in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8, but not in grade 7.



Research shows that under normal circumstances, it takes 3–5 years to see substantial change. With the pandemic, along with other challenges that we face in L55, the years have been anything but normal. Research suggests that with current conditions and climate, it takes 5–7 years to see that change.

We are working with a sense of urgency to continue to substantiate growth and progress.

*Keep the main thing,  
the main thing -  
OUR STUDENTS!*

## ACADEMIC RECOVERY INTERVENTIONS

One of the processes in place to help substantiate growth and progress for students is through our Academic Recovery Intervention Program. During the fall and spring of this school year, interventionists have served 1,299 students.



## LDHS DRONE ACADEMY



Chalen Smallwood of LDHS was recently recognized for his entrepreneurial endeavor into the drone business using the knowledge and skills he has gained from the LDHS Drone Academy, where he became a licensed, certified drone pilot. Chalen is one of the few teenage Federal Aviation Administration Certified Pilots in Laurens County and possibly the region. We are so proud of him for taking advantage of this opportunity offered at Laurens High School and for starting his own business.

## CLIMATE SURVEY

The South Carolina Department of Education and the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee have distributed parent, student, and teacher climate surveys to be administered by public schools. Information from the teacher and student surveys will be used in the state and federal accountability models.

Teacher and student surveys are being administered at the schools. Parents should have received information on how to access the parent survey through Parent Portal and QR codes. We encourage all parents to take a few moments to participate in the survey.

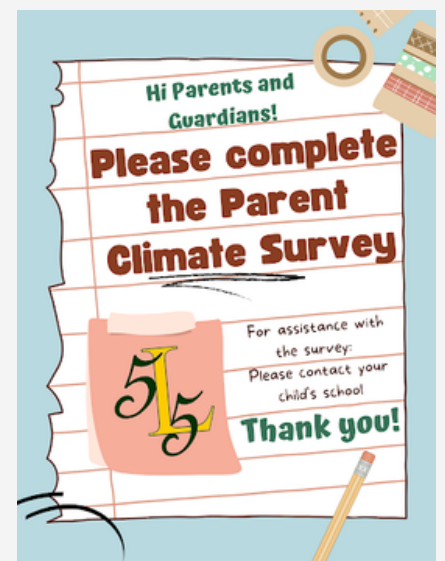
## DUAL ENROLLMENT

Through a continued partnership with Lander University, LCSD 55 is able to offer additional dual-enrollment classes that are easier to transfer to most four-year colleges/universities.

LDHS is planning a parent night on April 24 at 6:00 p.m. for parents and students interested in this great opportunity.

## MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Partnering with Mental Health Support-Cook Center for Human Connections, LCSD 55 is able to provide resources and support for students, families, staff, and community members. Visit [www.laurens55.org](http://www.laurens55.org) to access the information and support line.



## FACILITIES

There are multiple facilities projects recently completed, currently underway and in planning for district campuses. A sample of these includes the following:

- Upgraded doors and locks have been ordered and will be installed.
- Roofing projects
  - The Laurens District 55 High School gym project that was started during summer 2022 will be completed during the upcoming summer 2023 break.
  - Sanders Middle School will have new roofing underway during summer 2023.
  - The Gray Court-Owings School gym roof was recently completed.
- LED lighting installation is currently underway at Ford Elementary School. All other sites have been completed.
- A new intercom system has been installed at Gray Court-Owings School.
- A flooding problem at Waterloo Elementary School during heavy rains is being corrected.
- The district will soon be accepting bids for updates to security systems.
- The Sanders Middle School gym HVAC system is still out of order due to the needed part being unavailable. We are continuing to try to locate this part. However, the temporary heating system is still in place.
- District leadership has been working closely with legislatures in hopes to be able to have a countywide career and technology center that will benefit the county for generations to come.

## RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

School districts throughout the country are being affected by a national teacher shortage. We know that one of the most significant impacts on student achievement is high-quality teachers, and LCSO 55 is consistently working to recruit and retain educators.

One initiative that is being implemented is the Recruitment and Retention Task Force. This consists of current teachers and staff who are recommended by their principal.

It is customary to conduct the Exit Interview with those leaving employment in the district. While we will continue to do these, we realize that by that time, it is too late to retain the employee. As we have continued to seek high-impact retention strategies, we determined that the Stay Interview may be helpful. The Stay Interview is something that research shows is useful in preventing the ever-increasing employee turnover rate experienced by school districts. The Stay Interview is an effective method of collecting valuable data and insights surrounding what keeps employees coming back. This is a deliberate, scheduled, one-on-one conversation with top performers, flight risks, and high-potential staff members. It is also an opportunity to build relationships, demonstrate value, and build trust while discovering areas for celebration and improvement. The goal is to get information concerning what employees like about their job and what they would like to change. It is an intervention that district leadership hopes will help prevent the need for an Exit Interview.



## POLICIES

Trustees approved the following four district policies: GCLE Unencumbered Time, JB Equal Educational Opportunity/Nondiscrimination, JJAB Limited Open Forum, and KDC District Sponsored Information Media. Trustees received for information Administrative Rule GCLE-R.

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Todd Varner, Seat 1  
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Bubba Rawl, Seat 7  
[jrawl@laurens55.org](mailto:jrawl@laurens55.org)

## EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS

Reconvening in open session, the The LCSD 55 Board of Trustees approved certified employment contract recommendations for school year 2023-2024.

## BOARD MEETINGS SCHEDULE

The 2023-2024 schedule of monthly school board meetings was approved as follows:

DATE	LOCATION
August 28, 2023	Hickory Tavern School
September 25, 2023	Ford Elementary School
October 23, 2023	E.B. Morse Elementary School
November 27, 2023	Laurens Elementary School
January 22, 2024	Waterloo Elementary School
February 26, 2024	Sanders Middle School
March 25, 2024	Laurens Middle School
April 22, 2024	Laurens District 55 High School
May 20, 2024	Gray Court-Owings School
June 24, 2024	LCSD 55 Administrative Office

## APRIL 24 BOARD MEETING

The next monthly meeting of the LCSD 55 Board of Trustees is scheduled for Monday, April 24, 2023. The meeting will be held at Laurens District 55 High School located at 5058 Highway 76 West, Laurens, SC., 29360 The meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m.

## MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT

	01/31/23	01/31/22
Balance with Treasurer	\$15,325,125	\$11,562,445
Revenues	\$33,547,240	\$29,982,840
Expenditures	\$26,096,299	\$25,081,673
Difference	\$7,450,941	\$4,901,167
Total Tax Collections	\$6,760,291	\$5,950,830