

## Laurens County School District 55

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

[www.laurens55.org](http://www.laurens55.org)



### 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.

**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.

April 11, 2023

Greetings Laurens County School District 55 Family,

Welcome back from spring break! I hope everyone had a chance to recharge, relax, and spend time with loved ones.

Our administrators, teachers, and staff members are fired-up to continue to make lasting impacts on the lives of our students. As we approach these final months, we are focused on our shared goal of increasing student achievement and ensuring that every student in our district has the opportunity to thrive and achieve their full potential.

We know our work is vital to the success of our students. We commit to showing up each day with energy, enthusiasm, and a passion for making a difference. We vow to finish this school year strong. We have a lot of work to do, but with your continued support, we can accomplish great things. We invite our stakeholders to continue to collaborate, communicate, and support our school district as we strive to provide the best possible education for ALL students.

## LINKS

[April 11, 2023 Laurens District 55 High School Greenhouse Plant Sale](#)

[April 13th Family Mental Health Night Registration Link](#) and [Flyer](#)

[April 17-21, 2023 Ford Elementary School Scholastic Book Fair Flyer](#)

[April 22, 2023 City of Laurens Earth Day Community Clean Up Flyer](#)

[How Digital Media is Changing our Children's Mental Health ParentGuidance.org Course](#)

[LCSD 55 TruConnect Webpage](#) and [Community Eligibility Letter](#)



## APRIL IS NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

The [Child Information Gateway](#) states that increasing public awareness of the need to ensure the safety and welfare of children led to the passage of the first federal child protection legislation, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), in 1974. It further states that today, the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is the federal agency charged with supporting States, Tribes, and communities in providing programs and services to protect children and strengthen families. There is a call for the community to come together to end child abuse and neglect. Laurens County School District 55 families are invited to join the [First Steps Laurens National Child Abuse Prevention Month](#) celebration, the

[Lush Acres Farm Spring Festival](#) and [Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Presentation](#).



## APRIL IS SCHOOL LIBRARY MONTH

On April 4, 2023 we celebrated School Librarian Appreciation Day. We continue to celebrate our librarians and school libraries throughout the month of April. According to the [American Association of School Librarians](#), every April, school librarians are encouraged to host activities to help their school and local community celebrate the essential role that strong school libraries play in transforming learning. The first United States School Library Month celebration was on April 1, 1985.



A big thanks to all Laurens County School District 55 school librarians! In this issue, we feature three of them.



### **MICHELLE SPIRES**

Michelle Spires is the school librarian at Gray Court-Owings School. She has been in education for 19 years and has dedicated 15 of those years to Laurens County School District 55.

Michelle shared, “My love of reading and technology led me to become a school librarian, but having an entire school of students and faculty as part of my classroom is what brings me the greatest joy as a school librarian. I really enjoy collaborating with teachers to provide students with a variety of learning opportunities from new technologies to research skills to a love of reading by sharing new books!”

Michelle makes our district proud. She is the President-Elect of the South Carolina Association of School Librarians (SCASL) and recently organized the SCASL Conference at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center from March 22-24, 2023. Michelle is also a member of the Palmetto State Literacy Association, the American Library Association, and the American Association of School Librarians.



### **CHERYL E. EARL**

Cheryl E. Earl is the school librarian at Ford Elementary School. She has served in numerous roles in her 19 years in education. In her 16 years in Laurens County School District 55, Cheryl has served as a Special Education teacher, Elementary Education teacher, and teacher-librarian.

Cheryl decided to become a school librarian because she loves books and wanted to share her love of books and reading with children beyond a typical classroom setting.

Cheryl believes that “Helping a student connect to a book, author, or genre will help students to become lifelong readers and independent thinkers. We help our students to develop a love of reading that isn't forced on them due to curriculum.”



### **AMI HAYES HARDY**

Ami Hayes Hardy is a teacher-librarian at Laurens Elementary School. She has been in that role for 18 years and continues to love what she does every day. To date, Ami has 30 years in education. She taught high school English for seven years and was ready to complete a Master's program. When she considered her options, her love of books, and her desire to continue interacting daily with students, her choice was so obvious!

Ami exclaimed, “Even though the job has changed a great deal in the last several years, I know I made the right choice. I can't imagine a job that I would love more!”

Ami finds great fulfillment in watching students grow and mature, not just as readers but also as people. She gets excited knowing which books students would love when new books arrive.



## READING ALL-STARS CHALLENGE

For the second consecutive year, Laurens County School District 55's Pk-8th graders have participated in the Greenville Drive's Reading All-Stars reading incentive program. This year, one-third of the students from our district elementary and middle schools participated. The three schools with the highest participation percentages were Waterloo Elementary School, Laurens Middle School, and EB Morse Elementary School. Each student who completed the reading challenge received a ticket to a Greenville Drive baseball game to be redeemed on Sunday, April 30, or Sunday, May 21. We appreciate the opportunity to participate in this program and are extremely proud of all of our students who met the challenge.



## WATERLOO READING CELEBRATION



*Left Photo: Dr. Kristi Tucker, Waterloo Elementary School Instructional Coach*

*Right Photo: Waterloo Elementary School Principal Kimberly Penland*

Melody Sarmiento, Waterloo Elementary School (WES) school librarian, orchestrated a unique way to celebrate all students for having 100% participation in the Greenville Drive Reading Log Challenge. All students completed at least one reading log and had the opportunity to tape WES Principal Kimberly Penland to the wall. For students who completed multiple logs, they also had the opportunity to tape Dr. Kristi Tucker, WES Instructional Coach, to the wall. All WES students are eligible to watch a Greenville Drive Baseball game.

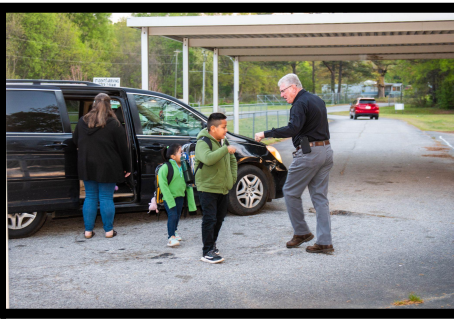
## VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION WEEK APRIL 17-21, 2023

Laurens County School District 55 (LCSD 55) would like to thank and acknowledge our incredible volunteers who give so much of their time to our district. Thank you for your time, support, encouragement, and your love for our students. We are very grateful. You are a very special part of LCSD 55.

The Volunteer Liaison from each school will be recognized for their dedicated work at a drop-in at the LCSD 55 District Office on April 17, 2023.

If you would like to volunteer in LSD55, please contact Lynne Todd (District Volunteer Coordinator) at 864-681-3648 or your child's school.





**FIST-BUMP  
DAY/HIGH-FIVE FRIDAY**  
The Laurens County Sheriff's Office welcomed students in our district with fist-bumps and high-fives on March 31, 2023.

### **ROBOTICS CLUB HEADING TO HOUSTON, TEXAS FOR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP**

Laurens District 55 High School (LDHS) is part of the winning youth robotics club team First Robotics Competition (FRC) Team Number 4451, Robotz Garage. The team is also composed of students from Fountain Inn High School (Greenville County Schools).

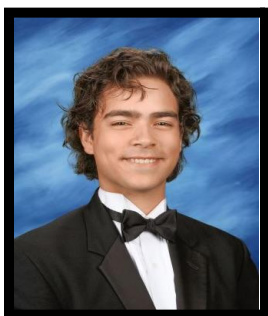
The team competed at the District Championship from April 5-8, 2023, and garnered points to compete at the For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (*FIRST*) World Championship in Houston, Texas from April 19-22, 2023.

Laurens County School District 55 is very proud of the coaches, mentors, and students who make FRC 4451 a winning team!



### **SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATHEMATICS (STEM) SIGNING DAY**

Congratulations to two students, Mason Gibbs and Isaac Adams, from Laurens District 55 High School (LDHS) for being selected to participate in the 2023 STEM Signing Day at the State House grounds in Columbia, South Carolina on April 18, 2023. The purpose of the event is to celebrate high school seniors who choose to pursue STEM-related careers at technical programs, two-and four-year colleges, and universities. This event is sponsored by Boeing, an aerospace company, and BMW, an automobile manufacturer.



Mason Gibbs (pictured on the left) is a triple Career and Technology Education completer in the Sports Medicine, Health Science, and Pre-Engineering Project Lead the Way programs. He plans to pursue a degree from Charleston Southern in Kinesiology, with an emphasis on Athletic Training. Mason is the Team Captain of First Robotics Competition Team 4451. While he loves Engineering and Robotics, Sports Medicine is his true passion.

Isaac Adams (pictured on the right) is a Career and Technology Education completer in Pre-Engineering Project Lead the Way and is heavily involved in the Robotics program at LDHS. He is currently a First Robotics Club Team 4451 robot driver. Isaac plans to attend Clemson University and pursue a degree in Engineering. He will specify which type of Engineering during his sophomore year after he explores all the programs.





## MEET A ROBOTICS CLUB MENTOR

Richard Neal Wilhite Jr. works as a Systems Engineer in Laurens County School District 55 and serves as the Scouting, Game Theory, and Project Management Mentor for the First Robotics Club Team 4451, Robots Garage. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from Birmingham-Southern College, a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science from USC, and Masters in Computer Science from the University of South Carolina. His interest in volunteering/mentoring for various robotics clubs started when his son wanted to try it out. Surprisingly, he had more enjoyment being with the robotics clubs than his son did.

He finds joy in being a mentor and said, "I get to help young people develop into more fully-rounded people."

He is very honored to be part of FRC Team 4451, Robotz Garage. "Our team works hard to challenge ourselves and grow even stronger in our arena of play. Last year, we ranked in the top 120 teams in the world (roughly 4,000 teams)," he beamed.

## WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH CELEBRATIONS



*Left Photo: Superintendent Dr. Ameca Thomas with Laurens Middle School Students*



*Right Photo (L-R): Faye Colley, Lovely Big O, Marilyn Ramsey, Chrissie Latimore, Peggy Nance, Cassandra Campbell, and Katrina Johnson.*

On March 20, 2023, Ms. Rebecca Corley's Montessori English Language Arts (ELA) class at Laurens Middle School held a Women's History Month Celebration. Three students, Jonathan, Lesly, and Mia, applied their interviewing skills by engaging Dr. Thomas in meaningful and inspirational conversation

On March 31, 2023, Gray Court-Owings (GCO) School's Multicultural Committee organized a Women's History Month celebration, featuring seven women with diverse backgrounds. Speakers were Laurens County School District 55 (LCSD 55) Board Member Peggy Nance, LCSD 55 Coordinator of Communications Faye Colley, retired GCO administrator Marilyn Ramsey, Laurens City Councilwoman Cassandra Campbell, United States Marshall Chrissie Latimore, Spartanburg 7 School Administrator Katrina Johnson, and Christian Comedian and 96.3 The Block Disc Jockey Oneshia Edens a.k.a. Lovely Big O.

Ms. Nance exclaimed, "It was exciting for me to let the kids realize that one day, they can play important roles in our society. They just have to be fired up and start with a good education."

Councilwoman Campbell shared, "It is a humble privilege to share what I have experienced. I have been blessed to be a blessing...to share the good, the bad, and the ugly so that the youth can hear and see options and corresponding outcomes."

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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

## STAY IN THE KNOW

	<i>A weekly video to share school district news</i> <a href="#">March 31, 2023</a>
	<i>A podcast of one-on-one conversations</i> <a href="#">Michael Cade</a>
	<i>A chance to hear how L55 has positively impacted students</i> <a href="#">Tucker McHone</a>
	<i>A chance to hear about our excellent teachers</i> <a href="#">Madeline Crowder</a>
	<i>A chance to hear how L55 graduates achieved greatness</i> <a href="#">Adam Taylor</a>

## 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](mailto: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.*