

THE TIMES IN 55

June 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

Dear Laurens County School District 55 Community,

The June board meeting focused on our Year In Review Report. It was a productive opportunity to reflect on the achievements, challenges, and progress made throughout the 2022-2023 school year.

First and foremost, I want to express my gratitude to our dedicated teachers, administrators, staff, students, and parents for their unwavering support and commitment to our district's mission of empowering and inspiring all to be educated and informed. It is through your collective efforts that we continue to create an environment where every student can thrive and reach their full potential.

During the Year In Review Report, we reviewed key highlights from the year, including academic achievements, extracurricular successes, college and career readiness opportunities, and the implementation of innovative teaching strategies. We also discussed initiatives and programs aimed at giving every student the opportunity to succeed.

Looking ahead, we are excited to announce various upcoming events, workshops, and learning opportunities for both our teachers and students. I encourage everyone to stay informed about these events through our district website and social media channels. Your participation and engagement in these activities contribute to the continuous growth and improvement of our educational community.

Open communication and collaboration are vital to our district's success, and I am grateful for any valuable feedback and input received. I want to emphasize the importance of continued open communication and collaboration within our district. If you have any further questions, concerns, or ideas you would like to share, I strongly encourage you to reach out to me or any member of the administrative staff. Your voices matter, and we value your input in shaping our practices and policies.

Thank you once again for your ongoing commitment to our district and for your unwavering support. Together, we will continue to make a positive impact on the lives of our students and create a bright future for all.

I hope you all are having a wonderful summer, and I look forward to the first day of school on Tuesday, August 1, 2023.

Sincerely,

Ameca C. Thomas

Ameca C. Thomas, Ph.D.
Superintendent



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 County School District 55 Administrative Office
301 Hillcrest Drive Laurens, SC 29360
864-984-3568 www.laurens55.org

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SAVE THE DATE
Laurens 55's 2023
Countdown to Kindergarten

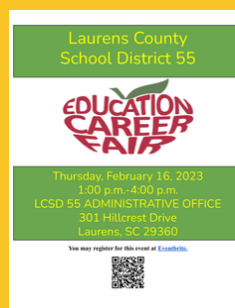
Laurens 55 invites you to
Countdown to Kindergarten
for our Incoming SK, AK, and 5K
students.

The event will be held **July 13, 2023**,
at the Laurens 55 Administrative
Building between the hours of
2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
Stop by the registration table to
receive important school
activities and enjoy the fun
activities.

Free Materials for SK,
AK, and 5K students

Free Books

Various local and school agencies will be
represented, as well as all of our Elementary Schools.



GOAL 1: INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS: Create an exceptional learning environment that supports and challenges each student to reach their potential.

- Cognia Accreditation
- Literacy Initiatives
- Math and Science Focus
- Academic Recovery Efforts
- Increased Opportunities for Special Education students
- Educational Leadership
- Opportunities for High School Students
- Social Skills/Social Emotional Learning
- Data/Growth
- Scholarship Totals \$14,012,860

YEAR IN REVIEW

Part of creating an exceptional learning environment is through staff development. In July, we had staff develop trainings. In August, we had our School Supply & Clear Backpack Drive. September brought excitement with our new Drone Signing Day. Our new drone program helps keep our students competitive in today's changing world and students were able to become licensed drone pilots. October was the Commitment to Commencement kick-off where 9th graders pledged to graduate in 4 years. We held our Legislative Luncheon in November where we shared our district needs. In December, we had our Fire Science Program Contract signing in partnership with Piedmont Technical College.

January was filled with excitement as we held our Mid-Year Kick-Off and training sessions with our teachers. In February, we had Read Aloud Day where the community was invited to come in and read aloud to our students. Our 3rd graders participated in Team Ecology in March. Our Superintendent's Lunch of Champions was held in April to celebrate all of the hard work for our champion students. As the year came to an end, we held the 2nd Amazing Shake and had a luncheon where students could practice necessary social skills. June held our Reading Buddies Distribution event where our youngest students received stuffed animals to practice their reading skills. We finished the school year celebrating our graduates.

Continuous Improvement Cycle



INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS

GOAL 1: INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS

- SEED Grant
- Instructional Learning Walks
- District Instructional Leadership
- Team Meetings
- School Instructional Leadership
- Team Meetings
- Professional Learning Communities
- Instructional Feedback
- Focus on 4.0 Rubric
- Strong Focus on Success Criteria
- Onsite Coaching Sessions
- Weekly one-on-one meetings with principals
- Monthly Induction Meetings
- Weekly visits with Induction Teachers
- Mentor Teachers
- Co-teaching
- Coaching Cycles
- Data Meetings
- Deep Dive Schools



LITERACY INITIATIVES

Literacy is a major focus in our district. Some of our literacy initiatives include: Just Take 30, Reading Under the Stars, Reading Buddies, Read Along Time With Dr. Thomas, Laurens 55 Libraries, All Stars Challenge, Book Vending Machines, and the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

MATH AND SCIENCE INITIATIVES

Math initiatives like the Dreambox Mathematics Challenge got students excited about learning. Before and after school tutoring sessions were offered for students who need extra help. We also offered STEM Saturdays and Summer School programs. RoboKind engagement provided a fun way for students with disabilities to learn.

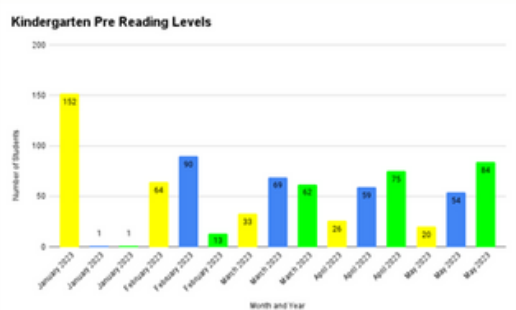
GOAL 1: INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS

Grade – 2 READING	Growth from F22 to S23
EB Morse	+15.3
Ford	+13.9
GCO	+17.9
HT	+17.7
LE	+12.0
WE	+17.0

Grade 2 - MATH	Growth from F22 to S23
EB Morse	+12.8
Ford	+17.0
GCO	+23.1
HT	+18.1
LE	+13.5
WE	+16.8

GOAL 1: INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS

WATERFORD



GOAL 1: INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS

New Curriculum Programs and Supports

- HMH Literacy Curriculum
- Dreambox Mathematics Challenge
- RoboKind

GOAL 2: STAFF DEVELOPMENT: Continually strengthen the recruitment, retention, and development of highly effective staff.

- Recruitment and Retention
- Employee Assistance Program
- Professional Development Opportunities
- Welcome Walks
- Listen and Learn Sessions
- Lunch and Learn
- Surveys
- Staff Recognition

GOAL 2: Staff Development

Districtwide Areas of Strength

- **Instructional Leadership (91% positive)**
 - **Q18:** 95% of teachers shared the principal at their school uses data to monitor students' progress.
- **Principal/Teacher Trust (88% positive)**
 - **Q14:** 88% of teachers shared that the principal at their school looks out for the wellbeing of teachers.
- **Evaluation (90% positive)**
 - **Q40:** 93% of teachers shared that the administrators who evaluate them assess their instruction accurately.

GOAL 2: Staff Development

Districtwide Areas for Improvement

- **School Safety & Order (72% positive)**
 - **Q20:** 60% of teachers shared that rules for student behavior are consistently enforced by teachers in their school, even for students who are not in their classes.
- **Professional Development (70% positive)**
 - **Q6:** 61% of teachers shared that the professional development available to them is a good use of their time.
- **Appreciation (78% positive)**
 - **Q24:** 75% of teachers shared that administrators at their school let them know when they're doing great work.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION

Laurens County District 55 has many benefits for our staff including mortgage assistance programs, partnerships with Lander University for their Masters Program, and USC Upstate programs. We offer Listen and Learn events where staff can share their concerns. Our staff is very important to us and we celebrate them through events like our Teacher of the Month, Champion Administrator of the Month, Spirit of 55 Awards, and Recognition of Special Days like Teacher Appreciation Day.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION

Like other schools in our nation, Laurens District 55 is experiencing a teacher shortage. We are doing our best to retain current teachers and recruiting new teachers through job fairs. We also have a program in place for our high-schoolers to become teachers. UPBEAT Data is used to show where weaknesses are and how to overcome those issues. Coaching is done with principals. The data showed areas of strength such as:

- Instructional Leadership
- Principal Teacher / Trust Evaluation

We showed growth in all areas of the survey except for 2 and we are working on those areas.

Laurens County
School District 55

EDUCATION
CAREER
FAIR

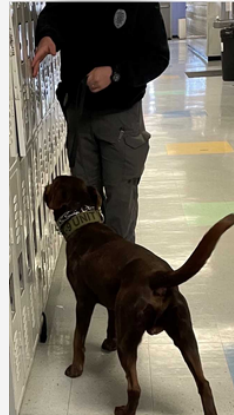
Thursday, February 16, 2023
1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
LCSD 55 ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
301 Hillcrest Drive
Laurens, SC 29360

You may register for this event at [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com).



GOAL 3: FACILITIES: Provide safe schools with innovative learning environments to support student readiness for college and careers.

- Listen and Learn Sessions – Facilities Focus
- Capital Projects
- Safety
- Fire Science Equipment
- Raider Creations Facility and Equipment
- Facilities and Demographics Study
- Weapon Detection Equipment



FACILITIES: CAPITAL PROJECTS

Laurens District 55 has many on-going projects to make sure our students and faculty are safe and comfortable. Along with the HVAC unit updates, we have many safety upgrades happening throughout the district such as security cameras, metal detectors, wand detectors, and K-9 unit officers. We have also held Listen and Learn Sessions to get direction on how to proceed with building and safety upgrades.

GOAL 3: Facilities

Capital Projects

- 20 new HVAC units installed at Ford Elementary School
- 17 new HVAC units installed at Laurens Elementary School
- 35 new HVAC units installed at Sanders Middle School
- 8 new HVAC units installed at Gray Court-Owings School

GOAL 4: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Actively engage with parents and community as partners in the education of all students.

- Communication to stakeholders
- Input
- IMPACT: 55
- Legislative Luncheon
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Partnerships
- Community Events
- Parent Academy Series
- Lunch and Learn
- Listen and Learn Sessions
- Website Redesign
- Weekly Newsletters
- Table Talk Episodes
- Laurens 55 Spotlight
- Grad to Greatness
- Pride in 55: Connections Podcast



COMMUNICATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

We work hard to increase communication with stakeholders. A Message from the Superintendent is sent out to all stakeholders weekly. The Times in 55 is sent out to the Board of Trustees after every monthly board meeting. Each week, the board receives a detailed newsletter of ongoing events. Table Talk is sent out to parents, staff, and the board weekly during the school year. We also send out call alerts, emails and text messages to share information.

Impact 55 allows students to tell their personal stories about how Laurens 55 had made an impact on their lives.

Volunteer opportunities like Reading Buddies keep our community involved. We also had a legislative luncheon to talk about our district to inform them of our progress and needs.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Laurens District 55 is committed to our community. We partner with many colleges, organizations, and civic and community groups. We offer a Parent Academy Series to focus on safety, parenting, and mental health. We share information through social media sites to make sure that everyone has access to this information. Resources like ParentGuidance.org, TruConnect, Waterford, and Apptegy are ways we stay connected with our stakeholders.

GOAL 4: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

New Resources for Stakeholders

- ParentGuidance.Org - Mental Health Resources
- TruConnect - Cell Phone and/or Internet Service
- Waterford Upstart - Early Learning Literacy Tool

Participation in State-Level Events

- 2023 STEM Signing Day
SC FutureMakers, SC Manufacturers Alliance
- 2023 Military Honor Cord Ceremony
South Carolina Department of Education

STATE AND FEDERAL EVENTS

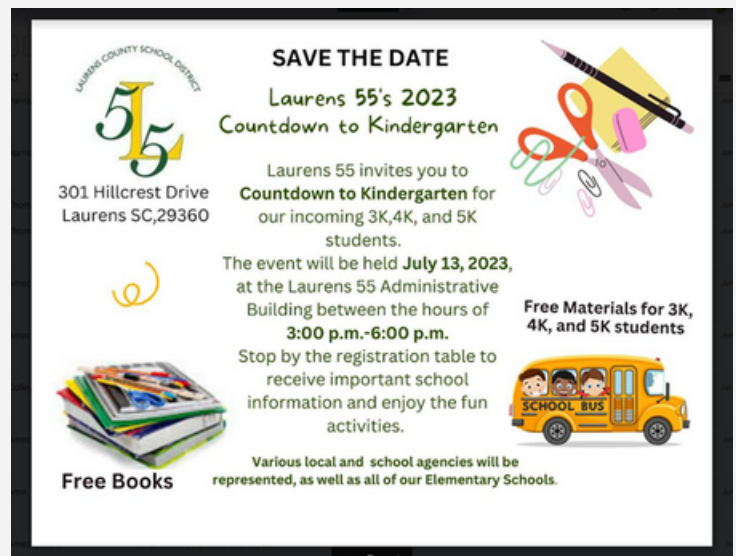
Laurens District 55 participates in state-level events such as the South Carolina Department of Education 2023 Military Honor Cord Ceremony and the STEM Signing Day sponsored by SC FutureMakers and SC Manufacturers Alliance.

Trips to Washington, DC to share our district goals and needs were also part of the curriculum this school year.



Countdown to Kindergarten

Laurens District 55 is once again having the Countdown to Kindergarten! This is an event designed to familiarize incoming 3K, 4K, and 5K students with our district and receive some goodies to encourage them to be excited about starting school.



Back to School Supply Drive-Thru

Our Back to School Supply Drive-Thru is being held on July 25th from 5:00 – 6:30 p.m. This is district-sponsored event to help out students in need.

A trip to Washington, DC to advocate for our district's educational needs

Advocating for our district's needs is at the top of our list. Staying in contact with our representatives lets them know that we care about our district and community.

GOAL 4: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Goal 5: FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY: Use resources effectively and maintain a strong fiscal position.

- Increase in the General Fund Balance
- Budget Surveys
- Budget Work Sessions/Planning Meetings
- Utility/Energy Analysis
- Financial Wellness & Operational Efficiency
- Grants
- Go Fund Me
- Monthly Financial Report

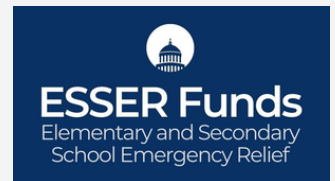
FISCAL RESPONSIBILITIES

We have focused on fiscal responsibility throughout the year. We continue to strive to position the district on a path that seeks to increase instructional quality, improve operational efficiency, and direct flexible spending closer to the classroom to ensure responsible and effective use of taxpayer dollars. This was the focus while developing the general fund budget. We sent out budget surveys to get input from the stakeholders, and had work sessions with the school board. We have caught up our salary schedule and are working hard to be competitive with other districts. Our General Fund balance has increased each year.

GOAL 5: Fiscal Responsibility

Awarded School Grants

- \$1,000.00 Michelin Earth Day Grant
Gerri McConnell & Krystal McGrew, Waterloo Elementary
- Michelin STEM Grant
(WES Science Labs Materials & Classroom Materials)
Gerri McConnell & Krystal McGrew, Waterloo Elementary
- Fine Arts Grant
Margaret Davis (Art) & Marjorie Tobias (Music), EB Morse Elementary



MONTHLY GENERAL FUNDS

We have monthly general fund expenditures and statements posted on the district website. There were also multiple meetings with principals and district staff to discuss staffing and budgetary needs.

GOAL 5: Fiscal Responsibility

Awarded School Grants

- 2022 Dick's Sporting Goods Grants
Laurens Middle School
- Ignite Grant (Musical Instruments)
Gregg Hinton, Laurens Elementary School
- \$5,446.28 from DonorsChoose.Org
Grades 1 - 5 Classes, Hickory Tavern School (Classroom Organization, School Supplies, Headphones, Books)

GRANTS

We are also constantly seeking out opportunities to apply for grants that can also be utilized to provide services for our students and assistance to the staff. Including the Teacher Leader Solutions Grant that if awarded could bring 5 million dollars to the district. Many of our teachers also write grants for their schools and classrooms.

We are looking forward to receiving 2.5 million dollars to go toward a Laurens county CATE Center.

FEDERAL FUNDS - GRANT APPLICATION BASED		
21st Century Grants	224	\$1,034,311.42
Homeless Grant - ARP I	232	\$79,054.88
Homeless Grant - ARP II	263	\$110,282.52
	Subtotal	\$1,223,648.82
GRANTS - APPLICATION BASED		
Arts in Education Grants	309	\$55,100.00
Reading Camp	357	\$93,871.00
EEDA Grants	394	\$450,000.00
GEAR UP	878	\$459,505.00
	Subtotal	\$1,054,192.00



MONTHLY GENERAL FUNDS

The data below reflects that the General Fund Balance has improved and increased. *Please note that in 2021 we used general funds to give a stipend to all employees due to the pandemic. .

	Reflects and Increase from 21 to 22 of
	\$1,871,515.00
6/30/2022	7,304,233.00
*6/30/2021	\$5,432,718.00
6/30/2020	\$6,271,603.00
6/30/2019	\$7,205,121.00

ASSESSMENT DATA

MRS. KIM PENLAND GAVE AN OVERVIEW OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS AT WATERLOO ELEMENTARY

Waterloo Elementary School's HMH Goals for 2022-2023

Math Goal: The percentage of students in grades K-5 scoring on or above on the HMH Growth Measure math assessment will increase from 18.4% to 50% by the end of the school year.

Reading Goal: The percentage of students in grades 2-5 scoring on or above on the HMH Growth Measure reading assessment will increase from 17.7% to 50% by the end of the school year.

Reading Grades 2-5	BOY Scoring On or Above	EOY Scoring On or Above
EOY Goal: 50% On or Above	17.7%	52.2%
Math Grades K-5	BOY Scoring On or Above	EOY Scoring On or Above
EOY Goal: 50% On or Above	18.4%	60.6%

Beginning of Year versus End of Year Performances

EOY Percentage of students scoring On or Above Grade Level

Grade Level	Reading	Math	Increase from BOY to EOY
K5		53.3%	Math - 40.4%
1st		74.2%	Math - 59.9%
2nd	66.6%	72.8%	Math - 48.5% Reading - 50.4%
3rd	52.8%	61.1%	Math - 39.5% Reading - 33.9%
4th	38.5%	43.6%	Math - 41% Reading - 43.2%
5th	40.7%	59.2%	Math - 27.1% Reading - 19.2%

Highest Growth Area on HMH Math

Beginning	Middle	End
● Above Level	0.9% (2 students)	
● On Level	16.7% (36 students)	

Percentage of students On or Above
Grade Level at the **BOY = 17.6%**

Beginning	Middle	End
● Above Level	22.6% (50 students)	
● On Level	38.0% (84 students)	


Percentage of students On or Above
Grade Level at the **EOY = 60.6%**

OVERALL GROWTH

This means that WES **increased** the percentage of students who scored On or Above grade level **43%** on the HMH Growth Measure Math Assessment by the end of the 2022-2023 school year.

ASSESSMENT DATA CONTINUED

KATHY MCMILLAN-BENNON'S PRESENTATION ON THE 2022-2023 ACADEMIC INTERVENTIONS



hello!

ABii highly personalizes every interaction, adapting to individual learning habits and encouraging students to stay engaged, to ultimately build confidence and core skills mastery. ABii guides students through each lesson, breaking down problems and leading students through brain breaks, when necessary. ABii's lessons are national standards aligned & created by certified teachers.

ABII ROBOT

READ 180 SUPERSTARS!!!

Grant, Brianna	5	E.B. Morse Elementary School
Allen, Keidriquez	6	Gray Court-Owings Elementary/Middle School
Jamieson, Travis	5	Hickory Tavern Elementary/Middle School
Reynolds, Jaxon	4	Waterloo Elementary School
Schultz, Corrine	5	E.B. Morse Elementary School
Orvin, Kerrah	3	Waterloo Elementary School
Davis, Zy'Mir Martavius	5	E.B. Morse Elementary School
Wardell, Abigayle	4	Waterloo Elementary School
Morton, Cera'jae	5	Hickory Tavern Elementary/Middle School
Owens, Konner	5	E.B. Morse Elementary School
Gaspar-Gaspar, Lola	6	Laurens Middle School
Smith, Thomas	5	Waterloo Elementary School
Watts, Skylen	5	E.B. Morse Elementary School

ACADEMIC
INTERVENTIONS

READ 180 SUPERSTARS!!!!

We had 13 students who were recognized by HMH nationally for their outstanding scores! These students had 1-4 year's growth in reading. Way to go!!



HMH NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED SUPERSTARS
(LEFT TO RIGHT) DR. AMECA THOMAS, THOMAS SMITH, CORRINE SCHULTZ, KERRAH ORVIN,
ABIGAYLE WARDELL, KATHY MCMILLAN-BENNON



POLICIES

Trustees approved the following: 2023–2024 General Fund Budget, Procurement Code, and Bond Resolution.

SUPERINTENDENT ANNUAL REVIEW

The 2022–2023 Superintendent Annual Review was held. Dr. Ameca Thomas received a rating of "Excellent."

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Cathy Little, Seat 2, Chair
cclittle@laurens55.org

Mike Hughes, Seat 4,
mhughes@laurens55.org

Anthony Carpenter, Seat 5, Vice–Chair
acarpenter@laurens55.org

Peggy Nance, Seat 6, Secretary
phnance@laurens55.org

After a vote was taken to fill the vacancy of Board Secretary, Mrs. Peggy Nance was elected. Congratulations, Mrs. Nance!

AUGUST 28TH BOARD MEETING

The next monthly meeting of the LCSD 55 Board of Trustees is scheduled for Monday, August 28, 2023. The meeting will be held at Hickory Tavern School located at 163 Neely Ferry Rd., Gray Court, SC, 29645. The meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m.

EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS

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

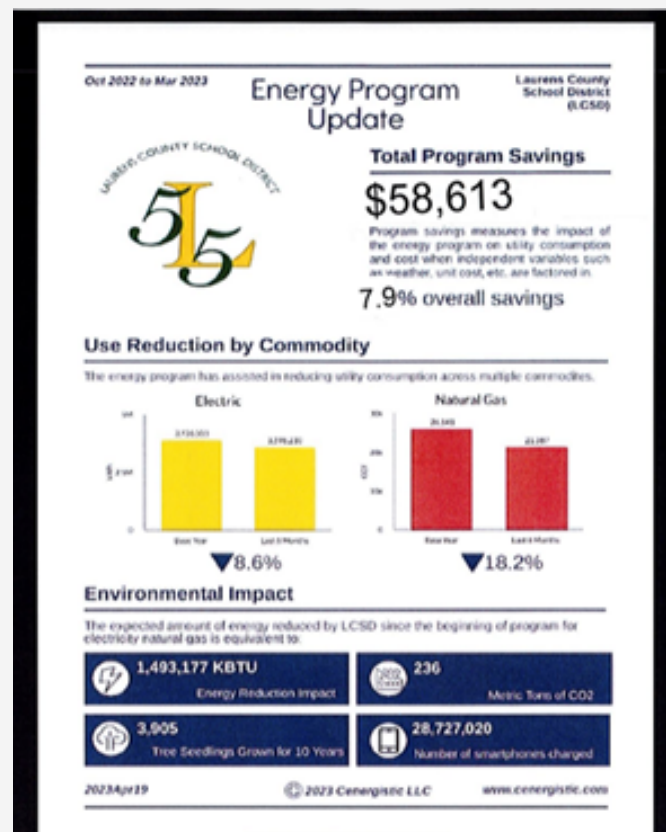
	5/31/2023	5/31/2022
Balance with Treasurer	\$13,545,608	\$11,776,515
Revenues	\$49,527,994	\$46,062,413
Expenditures	\$43,742,761	\$41,238,170
Difference	\$5,785,233	\$4,824,243
Total Tax Collections	\$1,350,306	\$810,480

MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT

The Monthly Financial Report was presented by Mr. Jim Lollis.

CENERGISTICS REPORT

We embarked on Cenergistic as our new energy program and from October 2022 to March 2023 we had saved \$34,371.00 and by June 20th the data showed a savings of \$58,613.00.



A Great Place To Be....



Pride in 55