



2019 - 2020
2020 - 2021

ANNUAL REPORT

NEWTON COUNTY
SCHOOL SYSTEM



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MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

To the residents of Newton County:

Welcome to our Annual Report. Unlike previous editions, this year's report will cover two years—the 2019-2020 school year and the 2020-2021 school year, as we were unable to publish a report in 2020 due to COVID-19. Although the pandemic wreaked havoc with our school system and community throughout the past two years, you will see by flipping through this report, that our students and staff still soared both academically and professionally. We even celebrated our school system's 150th anniversary! I must say, I'm truly amazed, but never surprised, by the incredible list of accomplishments and accolades that our students and employees earn. We have an extraordinary school system, and with the continued support and engagement of our families, business and industry partners, and community, the sky is the limit!



When the pandemic hit, our schools closed, and students began learning remotely. Although times were tough, I was never more proud of our staff. Teachers taught remotely. Bus drivers and school nutrition workers joined forces to deliver meals by school bus, and staff continued to manage and support the day-to-day operations of our schools and district either at work or remotely. It hasn't been easy, but we've made the very best of a bad situation. Students eventually returned to school—some remotely and some in-person—and they've continued to flourish just as I knew they would.

So please, read through our Annual Report and see for yourself the outstanding accomplishments of our students and staff over the course of the past two school years. Our motto is Spirit, Pride, and Excellence, and they have truly exemplified that during this unprecedented time.

As always, I thank you for your continued support of the Newton County School System.

Sincerely,
Samantha Fuhrey
Superintendent

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

TWO YEARS AND COUNTING

March 13, 2020, started like any other school day for Newton County School System (NCSS) students. An early release day for a scheduled teacher workday, students left for the weekend not knowing it would be the last day of in-person instruction for the remainder of the school year. By Monday, schools were closed due to the pandemic, with an expectation that they would soon reopen. That of course, never materialized. The 2019-2020 school year flipped to strictly virtual learning, with students never stepping foot back into their school buildings.



While COVID-19 hit the nation, our community, and our school system hard, NCSS students and staff were up to the challenge. Chromebooks and hot spots were offered to students free of charge and teachers began teaching remotely from home. The NCSS school nutrition staff switched gears and offered free breakfast and lunch meal pickup at select school locations. Soon thereafter, district bus drivers began delivering free meals throughout the community to ensure that all Newton County children received nutritious meals while families sheltered at home. Free meal pickup and delivery options were offered throughout the remainder of the school year and into the summer months.

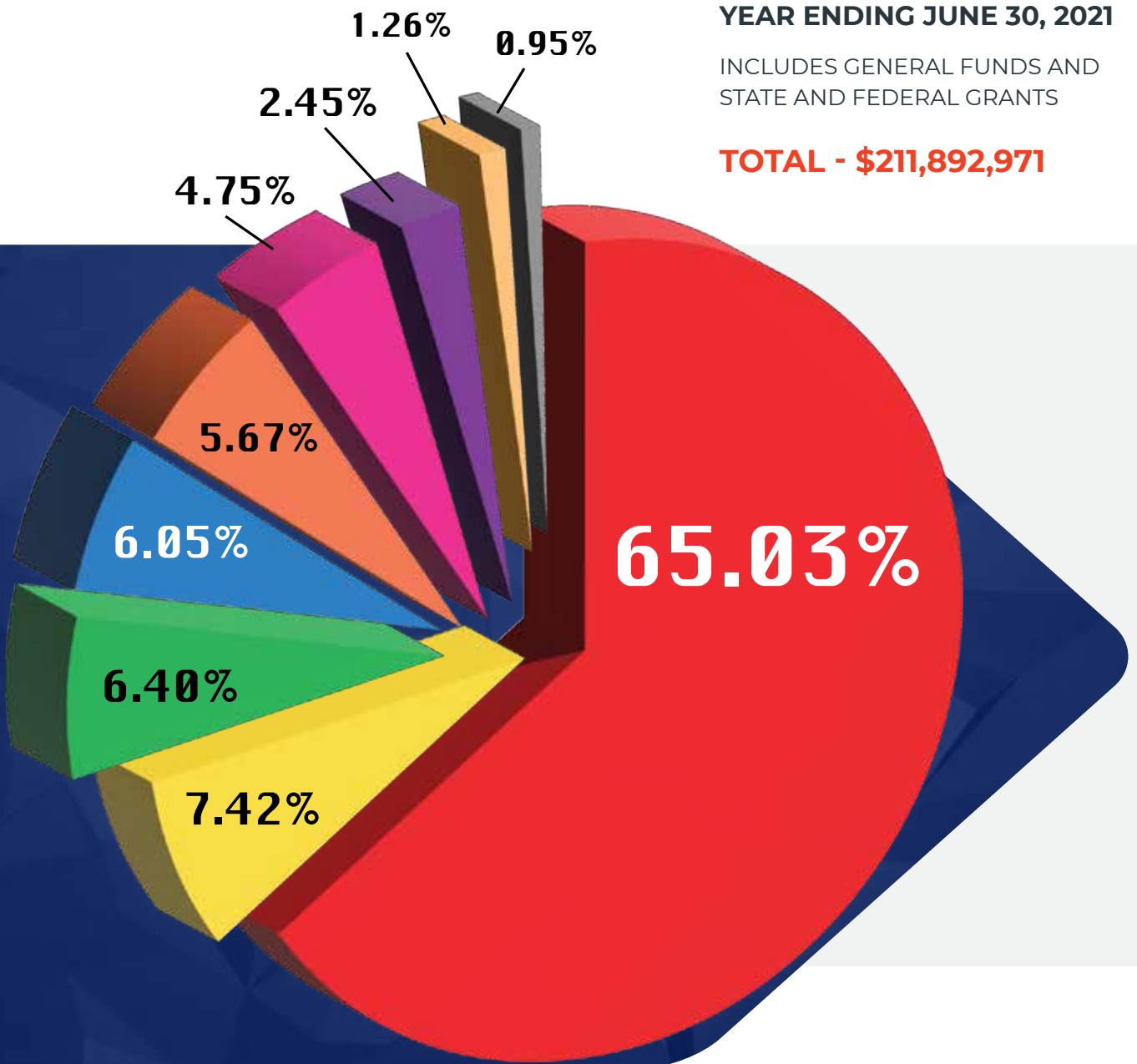
After an extended summer break—students reported back for the 2020-2021 school year on September 8, 2020, in one of three ways—in-person, virtually, or by self-paced virtual learning. Mask wearing became the norm and students and staff were encouraged to practice social distancing and hand washing/sanitizing throughout the day. Schools experienced temporary closures throughout the year due to COVID-19 outbreaks but students and employees still persevered. Students competed and won in numerous virtual regional, state, and national competitions throughout the year; our seniors earned millions of dollars in college scholarships; and our staff worked tirelessly to ensure our schools continued to operate seamlessly. Were there hiccups along the way? Of course! It was—and still is—a global pandemic. But Newton County School System proved it was up to the challenge as evidenced by the numerous accomplishments highlighted in this annual report, covering both the 2019-2020 and the 2020-2021 school years. Newton County School System's motto is Spirit, Pride, and Excellence, and our students and staff have exemplified those words throughout the COVID-19 pandemic!

FINANCIAL & OPERATIONS DATA

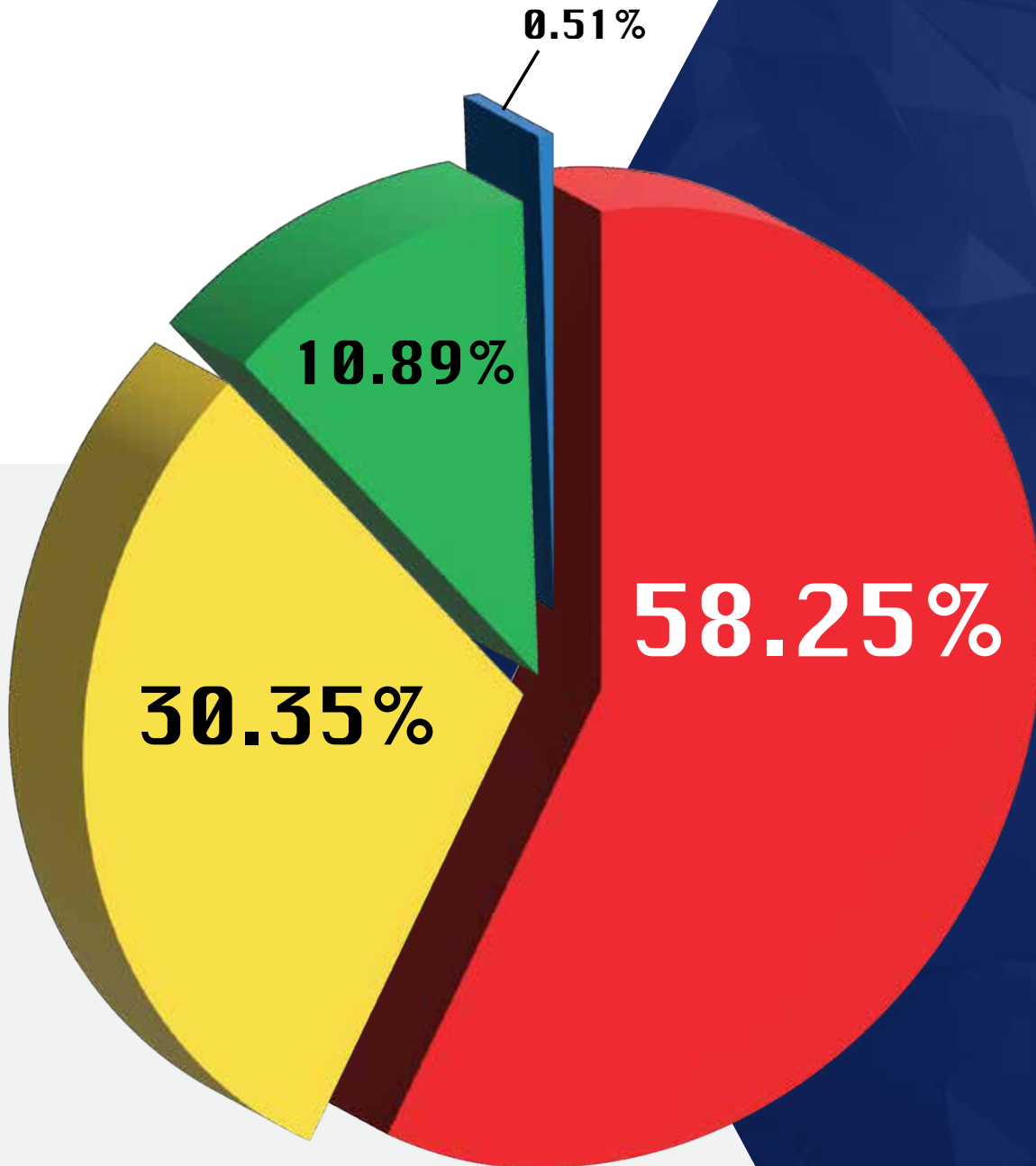
**NEWTON COUNTY SCHOOL
DISTRICT UNAUDITED
EXPENDITURES FOR FISCAL
YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2021**

INCLUDES GENERAL FUNDS AND
STATE AND FEDERAL GRANTS

TOTAL - \$211,892,971



■ Instruction: \$137,803,813	■ Transportation: \$10,059,585
■ Maintenance & Operations: \$15,728,516	■ Central Support & Business Services: \$5,196,344
■ School Administration: \$13,562,271	■ Media Services: \$2,677,084
■ Staff Services: \$12,822,619	■ General Administration: \$2,021,168
■ Pupil Services: \$12,021,571	



NEWTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT UNAUDITED REVENUES FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2021

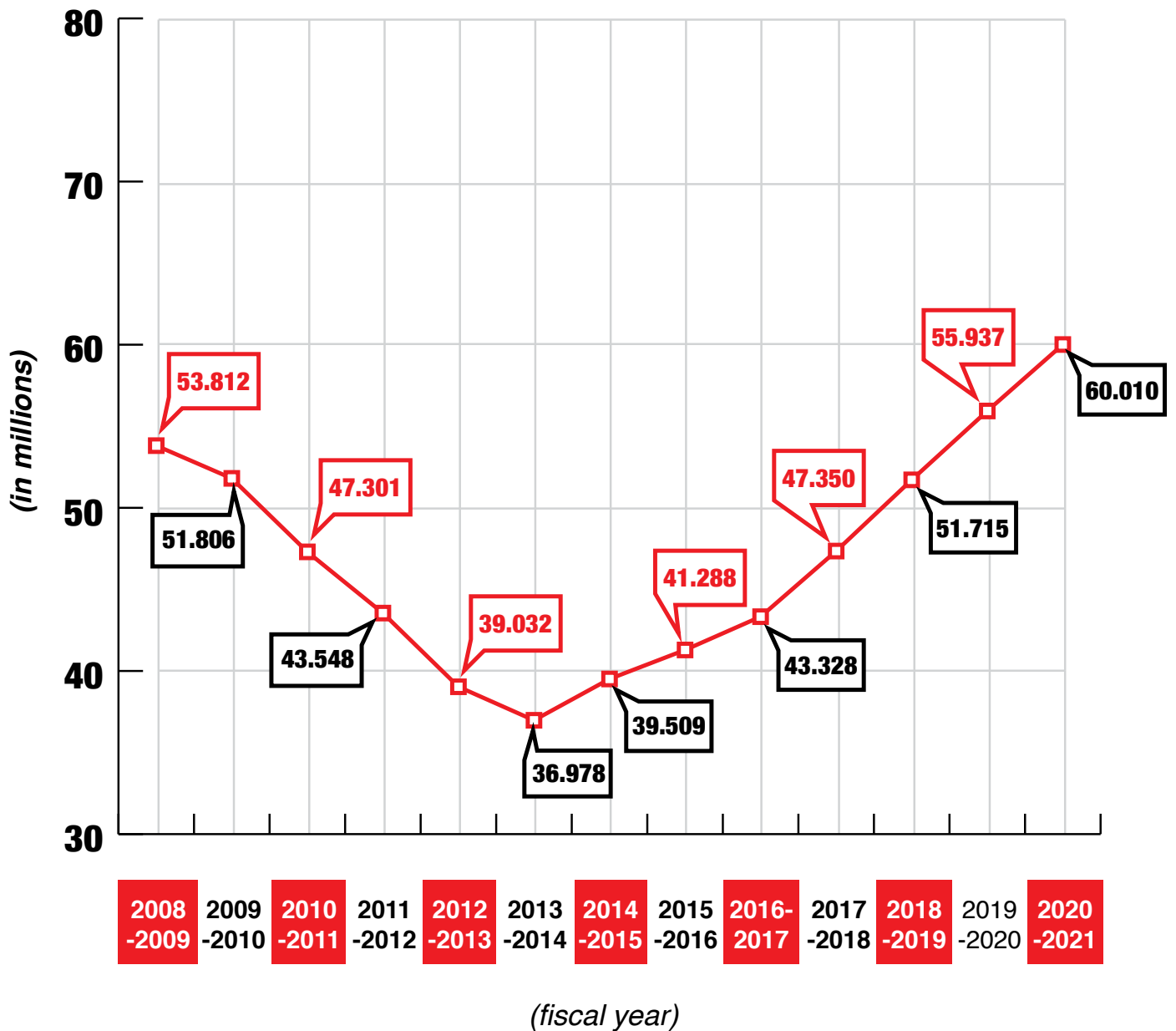
INCLUDES GENERAL FUNDS AND STATE AND FEDERAL GRANTS

TOTAL - \$220,716,939

	State Grants: \$128,559,354
	Local Revenues: \$66,987,499
	Federal Grants: \$24,035,411
	Other: \$1,134,675

FINANCIAL & OPERATIONS DATA

NEWTON COUNTY TAX DIGEST HISTORY FY 2009 TO PRESENT



Fiscal Year	Tax Digest	Millage Rate	Gross Taxes	Change from 2009
2008-2009	\$2,955,093,084	18.21	\$53,812,245	---
2009-2010	\$2,844,952,913	18.21	\$51,806,593	(\$2,005,653)
2010-2011	\$2,365,056,068	20	\$47,301,121	(\$6,511,124)
2011-2012	\$2,177,437,258	20	\$43,548,745	(\$10,263,500)
2012-2013	\$1,951,639,208	20	\$39,032,784	(\$14,779,461)
2013-2014	\$1,848,940,820	20	\$36,978,816	(\$16,833,429)
2014-2015	\$1,975,479,218	20	\$39,509,584	(\$14,302,661)
2015-2016	\$2,064,418,136	20	\$41,288,363	(\$12,523,882)
2016-2017	\$2,166,406,608	20	\$43,328,132	(\$10,484,113)
2017-2018	\$2,367,504,096	20	\$47,350,082	(\$6,462,163)
2018-2019	\$2,585,783,528	20	\$51,715,671	(\$2,096,574)
2019-2020	\$2,826,853,995	19.788	\$55,937,787	\$2,125,542
2020-2021	\$3,032,654,860	19.788	\$60,010,174	\$6,197,929

NEWTON COUNTY TAX DIGEST HISTORY FY 2009 TO PRESENT

SCHOOL LEVEL DATA

NCSS Graduation Rate

Newton County School System's (NCSS) four-year, cohort graduation rate continued to best the state rate in 2021. In addition, all three high schools—Alcovy, Eastside, and Newton—also topped the state.

The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate defines the cohort based on when a student first becomes a freshman. The rate is calculated using the number of students who graduate within four years and includes adjustments for student transfers.

Graduation rates for the schools, district, and state, are listed below:

SCHOOL/ GROUP	2017 GRADUATION RATE	2018 GRADUATION RATE	2019 GRADUATION RATE	2020 GRADUATION RATE	2021 GRADUATION RATE
Alcovy High	82%	84%	85%	89%	85%
Eastside High	90%	91%	87%	89%	91%
Newton High	82%	87%	88%	91%	91%
NCSS	83%	87%	87%	90%	89%
State	81%	82%	82%	84%	84%

Newton County School System 2021 ACT Scores

Newton County School System (NCSS) students increased their scores across the board on the 2021 ACT with English and Reading both seeing gains of 1.6 points. The district's Math, Science, and Composite score all increased by 1.5 points in 2021. In addition, Newton County School System students bested their national counterparts by one-tenth of one point in Science. The number of test-takers did decrease in 2021 both locally and across the state and nation. This is attributed to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the temporary waiver of SAT/ACT score requirements for University System of Georgia admissions.

According to the official ACT report, Alcovy High School students posted significant gains in 2021 with English increasing by 2.6 points and Math increasing by 2.1 points. The school's Science score rose 1.7 points and Reading increased by 1.2 points. As a result, the school's overall composite score rose two points in 2021. In addition, Alcovy students surpassed the national averages in English, Science, and the composite and matched U.S. test-takers in Math.

Eastside High School students also posted gains across the board on the ACT in 2021 and bested the nation in every category, too. The school's English score rose one point and Math increased by seven tenths of one point. Both the Reading and Science scores rose one-half of one-point. Overall, Eastside's composite score rose by seven-tenths of a point.

Like their counterparts at Alcovy and Eastside, Newton High School students also posted gains in every category of the ACT in 2021. Science rose 1.1 points and Reading increased 1.5 points. The school's English score increased by half of a point and Math rose six-tenths of one point. Overall, Newton's composite score rose .9 points last school year.

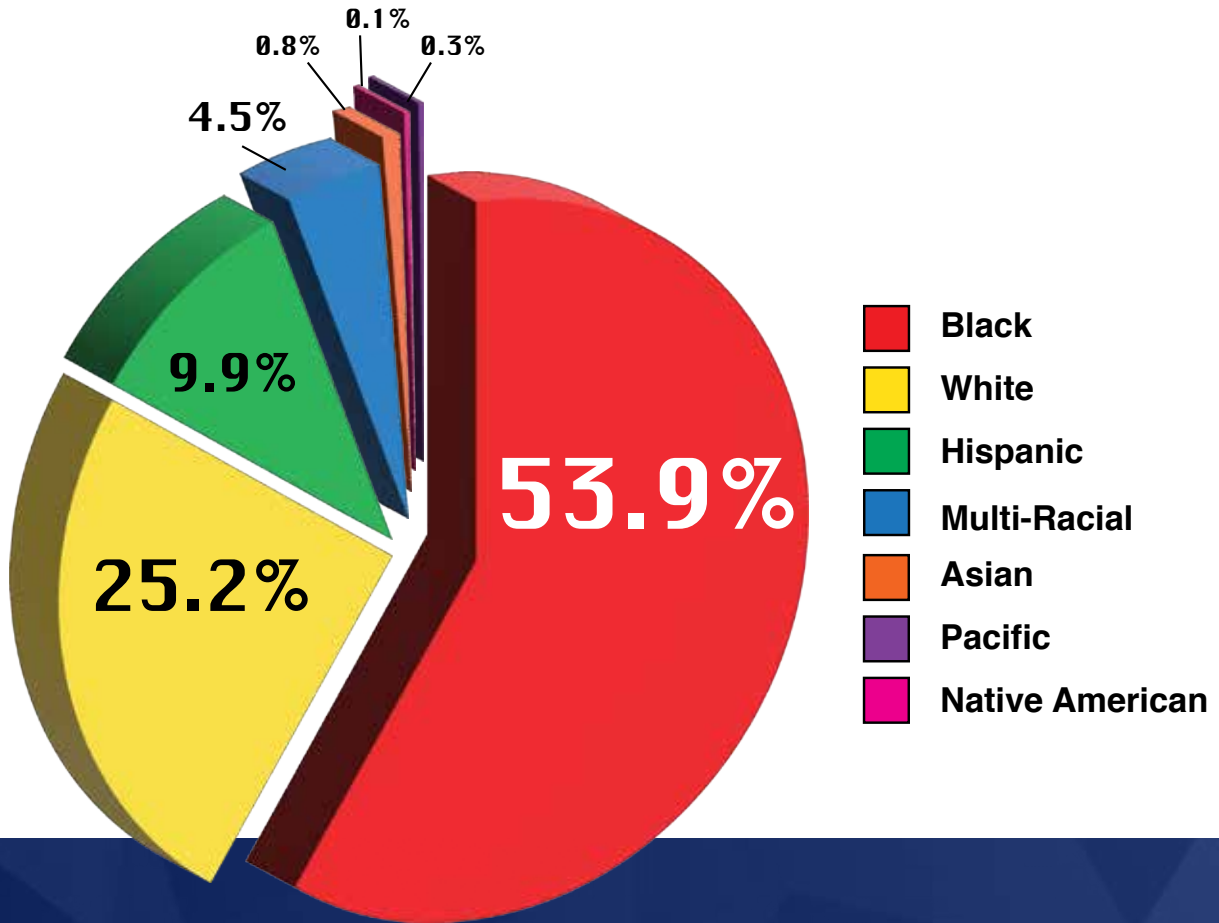
Group	English	Math	Reading	Science	Composite
Alcovy High	19.9	19.9	20.5	20.7	20.4
Eastside High	20.5	21	21.9	21.6	21.4
Newton High	16.6	16.9	19.1	18.6	17.9
NCSS	19.1	19.5	20.8	20.5	20.1
State	22.1	21.9	23.4	22.4	22.6
Nation	19.6	19.9	20.9	20.4	20.3

LANGUAGES SPOKEN

1. Arabic
2. Cambodian
3. Cantonese
4. Chinese
5. Dutch
6. Edo
7. Ethiopian Languages
8. Farsi
9. French
10. German
11. Ghanaian Languages
12. Greek
13. Haitian Creole
14. Hindi
15. Hmong
16. Korean
17. Kosraean
18. Lao
19. Mandarin
20. Nepali
21. Patois
22. Portuguese
23. Punjabi
24. Romanian
25. Russian
26. Samoan
27. Somali
28. Spanish
29. Tagalog
30. Turkmen
31. Urdu
32. Vietnamese
33. Welsh
34. Yoruba
35. Other African Languages
36. Other Asian Languages
37. Other Indian Languages

SCHOOL LEVEL DATA

Student Ethnicity for 2020-2021



EMPLOYEE BREAKDOWN:



Total Certified: **1,489**



Total Classified: **1,050**



Total Employees: **2,539**



We also have provisionally certified teachers with degrees and the breakdown is as follows: Bachelor's (83), Master's (19), Specialist (1), Doctorate (2)

NCSS 2021 SAT SCORES

Newton County School System (NCSS) SAT test takers posted outstanding results in 2021, increasing their total composite score by 43 points to 1035. Overall, NCSS students increased their Evidenced-Based Reading and Writing Score by 16 points to 529; math scores rose 27 points to 506.

Group	2021 #Test Takers	2021 Evidenced-Based Reading and Writing	2021 Math	2021 Composite
Alcovy High	63	527	490	1018
Eastside High	74	546	539	1086
Newton High	64	510	483	993
NCSS	201	529	506	1035
Georgia-ALL Test Takers	49,170	551	534	1086
Georgia-Public Schools Only	41,976	546	531	1077
USA-All Test Takers	---	533	528	1060
USA-Public Schools Only	---	524	514	1038

At the school level, Alcovy High School students increased their scores across the board in 2021, with their composite score soaring 44 points to 1018. Alcovy students increased their Evidenced-Based Writing by 24 points and their Math score by 19 points in 2021. Although Eastside High School saw a slight dip of two points on the Evidenced-Based Writing in 2021, their Math scores shot up 11 points, which raised the school's composite score to 1086 in 2021, surpassing both the national test takers and Georgia's public school test takers. Finally, Newton High School students posted increases in every category in 2021. Their Evidenced-Based writing score increased 12 points and Math shot up 29 points in 2021. As a result, the school's composite score saw a 40 point boost, going from 953 to 993.

2019 - 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

Samantha Fuhrey Named 2020 Georgia Superintendent of the Year/Finalist for National Superintendent of the Year

The honors kept coming for Newton County School Superintendent Samantha Fuhrey in December 2019 when she was named both the Georgia 2020 Superintendent of the Year and later one of only four finalists for the 2020 National Superintendent of the Year! She was the only female national finalist!



“It is quite an honor to represent Georgia, the Newton County School System, and community as a national finalist for Superintendent of the Year,” said Fuhrey. “I would not be in this position without our dedicated school system team, our hard-working students, and our supportive community. Together, we have made strides to ensure that we achieve our vision that all students are well-rounded and prepared for the future. I consider this an honor to be shared with our NCSS team, students, families, and our community partners. Newton County is truly a special community that supports its public school system. As a result, our students have benefitted from and have shown time and time again that they can compete with their peers at the regional, state, and national level.”

Fuhrey added, “I would be remiss if I didn’t publicly acknowledge the tremendous support I receive from our school board. Together they are a fantastic team that puts the children of our district first in every decision they make. Not all school superintendents are so fortunate to work with such an amazing group of men and women. They truly want what’s best for our students and employees.”

“We are absolutely excited that Mrs. Fuhrey’s leadership, commitment to public education, and innovative practices have gained recognition nationally by becoming one of the top four finalists in the nation for Superintendent of the Year,” said Shakila Henderson-Baker, then chair of the Newton County Board of Education. “Her leadership for learning and her implementation of programs in our district have been centered around national topics that

have impacted school systems everywhere. This has not only helped us to be proactive versus reactive, but it has also brought attention to our school district nationally on platforms like CNN and at national educational conferences. Her drive to be innovative and a forward thinker is also one of the reasons her peers from other districts respect her and seek out her guidance. I spoke with a superintendent in another district recently at a conference about this and his response was, ‘when they ask, she’s always willing to assist them.’”

Henderson-Baker added, “I think of Mrs. Fuhrey as a great leader because a leader at all times helps their team to be successful, but a great leader assists and develops others around them to be great leaders and when that happens success becomes natural. We are so thankful to have a great leader like Mrs. Fuhrey!”



2019 - 2020 IN MEMORIAM

Remembering Mr. Almond Turner

With deep sadness, the Newton County School System announced the tragic death of school board member, Mr. Almond Turner, on November 23, 2019. A beloved member of the Newton County Board of Education, Mr. Turner served the residents of Newton County's fourth district. Mr. Turner had a servant's heart, which led him to a 45-year-career in law enforcement; he retired as assistant chief of police with the Covington Police Department in December 2016.



Mr. Turner was a 1968 graduate of the historic R. L. Cousins High School and attended Fort Valley State College where he majored in music. He also attended DeKalb Community College where he earned an Associate of Arts degree in Criminal Justice. He furthered his education at Troy University, receiving a Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice. He was a 1982 graduate of the FBI National Academy (Quantico, Va.), as well as a 2002 graduate of Columbus State University's Command College.

A proud graduate of the Newton County School System, Mr. Turner was first elected to serve on the Board of Education in 1996. He was re-elected in 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, and 2016. During his tenure as a board member, he employed his law enforcement and security experience to improve safety measures throughout the school system, which included the installation of cameras in all school buses and all classrooms. He also fought for changes in school policies to make sure that any policies implemented would be fair and equitable to students, teachers, and administrators. Mr. Turner was committed to supporting teachers and ensuring they had the necessary tools needed to provide children a quality education.

Mr. Turner had a passion for music and was well known for his support of and performances in the Newton County Community Band. He was also a beloved member of the Springfield Baptist Church, where he served as a deacon and oversaw the Ministry Protection Team.

Born in Covington, Mr. Turner was the son of the late Lavancy Maxey Turner and Almond Turner. Mr. Turner was survived by his wife, the former Anita Franklin, three children—Dwahn, Shaye, and Shundra—and ten grandchildren.

"We are stunned, devastated, and heartbroken," said Samantha Fuhrey, superintendent of the Newton County School System. "Mr. Turner was a life-long supporter of our community and its school system. He always wanted and fought for what was best for our students and employees and we looked forward to him continuing to serve on our school board into the foreseeable future. But more importantly, on a personal note, Mr. Turner was my friend and mentor—someone who helped guide me as I began the journey as superintendent of this school system. I will never forget his advice, his kind words of encouragement, and most of all his friendship. There will never be another Almond Turner. He was truly one of a kind."

Then Newton County Board of Education chair, Shakila Henderson-Baker said, "Mr. Turner was a leader in our community and our school system. This is hard. Almond was and is a man who spent his life serving and protecting others, whether it was serving on the police force

or serving the community as an advocate for public education. I am shocked to hear of this tragedy. He will absolutely be missed.”

Mrs. Henderson-Baker added, “Almond is a hero to all of us. He was the backbone of our school board. He encouraged us. He fought for the best interest of our children. And he was our friend. I am absolutely devastated at this loss. I grew up seven doors down from Almond Turner. He watched me grow up from a little girl. My dad died two days before my first election but Almond came to me and said, ‘I got you.’ And now my ‘I got you’ is gone. I am devastated. We all are.”

The Newton County School System was not alone in grieving the tragic passing of Mr. Turner. The entire Newton County community was in a state of shock upon hearing the news. Numerous residents lined the route when Mr. Turner was brought home to Covington in preparation for his funeral. And hundreds more attended a candlelight vigil on the Square in Covington, where numerous dignitaries spoke and paid tribute to him.

On the day of his funeral, the Newton County Board of Education held a special called meeting to adopt a resolution in Mr. Turner’s honor. Signed by all four remaining board members, the resolution notes that Mr. Turner “provided quality leadership to the Board of Education” and that he “actively promoted public education and supported excellent educational opportunities for all students of the Newton County Schools.” The Board members noted they would “miss his commitment and dedication to upholding public education principles and policies, his willingness to listen to concerns of the public, and his unique ability to discern quickly what is in the best interest for public education in Newton County.”

Board chair, Mrs. Henderson-Baker, presented the framed proclamation to Mrs. Anita Turner during the funeral service at Springfield Baptist Church in Conyers. In addition, Samantha Fuhrey awarded Mr. Turner posthumously with the Superintendent’s Coin of Distinction. Mrs. Fuhrey reserves her Coin of Distinction to people who are “heroes” and those who “dedicate their lives to serving others, go above and beyond, seek nothing in return for their actions and deeds and serve as an example to be emulated.”

Mr. Turner was buried with full honors at Lawnwood Memorial Park in Covington, Georgia. He was 69.



2019 - 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

NCSS Earns Accreditation

The AdvancED Global Commission approved Newton County School System (NCSS) and each of its schools for accreditation. According to Dr. Shelia Thomas, Chief Strategy and Support Services Officer for NCSS, the district was awarded accreditation by the North Central Association Commission on accreditation and school improvement, the Northwest Accreditation Commission and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement.

“These three regional agencies provide our institution with a highly regarded accreditation that is recognized throughout the world,” said Thomas. “Newton County School System has been granted district accreditation, which extends accreditation to each of the schools in the district.”

In March 2019, Newton County School System hosted an AdvancED External Review visit during which a team of educators from across the state and nation evaluated the school system and a cross section of schools on how the system as a whole adheres to the AdvancED Accreditation Standards.



“AdvancED accreditation is a rigorous process that demonstrates to our students, parents and community that we are focused on raising student achievement, providing safe and enriching learning environments, and maintaining efficient and effective operations, staffed by highly qualified educators,” said Samantha Fuhrey, Superintendent of Newton County Schools.

To earn AdvancED School System Accreditation, systems must: meet the AdvancED Accreditation Standards in the areas of Leadership, Learning and Resource Capacities; implement a continuous process of improvement; and host an External Review team visit once every five years.

The AdvancED Team found Newton County School System met the requirements for accreditation. Newton County School System received an Index of Education Quality (IEQ) score of 321 out of a possible 400, which is a holistic measure of overall performance based on a comprehensive set of standards and review criteria. An IEQ score below 250 indicates that the institution has several areas within the Initiate level and should focus their improvement efforts on those Standards within the Initiate level. An IEQ in the range of 225-300 indicates that the institution has several Standards within the Improve level and is using results to inform continuous improvement and demonstrate sustainability. An IEQ of 275 and above indicates the institution is beginning to reach the Impact level and is engaged in practices that are sustained over time and are becoming ingrained in the culture of the institution.



2019 - 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

NCSS Teacher of the Year

Flint Hill Elementary School fourth-grade teacher, Dr. Shannon Price, was named Newton County School System's 2020 Teacher of the Year! Dr. Price's prizes included \$1,000 cash and a crystal vase from the Newton County Chamber of Commerce, \$2,000 cash from Newton County School System, and three-month's free car rental from Covington Ford.



Dr. Price is a fourth-grade teacher at Flint Hill Elementary School. She began her teaching career in the Newton County School System when she was hired as a teacher at Palmer-Stone Elementary School in 1995. She transferred to Flint Hill Elementary School in 2011 and has been teaching there ever since. Dr. Price has taught kindergarten, second, third, and fourth grades for the district. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from Georgia College in 1994 and her Master of Arts degree in Elementary Education from Piedmont in 1999. In 2011, she earned her Education Specialist degree in Teaching and Learning from Liberty University and ultimately obtained her Educational Doctorate from Liberty in 2015. In addition, Dr. Price completed all requirements for a Leadership Add-On to her Educational Specialist in 2017.

Newton College & Career Academy Teacher Named GACTE New Teacher of the Year

Newton College & Career Academy (NCCA) culinary arts instructor, Scott Quinlan, was named the 2019 Georgia Association for Career and Technical Education's New Teacher of the Year! He represented Georgia in the Association for Career & Technical Education (GACTE) Region II competition in October 2020. Region II includes: Bahamas, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.



NCSS Announces CTAE Students of the Year

J'Havel Allen of Veterans Memorial Middle School and James Wilson of Newton College & Career Academy were named Newton County School System's 2020 CTAE (Career, Technical and Agricultural Education) Students of the Year! The student winners were announced during the Newton County School System's 2020 CTAE Student of the Year Awards Ceremony at Porter Performing Arts Center on February 27, 2020. Each year the school system celebrates National CTAE Month by recognizing CTAE Students of the Year from each of the district's middle and high school programs.



Each year the school system celebrates National CTAE Month by recognizing CTAE Students of the Year from each of the district's middle and high school programs.

CTAE pathways recognized at the annual event included Business Education, Engineering/Technology, Family and Consumer Science, Agriculture Education, CTI, Education, Engineering, Business Education/IT, Health Science/Bio Tech, Marketing, Nutrition/Food, ROTC, Skilled Trades, Video/Graphics, and Work-Based Learning.

Middle school district winners included:

- Agriculture Education Award: Sam Kennon, Indian Creek Middle School
- Business Education Award: Anna Underwood, Indian Creek Middle School
- Engineering/Technology Award: Mason Kinard, Cousins Middle School
- Family and Consumer Science Award: J'Havel Allen, Veterans Memorial Middle School

At the high school level, district winners included:

- Agriculture Education Award: Jacob Hammond, Eastside High School
- Business Education/IT Award: Natalia Sanchez, Newton College & Career Academy
- CTI Award: Ezareona Sheppard, Alcovy High School
- Education Award: Ameericle Sanders, Newton College & Career Academy
- Engineering Award: Dasia Hill, Newton High School
- Health Science/Bio Tech Award: Taneil Gordon, Newton College & Career Academy
- Marketing Award: Nykirra Norman, Newton College & Career Academy
- Nutrition/Food Award: Cameron White, Alcovy High School
- ROTC Award: Kijana Knights, Newton High School
- Skilled Trades Award: Phillip Andrew Brown, Newton College & Career Academy
- Video/Graphics Award: Laura-Jean Dole, Newton College & Career Academy
- Work-Based Learning Award: James Wilson, Newton College & Career Academy

In addition to recognizing CTAE students, the district also presented the 2020 Work-Based Learning Employer of the Year Award to Chick-fil-A.

2019 - 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

Eastside Counselor Wins Big on Television Game Show

Imagine winning over \$100,000 on a television game show and having to keep it a secret for over a year. That's exactly what Eastside High School guidance counselor, Jahmar Tate and his uncle, Michael Oglesby were faced with. The dynamic duo teamed up to win \$115,091 on NBC's "The Wall" in September 2018 but could not share the fantastic news with anyone until the episode aired on Monday, June 8, 2020.

Tate said he planned to use his game show proceeds to establish a scholarship fund in recognition of his mother, who was an educator for 37 years, to provide opportunities for at-risk students to further their education.



BOE Breaks Ground for New Eastside High

Newton County school board members broke ground on the site for the new high school to replace the current Eastside High School. The property is located on State Route 142 near the intersection of U.S. Highway 278.

RA-LIN and Associates of Carrollton, Georgia is building the new school, which is scheduled to open August 2022. Upon its completion, the school will accommodate 1,650 students.

In addition to central office administrators and current school board members Shakila Henderson-Baker, Abigail Coggin, and Trey Bailey—Mr. Eddie Johnson was unable to attend—the family of late school board member, Almond Turner was also invited to attend the groundbreaking ceremony.



NCSS Human Resources Department Wins State Award of Excellence

The Georgia Association of School Personnel Administrators awarded the Newton County School System (NCSS) Human Resources Department a Gold Award of Excellence for “Best in Class” in the area of Retention Practices/Recognition. According to NCSS Human Resources Director, Nyree Sanders, the award was the culmination of the department’s focused efforts to improve the retention rate of high-performing personnel as outlined in the school district’s 2018-2023 Strategic Plan.



Meghen Bassel Named South Metro District Library Media Specialist of the Year

South Salem Elementary School media specialist Meghen Bassel was named both the Newton County School System’s 2020 Media Specialist of the Year and also the South Metro District Library Media Specialist of the Year! The Georgia Library Media Specialist of the Year Award program recognizes K-12 library media specialists with dynamic, innovative programs and whose instructional collaborations foster student engagement and achievement. As a region level winner, Ms. Bassel received a \$100 prize and plaque commemorating her achievement.



Dr. Adam Phyll Named One of Thirty Top K-12 IT Influencers Worth a Follow in 2020

Newton County School System’s Director of Technology and Media Services, Dr. Adam Phyll, was named one of the top 30 K-12 IT influencers worth a follow in 2020 according to EdTEch Magazine: Focus on K-12. The magazine compiled a list of the top 30 influencers who are using social and digital media to inform, engage and even entertain those in the education space from IT leaders, bloggers, podcasters and social media personalities around the nation.



2019 - 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

NCSS Students Win Awards at Georgia Regional Braille Challenge

Three visually impaired NCSS students brought home awards from the Georgia Regional Braille Challenge held at the Georgia Academy for the Blind.

Lucas Montalvo, a fifth grade student at South Salem Elementary School tied for third in the sophomore category and Javon Harris, an eighth-grade student at Liberty Middle School placed third in the junior varsity category. Chad McDaniel, a seventh-grader at Indian Creek Middle School tied for third place in the apprentice category. Keagan Lyons, a second-grader from Livingston Elementary School competed in her very first Braille Challenge and did a fantastic job in the rookies category.



NCSS Graduate Wins 2020 Prudential Spirit of Community Award

Newton High School Class of 2020 graduate, Kayla Wyatt, believes in making a difference by helping others—and giving back to her community means the world to her. She actually amassed over 300 hours of community service during her school career. Wyatt's work ethic and good deeds did not go unnoticed. She was awarded the Certificate of Excellence by judges in The 2020 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards. According to the award guidelines, this means her volunteer activities were judged to be among the top ten percent of all those considered in the state this year. In addition to the Certificate of Excellence, Wyatt qualified for the prestigious President's Volunteer Service Award.



The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program is the United States' largest youth recognition program based exclusively on volunteer community service. Created in 1995 by Prudential and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), the program honors middle level and high school students for outstanding service to others at the local, state and national level.

Ready to Serve

Three high school seniors from the Class of 2020—Corinne Hanson, Israel Dixon, and Kijana Knights—were accepted to attend prestigious military academies. Eastside High School and NCCA Stem Institute senior Hanson headed west to the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado while Dixon, a senior at the Academy of Liberal Arts at Newton High School (ALANHS) and Knights, a senior at Newton High School and the NCCA Stem Institute moved north to the United States Military Academy at West Point in New York. Upon graduation, the students will begin exciting careers as officers in the United States military!



NCSS Students Serve on Georgia School Superintendent's Student Advisory Council

Newton County School System (NCSS) students had a voice at the state level as two NCSS students were selected to serve on Georgia School Superintendent Richard Woods' Student Advisory Council. Over 1,000 students applied to serve on the council; only 130 were ultimately selected to serve. Indian Creek Middle School eighth-grader Charleigh Adams and Newton High School and NCCA Stem Institute junior, James Wilson were two of 130 chosen to participate in the Advisory Council. As a member of the Student Advisory Council, Adams and Wilson met with Superintendent Woods throughout the school year to discuss the impact of state policies in the classroom.



Eastside Students Perform in 2020 All-State Band

Eastside High School students Duncan Jourdan and Joseph Bickel were selected via statewide audition process to perform in the prestigious 2020 Georgia All-State Band. This marked the third time Duncan was selected for All-State Band; Bickel achieved the honor five consecutive years dating back to his middle school days.



2020 - 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

Clements Middle School Teacher Named 2021 Griffin RESA Regional TAPP Teacher of the Year

Clements Middle School teacher, Ms. Tomeka Daugherty, was named the Griffin Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) 2021 Regional TAPP Teacher of the Year! Daugherty teaches eighth-grade mathematics at the school.

"Being named TAPP Teacher of the Year is beyond amazing," said Daugherty. "It's indescribable, but at the same time I am so overjoyed and thankful. To be recognized for your hard work and efforts really speaks volumes. For me it provides a level of validation of knowing that my decision to leave State Farm Insurance, what I was so familiar doing day in and day out to embark on a new path of uncertainties of becoming a teacher. In the midst of a pandemic and everyday challenges, I am just proud to show my children that it is possible. I am grateful for being chosen as TAPP Teacher of the Year, representing NCSS and most of all Clements Middle School!"



RISE Academy Teacher Named 2020 Georgia Alternative Education Association Teacher of the Year

RISE Academy Teacher, Kelly Byrd, was named the 2020 Georgia Alternative Education Teacher of the Year. Georgia Association for Alternative Education, Vice-President and Awards Chairman, Keith Hose, announced the award during the 2020 Georgia Alternative Education Association conference.

Byrd is a graduate of Jackson State University in Jackson, Mississippi where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics. She earned a Master's from Marygrove College in Detroit, Michigan and added a Specialist in Curriculum and Instruction. Her teaching career spans 15 years with the majority of her career with Newton County Schools. Prior to joining the RISE staff, she taught ninth grade math at Alcovy High School.

Byrd is married to Jermaine Byrd. They reside in Covington with their two children, Jacob and Jada-Kendall.



BOE Appoints Anderson Bailey to Fill Unexpired Term of Almond Turner

By unanimous vote, the Newton County Board of Education appointed Mr. Anderson Bailey to fill the unexpired term of the late, District 4 representative, Almond Turner. Mr. Anderson Bailey then ran for the open seat on the Board of Education and won an August runoff for the Democratic primary. He ran unopposed in the November election and was elected to serve his own term of office.



“While we miss Mr. Turner tremendously, we know he would want us to move forward to assure the residents of Newton County’s District 4 are represented on our board,” said Superintendent Samantha Fuhrey.

Anderson Bailey is a native of Covington, Georgia. He graduated from Newton County Comprehensive High School in 1979. After his graduation, Mr. Bailey entered the U.S Army, where he served three years of active duty. In 1982, Mr. Bailey then enlisted in the Georgia Army National Guard and served for 20 years. During his time in the military, Mr. Bailey served as Cavalry Scout, Administration Clerk, and Communication Chief/Platoon Sergeant before retiring at the rank of staff sergeant.

Mr. Bailey has been employed by the City of Covington for 14 years. He currently serves as a city meter reader. Mr. Bailey attended the University of Georgia Carl Vinson Institute of Government and completed his certificate. He has served as the Minister of Music for Murray CME Church for the past six years. In addition, Mr. Bailey has been actively involved with the Newton County Recreation Department as a coach, referee, and umpire; he has also served 20-plus years as a high school official.

Mr. Bailey is married to Mrs. Angela Bailey; they have three children—Courtney, Yasmine, and Anderico—and two grandchildren—Jaylin Gunn and Parker Bailey.

Mr. Bailey stated he was excited to join the Newton County Board of Education to work “to provide the very best quality of education for all children throughout Newton County.”

NCTS Students Win at Georgia Science and Engineering Fair

Two Newton County Theme School (NCTS) students—Katheryn Wilber and Alexander Ehret—brought home awards from the 2021 Georgia Science and Engineering Fair. Katheryn, a 7th-grader at NCTS, earned both the second place award and the prestigious Naval Science Award for her project, “Which Mask Works Best?” Her project examined the spread of staphylococcus epidermidis during a simulated cough or sneeze to determine which mask works best at stopping the transfer of bacteria. Sixth-grade NCTS student, Alexander, earned an Honorable Mention for his research project to determine, “How Acid Rain Affects Plant Growth.”



2020 - 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

Eastside FFA Named Horticulture Chapter of the Year

Eastside High School FFA program was named the 2020 Horticulture Chapter of the Year by Georgia North Region Agriculture Education. According to Eastside FFA advisor, Dr. Catrina Pollard, the award is based on student results from agriculture competitions during the 2019-2020 school year. Eastside FFA students competed in contests such as floral design, nursery landscape, and floriculture throughout the school year. They earn points for the program based on their results. In addition to contests, students have to complete proficiency applications. The school had two state winners so that earned the program numerous points towards the award designation.



Toneicya Parrott Named 2021 NCSS Media Specialist of the Year

Ms. Toneicya Parrott was named Newton County School System's (NCSS) 2021 Media Specialist of the Year! The Live Oak Elementary School media specialist represented NCSS in the South Metro Regional Library Media Specialist of the Year competition. Newton County Theme School media specialist Ali Geigerman and Flint Hill Elementary School media specialist, Laura McNulty, were finalists for the district award.

"I am truly humbled by the opportunity to be recognized as the 2021 NCSS Media Specialist of the Year," said Parrott. "In my seven years as an NCSS educator, I have worked with an incredible group of administrators, teachers, and most importantly, served an extraordinary group of students. I am honored to be recognized at such a magnitude. My goal is to continue to empower students to become lifelong readers, critical thinkers, and responsible digital citizens."



Eastside Students Participate in Topping Out of New School

The new Eastside High School building is quickly becoming a reality for students and staff as construction is well underway at the new facility. On Wednesday, March 10, 2021, representatives of both Eastside High School's student government and varsity football team were on hand to witness the "topping out" or installation of the final beam of the facility. They were joined by Newton County School Superintendent (NCSS) Samantha Fuhrey, school principal Jeff Cher, and members of the NCSS Operations Division. The last beam was actually taken to Eastside High School beforehand so students and staff could sign it prior to its placement. The beam completed the steel frame of the building. The new Eastside High School is expected to open for operation in time for the 2022-2023 school year.



NCSS Celebrates School Board Attorney's 45 Years of Service

School board members and superintendents both present and past joined other special guests at a reception honoring Newton County School Board attorney Kent Campbell, who retired with over 45 years of service to the school district.

Newton County School System Superintendent Samantha Fuhrey presented Mr. Campbell with a special plaque to commemorate his service to Newton County Schools and noted that he was, in fact, the longest serving employee of the district.

Upon accepting his plaque, Mr. Campbell thanked the assembled group and reminisced on his 45-years with the district, noting that it wasn't always an easy job, but it was one that he truly enjoyed.

"Mr. Campbell has left an indelible mark on the school system that will continue to serve our students, families, and community well into the foreseeable future," said Fuhrey. "I am grateful for his service, support, and sound guidance over his more than 45-year career with our school system, and I wish him nothing but the best in his much-deserved retirement."



2020 - 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

NCSS 150th Anniversary Celebration

Newton County School System (NCSS) students and employees celebrated the 150th anniversary of the founding of the district throughout the week of February 1, 2021. Special videos, proclamations, and artwork were featured throughout the week on NCSS social media to spread the news that 150 years ago—on February 7, 1871 to be exact—the district was officially founded.



To commemorate the occasion, members of the Newton County Board of Education adopted a resolution celebrating the school system's 150th anniversary. Proclamations from the county government and some municipalities were also received in anticipation of the anniversary of the founding.

NCCA Agriculture Program Awarded \$99K Grant from US Department of Agriculture

Newton College and Career Academy Agricultural Education Program, on behalf of Newton County Schools, was one of six organizations in Georgia to be awarded a United States Department of Agriculture Farm to School Grant for the 2020-2021 school year in the amount of \$99,974. This grant will meet the needs of the "Farming IN School: Agriculture for ALL" initiative created by agricultural education instructors, Cecily Gunter and Marcus Pollard.



This initiative is a collaborative effort led by the Newton College and Career Academy Agricultural Education Department. Through this initiative, students enrolled in all schools located in Newton County will benefit by the creation of Blue and Gold Acres, a fully functional farm located on the campus of Newton College and Career Academy.

Blue and Gold Acres would increase agricultural awareness to students by providing hands-on learning opportunities centered around Agricultural Production, Biosecurity, STEM, and Agricultural Advocacy. By utilizing community partners and resources, Blue and Gold Acres will be able to provide students a comprehensive and diverse look at farming and growing food.

Liberty Middle School Student Saves Friend's Life at School

It was just a typical day at Liberty Middle School. Sixth-grader, Christian Swope, was eating his lunch in his class when he sensed a classmate was in danger. He instantly recognized the signs that his friend was choking and couldn't breathe. Christian ran to his aid, performed the Heimlich maneuver, and successfully dislodged the food from his friend's throat before a tragedy could occur. He is only 12 years old.

"My friend was choking and couldn't breathe," said Christian. "My Auntie is a nurse and she taught us how to do CPR and the Heimlich so I wasn't scared because I knew what to do."

After the frightening experience, when they determined his friend would be okay, Christian said his classmates, "called me a lifesaver and they clapped for me."

When asked how he felt Christian said, "I feel good. And I feel proud of myself. When I got home my auntie called me a hero."

When Newton County School System Superintendent Samantha Fuhrey learned of Christian's actions she made it a point to meet him. She paid a surprise visit to Liberty Middle School shortly afterwards to meet Christian and present him with her Superintendent's Coin of Distinction.

"This coin is reserved for the individuals who go above and beyond because it's the right thing to do; they are selfless and demonstrate their commitment to others through their actions and words," Fuhrey explained to Christian as she presented him the coin. "Very few people receive the Superintendent's Coin of Distinction, but you get it because you're a hero. You saved someone's life when you performed the Heimlich maneuver in the classroom and that is most definitely worthy of the Superintendent's Coin of Distinction."



NCCA STEM Student Earns Full-Ride Stamps Scholarship

Ester Adewumi has one less thing to worry about. Her college education will now be fully funded as the Newton College & Career Academy (NCCA) and Alcovy High School student earned a full-ride Stamps Scholarship to attend Mercer University. The Stamps Scholarship program will pay both full tuition and fees plus room and board, and also provide Ester with a free Apple iPad. In addition, the Stamps Scholar benefit includes up to a \$16,000 enrichment stipend over four years to support study abroad, undergraduate research, unpaid internships, and conference fees and travel.



2020 - 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.-Phi Omicron Chapter Named NCSS 2021 Partner of the Year

Newton County School System (NCSS) and the Newton County Chamber of Commerce announced that Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.-Phi Omicron Zeta Chapter, was the 2021 NCSS Partner in Education of the Year! NCSS School Superintendent Samantha Fuhrey made the announcement at a special reception on Monday, June 21, 2021, at the Newton County Board of Education.

“We’ve seen many partners—mainly small businesses—have to close their doors either temporarily or permanently this year, and this has affected our schools,” said Fuhrey. “Fortunately, we saw an increase in assistance from local organizations such as yours who stepped to the plate and went above and beyond to assist our schools.”

In her partner of the year nomination letter, Newton High School principal Dr. Shannon Buff noted Zeta Phi Beta Sorority’s “unwavering partnership” and how their continuing support boosted the morale of both students and staff. In fact, Dr. Buff stated that the women of Zeta Phi Beta “had become part of the Newton High School family” through their various service projects.



“You began the school year by providing hot meals after practice and games to various athletic teams in partnership with Emanuel Community Church,” said Fuhrey. “You also created hygiene bags for students. In September, you served Newton High School faculty and staff breakfast and provided goodie bags for all teachers, which included PPE, snacks, and gift cards. Needless to say, the staff were both surprised and appreciative.”

In October, the organization invited students and parents to attend a college essay-writing workshop sponsored by the chapter. During the event, students were able to prepare their college essays for submission to various colleges and scholarship organizations.

“This was especially important to our students as so many were attending school virtually and felt overwhelmed by the college application process,” Buff explained.

The group’s support did not stop there. This spring, the chapter continued their good work by replenishing the hygiene bags for Newton High School students. They also hosted two different teacher appreciation events to recognize the faculty and staff for their hard work. And finally, they ended the school year by providing a scholarship to a very deserving senior on Newton High School Honors Night.

“Your unwavering support for all of Newton High School’s stakeholders has been nothing short of amazing,” said Buff. “You stood in the gap at a time when other organizations were unable to provide the normal level of support. When Newton High School needed assistance, you were there to provide whatever we asked.”

“I can’t thank you enough for your organization stepping up in a time when a lot of us didn’t know what to do,” said Debbie Harper, President of the Newton County Chamber of Commerce. “When Dr. Buff reached out to you, you knew exactly what to do. I appreciate that. The fact that I am a graduate of Newton High School makes it even more special. Your support for this school is truly amazing.”

Upon accepting the award, Ms. Katheryn Williams, president of the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.—Phi Omicron Zeta Chapter, addressed the assembled group and stated, “Dr. Buff, my sorority has four principles—scholarship, service, sisterhood and finer womanhood. While scholarship is the first principal...we pride ourselves on world-class service. Please know that we do this not for recognition; we do this because it is the right thing to do. My mom and dad always told me ‘To those who much is given, much is expected.’ And so, we are very blessed, and we are thankful that you allow us to use your school to help us facilitate the service that is so important to us.”

Williams noted that the organization would continue their partnership with Newton High School and promised even greater things to come.

2020 - 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

Eastside/NCCASTEM Institute Student Awarded Mercer University's Bessie Willingham Tift Scholarship

The future looks bright—and debt-free—for Abigail Sugg, a student at Eastside High School and the Newton College & Career Academy STEM Institute. The high school senior was awarded the Bessie Willingham Scholarship from Mercer University—a full ride scholarship that includes not only tuition but also room and board. According to Christina Huseman, Coordinator of the Tift Program at Mercer University, that equates to approximately \$250,000 over the course of four years. She added that Abigail was chosen the sole winner of the Bessie Willingham Scholarship out of 198 applications for the prestigious award.



Two Eastside High School Students Named Governor's Honors Finalists

Two Eastside High School students—Elizabeth Johnson and Matthew Walker, were selected as finalists to participate in the 2021 Governor's Honors Program (GHP). Johnson studied World Languages, specifically Latin while Walker participated in the Communicative Arts program. Brie Worton, a junior at Eastside High School and the Newton College & Career Academy, and Noah Geiger, a sophomore at Newton High School and the NCCA STEM Institute, were each named alternates for the 2021 program.



Eastside Senior Awarded \$200,000 QuestBridge Full-Ride Scholarship

The incredible burden of paying for college was lifted for Ziana Benjiman. The Eastside High School senior was awarded a four-year, all expenses paid QuestBridge National College Match Scholarship. Out of 18,500 applicants, Benjiman was one of only 1,464 to receive a College Match Scholarship; she will attend Grinnell College in Grinnell, Iowa, currently the number 13 ranked liberal arts college in the country. According to a spokesperson for QuestBridge, the scholarship, worth over \$200,000, includes full tuition, fees, room and board, books and supplies, and travel expenses.



Porterdale Elementary School Named National Beta School of Distinction

Porterdale Elementary School was named a 2019-2020 National School of Distinction. This award is an honor for Beta Clubs striving towards academic achievement, exemplary character, demonstrated leadership and service to others. With an ongoing quest to instill these qualities in more students, the National Beta School of Distinction Award is designed to award those schools that show an increase in membership for the current school year.

“We are excited and proud to be named a National Beta School of Distinction,” said Clydia Newell, principal of Porterdale Elementary School. “The Beta Club has provided our students with leadership development activities and service projects that will prepare them for the future. Our students and sponsors have worked hard this year, and we are proud to continue to offer the opportunities afforded by the Beta Club for our students at Porterdale Elementary.”



Shakila Henderson-Baker Named President Elect of Georgia School Board Association's Board of Directors

Newton County School Board of Education member, Mrs. Shakila Henderson-Baker, district three, was installed as the president-elect of the Georgia School Board Association Board of Directors. Mrs. Henderson-Baker previously served as vice president of the GSBA Board of Directors. Mrs. Henderson-Baker, as president elect, will assume the president's position the following year. She would perform the duties of president of the Board in the absence of the president, to include presiding over meetings of the Delegate Assembly, the executive committee and the board of directors.



Mrs. Henderson-Baker and other officers of the GSBA Board of Directors have numerous responsibilities, including governing the affairs of the association, adopting policies for the governing of the association, transacting the business of the association, employing the executive director, and adopting standing legislative policies and position statements.

Mrs. Henderson-Baker is a native of Covington, Georgia and she began her first term on the Newton County Board of Education in January 2011. She graduated Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science from Fort Valley State University and holds a Master of Science Degree in Psychology and Counseling from Troy University. Mrs. Henderson-Baker is currently finishing up courses at Piedmont College in Athens to obtain her certification in Early Childhood Education. She works as a Mental Health Clinician and Behavioral Specialist. In addition, she is an active volunteer in the community as an after-school tutor and one of the coordinators for The Young Legends teen-mentoring group. She is also a charter and current member of the Chi Tau Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., which serves both Newton and Rockdale Counties.



NEWTON COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

www.newtoncountyschools.org

2109 Newton Drive NE
Covington, Georgia 30014

