

STUDENT SERVICES REPORT

:: A Hands on Learning Experience for Students ::

A unique partnership was created between the Mossy Creek Middle School seventh grade FCCLA class and the school's lunchroom staff. The students from the class were given the opportunity to assist with bagging the meals for virtual learners. Mrs. Sherry Sheppard, MCMS FCCLA teacher, commented, "Not only did this fit in beautifully with the FACS curriculum, but it also provided a plethora of FCCLA learning opportunities for my students!" This experience supports the FCCLA curriculum and is the embodiment of learning employability skills, leadership traits, responsibility, dependability, communication skills, and teamwork. Mrs. Shella McGhee, MCMS School Nutrition Manager, states, "This has been a great opportunity for students, and staff alike!"

Below are several comments from students who participated in this partnership:

"You need to do a lot of calculations to make sure you have an even amount that matches the manager's directions."

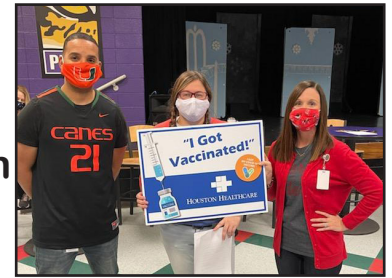
"We learned how hard the lunch ladies worked, especially since Covid hit."

"Everybody needs to work together to make things faster; I didn't like teamwork before this experience."





COVID-19 Vaccine Offered to Educators in Partnership with Houston Healthcare and Houston County Health Department



In February, a COVID-19 vaccination survey was sent to the district's 4,300 full-time employees; of the 76% who responded, 61% wanted the vaccine. Based on the survey results, the Houston County School District partnered with Houston Healthcare and the Houston County Health Department to give a COVID-19 vaccine to any district employee who desired the vaccination. Teachers and support staff received the vaccine at their schools through Houston Healthcare. Employees based at non-school sites were given appointments during the workday for the Houston County Health Department's drive-thru vaccination center.

School-based clinics began March 9, 2021, with Houston Healthcare offering vaccinations at 11 schools the first week. By March 24, Houston Healthcare had visited all 39 campuses and distributed over 1,500 vaccines. Employees who were scheduled through the Health Department, began receiving their vaccines on March 8. Superintendent of Schools Dr. Mark Scott is pictured to the right with Chris Sikes, the County Nurse Manager for the Houston County Health Department, at the drive-through center.



"I am very thankful for the partnership the school district has with both the Houston County Health Department and Houston Healthcare to provide vaccines for our teachers and staff," said Dr. Scott. "Their employees have been on the front-line for the past year; however, their commitment to the citizens of Houston County has not wavered. They have gone above and beyond to make the vaccine administration process as easy as possible for our school district employees. I extend a sincere and heartfelt thank you to Chris Sikes with the Houston County Health Department and Charles Briscoe with Houston Healthcare."

The goal was to administer as many vaccines as possible by March 26, the Friday before spring break. Approximately 2,400 school district employees received a COVID-19 vaccine through the partnerships with the Houston County Health Department and Houston Healthcare. In addition, 365 district employees ages 65 and older had an opportunity to get the vaccine in January through the Health Department.

As pictured below, Dr. Scott visited the first COVID-19 clinic at Warner Robins High School on March 9th to personally thank the Houston Healthcare vaccination team for bringing the vaccine to educators.



Social Workers are Essential



March was Social Worker Appreciation Month. The theme for this year's celebration was "Social Workers are Essential." Houston County celebrated School Social worker week March 8-12.

Social Workers collaborate with families to help meet their basic needs and reduce barriers that keep students from success in school. Our staff helps families navigate the resources available to them. Through a partnership with Houston County Family Connection, Social Workers are able to provide families with updated information on food pantries, medical services, digital learning assistance, and unemployment resources.

One of the most important tasks of social workers is truancy prevention. Students missing five or more unexcused days from school are considered truant. Social workers conduct home visits to locate students who are truant, educate parents and students on laws regarding attendance, collaborate with the judges at magistrate and juvenile courts, work with community agencies, and write grants for the department. Several schools across the district have campaigns to increase attendance with assistance from social workers. The goal is to ensure that every child has an equal opportunity to reach his or her potential.

"Live Life to Its Fullest"

April is Occupational Therapy Month. Occupational therapy aids individuals, across their lifespan, in learning to perform necessary tasks through the therapeutic use of daily activities (occupations). School based occupational therapists support a student's ability to participate in desired daily school activities or "occupations." This includes academic support and non-academic support such as social skills, behavior management, recess, self-help skills, prevocational/vocational participation, transportation and lunch.

In the school setting, occupational therapy is provided if the student needs skilled therapy to function in the educational setting. Occupational therapists collaborate within the educational team to support student success. Some intervention strategies may include:

- Maintaining or improving functional joint motion skills needed during the school day such as putting on a coat or reaching for items in a locker.
- Development of hand skills sufficient for functional writing, keyboarding, cutting and buttoning.
- Fabrication of splints to enable the student to perform education tasks such as writing, eating, using a keyboard, or stabilization of work material.
- Modification of seating or positioning on the school bus.
- Promotion of safety within the school environment such as modifications of playground equipment/areas.

Houston County Board of Education's Occupational Therapy Department team members include: Leigh Ann Allen, Ansley Bailey, Danetta Hardy, Lauren Hatcher, Heather Mattox, Stephanie McCormick, Keshia Ragin, Amy Velazquez, and Lynn Whittle. The department currently serves over 300 students across 38 schools.



School Nutrition Highlight

Houston County School Nutrition was recently featured in a USDA update – twice! Our team is grateful to have wonderful lunchroom personnel who are committed to serving our families during this difficult time!



United States Department of Agriculture



March 3, 2021

COVID-19 School Meal Spotlights

Under challenging circumstances during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, school communities have worked tirelessly to ensure children have access to meals. Below are some of their inspirational stories. Share your school/school district story with us [@TeamNutrition](#).



The Houston County School Nutrition Program served more than 1 million meals to children between March and June 2020.

Coupeville School District Continues Cooking from Scratch



As of February 2021, Coupeville School District in Washington state includes foods made from scratch in each of the 750 weekly meal boxes they distribute through the Summer Food Service Program. At least 85 percent of meals have something homemade, and they use locally procured foods whenever possible. [Read more...](#)

Houston County Schools Provides Meals and Smiles



The Houston County School Nutrition Program in Georgia has adapted its school meals program to provide meals for virtual and in-person students. In addition to providing nutritious meals, staff and families have demonstrated their support of each other during creative drive-thru events. [Read more...](#)

Exceptional Children's Week

The Ellen Maltais Chapter of the Council for Exceptional Children celebrated Exceptional Children's Week during the week of March 8th. This year's theme was "Virtually Unstoppable!" Social media posts were made twice a day to the chapter's Facebook and Twitter pages, celebrating individuals with exceptionalities and highlighting ways to support various disabilities. Our Exceptional Children's Week program was held virtually this year. Our officers exercised creativity to make this event possible. Middle Georgia GLRS and West GA GLRS supported our event by helping to provide plaques, invitations and programs. The organizations also assisted with creating the virtual program (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_bzVOseLRj0). Electronic nomination forms were sent to all special education teachers, special education paraprofessionals, building administrators and Student Services coordinators. The officers of the chapter used a rubric to rate each form submitted. The nominations with the highest total points were deemed the winners. All nominees received certificates of recognition. Student nominees received a coupon for a snack from their school's lunchroom. The program link was shared with our teachers, classes, and with the community via YouTube. Several of the schools had viewing parties! Building administrators presented awards to their school winners and submitted pictures and videos of the award presentation for our virtual program. Schools across the county celebrated Exceptional Children's Week by highlighting students.



Feagin Mill Middle School



Langston Road Elementary

SHARKS FOOTBALL



The Houston County Sharks Varsity football team opened their season with a win against the Gwinnett Heat. The Sharks football team is under the leadership of seniors, Miranda Lawhorn (PHS) and Annabelle Putnam (PHS). The Heat and Sharks went head to head in a defensive battle that only allowed one touchdown and several field goals on the day. Dalton Crosby (HMS) and Langley Yoh (HCHS) successfully shut down the Heat's quarterback causing several rushed passes and numerous sacks. Dylan Thompson (VHS), Joseph Hall (VHS), Leeza Brown (NHS), Adonis Brown (NHS), and Germir Gordon (MCMS) contributed offensively with receptions. Dylan Thompson also had an interception. The Sharks rolled away with a 22-18 victory. The Sharks next home game and Senior Recognition day will be April 17th. Kickoff will be at 11:00 am and 1:00 pm.

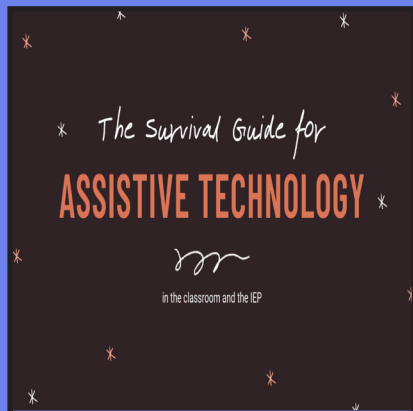


TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Our teacher spotlight shines on Athena Singletary. She is an Interrelated Teacher at Mossy Creek Middle School. This is her 11th year teaching. Mrs. Singletary attended Wesleyan College where she earned her degree in Early Childhood Education. At the time of graduation, she did not realize special education was her calling. Growing up, her family moved several times due to her dad's job. With so many transitions, her teachers became some of her closest friends and provided stability in her life. She realized at a young age what a positive impact a good teacher could have on students. Mrs. Singletary decided she wanted to be an encourager for students, just as her teachers were for her. At the beginning of her career, she found herself identifying with kids "in the gap". She desired to advocate for them and to teach them how to advocate for themselves. When asked what she finds most challenging about teaching, she shared that for her, the greatest barrier in teaching is encouraging struggling learners to believe in their own abilities to learn, grow, and achieve personal goals. She and her husband Jeremy have two boys, Bryce and Brady. Her husband is the pastor of Gateway Fellowship in Macon. During their free time, they enjoy spending time at church and playing baseball. They love to go to Dollywood and Pigeon Forge during holiday breaks. Thank you Mrs. Singletary for the work you are doing to empower our students and make them feel known, loved, and valued!



Professional Learning



During the March New Special Education Teacher Induction training, twenty teachers were trained how to effectively refer, acquire, and implement assistive technology (AT) for their students. The training included a discussion on when to consider AT for students, which students require AT to access the curriculum, options available for students, and how to get assistance from the Assistive Technology team. Teachers also learned where to include AT in a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Participants had the opportunity to ask questions from the Student Services Technology Team experts, Misty Salter and Jennifer Thomas.

THE RE-EVALUATION PROCESS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Kristen Peaster, School Psychologist, and Monica Smith, Coordinator of Student Services, provided professional learning to twenty-four teachers in our February Special Education New Teacher Induction session. The Re-evaluation process was presented, along with eligibility determination procedures. They specifically focused on increasing understanding of the twelve areas of Special Education Eligibility. Teachers also received resources about the various assessments used in Houston County when conducting a psycho-educational evaluation.



Georgia Alternate Assessment 2.0

On March 3rd, the Assessment and Accountability and Student Services departments trained over 75 teachers and each API on administering the Georgia Alternate Assessment 2.0. The GAA 2.0 is designed to ensure that students with significant cognitive disabilities are provided access to the state academic content standards and given the opportunity to demonstrate achievement of the knowledge, concepts, and skills inherent in the standards. The individually administered assessment provides meaningful information about classroom instruction and helps identify students' areas of strength and improvement through a standardized test. The GAA 2.0 testing window is open from March 8th through April 30th, 2021.