



Steve Barnette  
Superintendent

*Engage. Inspire. Prepare.*

## 2021-2022 School Year Wrap Up and Celebration!

May 27, 2022

Dear Paulding County School District Community,

This weekend more than 2,000 Paulding County seniors will walk across stages at their respective high schools, take their diplomas and then move on to the next stage of their young lives. For many that will mean attending colleges or universities, community or technical colleges, the military, or perhaps, going straight into the work force. But regardless of where a particular graduate may spend the next part of his or her life, I am confident the Class of 2022 will be prepared for success wherever they decide to go.

Since being named school superintendent in 2021, I have had a first-hand opportunity to learn even more about what makes our school system great. In the Paulding County School District our vision is to **Engage, Inspire, and Prepare** all students. We believe that when students are engaged, inspired, and prepared they are more likely to attain success not just today, but for the rest of their lives. We have been fortunate to see students at all grade levels preparing for success throughout this school year, just like the graduates you see here who each represent all-around academic and extra-curricular excellence at our Paulding County high schools.



**Outstanding Representatives of the Class of 2022**

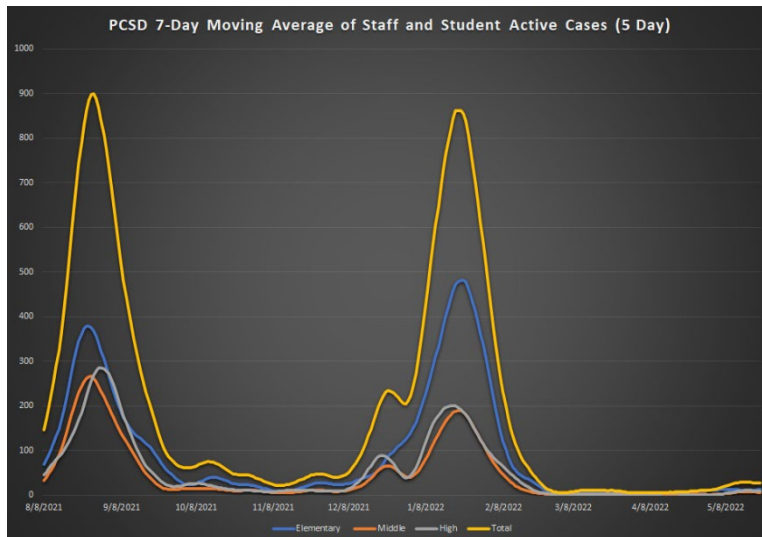
And what a great school year it has been for PCSD! Our Paulding County teaching staff, administrators, and support staff are second-to-none. The work they do with students on a daily basis is truly phenomenal. Before this year has passed us by and we begin preparing for the Class of 2023, I want to remind you of a few highlights from the 2021-2022 school year – testaments to the outstanding students and staff we have in the Paulding County School District. We are truly blessed to be part of a community that cares so much about the success of its students.



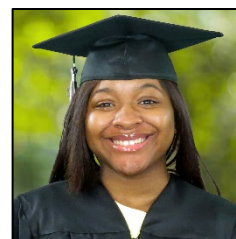
### THE CHALLENGE OF THE PANDEMIC:

One of the biggest challenges we faced heading into the 2021-2022 school year was the continued impact of COVID-19.

Our color-coded Operations Plan gave us the flexibility to adapt as conditions changed. That proved to be a good thing because, as you can see, conditions changed radically over the course of the year. The chart at right shows the two spikes caused by the Delta variation near the start of the school year, and by the Omicron variation that arrived in January. The spikes each reflect nearly 900 confirmed cases district-wide. I want to extend a heartfelt “Thank You!” to our staff, our parents, our students, and our entire community for the support and patience you showed over the course of the school year. The constant monitoring and reporting (which meant almost daily COVID-19 notification letters at some schools), along with the quarantining and other mitigations, were a significant operational burden, but your support through this uncertain time helped us meet the challenge by minimizing the spread and keeping our students and staff as healthy as possible. It is a remarkable achievement that we were able to complete the last three months of the school year in Green Operational Status.



In 2020, PCSD was one of the first school districts nationwide to offer parents and students a choice of in-person or virtual instruction, and because COVID-19 continued to be a factor heading into the 2021-2022 school year we decided to make our K-12 PCSD Virtual Academy a permanent option. PVA enrolled nearly 2,000 students who took their learning online for this school year. Cydni Tyler-Lumar is one of those students.



**Cydni Tyler-Lumar**

On Saturday, Cydni will graduate from her home school, Hiram High School. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, she enrolled in the Paulding Virtual Academy and continued to learn virtually this school year. She found that online instruction better suited her learning style.

“The way I learn, it was very easy to adjust to it,” she said. “My teachers were always available to help me, and with virtual I always have my own space.” Her online courses included “Introduction to Law” and “Forensic Science,” and she still found time to serve as Secretary of the Hiram High School Student Government. She will attend Georgia Southern University this fall where she hopes to study criminal justice. Cydni is just one excellent example of how virtual instruction is here to stay and can help some students thrive.

### STRATEGIC PLAN:

In the fall of 2021, the school district began the process of developing a five-year strategic plan to guide all operations. The plan will have five Strategic Goal Areas:

- Growth and Success for All
- Communications and Engagement
- Attracting, Developing and Retaining Quality, Diverse Professionals



- Operational and Organizational Excellence
- Innovative Practices and Resource Implementation

Under each Goal Area are Performance Objectives that will guide administration and schools in delivering a comprehensive education that Engages, Inspires and Prepares all students and helps ensure success. The Goal Areas, Performance Objectives, and the specific initiatives that form the Strategic Plan were developed over the last nine months through a process that involved significant stakeholder input. A stakeholder survey last September generated nearly 2,000 responses, and another 130 stakeholders participated in a strategic plan work session at P.B. Ritch Middle School.



A Strategic Planning Team was developed that included a wide range of participants including parents, teachers, county commissioners, administrators, Partners in Education, and students. Input from the survey and work session resulted in a framework for the plan. The new Strategic Plan was approved by the Board of Education on May 24, 2022 and will go into effect in July.



### FACILITIES IMPROVEMENTS

In November 2019, Paulding County voters approved a five-year renewal of the school district's E-SPLOST (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax for Education). The E-SPLOST is a one-cent sales tax collected over five years to fund capital projects for schools including:

- New schools
- Classroom additions
- Renovations and modifications
- New technology
- Land purchases
- Debt retirement

A significant portion of the E-SPLOST funds collected is being used to retire debt remaining from bonds issued in the 1990s. Those bonds funded the construction of new schools and classrooms but had to be paid back with interest





over a period of decades. E-SPLOST funds not used for debt retirement are being combined with operating funds to address current capital needs. Those needs continue to grow as total enrollment in PCSD schools has surpassed 31,000 students and is projected to continue growing as new housing is developed over the next several years. Recently, PCSD has completed classroom additions at Russom Elementary School and Moses Middle School, and has either completed or is in the process of completing multiple renovation and modification projects at sites including Hiram High School, Dobbins Middle School, and Allgood Elementary School. Additionally, E-SPLOST is funding renovation and upgrade projects at athletic facilities at every Paulding County high school.



**Russom ES Classroom Addition**

The next phase of E-SPLOST VI will be announced to the public over the coming weeks and will include plans to construct a new middle school in the Seven Hills area as promised in the E-SPLOST VI referendum. The new middle school will provide enrollment relief for McClure Middle School. Additionally, classroom additions for North Paulding High School and Burnt Hickory Elementary School are planned.

### TEACHERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE YEAR

The school district recognized its Teachers and Employees of the Year at a celebration event on May 3 coordinated by the [Paulding Education Foundation](#).

Teachers of the Year from each of the district's 34 schools, as well as seven employees representing each of the district's operational areas, were honored as the "best of the best" of our school district's extraordinary staff. Additionally, **Rachel Stancel**, a [U.S. & World History teacher](#) at Hiram High School, was selected as the overall Paulding County School District Teacher of the Year. Congratulations, Rachel!



**Rachel Stancel**

I could not be more proud of how our district came together to respond to the challenges of the pandemic, and our teachers and support staff were central components of that effort. Recent data shows that over the last two years many of our students stayed on track academically, and those who did not have received targeted resources, intervention, and support to mitigate the impact of interrupted learning. This could not have happened without the dedication and daily commitment to our students from our teachers.

### SCHOOL BOARD EARNS EXEMPLARY BOARD RECOGNITION

In December, the Paulding County Board of Education learned it earned the Georgia School Boards Association's (GSBA) 2021 Exemplary School Board [recognition](#) for the second year in a row. Board members were presented with the honor at GSBA's annual conference at the Renaissance Waverly Hotel in Atlanta. The PCSD school board became eligible to apply for Exemplary Status for the first time in 2020 which was the first time a Paulding County Board of Education had been recognized with GSBA's highest status level. According to GSBA, the recognition program is designed to showcase best practices in school governance and leadership. GSBA recognizes good school board governance to foster educational community cultures to advance student learning and achievement.





### STATE CHAMPIONS

East Paulding High School won the GHSA Esports state championship over Fayette County in the Smash Bros. Ultimate League! The state championship was held at the University of West Georgia. North Paulding High School finished runner-up in the Esports FIFA League state championship.

Georgia is one of the few states that sanctions Esports as a high school sport. Players compete in a range of video game scenarios that promote teamwork, STEM skills, and demand not only superior execution but superior strategizing, conceptual thinking and creative problem solving.



Also, congratulations to **Cooper Guyon De Chemilly** of North Paulding High School, the new GHSA Literary State Champion in the category of Extemp Speech Domestic. Cooper's Speech and Debate coaches at NPHS, **Selina Madison** and **Annie Bolton**, helped prepare Cooper for his state title.



PCSD produced another state champion when **Madden Sanker**, a junior at South Paulding High School, won the state title in his weight class for boys wrestling. Congratulations, Madden!



### EAST PAULDING MS STUDENT WINS DISTRICT SPELLING BEE

**Anu Ajayi**, a 7th grader at East Paulding Middle School, is the 2022 PCSD District Spelling Bee champion! At the competition at East Paulding HS, Anu successfully spelled "Balsamic" to stand alone after an epic 20-round match against students from across the district. Anu, and runner-up **Kingston Dempsey**, a 6th grader at Ritch MS, advanced to the online regional competition on February 26<sup>th</sup>, along with third-place alternate **Sarah Broadstreet**, a 7th grader at Austin MS. Anu finished runner-up at the regional contest.



### STAR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Each year, the Paulding County Chamber of Commerce coordinates the STAR Student/Teacher recognition for the Paulding County School District. The STAR program was developed by the Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE) to recognize the high school senior at each school who scores the highest on the SAT for any single test date. The STAR students are then asked to choose a teacher who inspired them to their success. This year's STAR students and teachers are:



- **Emi Pergrem**, a senior at Paulding County High School, was the district-wide STAR Student winner. STAR Teacher: **Tammy Shiflett**.



- **Evan Weaver**, a senior at East Paulding County High School. STAR Teacher: **Dr. Tommy Jolly**.
- **Olubande Taiwo**, a senior at Hiram High School. STAR Teacher: **Mitchell Roberts**.
- **Carter Jones**, a senior at North Paulding High School. STAR Teacher: **James Moore**.
- **Amelia Sophia Akins**, a senior at South Paulding High School: STAR Teacher: **Wynne Shoemaker**.

### OUTSTANDING BUDGET PRESENTATION

Paulding County taxpayers deserve to have confidence their tax dollars are being managed effectively and efficiently. The Association of School Business Officials International helped confirm that last fall by presenting the Meritorious Budget Award to the Paulding County School District's Business Services budget team. The award recognizes clarity and transparency in budget presentation to the public. Paulding County taxpayers can find an abundance of information regarding school district finances at the [Business Services web site](#).

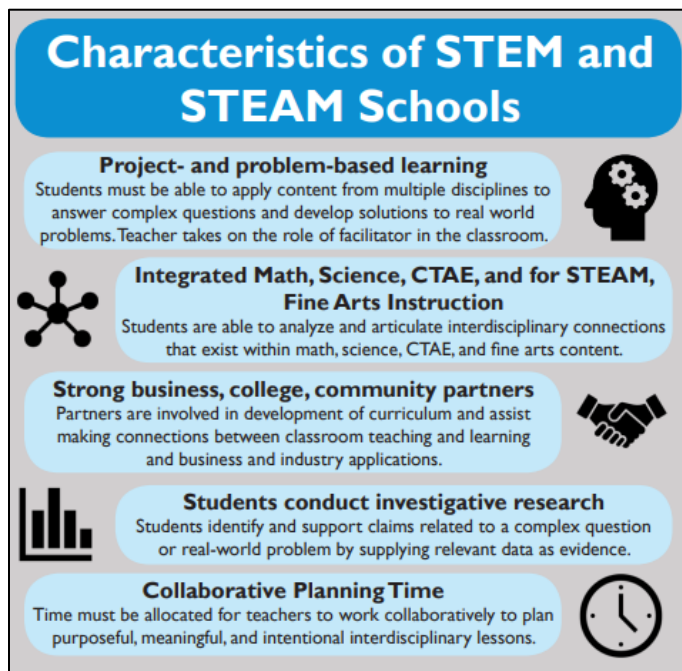
### GEORGIA SCHOLAR

**Jackson Gammon** of North Paulding HS was one of just 216 seniors to be named a 2022 Georgia Scholar! Through the Georgia Scholar program, the [Georgia Department of Education](#) honors high school seniors who have achieved excellence in school and community life by carrying exemplary course loads during their four years of high school, performing excellently in all courses, successfully participating in interscholastic events at their schools and in their communities, and assuming leadership roles in extracurricular activities.



### STEM CERTIFICATION

Earlier this year STEM assessment teams from the Department of Education and other districts from around the state visited each grade level at **McGarity Elementary School** and spoke to students about their STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) projects. They observed the learning environment and talked to parents and community partners as well. After a thorough review, the committee announced that McGarity ES is Paulding County's newest STEM Certified School! At the same time, **Paulding County High School's** Academy of Science, Research, and Medicine, the school district's first STEM certified program, had its certificate renewed. Congratulations to McGarity ES Principal **Karla Dodgen** and Paulding County HS Principal **Craig Wilcox** and their staffs on their impressive achievement.



Becoming a Georgia STEM Certified school is a process that shifts the school's instructional practices to an integrated curriculum grounded in exploration and project-based learning. Students are solving real-world problems that are often present in their school community. More info about STEM schools can be found here: <https://www.stemgeorgia.org/>.





### CREATIVE TALENT IN FINE ARTS

Each year I am amazed at the level of creative talent our school district produces in the Fine Arts. I know this well because some of the most impressive pieces are displayed in my office and in the central office lobby for a time. Our district Fine Arts Director **Katie Anderson** does a phenomenal job of inspiring our local school programs and the results speak for themselves. Many students were able to showcase their works at the school district's annual Fine Arts Day event in March.

Here are just a few examples of the outstanding pieces produced by students in our local school art classes:



PCSD Fine Arts students excel in more than just the visual arts. This school year our high school bands and choruses not only put on impressive performances at a wide range of local events, they also traveled the country, from Disney to New York City and beyond, sharing their musical talents. And special theater kudos go out to Hiram High School student **Shyla Rosario**, who won a prestigious Shuler Award for “Best Supporting Performer,” and to South Paulding High School senior **Ally Medley**, for earning All-State Theater recognition in 2022!



Shyla Rosario

Ally Medley

### SPECIAL NEEDS INSPIRATION

One of the most rewarding parts of our school year is seeing our special needs students excel. From the community kickball game at South Paulding High School sponsored by Paulding County Public Safety staff, to the return of the Special Olympics at Paulding County High School attended by hundreds of students and parents after a three-year hiatus, to the recent Yes I Can! awards ceremony that recognized outstanding achievements, our special needs students truly shined. These events reinforced our emphasis on ensuring that *all* students are able to succeed, and allowed our special needs students to show off their talents while bringing smiles to the faces of all who attended.





### AP HONOR SCHOOLS

State Superintendent Richard Woods named three Paulding County School District high schools to the list of Advanced Placement (AP) Honor Schools for 2022. In a [press release](#), Superintendent Woods announced that East Paulding High School, Hiram High School, and North Paulding High School all received honors in one or more AP categories.

Advanced Placement courses and exams are a direct indicator of the potential for student success at the post-secondary level. Having three schools earn AP Honor Roll status reflects the high level of instruction taking place and is a credit to the commitment these schools have made toward student success, especially following a school year dominated by the pandemic.

#### PCSD 2022 AP HONOR SCHOOLS

East Paulding High School  
AP Access and Support School  
AP STEM School

Hiram High School  
AP Access and Support School

North Paulding High School  
AP Humanities School  
AP Humanities Achievement School  
AP STEM School  
AP STEM Achievement School

### HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!

The items mentioned in this letter barely scratch the surface of all the amazing things that happen in our schools each and every day. But I hope that when you read about the accomplishments of these students and staff members, you feel the same sense of pride in your school district that I do. We have worked hard to Engage, Inspire and Prepare students, but it is your support that makes our school system great. The involvement of our entire community, from parents to the local businesses in our Partners in Education program, makes a real difference in helping our schools succeed.

I want to congratulate the Class of 2022 and wish them great success in their future endeavors. I hope that all of you have a great summer and get to enjoy some well-deserved time off with your families. See you in August!

Sincerely,

Steve Barnette  
Superintendent

