

The Hawk

Holly Springs, Mississippi

Summer-Fall 2025

District Newsletter



Pictured are the senior group prior to the graduation ceremony and valedictorian Natalya Jones, salutatorian Jakhya McIntyre and historian Talyah McAdams.

Class of 2025



Holly Springs High School graduation was held Friday night, May 23, 2025, in the Rust College McMillan Multi-Purpose Center.

It began with the processional, the National Anthem led by graduates Kevin Martin and Aziah Wright, the welcome by student body president Leah Odum, and the invocation by historian Talyah McAdams. Jakhya McIntyre delivered the salutatory address and Natalya Jones the valedictory address. Choir members, under the direction of Charles Terry Jr., performed two musical selections, plus there was a special musical presentation by student body vice president Aziah Wright.

Superintendent of education Dr. Irene Walton Turnage gave remarks, and Ladaryl Odum, chief investigator with the Marshall County Sheriff's Department and pastor of St. Mark in Collierville, Tenn., was the guest speaker. Principal Cravin Turnage recognized honor students, and assistant principal Dr. Jorgell Jones announced scholarships and laptop recipients. Awarding diplomas to members of the Class of 2025 were Cravin Turnage, Dr. Jorgell Jones, Maurica Sims, GED/TST/interventionist, and Kim Mayfield, president of the board of trustees.

Cravin Turnage presented closing remarks. The ceremony concluded with the Holly Springs High School alma mater and the benediction by Saimira McAuley, a distinguished honor graduate.



Displaying the commemorative School of Excellence banner are Cravin Turnage, principal of Holly Springs High School; Susie Brown, director of the Holly Springs Career and Technical Center; and LeTashia White, grades 7-12 literacy interventionist for the Holly Springs School District.

High school receives Imagine Nation Award

Imagine Learning, the leading provider of digital-first Pre-K through 12th grade curriculum solutions, recently announced the winners of the 2024–2025 Imagine Nation Awards. One of those is Holly Springs High School.

These annual awards recognize schools and districts across the country for their exceptional use of Imagine Learning programs and their commitment to supporting student growth.

More than 42,000 schools and districts were eligible for this year’s awards. Of those, 232 schools and districts have been honored as Imagine Nation Schools of Excellence or Districts of Distinction, representing best-in-class implementation and meaningful engagement with Imagine Learning solutions.

“The Imagine Nation Awards celebrate not just implementation excellence, but the everyday breakthroughs that happen when we work together to empower potential,” said Kinsey Rawe, executive vice president and chief product officer at Imagine Learning. “Each of this year’s honorees represent what’s possible when educators and students are supported with the right tools and the belief that growth is always within reach. We’re proud to partner with schools and districts that bring learning to life in ways that are rigorous, inclusive, and grounded in purpose.”

Based on rigorous research, Imagine Learning has found that consistent program usage and strong implementation practices are directly linked to gains in student achievement. The Imagine Nation Awards highlight the schools and districts who have gone above and beyond to ensure students benefit fully from the digital solutions they’ve adopted. Each recognized school or district received a banner to commemorate their achievement and inspire continued momentum in the year ahead.

Data shows plan is working to better prepare graduates

*A message from Dr. Irene Walton
Turnage, Superintendent of Education*



The district has been working hard to fulfill its mission: To Educate Students Who Will EXCEL in the Global Community. Like most districts, the Holly Springs School District has a strategic plan that outlines why it exists, or its mission, along with strategic steps that it will take to make it happen.

District and school staff have been working with the Holly Springs School District’s Board of Trustees, parents, students and community to develop the mission and determine how the mission will be fulfilled. Representatives from each stakeholder group have been included in every step to help develop the strategic plan and the steps to obtain it. Additionally, the committee receives updates annually as to the progress that is being made.

The data from the last few years shows the plan is working. Based on the data from the 2024-2025 school year, students are leaving the district more prepared than ever to excel in the global community. According to the data, over 95 percent of students are leaving the district with a standard diploma, indicating they are meeting requirements from the Mississippi Department of Education in order to graduate.

There are also additional indicators from the last three years showing the district is heading in the right direction. The acceleration rate for the district, which measures how many students are taking college courses or receiving national career certifications, has remained above or close to 80 percent. The College and Career Rate (CCR), which includes the percentage of students meeting college and career readiness standards, has continuously increased. This past year, the district obtained a CCR rate above 80 percent for the first time.

Although district and school staff members are excited that the district is heading in the right direction when it comes to preparing students to excel in the global community, we understand that there is still a lot of great work to do. This work will take support from all stakeholders and collective effort that we have had in the past to ensure student success.

The district will continue its work with developing a Portrait of Graduate, which will include characteristics we want all graduates to have when they leave the district to help ensure they are prepared, plus we will continue to set goals for students and staff to increase student achievement.

The 2025-2026 school year will present many additional opportunities for all stakeholders to join the district to ensure our students are prepared and able to excel in the global community.



From left are Eileen Dowsing, assistant superintendent; Lemon Phelps, board member; Kim Mayfield, board president; Charisse Harris, board vice president; Dr. Gemma Beckley, board secretary; Ejeera Dukes, board member; Dr. Denotris Jackson, executive director of the Mississippi School Boards Association; and Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, superintendent of education.

Board retreat focuses on vision, strategic plan

School board members from the Holly Springs and Marshall County districts came together for a joint retreat June 23. Topics headlining the agenda included board oversight versus overstepping and the importance of a district uniting to carry out its strategic plan.

Leading much of the discussion was Dr. Denotris Jackson, executive director of the Mississippi School Boards Association.

“Be sure and focus on things that are in your lane as a school board,” Jackson said. “All of your actions should be aligned toward your vision as a district. Everything on your agenda should be tied to your strategic plan and your goals. All decisions should be based on what is best for the students.”

Jackson also talked about the importance of planning and adapting with the times.

“Are you ready for the next generation?” she asked. “We are training students for their future, not our past. There is need for integrating traditional learning with contemporary methods.”

Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, superintendent of the Holly Springs School District, and Dr. Carrie Skelton, superintendent of the Marshall County School District, presented overviews of their respective districts. Both mentioned the “time of change,” particularly highlighting new programs and expansions within their Career and Technical Centers to meet the needs of the ever-changing job market.

Austin Gilbert, policy and legislative manager with MSBA, updated school board members on new software being utilized by districts for posting new policies and changes and updates in standing policies. He also updated school board members on legislative matters.

Members of the Holly Springs School District Board of Trustees are president Kim Mayfield, vice president Charisse Harris, secretary Dr. Gemma Beckley, Lemon Phelps and Ejeera Dukes. Members of the Marshall County School District Board of Trustees are president Kerry Hale, vice president Leslie King Jr., secretary Mark Bryson, Elizabeth Jones and Lee Seals. An open discussion was held between board members on various topics of importance.

The mission of the Holly Springs School District is to educate students who will excel in the global community. The mission of the Marshall County School District is to challenge every student to reach his or her maximum potential, thereby developing highly educated college and career ready citizens.

Melissa Hunt, board clerk for the Holly Springs School District, planned and organized the retreat with support from board members and district staff. It was held at The Apothecary in downtown Holly Springs, and both boards thanked owner Lisa Liddy for her assistance. Caterer for breakfast and lunch was Faith Bass Mallory (Da Style of Jaith Catering), and snacks were provided by Fredrick Prowell, food services manager with the Holly Springs School District.

Sponsors for the retreat included Marsh McLennan Agency (solicited by Craft and Wynne Insurance), Bank of Holly Springs, and Adams and Reese Law Firm. The Holly Springs and Marshall County school boards expressed appreciation to the sponsors for their generous support.

This was the second consecutive summer for the two boards to unite for a joint retreat.



Members of the Class of 2025 graduating with Distinguished Academic Honors are pictured at Senior Night. From left are Jason Jeffries, Anesha Vasser, Brithany Garcia Espino, Shaniyah Storey, Aziah Wright, Saimira McAuley, Asia Jackson, principal Cravin Turnage, Sonya Hosmer, Joshua Harris, Demarquez Strickland, Brianna Guy, Leah Odum, Kalea Jones, Jakhya McIntyre, Natalya Jones. Not pictured is Talyah McAdams.

Senior Night Honor Graduate Recognition

Members of the Class of 2025 graduating with Academic Honors are pictured at Senior Night. From left are guidance counselor Rhonda Richard, Johnisha Scott, Ceyenne Burton, Braya Crane, Malicia Selman, Aeryiel Glover, Itzel Arce.



Memorial Scholarships

(Left photo) Tiffany Elzie, filling in for Ciente Barber of the Class of 2011, presents the RichB Memorial Scholarship to Kameron Cooley. (Above) Recipients of the Joseph H. Ford Awards were honored. From left are superintendent Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, presenter Rebecca Dowdy (Class of 1972), Sonya Hosmer, Future Matthews, Latravis Beaugard, Kennedy Terry and presenter Isaac Shelton (Class of 1972).



CC Taylor Foundation scholarship recipients 2025

CC Taylor Foundation celebrates achievements of Holly Springs High School Class of 2025

The CC Taylor Foundation, rooted in a steadfast belief in the transformative power of education, proudly celebrated the remarkable accomplishments of the Holly Springs High School Class of 2025. With hearts full of hope and a vision for a brighter tomorrow, the Foundation awarded 12 scholarships totaling \$10,000 to deserving students—future leaders, innovators, and change makers—empowering them to pursue their academic and professional dreams.

Each scholarship was carefully awarded based on academic achievement and financial need, demonstrating the Foundation’s dedication to investing in the potential of young scholars who will shape our communities and our world.

This celebration is more than a moment; it’s a continuation of a legacy. Founded on July 28, 2006, the CC Taylor Foundation honors the enduring spirit of Reverend Charlie E. and Cinderella S. Taylor, Sr., whose unwavering devotion to God, country, family, and community continues through their seven children. United in purpose, these descendants established the Foundation as a living tribute to their parents’ selfless love and sacrifice—a legacy that now lifts up future generations.

As the Class of 2025 confidently begins the next chapter of their journey, the CC Taylor Foundation continues to serve as a source of support, inspiration, and belief in education’s power to change lives.

Award recipients this year included: All Veterans Care Scholarship, Demarquez Strickland, Leah Odum and Sonya Hosmer; Diane Williams Gray and Katherine C. Williams Scholarship, Kalea Jones; Sunshine Shehee Payne Endowed Scholarship, Malicia Selman, Anesha Vasser and Joshua Harris; John L. “Coach” Taylor Achievement Award, Dreyvin Oswalt; Judith Woolley McKeivitt Endowed Scholarship, Aziah Wright, Ceyenne Burton and Asia Jackson; Rev. Marjean Taylor-Myatt ICS Head Start Center Scholarship, Brithany Garcia Espino. They are pictured with Attorney Shirley Byers, immediate past Foundation board chairman; Susie Brown, director of the Holly Springs Career and Technical Center; and Dr. Irene Walton-Turnage, superintendent of education.

Continuation of a legacy

Honoring the enduring spirit of Reverend Charlie E. and Cinderella S. Taylor, Sr.



School district administrators and board members, community leaders, and NCEE representatives came together to focus on the learner profile for Holly Springs Schools. From left are Dr. Cederick Ellis, Eileen Dowsing, Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, Letashia White, Dr. Casshaunda Davis, Cravin Turnage, Susie Brown, Vikki Marion, Kim Mayfield, Forrest Bryan, Tannya Sanders, Angela Mayfield, Fannie Lampley, Monet Autry, Dr. Gemma Beckley and Dr. Susan Rucker. Not pictured are Fergenina Hood and Nicole Phelps.

Portrait of a Graduate will ‘help change lives’

The process of developing the Holly Springs School District’s learner profile for the Portrait of a Graduate is moving forward.

Another in a series of meetings with facilitators from the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) and community leaders was held Wednesday, June 11, in the high school library. The Portrait of a Graduate is a collective vision articulating the community’s hopes and dreams for its students. It is all about instilling important soft skills, from an early age, that will help prepare a new generation of students for ever-changing career opportunities.

NCEE representatives Dr. Susan Rucker and Dr. Cederick Ellis asked school district administrators and principals to provide feedback they had received from the community.

Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, superintendent of education, said the Portrait of a Graduate had been shared with all stakeholder groups since the last meeting including community groups, parents, staff and students. Community groups, like the Rotary Club and most recently members of the Superintendent’s Advisory Committee, had been asked to provide feedback on the portrait. Parent feedback was obtained during end-of-year activities. The competencies in the Portrait of a Graduate were also shared with parents, grandparents and community members attending the Holly Springs High School graduation for the Class of 2025.

To include a wider audience, the Portrait of a Graduate was a front-page focus of the spring edition of *The Hawk*, the Holly Springs School District newsletter, and was sent out to all parents through the district’s callout system. Student and staff voices and feedback were also essential in the development of the Portrait of a Graduate. Both were involved in creating the competencies and the final draft was shared with students and staff at different times. For example, Cravin Turnage, principal of the high school, met with members of the Class of 2025 to get their input and feedback. Seniors were a part of developing the Portrait of a Graduate.

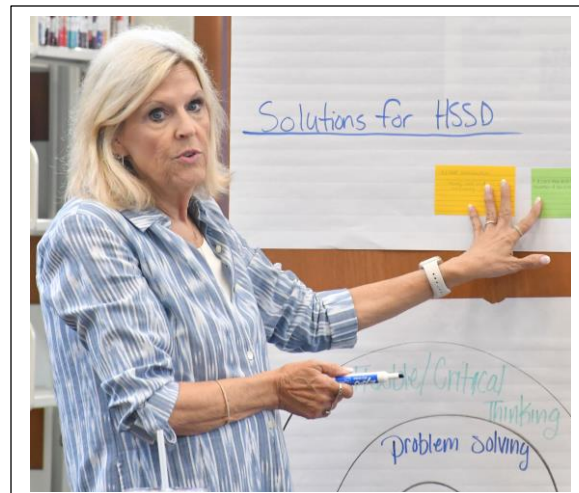
The competencies at the heart of the Portrait of a Graduate for Holly Springs School District include:

- 1) Thinkers – Future-ready thinkers analyze problems deeply and think outside the box.
- 2) Citizens – Future-ready citizens actively and responsibly participate in an interconnected, rapidly-changing world.

See Portrait of a Graduate page 7



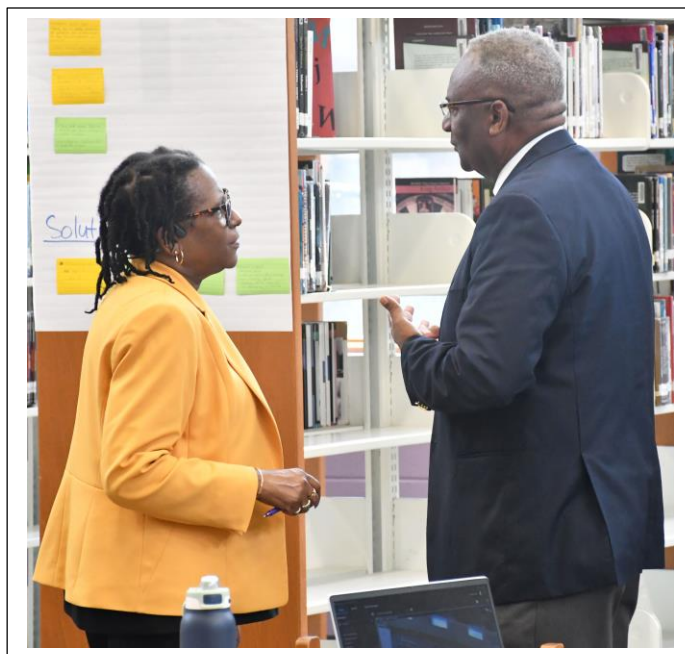
Community representative Nicole Phelps, a member of the Superintendent’s Advisory Committee, participates in the recent session led by NCEE representatives.



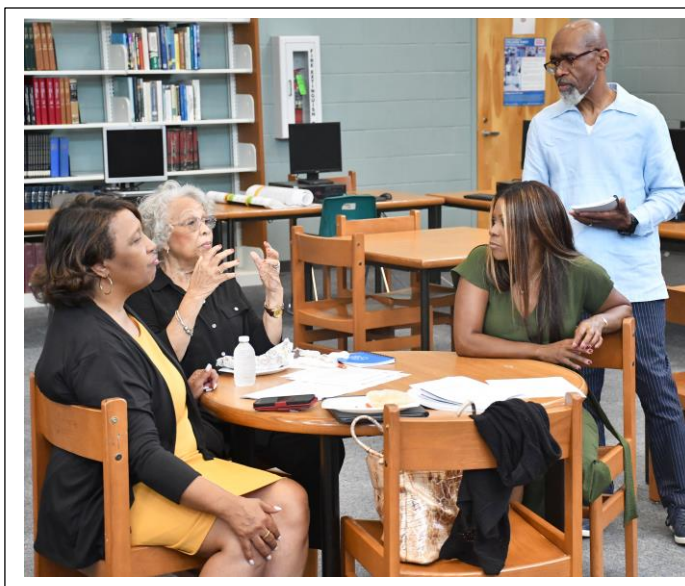
Dr. Susan Rucker with NCEE explains the goals of the project and asks for additional input.



Community representatives and members of the Superintendent's Advisory Committee contributing to the Portrait of a Graduate include Monet Autry, Angela Mayfield and Fannie Lampley.



Sharing their thoughts during one of the Portrait of a Graduate sessions are Eileen Dowsing and Cravin Turnage.



Dr. Cedrick Ellis (standing) listens as one of the steps in the learner profile process is discussed by (seated, from left) Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, Dr. Gemma Beckley and Susie Brown.

Portrait of a Graduate

- 3) Life-long learners and leaders – Future-ready students take ownership of their learning journey and lead with integrity, transparency and accountability.
- 4) Social Awareness – Future-ready, socially-aware students are empathetic and community-minded; they understand and respect the feelings, perspectives and experiences of others.
- 5) Resilient – Future-ready resilient students face challenges with courage, bounce back from setbacks and grow stronger through adversity.
- 6) Self-awareness – Future-ready, self-aware students understand their own thoughts, emotions, strengths and areas for growth.

Dr. Turnage said competencies to be included in the Portrait of a Graduate were well received with some suggestions on additions to the list.

"All of our children will have careers; the path they choose will be up to them," she said. "But the competencies we teach – from pre-K up will ensure they are successful regardless of what career they choose. We have to make these skills internal."

Dr. Ellis also emphasized that the learner profile, which has nothing to do with test scores, has to be put into practice in order to be successful.

"It's much more than poster," he said. "It can be a game-changer for Holly Springs and the state, and it can be a road map for others."

He also said he is glad to see folks from different segments of the community being involved and helping to carry the torch.

Some members of the community and business focus group in attendance June 11 complimented the plan - emphasizing development of the entire person, getting the parents involved from pre-K up, and giving students early exposure to public service and what it takes to be a model student and good citizen.

Forrest Bryan, with Accelerate Mississippi, is assisting the school district in developing the learner profile and with Career and Technical Center programs. He suggested adding decision-making and self-worth to the profile. He said on average a person makes 35,000 decisions a day, starting with whether or not to get up in the morning, and must decide throughout the day between the "right thing and the wrong thing."

The next steps include finalizing the learner profile and developing the learning model for the Holly Springs School District.

"One caring adult can change a life," Dr. Turnage said. "Caring adults teaching the competencies in this 'Portrait of a Graduate' will help us to change lives."

The World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report, 2025, lists core top skills, ranked by importance. The top 10 includes analytical thinking; resilience, flexibility and agility; leadership and social influence; creative thinking; motivation and self-awareness; technological literacy; empathy and active listening; curiosity and lifelong learning; talent management; and service orientation and customer service. Most of these top skills are embedded in the Holly Springs School District's Portrait of a Graduate.



From left are Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, superintendent of education; Bobby Robinson, teacher assistant/bus driver, 25.75 years in the district and total in education; Joseph Selman, technology coordinator, 26 years in the district and total in education; Linda Carouthers, teacher, three years in the district and 40 years total in education; Retha Kimbrough, parent center liaison/material clerk, 29 years in the district and 32.25 years total in education; Glynn Faulkner, teacher/band director, 17 years in the district and 32 years total in education; Shauneille Mason, 34 years in the district and 41 years total in education; and Eileen Dowsing, assistant superintendent of education.

School district honors retirees

The Holly Springs School District honored a distinguished group of retirees on Thursday, May 29, who have a combined 223 years in education, with 161 of those devoted to our district.

"You have made a difference that echoes far beyond the classroom walls," Eileen Dowsing, assistant superintendent of education, told the retirees. *"You've shaped lives, nurtured minds and inspired hearts. You've shown up on the hard days, celebrated the small victories, and never stopped believing in the potential of your students. Don't underestimate your legacy. It lives on in the students who found their confidence because of you, in the colleagues who were strengthened by your wisdom, and in the school community that was better because you were a part of it. Thank you for your dedication, resilience, and heart. You deserve every joy this next chapter offers."*

Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, superintendent of education, shared personal thoughts on each retiree and ways each one has given back over the years. She thanked Mr. Selman for being the face of technology for the district and how he had helped to make sure students were ready for the technological world in which they will live. She shared how she loved that Ms. Mason always wanted to work in the Holly Springs School District and thanked her for her commitment and dedication to the math department and for helping achieve historical gains with sixth grade math, which also included unprecedented numbers of students attaining grade level and growth requirements. Dr. Turnage shared that Ms. Carouthers had only been in the district three years but had earned a reputation for loving students and pushing them to be their best. She thanked Ms. Kimbrough for helping to connect parents to the schools and district as a member of the parent center support staff. Dr. Turnage thanked Mr. Faulkner for serving as band director for so many years and helping students to love music. She also thanked Ms. Robinson for wearing many hats during her time in the district to help support students, including teacher assistant, bus driver and library attendant. In Mr. White's absence, Dr. Turnage asked all faculty and staff to give him a round of applause, and she expressed appreciation for his many years of service as a teacher and senior sponsor, as well as his contributions to high school journalism and the basketball program.

Dr. Turnage thanked all retirees for the support and love they had given students and encouraged them to come back in some way, reminding them that they will always be part of the district family and "once a Hawk, always a Hawk."



Pictured is Brian White, teacher, 26 years in the district and 26 years total in education, who was unable to attend the retirement recognition program.

"You've shaped lives, nurtured minds and inspired hearts."

Eileen Dowsing, Assistant Superintendent of Education



Holly Springs
School
District
Staff
Recognition
2024-2025

Perfect Attendance



Central Office



Holly Springs High School



Holly Springs Primary School



Holly Springs
School
District
Staff
Recognition
2024-2025

Holly Springs Intermediate School



Holly Springs Junior High School



Holly Springs Career and Technical Center



New Beta Club members

Holly Springs Intermediate School held its National Beta Club Induction Ceremony on Tuesday, May 20, in the library. Sponsor Candice Peery emphasized the pillars of Beta - achievement, character, leadership and service, with a candle being lit for each pillar. Inductees recited the Beta Pledge – “I pledge to be honest and truthful, maintain academic excellence and conduct myself in an ethical manner. I am dedicated to serving others and contributing to the collective success of my peers.” For more than 80 years, Beta has prepared today’s students to be tomorrow’s leaders. From left are Jakhari Johnson, fourth grade; Payton Cowan, fourth grade; Jordyn Petty, fifth grade; Octavis Bowen, fourth grade; Talia Hardy, fifth grade; Alyssa Manning, fourth grade; and Andre Rankins, fourth grade. Not pictured are Marchez Blake, sixth grade; and Shaniah Isom, fourth grade. Principal Vikki Marion concluded the ceremony with congratulations to the students and thanks to the parents.



Kindergarten promotion

All smiles with their kindergarten certificates from Holly Springs Primary School in May 2025 are Alaiya Tucker and Ziyah Tucker.



Honor Roll all three nine weeks

Making the Honor Roll all three nine weeks at Holly Springs Junior High School in 2024-2025 were (from left) Takerra Oliver, Markel Harris, Justin Garcia, Kirsten Aldridge, Kyler Jefferson and Jeremiah Jefferson.



Delta Tech scholarships

Two Holly Springs High School seniors, Emmanuel McCary and Itzel Arce, each received a \$2,000 scholarship to Delta Technical College. McCary will be training in heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC), and Arce plans to be a dental assistant. McCary is a student at the Holly Springs Career and Technical Center where he is studying in the Business Marketing and Finance II class, and Arce took and completed Teacher Academy I and II classes. From left are Rhonda Richard, guidance counselor at Holly Springs High School; Itzel Arce; Andria Ivory, admissions representative with the Horn Lake location of Delta Technical College; and Emmanuel McCary. Ivory surprised the two students on Friday morning, May 2, at the high school.

Kinkle leaves high school with lots of gold



Tray Kinkle displays his nine state medals, eight of those gold.



Tray Kinkle reaches the finish line first in a race at the 2025 State Meet in Pearl.

Kentravian “Tray” Kinkle has certainly left his mark on Holly Springs athletics.

The senior sped his way to a state triple crown in individual races for a second straight year, winning the 100-meter, 200-meter and 400-meter dashes at the 2025 Class 3A Track and Field Meet in Pearl.

“He’s a tremendous athlete, and his performance on the track was again magnificent,” said head coach Clifford Brown.

Kinkle’s time in the three dashes were 10.59 in the 100, 21.25 in the 200 and 48.03 in the 400, all personal improvements from the 2024 state meet.

He was also a member of the first-place 4x400-meter relay team with Jaylen Cassidy, Jasiah Johnson and Christopher Hale. Their winning time was 3:33.25.

From his sophomore, junior and senior years, Kinkle has medaled nine times at the Class 3A meet, eight of those gold.

He said he thinks about himself when running and not the competition.

“I go against myself,” Kinkle said. “I am thinking about my own time and improving every time I’m on the track. I’m blessed to be able to compete and win.”

Kinkle, who was the Region 1-3A Player of the Year in football for the 2024 season, signed a football scholarship with the University of South Florida. He reported to USF in Tampa on May 26.

Gold medal winner

Jamiya Yarbrough, a seventh grader at Holly Springs Junior High School, won a gold medal in the Special Olympics Summer Games 2025 at Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi on Saturday, May 10. Her first-place win was in the 50-yard dash, and she also received a fourth-place ribbon in the softball throw. She said she had a fun time in Biloxi and enjoyed representing her school. Her teacher at Holly Springs Junior High School is Patricia Waldrop.



Kilgore back as head basketball coach

Sylvester Kilgore is back in very familiar territory. He has returned to the head basketball coaching position at Holly Springs High School after five seasons with South Panola. He compiled a 122-61 record as head coach of the Hawks during the 2012-2019 seasons. His Hawks made five straight trips to Jackson from 2015-2019, reaching the final four three times and finishing as state runners-up in both 2018 and 2019. “I want to reestablish the winning tradition, with high character players, and I want Holly Springs basketball to again be a source of excitement for our community,” Kilgore said.

Laptop Donors 2025

- * Dr. Irene Walton Turnage and Cravin Turnage
- * Eileen Dowsing
- * Holly Springs School District Board of Trustees
- * Marjean Myatt Head Start
- * Eric Taylor
- * Class of 1980 – Eric Taylor
- * H&F Properties, LLC, Henry and Fergenia Hood
- * Kappa Alpha Psi Inc., Oxford Alumni Chapter, Jansen Pegues
- * Class of 1982, Dr. Cecilia Dowsing Adams
- * Dr. Paul and Fannie Lampley
- * Anderson Chapel CME Church, Rev. Leon C. Moore Jr.
- * Class of 1988, Patricia Barksdale
- * Class of 1985, Melissa Hunt
- * Dowsing and Moore families, in honor of Annie and Lawrence Dowsing and Glen Moore, educators
- * Hudsonville CME Church, Rev. Bobby Wilson
- * Eileen Dowsing and Dr. Cecilia Dowsing Adams, in memory of Yvonne Dowsing Lucas and Lawrence Dowsing Jr.
- * Class of 1998, Katrina Washington
- * Class of 2012, Sharicka Jones
- * Class of 1992, Delores Reaves
- * Class of 1982, Dr. Cecilia Dowsing Adams
- * Holly Springs-Marshall County Alumnae Chapter Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc.
- * John Head Jr., in memory of Elizabeth and John Head III.
- * Dr. Irene Walton Turnage and the Walton family in memory of Jewel Walton
- * D. Shipp Chapter 338, Order of Eastern Star, Purvene Anderson
- * Southern Eatery, Katrina Washington
- * Pride of 1977, Eileen Dowsing
- * Class of 1991, Kimberly Dowdy
- * Brittenum and Marshall families, Clemia Brittenum
- * Class of 1993, Precious Chapman
- * Cassandra Byers Mason, Class of 1981
- * Class of 1985, Melissa Hunt
- * Class of 1980, Jon and Vivian Davis
- * Chicken Coop, Chelcey Malone
- * Class of 1988, Metroine Stewart
- * Class of 2001, Tamecia Mitchell
- * Susie and Terrence Brown
- * Rev. Leon and Tiffany Moore Jr., Anderson Chapel CME Church
- * Picture This Photography, Deuntral Mosley
- * Versie Turnage Memorial Scholarship, Cravin Turnage
- * Class of 2010, Jarvarus Kimmons
- * Omicron Alpha Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., Shirley Byers
- * Class of 1978, Harriet Hearn
- * Pegues Barber Shop, Jansen Pegues
- * Class of 1986, Deborah Gullledge
- * Class of 1982, Dr. Cecilia Dowsing Adams
- * Class of 1984, Daryl McFadden
- * Attorney Shirley Byers, Marshall County prosecutor
- * Class of 1984, Daryl McFadden
- * Jackson family, in memory of Bernice and Jesse Jackson, educators, Shauneille Mason
- * John Head Jr., in memory of Elizabeth and John Head III
- * Class of 1983, Dr. Irene Walton Turnage
- * Dr. Gemma and Dr. David Beckley
- * Willa and Charles Terry
- * Monet Bell Autry, circuit clerk, in memory of her father Parker Bell, who served as teacher, board member and president in Holly Springs School District
- * JayColby Robinson



Jeremiah Sellers, a member of the Class of 2025, receives a new laptop courtesy of Dr. Gemma Beckley (middle) and her husband Dr. David Beckley. Pictured at left is Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, superintendent of education.

School district, community continue annual laptop donation program

The Holly Springs community partnered again with the Holly Springs School District in another dynamic program to benefit graduating seniors. Under its third strategic goal, “ensure all students are career ready,” the district wanted to ensure every senior had one additional tool to ensure the graduate was ready as they transition from the high school, a laptop.

“We live in a technological world,” said Irene Walton Turnage, superintendent of education. “For the last few years, our students have had access to technology as part of the district’s 1 to 1 Chromebook Program, so we wanted to make sure our students continued to have access.”

The program started many years ago when an alumnus, Eric Taylor, wanted to donate a few laptops to some deserving graduating students. The district staff and school board members thought it was such a great idea, the next year, they made an annual commitment. The superintendent and her husband would donate every year to the valedictorian; the assistant superintendent would donate to the salutatorian and the board of trustees would donate to the historian to honor the historical significance receiving a diploma can make in a student’s life.

Then, the community wanted to join in and support students. The program became a way for alumni classes to give back, businesses and organizations to help ensure students are prepared and for families to help students and donate in honor of a loved one or in memory of family members.

As a result of another collective effort on the part of the community and the district, every student in the graduating class was donated a laptop or Chromebook this past school year to help with applying for jobs, researching information related to their field or a field of interest, or continuing their education or career journey.

The district would like to take this time to thank all community members who donated this year or in previous years and looks forward to continuing to work together to help ensure our students are career ready and excel in the global community.



Parent/Community Advisory Committee at Intermediate School

Holly Springs Intermediate School held its Parent/Community Advisory Committee meeting on Tuesday, April 8, in the library. Those present were Kylon Freeman, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity; Falando Marion, assistant police chief; Shane McMillen, fire department; Jeremy Moore, fire department; Kristoffer Weeks, fire department; Adrian Morales, fire department; Jannie Luellen, LPN school nurse; Darryl Bowens, chief of police; Lemon Phelps, MSU-Extension Service; Candice Peery, Jacqueline Sledge and Linda Bruce, Intermediate School teachers; Angela Reed-Hudson, Unity Bank; Carmeeka Shelton, Holly Springs Junior High School and parent; Karen Pigues, ICS, Inc.; Beverly Phillips, parent and family engagement liaison, and Vikki Marion, principal of the Intermediate School. Not pictured are Leketia Petty, parent and assistant principal at the Junior High School, and Robyn Jones, ICS Inc. and parent. Beverly Phillips gave updates on federal programs and parent/community involvement events. Committee members shared ways they can become involved in the schools. Principal Marion commended all the men for participating and talked about ways they can help.

RYLA participant

Courtney Hines, a junior at Holly Springs High School, attended the Rotary Youth Leadership Academy (RYLA) on February 28-March 1 in Olive Branch. She was sponsored by the Rotary Club of Holly Springs. She is pictured with Cravin Turnage, principal at Holly Springs High School. The conference, hosted by Rotary District 6800, enhances the leadership of today's youth so they may more effectively answer tomorrow's challenges. The young people associate with students from different locations and backgrounds and are exposed to a broad range of business and professional leaders. The program material is geared toward developing these future leaders.



Rotary Club Student of the Year

The Holly Springs Rotary Club honored its Student of the Year scholarship recipients during a May 7 luncheon at Rust College. One of the three seniors in Marshall County honored as Student of the Year was Natalya Jones, a 2025 graduate of Holly Springs High School. Rotary Club member Charlie Farris, who chairs the Education Committee, presented the scholarship money and certificate. Other committee members are Barry Burleson, Angela Mayfield, Cassandra Hawkins and Sarah Liddy. Family members and school representatives joined Rotarians for the event.



10th Annual Fill Up the Bus

The Men of Psi Rho Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc. would like to thank the community for its support of their 10th Annual Fill Up the Bus initiative. Because of the community's generosity, the Men of Psi Rho Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc. presented approximately \$3,000 in school supplies to the Holly Springs School District, plus a sizable monetary donation is also going to the district.

Parker donates

Employees of Parker in Holly Springs delivered school supplies to second graders at Holly Springs Primary School on Friday, Aug. 8. There were plenty of smiles and cheers to go around as children received Parker book bags filled with various school supplies. The donation also included boxes filled with hygiene products and other needed items for the students. Dr. Casshaunda Davis, principal of Holly Springs Primary School, thanked Parker for their generous donation and their outstanding support of the school, and she urged them to continue to be a partner with the Holly Springs School District. Students pictured are (front row) Keith Muhummad and Carson Holloway; (back row) Savannah Perry, Micheal Naylor, Kiersten Jones, Corliyah Pritchard, Jaliyah Pritchard and Niy'Lah McDonald.



Anderson Chapel partners with schools

On September 7, 2025, administrators and staff from the Holly Springs School District attended the annual Back to School Prayer Service Program hosted by Anderson Chapel CME Church. Anderson Chapel is a longtime partner of the Holly Springs School District. School supplies donations, annual donations to the laptop program for seniors, and various other programs throughout the year are just some of the activities that have been completed by the church over the years to support schools and students in the district. Pictured are, front, from left, Eileen Dowsing, assistant superintendent; Rev. Dr. Leon C. Moore Jr., pastor of Anderson Chapel CME Church; Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, superintendent; Tannya Sanders, transitional coordinator and grades 6-12 interventionist; and back, same order, Laketia Petty, assistant principal of the junior high school; Vikki Marion, principal of the intermediate school; Letashia White, literacy interventionist; and Fannie Lampley, program committee chair, Anderson Chapel. Not pictured are Susie Brown and Brittney Broadwater.



District leaders attend Southern Region Leadership Conference



Pictured at the Southern Region Leadership Conference are, from left, board member Lemon Phelps, assistant superintendent Eileen Dowsing, board member Ejeera Dukes, board president Kim Mayfield, board vice president Charisse Harris, board secretary Dr. Gemma Beckley and superintendent Dr. Irene Walton Turnage.

Holly Springs School Board members, along with the superintendent of education and assistant superintendent, represented the district at the 2025 Southern Region Leadership Conference (SRLC), held July 28–30 at the Golden Nugget in Lake Charles, Louisiana.

The conference brought together education leaders from across the region to address key issues such as artificial intelligence in education, teacher recruitment and retention, English Language Learner strategies, and ESSA accountability updates. Keynote speaker Mark C. Perna inspired attendees with strategies for workforce development and intergenerational communication.

District leaders returned with fresh ideas and proven strategies to support student achievement, strengthen teacher recruitment efforts, and enhance community engagement.

Superintendent Turnage said, “The board of trustees, our administrative team, and I continue to work cohesively to ensure our students and staff are thriving in a competitive and ever-changing world.”

Legislative update

Members of the Holly Springs School District Board of Trustees, along with two administrators, recently attended the Legislative Update and School Law Review, coordinated by the Mississippi School Boards Association. Pictured, from left, are Eileen Dowsing, assistant superintendent of education; Lemon Phelps, board member; Kim Mayfield, board president; and Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, superintendent of education. Board members who attended virtually were Dr. Gemma Beckley, secretary; Charisse Harris, vice president; and Ejeera Dukes.



State of the Region

The Holly Springs School District was well represented at the State of the Region meeting Wednesday, May 14, in Tupelo. Attending were, from left, Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, superintendent of education; Kim Mayfield, president of the school board; Dr. Gemma Beckley, secretary of the board; and not pictured, Barry Bureson, communications/public relations coordinator. The Commission on the Future of Northeast Mississippi, established by the CREATE Foundation, is celebrating its 30th year. It was established to enhance the quality of life in the region and strengthen regional unity through community development. The commission also collaborates with numerous stakeholders to help launch meaningful initiatives, particularly in the field of education. One of the guest speakers May 14 was Dr. Lance Evans, state superintendent of education. He talked about a wide array of topics, including career and technical education opportunities, the teacher shortage, new partnerships with universities and changes to the accountability model. The State of the Region agenda also included Excellence in Education and Communities of Excellence panels.



Vision, faith and results

Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, superintendent of the Holly Springs School District, was featured in the July 2025 edition of the Mississippi School Boards Association newsletter, "MSBA Update." The article is reprinted here with the permission of MSBA.

Mississippi's longest-serving female superintendent



In a time when superintendent turnover is high and challenges in public education seem unrelenting, one woman stands out— not just for her resilience, but for her results. Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, a native of Holly Springs, is not only the longest-serving female superintendent in the state, now in her 19th year, but also the architect of one of the most remarkable school district transformations in recent Mississippi history.

Raised as the youngest of 10 children, Dr. Turnage grew up in a household built on hard work and hope. Her parents were both entrepreneurs—her mother, a cosmetologist; her father, a repairman. "I watched my parents build something out of nothing," she says. "That's what I've always tried to do as an educator."

She began her career as a teacher assistant in 1984, later taking her first teaching position in Bartlett, Tenn. In 1991, she returned to her roots in Holly Springs, where she would go on to serve as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, and eventually, superintendent. With the exception of one year, her entire professional journey has taken place in the Holly Springs School District.

But longevity is only part of her story. Her leadership has reshaped the culture and performance of a district once burdened by low expectations. "The biggest challenge," she recalls, "was changing the culture. People cared, but they didn't believe students could truly succeed." Through time, trust, and tenacity, she led the shift—from a mindset of defeat to one of academic belief and excellence.

That change has been transformational. In 2023, the district earned a B-rating for the first time. In 2024, the district made history again with its first-ever A-rating from the Mississippi Department of Education. "That 'A' didn't come from me," she says. "It came from our board, our teachers, our principals, our students, and our parents. We did it together."



*"This is home. These are my people.
These are our children. I want every
child here to know they are seen, they
are smart, and they can succeed."*



From left, Dr. Irene Walton Turnage as grand marshal of the 2024 Christmas Parade, speaking to Rotary Club, and with her husband Cravin Turnage.

Vision, faith and results

Dr. Turnage has championed programs to support student readiness and educator growth. She introduced the Dress for Success mentoring program for young men, established partnerships with Accelerate Mississippi and the National Center on Education and the Economy, and launched the Portrait of a Graduate initiative to define what success should look like beyond graduation.

She has also nurtured leaders at every level. Under her leadership, three of her former principals have gone on to become superintendents. Dozens of educators she mentored have advanced in the profession. Perhaps even more remarkably, her former students now serve as doctors, nurse practitioners, nurses, attorneys, business leaders, and entrepreneurs. “She didn’t just educate students—she inspired destinies,” one community member shared.

Dr. Turnage is herself a lifelong learner. A proud graduate of Rust College, she earned two master’s degrees, a specialist degree, and a doctorate from the University of Mississippi. Her doctoral research focused on teacher efficacy and behavioral interventions, reflecting her commitment to evidence-based practice.

She is a woman of deep faith—anchored by her favorite Bible verse, 2 Corinthians 12:9: “And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” That verse has been a steady source of strength through times of change, challenge, and uncertainty. For Dr. Turnage, it is not just scripture—it is a lived truth that has carried her through decades of service. She is also a devoted wife to Cravin Turnage, principal of Holly Springs High School, and proud mother to Ashley and grandmother to Kyrie, Kennedy and Kali. She serves on the Mississippi Association of School Superintendents (MASS) Board, is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and The Mississippi Roses Chapter of The Links, Inc., and is a faithful member of Mt. Teamer CME Church.

In 2024, she was named grand marshal of the Holly Springs Christmas Parade—a fitting honor for a woman who has spent decades marching forward on behalf of children and community.

“We have everything and everyone we need to take our students to the highest level possible,” she told educators during a recent back-to-school kickoff. “This is our year to go all the way to the top.” Fittingly, just one year later, the district followed up with an even greater milestone: its first-ever A-Rating.

Indeed, she has led Holly Springs to the top—but she is not done yet. Dr. Turnage’s legacy is not simply one of tenure, but of transformation, belief, and the unshakable power of leadership that lasts. “This is home. These are my people. These are our children. I want every child here to know they are seen, they are smart, and they can succeed,” she says.

Dr. Turnage’s legacy is not only measured in ratings or rankings, but in the values she instills across the district—chief among them: service. In 2023, the City of Holly Springs proclaimed October 10 as “Superintendent Dr. Irene Walton Turnage Day” in recognition of the district’s historic rise to a B-Rating. But in true Holly Springs fashion, the district chose not to simply receive the honor—they turned it into a day of giving back. Students, staff, and community members now spend each October 10 engaged in acts of community service, teaching students the power of gratitude and civic responsibility. That day has since become a district-wide tradition—one rooted in humility, celebration, and shared progress.

“Our students need to see what it means to give back,” Turnage says. “This community loves them, believes in them, and we want them to carry that spirit forward.”



HOLLY SPRINGS SCHOOL DISTRICT

DISTRICT CALENDAR 2025 – 2026

BOARD APPROVED: JANUARY 14, 2025

JULY 30–August 1, 2025

AUGUST 4, 2025

AUGUST 4–5, 2025

AUGUST 6, 2025

SEPTEMBER 1, 2025

SEPTEMBER 10, 2025

OCTOBER 6–10, 2025

OCTOBER 13, 2025

OCTOBER 14, 2025

OCTOBER 15, 2025

OCTOBER 22, 2025

NOVEMBER 12, 2025

NOVEMBER 24–28, 2025

DECEMBER 15–19, 2025

DECEMBER 22, 2025–JANUARY 5, 2026

JANUARY 5, 2026

JANUARY 6, 2026

JANUARY 14, 2026

JANUARY 19, 2026

FEBRUARY 4, 2026

FEBRUARY 16, 2026

MARCH 2–6, 2026

MARCH 9–13, 2026

MARCH 16, 2026

MARCH 17, 2026

March 25, 2026

APRIL 3, 2026

APRIL 6, 2026

APRIL 15, 2026

MAY 18–22, 2026

MAY 22, 2026

MAY 25, 2026

MAY 26, 2026

MAY 27–28, 2026

NEW LEADERS' ACADEMY

STAFF'S FIRST DAY

LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

STUDENTS' FIRST DAY

LABOR DAY HOLIDAY

PROGRESS REPORTS

FIRST NINE WEEKS EXAMS

FALL BREAK

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING DAY/FALL BREAK STUDENTS

STUDENTS RETURN

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES (3:30 – 6:30 PM) REPORT CARDS

PROGRESS REPORTS

THANKSGIVING HOLIDAYS

SECOND NINE WEEKS/FIRST SEMESTER EXAMS

CHRISTMAS/NEW YEAR'S HOLIDAYS

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING DAY/STUDENT HOLIDAYS

STUDENTS RETURN

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES (3:30 – 6:30 PM) REPORT CARDS

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. HOLIDAY

PROGRESS REPORTS

PRESIDENTS' DAY HOLIDAY (MAKE-UP DAY)

THIRD NINE WEEKS EXAMS

SPRING BREAK

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING DAY/STUDENT HOLIDAY (MAKE-UP DAY)

STUDENTS RETURN

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES (3:30 – 6:30 PM) REPORT CARDS

GOOD FRIDAY HOLIDAY

GOOD MONDAY HOLIDAY (MAKE-UP DAY)

PROGRESS REPORTS

4TH NINE WEEKS/SECOND SEMESTER EXAMS

GRADUATION

MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY

STUDENTS' LAST DAY (60% DAY)

PROFESSIONAL WORK DAYS (MAKE-UP DAY)

FIRST SEMESTER:

STUDENT DAYS – 90

FACULTY DAYS – 93

SECOND SEMESTER:

STUDENT DAYS – 90

FACULTY DAYS – 94

****The above calendar is subject to change for reasons of inclement weather conditions and/or state assessments. ****

MAKE-UP DAYS due to inclement weather conditions and/or state assessments will be as follows:

FEBRUARY 16, 2026 (PRESIDENT'S DAY HOLIDAY)

MARCH 16, 2026 (PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAY/STUDENT HOLIDAY)

APRIL 6, 2026 (GOOD MONDAY HOLIDAY)

MAY 27–28, 2026 (TEACHER WORK DAYS)



*Holly Springs High School
Graduation 2025*

