



NEWSLETTER



**Gadsden County School District
Celebrates Sunshine State Scholar
Amya Burns**
Submitted by: Allysun Davis, Director



Gadsden County High School's Mighty Jaguar Nation is "Setting the Bar" with higher heights as we introduce one of our natural scholars, Class of 2027 Miss Amya Maisha Burns.

Amya is an exceptional senior at Gadsden County High School (GCHS) whose academic excellence and leadership have distinguished her as one of the district's brightest scholars. She's a Dual Enrollment Honors student who's well on her way to earning an Associate of Arts degree from Tallahassee State College. This accomplishment is a testament to her determination, discipline, and commitment to academic success. Amya has remained focused on her personal and academic goals by maintaining academic excellence, ranking among the top students in her class and expanding her experiences beyond the classroom. Her hard work has resulted in an impressive 4.0 unweighted and 4.5965 weighted GPA. She's actively involved in numerous organizations, including the Math Club, National Society of High School Scholars (NSHSS), SOARS, Upward Bound, marching band, and community service initiatives such as Sustainable Tallahassee.



Amya's achievements have earned her numerous honors, including placement on the GCHS Principal's List, the Tallahassee State College Academic President's List, Student of the Month recognition, and the Principal of Entrepreneurship Certification. These accomplishments, along with her strong character, determination, and commitment to helping others succeed, have afforded her the distinguished opportunity to be recognized as a 2026 Sunshine State Scholar.

The Sunshine State Scholars program, sponsored by the Florida Department of Education, is a prestigious statewide initiative that honors high achieving students who demonstrate exceptional academic ability, leadership, and dedication to service. Scholars are selected from across Florida and represent the very best of their schools and districts.

Amya's dedication to excellence, coupled with her leadership and positive impact on her peers, truly embodies the spirit of this honor. With aspirations to pursue a career in architecture or a field related to sustainability, she continues to set ambitious goals and exceed expectations.

Please join us in celebrating Amya Burns for this outstanding achievement and her continued pursuit of excellence.

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

Commencement Exercises

May 21st @6:30pm: Crossroad Academy Charter School
May 22nd @7pm: Gadsden Co. High School

Elijah Key, Superintendent
Lisa Robinson, Asst. Superintendent,
Academic Services

School Counselors' Close-Out Presentation

Submitted by: Dr. Nickitra Jones

On April 15, 2026, school counselors attended the School Counselors' Close-Out presentation led by Dr. Nickitra Jones. The session emphasized completing end-of-year responsibilities with accuracy and fidelity while aligning with district, state, and American School Counselor Association (ASCA) standards. Key focus areas included documentation, accountability, student transitions, MTSS, graduation requirements, Section 504 compliance, and preparation for the upcoming school year.

On April 21, 2026, the College and Career Readiness Team met to strengthen postsecondary preparation. Priorities included expanding partnerships, increasing access for underrepresented students, enhancing career fairs and outreach, and improving academic support and data tracking. The next meeting is scheduled for May 12, 2026.

On April 22, 2026, the School Health Advisory Committee (SHAC) reviewed health services and system updates. Required screenings (vision, hearing, BMI, and scoliosis) have been completed and documented in FOCUS for all district and participating schools. Additional services included dental care at select elementary schools and EKG screenings for 100 student-athletes through a partnership with Florida State University.

Overall, these efforts reflect a strong commitment to student success, compliance, and collaborative support, ensuring a smooth close to the 2025-2026 school year and readiness for the next academic year.

Growing Strong: Head Start Registration and Program Success Updates

Submitted by: Valencia Denson, Director

The Gadsden County Head Start/PreK Program held its annual registration week for new incoming students for the 2026-2027 school year. The turnout was not so great in part to our two previous pop-up registrations in February and March. Overall, we have a plethora of applicants who have applied to our program.

As of Friday, April 17, we currently have 105 students returning next year, 70 waitlisted and 134 in new status. The waitlisted students will become accepted students and the new status students are missing one or more documents for enrollment. The total enrollment for Head Start is 227 students.

On April 15, the Early Learning Coalition of the Big Bend Regions conducted a VPK Contract Monitoring for three school sites (George W Minuroe, Midway Head Start and Stewart Street). After the review, we were congratulated on being in full compliance with all requirements outlined in the terms and conditions of the VPK contracts.

The program is preparing for our Focus Area 1 Review: Program Systems to be conducted May 5-7, 2026, from 9:00-4:00p.m. daily. This review is part of the monitoring process to review how well the program is running its internal systems. The data tours cover the component areas of Head Start (program management, policy council and governing body, education, health, ERSEA, family and community engagement, human resource and fiscal management).

Empowering Families Across Our Schools

Submitted by: Joannette Thomas, Federal Programs Director

Title I and Family and Community Engagement successfully hosted a Parent Night at Stewart Street Elementary, bringing together families from multiple schools. The event provided important information on Title I rights and available resources, helping parents feel informed and supported.

The evening also featured student performances and special guest appearances, including the Stewart Street chorus, the James A. Shanks boys' basketball team, and cheerleaders, creating an engaging and celebratory atmosphere.



Advancing Excellence: Instructional Support and Teacher Development

Submitted by: Kysha Hopkins, OPLS Director

The OPLS Program Specialists continue to support West Gadsden Middle School with intervention in Reading, Mathematics, Science, and Civics. We are committed to assisting our schools as we work together to improve teacher and student achievement.

Facilitated by Ms. Chelsea Murphy, participants in the Reading Endorsement cohort are making strong progress as they transition into Competency 5, which emphasizes the application of previously developed knowledge and skills. Throughout the course, they have demonstrated growth in evidence-based reading practices, data-driven instruction, and differentiated support for diverse learners. As they enter this final phase, participants will focus on implementing and refining these strategies in authentic classroom settings. The cohort remains on track for successful course completion on May 20, 2026.

Ms. Chelsea Murphy and Ms. Tenesia Clark are continuing to work with educators in obtaining professional certification.

Upcoming Professional Learnings

* May 16, 2026: Planning with the B.E.S.T. in Mind-Part 4 Sessions: Reflective Practices, Wellness, and Summer Assignment Planning (Fighting Against Summer Learning Loss) held at GTC from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm.

*May 23, 2026: "Teacher Believed in Me" for School Administrators and Educators held at the Gadsden Extension Center from 8:30 am – 3:30 pm. Registration deadline is May 8, 2026.

*May 26-27, 2026: FL VAM Professional Suites held at the Gadsden County School Boardroom from 9:00 am – 3:30 pm. This session will be for School Administrators only.

*July 13-16, 2026: GCSD Education Summit held at the Orchid Center from 8:00 am – 5:00 pm. Registration is open in ePDC.

Spring Progress & Planning for Continued Student Success

Submitted by: Kesandra Brown, ESE Director

As we move through the final stretch of the school year, the Departments of Exceptional Student Education (ESE), Student Services and Mental Health are actively engaged in critical end of year processes that support student achievement, compliance and continuity of care.

Alternate Assessment Completion

We are proud to share that alternate assessment administration is nearing completion across the district. This process reflects the dedication and collaboration of our educators, support staff and school leaders who work diligently to ensure that all students are provided equitable opportunities to demonstrate their learning. The careful planning, individualized supports and adherence to state guidelines have been instrumental in maintaining the integrity of this important assessment process.

Extended School Year (ESY) Planning Underway

In alignment with Individualized Education Program (IEP) team decisions, ESY planning is currently in progress. Teams are reviewing student data to determine eligibility and ensure that services are designed to prevent regression and support the maintenance of critical skills. Our focus remains on providing targeted, meaningful instruction that meets the unique needs of each student throughout the summer months.

Integrated Student Support Systems

Across ESE, Student Services and Mental Health, we continue to strengthen our multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) to ensure students receive academic, behavioral, and social emotional assistance. Collaboration among departments has been key in addressing student needs holistically, reinforcing positive outcomes and supporting overall well being.

Mental Health & Wellness Focus

As the school year concludes, our mental health teams remain committed to supporting students through transitions, managing end of year stress and promoting resilience. Schools continue to implement strategies that foster safe, supportive learning environments while connecting students and families to appropriate resources.

Looking Ahead

As we prepare for summer programming and begin planning for the upcoming school year, our departments remain focused on continuous improvement, compliance, and student centered practices. We are grateful for the ongoing support of our staff, families and community partners in helping us meet the diverse needs of our students.

**Student Testing in Full Swing
Across Our Schools**

Submitted by: Caroline McKinnon, Coordinator

In addition to everything else that’s going on in our schools, students have been very busy testing! Students have completed iReady and the Writing assessment. Some schools are wrapping up the Florida Alternate Assessment for students who are enrolled in Access courses. Now we’re preparing to administer PM3 and EOCs to students.

Testing Schedule

<h1>MAY 2026</h1>				1
				SSES: Science HMS: ELA GCH: Florida Civic Literacy Exam
4	5	6	7	8
GWM: Math SSES: ELA & Math HMS: ELA GCH: ELA	GWM: ELA & Math CES: ELA SSES: ELA & Math GEMS: ELA HMS: ELA JASM: ELA WGM: ELA GCH: ELA	GWM: ELA & Math CES: ELA SSES: ELA & Math GEMS: Math/Algebra HMS: ELA JASM: ELA WGM: ELA GCH: ELA Retakes	GWM: ELA & Math GRBES: ELA CES: Math SSES: ELA & Math HMS: Math JASM: Civics/Biology/Science	GWM: ELA & Math HMS: Science GCH: U.S. History EOC
11	12	13	14	15
SSES: ELA & Math HMS: Math GCH: Biology EOC	GRBES: Math CES: Math SSES: ELA & Math GEMS: Civics/Algebra/Biology HMS: Math JASM: Math WGM: Math GCH: Geometry EOC	GRBES: Math HMS: Math/Algebra JASM: Math/Algebra WGM: Math GCH: Algebra EOC	GRBES: Math HMS: Science/Civics/Biology	HMS: Biology
18	19	20	21	22
	WGM: Civics/Algebra	WGM: Science		

The Data Speaks

Submitted by: Kimberly Cummings, Coordinator

The end-of-year Progress Monitoring data for I-Ready has been received. As this assessment is aligned with the state FAST assessment, the results provide valuable insight as we approach testing in May. While the data shows measurable student growth, it also highlights key areas that require continued focus during this final instructional stretch.

Administrators and staff collaborated to analyze results across three assessments to ensure consistency in understanding and interpretation. This deeper review helped determine whether a common language was being used when discussing student performance. Overall, the findings indicate alignment in identified needs, as similar trends were observed in both STAR and Progress Monitoring 2 data.

Next Steps

The data is being used as a lens for both teachers and administrators to make targeted, final instructional adjustments. By triangulating results from Progress Monitoring 2, STAR, and i-Ready, the school has been able to plan more intentionally and strategically to meet individual student needs. This approach has supported the implementation of tiered instruction, allowing for small-group interventions that both support and extend student learning.

Additionally, after analyzing students’ Value-Added Model (VAM) data, a clearer picture has emerged to guide preparation in key content areas, including math, reading, and science. This comprehensive use of data ensures that instruction remains focused, responsive, and aligned to student needs as testing approaches.

District staff continue their presence on campuses, providing academic support and collaborating with administrators. The data, which reflect steady improvement, highlights the need to maintain a sense of urgency in accelerating student learning.