



AUGUST 2026

ACADEMIC SERVICES Newsletter

"One Team, One Focus"

Academic Services Begins the New School Year

The Academic Services leadership team began the 2026–2027 school year with a renewed focus on collaboration, communication, and coordinated support for schools. In addition to participating in the district's Extended Executive Management Team meetings, directors and coordinators came together for a focused Academic Services meeting to discuss the priorities and shared work of their departments.

During the meeting, team members reflected on the previous school year, celebrated departmental accomplishments, and identified strengths, challenges, and areas for continued growth. Each department also shared its major goals, current initiatives, and the support needed to accomplish its priorities for the new school year.

The central focus of the meeting was strengthening collaboration across Academic Services. Because many departments share responsibilities that directly affect teaching, learning, professional development, student services, and school improvement, the team discussed ways to better coordinate school support, align programs and resources, and provide principals and teachers with clear and consistent information.

Moving forward, these focused Academic Services meetings will complement the district's Extended Executive Management Team meetings by providing additional opportunities to review student achievement data, discuss school needs, share departmental updates, celebrate accomplishments, and coordinate next steps. Through this approach, the Academic Services team will continue working collectively to support students, teachers, school leaders, and families throughout Gadsden County.



GROWING LEADERS, STRENGTHENING SCHOOLS

SUBMITTED BY: ALLYSUN DAVIS, K12 DIRECTOR

Gadsden County School District leaders are preparing for the 2026–2027 school year with a renewed focus on intentional leadership, data-driven instruction, and student success. District directors, instructional specialists, principals, assistant principals, and teachers recently participated in the Florida Department of Education's Summer Institute, engaging in professional learning designed to strengthen teaching, learning, and leadership across the district.

The Summer Institute focused on several areas that will guide our work this school year: leading with the end in mind, using data to drive instruction, remaining focused on our goals, and recognizing the importance of every student subgroup. These areas reinforce our commitment to using evidence to make decisions, monitoring student progress, and ensuring that all students have access to high-quality instruction and opportunities for success.



While our leaders continue to learn and grow, they are also being recognized for the knowledge and practices they bring to the profession. Recently, four Gadsden County principals were invited to participate in a leadership panel hosted by the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC). During the panel, they shared practical strategies with school leaders from across the Panhandle on managing day-to-day school operations, strengthening school culture, and creating effective learning environments for students and staff.



Panelists were encouraged to move beyond theory and provide concrete examples and strategies that other school leaders could take back and implement in their own schools. This marks the third time Gadsden County principals have been selected to share their expertise and best practices with educational leaders throughout the Panhandle.

The Academic Services Department remains intentional about providing our leaders with opportunities to both learn from others and share their own expertise. Through professional learning, mentoring, school-based coaching, instructional monitoring, leadership development, and partnerships with educational organizations, we continue to strengthen leadership capacity throughout the district.

As we begin the new school year, our focus is clear: lead with purpose, use data to guide our decisions, remain focused on what matters most, and provide our leaders with the support they need to create schools where students and staff can thrive. When our leaders grow, our schools grow—and ultimately, our students benefit.

IMPORTANT DATES

Sept. 3rd

EEMT Meeting

Sept. 7th

Labor Day
(District Holiday)

Sept. 10th

PLTM Meeting

Sept. 17th

Academic Services
Meeting

Sept. 24th

Principals Professional
Development

BUILDING CAPACITY THROUGH PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

SUBMITTED BY: KYSHA HOPKINS, DIRECTOR

The Office of Professional Learning has begun the 2026–2027 school year with a strong focus on safety, instructional excellence, educator certification, and school-based support.

Coaches CPR Training

Twenty-nine athletic coaches and physical education teachers participated in Coaches CPR training conducted by Gadsden County Emergency Services on August 4 and August 7 at Gadsden County High School.

Participants received hands-on training in chest compressions, rescue breathing, choking response, first aid, and the effective use of an automated external defibrillator. This training helps ensure that staff members are prepared to respond appropriately during a medical emergency.



Proficient to Powerful Professional Learning

On August 5, 2026, educators throughout Gadsden County Public Schools participated in an engaging 75-minute professional learning session presented by the Bureau of School Improvement team. The session, “Proficient to Powerful: 3 UP—So What, Now What,” was attended by 75 educators at Gadsden County High School and 61 educators at West Gadsden Middle School.

Participants were challenged to make “one move, one shift” by selecting one instructional practice to strengthen during the first 30 days of school:

1. Change the question.
2. Change the task.
3. Change the support.

Educators were encouraged to start small, examine the evidence of student learning, and adjust their instructional practices as needed.

Certification Fall Tour of Schools

The Certification Fall Tour of Schools will be held during September and October. Through this initiative, the Office of Professional Learning will meet directly with educators to provide individualized assistance with their certification requirements.

A registration link has been shared with all schools, and educators should sign up by Friday, August 21, 2026. Ms. Chelsea Murphy and Ms. Tenesia Clark will facilitate the school visits.

New Teacher Induction Academy

The New Teacher Induction Academy Mentor/Mentee Orientation will be held on August 24, 2026, at 3:00 p.m. Twelve educators and their assigned mentors will participate in the program during the 2026–2027 school year. Mrs. LaTasha Pride will serve as the facilitator.

The New Teacher Induction Academy provides foundational support for educators as they progress into the Gadsden Professional Learning Certification Program and work toward upgrading from a temporary teaching certificate to a professional certificate.

Program Specialists Begin School Support

District program specialists have begun visiting schools to develop individualized plans of support. These visits will help ensure that each school receives assistance based on its specific instructional needs.

Ms. LaTasha Pride will provide support in English language arts, Mrs. Patricia Vickers will support mathematics, and Mr. Dominique Dantley will assist with additional content areas. The program specialists look forward to partnering with school leaders and teachers to strengthen instruction and improve student outcomes.

Upcoming Professional Learning

August 27, 2026 ~ “Knowing Your Students’ Worth”
8:30 a.m.

GCHS Media Center

A STRONG START TO THE 2026-2027 SCHOOL YEAR

SUBMITTED BY: CAROLINE MCKINNON, COORDINATOR

Gadsden County Public Schools is off to an exciting start to the 2026-2027 school year! Following several informative professional learning sessions during the summer, the Office of Assessment and Accountability is prepared to support our schools as they continue developing and preparing scholars for success beyond high school.

Beginning of Year Assessment

The first statewide assessment windows of the school year are as follows:

Prekindergarten: August 18-September 18

Grades K-2: August 24-September 4

Grades 3-10: September 1-11

These beginning-of-year assessments will provide educators with valuable information about students' academic strengths and areas needing additional support. Teachers and school leaders will use the results to guide instruction, plan interventions, and ensure that students receive the support necessary to make meaningful academic progress.

The Classic Learning Test and SAT will also be administered on Saturday, August 22, for students who have registered to participate.

Student achievement requires attention to more than assessment results. Consistent attendance, positive student behavior, meaningful parent involvement, and effective use of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports are all essential to improving student outcomes. The Office of Assessment and Accountability will assist schools with identifying students who are experiencing attendance challenges and developing strategies to encourage regular school attendance.

2026-2027 Goals

This year, two of our primary goals are to assess at least 95% of eligible students at every school and for the district to achieve a school grade of "B." With the continued commitment of our students, families, teachers, administrators, staff, School Board, and community partners, we can accomplish these goals together.

GROWING, LEARNING & THRIVING: WELCOME BACK, HEAD START/PRE-K!

SUBMITTED BY: VALENCIA DENSON, DIRECTOR

We are excited to begin another wonderful year of learning, growing, and making memories in our Head Start/Pre-K classrooms! Our classrooms are filled with happy, curious children who are ready to explore new ideas, make friends, and develop important skills for kindergarten and beyond.

We are especially excited to say that our Head Start/Pre-K program is fully enrolled, with 227 bright scholars allotted based on our Head Start grant. The Title I/VPK program has 13 students. In total, there are 13 Head Start classes and 4 Title I classes. However, we are still accepting applications daily.

Five-Year Goals

As part of the Head Start five-year grant period, our program has developed three five-year goals based on findings from our Self-Assessment. These goals focus on:

- Parental Involvement
- Kindergarten Readiness
- Attendance

During Parent Orientation and Home Visits, families were informed about these goals and the steps we are taking to achieve them. We look forward to partnering with our families to ensure our children have a successful start and are prepared for kindergarten and beyond.

Male Involvement Initiative

We are excited to kick off our Male Involvement Initiative with Muscle Men & Motors: Cars, Trucks and Motorcycles Show!

 Monday, August 31, 2026

 5:30 p.m.

 Quincy Area 3 Grounds

We invite our families and male role models to come out, connect with our children, and enjoy an evening celebrating family and community involvement.

Cheers to a fantastic school year filled with learning, laughter, friendship, and growth! We are so happy to welcome our Head Start/Pre-K families back and look forward to all the wonderful things our children will accomplish together.