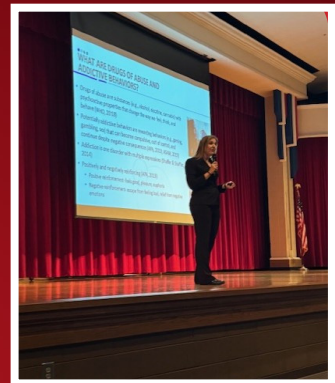




Student Services Board Report

Student Services and School Operations partnered together to bring Dr. Giordano to speak to administrators, teachers, and parents about mental health issues and addictive behaviors.



The Houston County School District hosted a parent training session on November 21 at 5 pm at Veterans High School on mental health, addiction, and vaping. The session was led by Dr. Amanda Giordano, Associate Professor, Department of Counseling and Human Development Services, for the University of Georgia.

Parents and guardians learned about substance use among youth, with an emphasis on vaping, cannabis, alcohol, and nonprescription stimulant use. Additional information on addictive behaviors among youth, with an emphasis on gaming, social media, and self-injury was also shared.

“The mental health and well-being of our students is a top priority,” said Dr. Dana Wiggins, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services for the Houston County School District. “Being able to share and discuss the ways our students are impacted by the decisions they make is very important to us. By partnering with our parents and guardians on topics such as this, we are able to make them more aware of the dangers and consequences of addictive behaviors and how it effects their overall health.”

Revitalizing Relationships Face-to-Face



In November, the National Council for Administrators of Special Education (CASE) and the Georgia Council for Administrators of Special Education (GCASE) held their annual conferences in Savannah, Georgia. The GCASE conference theme, “Revitalizing Relationships Face-to-Face,” set the tone for a dynamic exchange of ideas and innovations. Houston County’s Student Services staff showcased three key initiatives, sharing their district’s successes with administrators from across the state. Kristi-Lee Arrington, Bonnie Brown, Marina Jones, and Erika Abrahms highlighted the impactful services and partnerships developed through the Lindsey Student Support Center. Kristi-Lee Arrington, Brandi Mauney, and Meredith Potter presented the Work Ready Intern Program (WRIP), which equips students at the Transition Academy with essential skills for gainful employment, emphasizing its partnership with the School Nutrition Program. Additionally, Paula Cooper, alongside her husband Sean Cooper, Director of Southwest GLRS, delivered a presentation on “Time-Wise Teaching: Empowering Educators with Behavior Tools.” Adding to the district’s representation, two Houston County teacher leaders, Melanie Duncan and Kim Grizzle, were honored with scholarships to attend the conference through the Administrator Development Academy of GCASE. These presentations and recognition showcased Houston County’s commitment to collaboration and advancing student success.

Houston County Sharks News

The Varsity Sharks traveled to the University of Georgia on November 15th to raise awareness for adapted sports. The Sharks partnered with UGA to lead a field day for college students. They led drills and scrimmages for handball, basketball, and football.



The Sharks won the 2024 Handball State Championship on Saturday, November 2nd. Since 2009, the Sharks have won 13 handball championships. Way to go Sharks!

Sharks at National CASE Convention



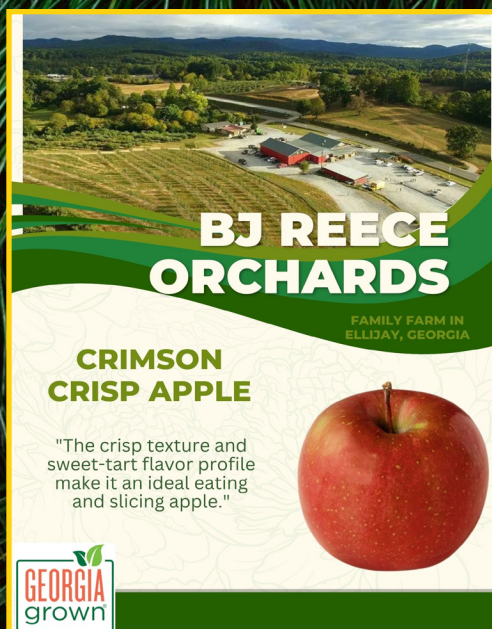
The Houston County Sharks attended the annual National CASE Convention in Savannah, GA to share experiences related to adapted sports. Anthony Cuti and Ashlyn Stevens each shared what the program has done for them. The Sharks also enjoyed dominating the short scrimmage against some prominent CASE members.

School Nutrition Program News

"Eat Local" is a phrase that has grown in popularity throughout the years. Many health benefits are tied to eating items that are grown in the same region where the consumer lives. This year we received a Local Food for Schools grant that requires purchasing Georgia Grown products or products from surrounding states that are located 400 miles or fewer from our county.

This program is an exciting new endeavor that allows us access to more farm to school items to showcase on our menus! So far this year, we have received apples from B.J. Reece Orchards, a family farm located in Ellijay, Georgia, stone ground grits from Palmetto Farms in South Carolina, and Satsuma mandarin oranges from The Growers Network of small farms in Georgia. Our students are loving having new varieties of fruit offered at mealtime. One manager even reported that many of her students came back for seconds on their apples when she served the Crimson Crisp Apples from B.J. Reece.

We love watching kids enjoy fresh, seasonal produce. We can hardly wait to serve Georgia Grown collards, pasture raised pork sausage, and many other local products in the near future!





Our Social Services Department Loves Serving Others!

Members of the Social Services department kicked off their Thanksgiving Break by doing what they do best—serving others. Several school social workers and other members of the Student Services team gathered on Sunday, November 24, 2024, at Church in the Park in Perry, GA, to deliver Thanksgiving baskets to families in need.

Through this partnership, 103 families received Thanksgiving baskets filled with canned vegetables, a frozen turkey, and dinner rolls. The Social Services department has partnered with Church in the Park for nearly ten years to provide this much-needed service.

During this season, the Social Services department collaborates with local businesses and organizations across the county. A special thanks to the Zaltana Group of Perry, GA, for sponsoring a fully cooked Thanksgiving meal for a family of six who currently resides in a local shelter.