Schools across Hinds County School District held reading fairs in December. The reading fair provides students in pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade the opportunity to share a story through a project display board. Books can be fiction or non-fiction, and projects can be completed individually, with peers, or with family members. There are many categories in which students can compete.

Winners at school reading fairs were able to advance to the district level reading fair on January 26. Winners from the district fair advanced to the Regional Fair on March 3 at the MS School for the Deaf and the Blind in Jackson.

Students used great creativity in displaying their story on project boards. To summarize the story, each student had to include specific elements on the board, like the following: title, author, plot summary, setting, main characters, conflict, resolution, and others. Boards were scored by judges who used a rubric that included categories such as: clarity of writing, creativity, quality of project, thoroughness, and interest evoked. The reading fair makes reading fun for all!
THE RED CROSS CLUB AT MAIN STREET RESTART CENTER

In the Red Cross Club, students participated in three service projects that allowed them to compile official volunteer hours with the Red Cross organization. The first service project students at Main Street completed was creating Christmas cards to be distributed as gift cards provided by the South Hinds County Rotary Club. These Christmas cards were given to select students to enhance their Christmas holidays.

The second service project by the club was on December 10, when students assisted in organizing food items at the Mississippi Food Bank in Jackson, MS. Students also organized and collected special items to create “Totes for Hope” for many of our local veterans. It’s obvious that students in the Red Cross Club are devoted and determined to give back and serve our community.

I don't think limits.

-Usain Bolt

BYRAM MIDDLE SCHOOL AT CAMP WESLEY PINES

Two clubs at Byram Middle School took a field trip to Camp Wesley Pines in Galloway, MS. The Byram Middle School Science Club and the Interact Club visited the camp to participate in a high ropes outdoor course that engaged them in personal development, as well as team building experiences.

This ropes course is constructed 20-30 feet above the ground in the trees.

Students were able to study principles of physical science and mathematics during the course. They explored the effects of unbalanced forces on the speed and direction of an object in motion. Students used the scientific method to explore the speed of objects of different weights (the students) as they traversed down a zip line. They also discovered that each student’s weight had a significant effect on the speed and time it took to complete the zip-line portion of the ropes course. Students who had more weight traversed down the zip line much faster than students with less weight! Students also used mathematical formulas to calculate force and acceleration. The trip was a great opportunity for students to see how math and science can apply to real-life situations.
THE HCSD JOB FAIR

On March 25, the Hinds County School District held a job fair at Byram Middle School from 8:30 am—12:30 pm. The job fair was open to prospective teachers, teacher assistants, bus drivers, custodial staff, and food service employees.

Every school in the district was represented by the administration at each school. Some schools brought additional staff members too, like administrative staff and teachers, to talk to prospective employees. Durham Transportation, Kelly Services and Service Master all participated in the job fair too. Each of these companies contract with HCSD to provide services like transportation, substitute teaching, and custodial work.

HCSD TEAMs UP WITH THE UNITED WAY

Staff in Hinds County School District are teaming up again this year to raise money for the United Way. All money raised will be kept in local community United Way programs. Last year’s campaign raised over $6,000, so the district is aiming to beat that amount this year.

The campaign will continue through May 13. Employees can make donations in several ways: a one time donation of cash or by check or through a monthly payroll deduction. If you are a community stakeholder or business who would like to contribute on behalf of a HCSD school, please contact the principal of that school to discuss making a donation on the school’s behalf. With United Way, HCSD asks everyone to:

“Join hands. Open your heart. Lend your muscle. Find your voice.”

- United Way of the Capital Area
On 3/30/17, students from every school in the district gathered together to celebrate the fine arts: art, dance and music. The annual Fine Arts Festival was a successful event with a full audience in attendance at Cain Cochran Hall at Hinds Community College. There were musical performances from elementary, middle and high school choirs led by expert clinicians. Tabatha Ash, assistant director of the award-winning Northwest Rankin Middle School Cougar Show Choir, served as clinician for the elementary choir. Chris Young, National Board Certified Teacher and Choral Director at Sumner Hill Jr. High, served as clinician for the middle school choir. James Hawkins, who has sung professionally with Opera South and has been in Music Education for over 40 years, served as clinician for the high school choir.

Each choir was composed of students from schools across the district. School dancers from Gary Road Intermediate performed while the elementary choir sang. Byram Middle School Dancers performed with the High School choir. Stunning student art, from Kindergarteners to high school seniors, was also on display for visitors to view.
Middle school students in HCSD recently participated in the Central MS Regional Science Fair held at Jackson State University on March 23 and March 24. HCSD had seven students that placed in the competition. Those students that placed 1st, 2nd, or 3rd advanced to the State Science Fair at Mississippi State University in Starkville on April 6.

To compete, students were required to conduct an experiment and record the process for presentation on a project board. Project boards typically included information like: the research question, the hypothesis, materials list, procedures, data, abstract, and a conclusion.

Projects were sorted into 13 different categories, and awards were given in each category.

⇒ Organic Chemistry
⇒ Earth and Environmental Science
⇒ Animal Sciences

⇒ Medicine and Health
⇒ Microbiology
⇒ Physics and Astronomy
⇒ Engineering
⇒ Computer Science and Math
⇒ Robotics and Intelligent Design
⇒ Botany
⇒ Behavioral and Social Sciences
⇒ Biochemistry
⇒ Inorganic Chemistry

HCSD had seven students who placed in the regional competition and are listed below by school, name, grade, title of project, and award placement. Those who advanced to the state level competition are typed in boldface.

- CMS- Emelia Burke, 8th grade - Under Pressure: 3rd place
- CMS -Tara Williams, 8th Grade - Adrenaline Rush: 4th place
- CMS- Zion Culbreath, 8th Grade - Killer Baby Food: 3rd place
- CMS- L'Garion Louisville, 7th Grade- Degrees of Attraction: 4th place
- CMS- Nicolas Lohrstorfer, 7th Grade- What Ants Prefer: 1st place
- BEEMS- Marlon Kidd Jr., 8th Grade- How To Build a Better Battery: 4th place
- BEEMS- Kyla Nelson, 8th Grade- The Color Changing Milk: 5th place

These students are to be commended for their hard work and dedication to the scientific process!
The National Education Association (NEA) developed a program 20 years ago to build a nation of readers. It’s called Read Across America. The program actually goes year-round with a central focus on motivating students to read through events, partnerships, and reading resources.

One week of every year, however, there’s a special celebration in honor of Dr. Seuss’ birthday. NEA’s Read Across America Day is a nationwide reading celebration that takes place annually on March 2—Dr. Seuss’ birthday.

Across the country, thousands of schools, libraries, and community centers participate. HCSD students love this week, as schools have special events and guest speakers from the community who come to read to the children.

It’s most important to know, however, that family members reading daily make the biggest impact on a child’s education. Think about this statistic: Reading aloud is, according to the landmark 1985 report “Becoming a Nation of Readers,” “the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading.”

"You're never too old, too wacky, too wild, to pick up a book and read with a child."

-Dr. Seuss

It may be fun to celebrate the joy of reading with special events during the year, but we’ve got to keep our kids vested in reading every day!

Whether you’re the parent of an upcoming Kindergarten student for the 2017-2018 school year or an upcoming seventh grader, it’s important to know immunizations are required. Proof must be submitted to schools by forms (Forms 121 or 122) signed by District Health Officers, a physician, or a nurse.

For a specific list of immunizations required for enrollment in any public kindergarten, elementary, or secondary school in Mississippi, please see the following link to the MS Department of Health:

The Department of Health has a Hinds Co. Health Dept. located at:
Jackson Medical Mall
350 W. Woodrow Wilson
Suite 411
Jackson, MS 39213
Map


HCSD has a pre-Kindergarten program that serves students with the greatest socio-economic and academic needs. The goals of the program are to offer educational services to students not receiving preschool services; build a foundation for common core learning ensuring that more students are ready for kindergarten; and involve parents at earlier stages of their child’s educational journey.

The pre-K program is located at two schools in HCSD: Bolton-Edwards Elementary/Middle School and Utica Elementary/Middle School.

Both schools are staffed by highly qualified teachers and staff who use the MS Early Learning Standards for Four Year Old Children in English Language Arts and Mathematics. In addition to those subjects, students are also provided with learning opportunities in social/personal development, social studies, art, physical development and technology.

To qualify, students must be four years old on or before September 1 and must live in the Bolton-Edwards or Utica school zones. For more information about the application process, please contact the Office of Federal Programs at 601.857.5222.

—Confucius

Tell me and I’ll forget. Show me and I’ll remember. Involve me and I’ll understand.”
On Thursday, March 9, 2017, the Hinds County School Board recognized a “Parent of the Year” from each school in the district. Families, administrators, faculty, staff and friends attended the award ceremony to show their support to these parents.

The nomination process is rigorous and includes a letter of recommendation from the building principal and an application. These documents must reflect involvement in service-oriented activities, such as PTA, district projects, community work, fundraising, athletics, etc. Awards and recognitions are also described within the application/nomination process.

All of these parents are noted for their outstanding dedication to not only their child, but to other students and to the school. One parent is selected to be the District Parent of the Year, and that award went to Lori Downing, whose children attend Raymond Elementary School.

Lori Downing
Parent at Raymond Elementary School
HCSD District Parent of Year!

Mrs. Downing has worked with the PTO welcoming new staff, helping parents become more involved, promoting the school in the community, and helping with fundraisers. To encourage interaction between PTO, parent and employees, Mrs. Downing created an “About You” form. The information provided on this form allows her to buy birthday presents for each of the staff and special gifts for the Employee of the Month.

Her desire is for other parents to be more active in the school community. As PTO vice-president, she manages the PTO Facebook page, where she posts school events, contest winners, and reminders for upcoming activities.

Mrs. Downing also designs and publishes the PTO monthly newsletter. This newsletter informs parents of ways to become involved with PTO and other school activities. There are two principles that Mrs. Downing wants to pass on to her children: Invest in family first and then invest in those around you!

HCSD congratulates all the Parents of the Year and sincerely thanks them for helping to improve teaching and learning in every school!
HCSD recognizes Star Employees for November and December

November’s Employee of the Month

Levi White, Receptionist at Central Office, was selected as the HCSD Employee of the Month for November. His co-workers had many positive things to say about him:

- Always available when I need him
- Consistently answers the phone with a smile and a friendly “hello”
- Has a very warm rapport with everyone he comes in contact with, no matter how difficult
- Goes out of his way to help a parent, citizen, or co-worker find requested information
- Knows when to ask for additional help from team member if he doesn’t have the answer

December’s Employee of the Month

Felicia Barnes, Federal Programs Project Manager at the Central Office, was named December’s Employee of the Month. Here are what Ms. Barnes’ co-workers had to say about her:

- Always dedicates time and energy to make sure work and other tasks are complete and of high quality
- Encourages others by providing kind words and a friendly smile
- Supports the district’s mission and goals by always producing high quality work and consistently and continually offering assistance to others
- Always has a positive attitude when dealing with employees, parents, and community members
- Remains positive and polite even when not receiving the same
Human Resources chose “Works Well Under Pressure” for January’s theme. Nominees for the month of January were expected to perform on their jobs successfully, even under high pressure. They are able to manage their stress, think positively, perform effectively, and even make their stress work in their favor.

In February, the HCSD Human Resources Department chose the theme of “Performance Versatility.” Nominees for February were employees who can really “roll with the punches.” If asked late to stay, handle someone else’s appointments, finish someone else’s assignment or deal with an unexpected event, these employees respond willingly and even enthusiastically.

They are always up for a challenge. Employees with performance versatility treat contingencies such as these like opportunities to learn and grow.

**JANUARY’S EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH**

Dianne Halcomb, Teacher Assistant at Gary Road Elementary School, was named the employee of the month for January at the HCSD Board meeting on February 9, 2017.

Ms. Halcomb is consistent with her job performance, even under high pressure. She is able to meet deadlines, handle conflicts and adversity with a sense of challenge, confidence, commitment and control.

She is a difference maker! The Theme for the month was “Works Well Under Pressure.”

Here’s what a few more coworkers had to say about Mrs. Halcomb:

- great work ethic
- does whatever is asked without complaining
- will volunteer to help wherever/whenever needed
- great example for students.

**FEBRUARY’S EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH**

Chivonna Roberts works as a PE assistant at Raymond High School. She is known there for having performance versatility. Here are some comments from the co-worker who nominated her:

- At a recent away basketball game, Ms. Roberts helped diffuse a potentially hazardous situation when fans from opposing teams began to disagree. She remained calm and effectively handled the situation.
- There have been a few times when she had to serve as a sub for different teachers. She even goes as far as to leave notes for the teacher.
HCSD is a collaborative environment where we explore the world, experience authentic learning, enhance our character, envision our dreams, pursue excellence and celebrate success.

**MISSION:**

Providing an engaging and empowering environment that ensures excellence

**VISION**

According to research, our children truly do look to their parents and caregivers to get answers and advice on tough questions and decisions.

Spending as little as fifteen minutes a day engaged in genuine conversation about everyday life and your kid’s feelings can make a huge difference in their lives. Here are a few questions you may want to incorporate into those conversations:

- Tell me the best thing that happened today. Did anything not go so well?
- What was lunch time like?
- What happened on the playground today?
- If you’d like to know more about conversations with your child about bullying, I encourage you to check out the link/source below. Together let’s help our kids understand, “It’s not big to make others feel small.”

https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/talking-about-it/

Sincerely,

Delesicia Martin

For regular blogs from Dr. Martin, visit the HCSD homepage and click on “Superintendents Corner.”