

# BCS News & Notes

A newsletter for parents, students, staff and community

July 21, 2011



**Board of Education President Phyllis Wyne speaks at a press conference about services for displaced families while Superintendent Craig Witherspoon looks on.**

## **District offers services to displaced**

The April 27 tornado that ripped through Pratt City, Smithfield Estates and other areas displaced more than 1,000 Birmingham families, many of whom had children attending the Birmingham City Schools.

Nearly three months later, many families are living with relatives or friends, others have moved into housing outside the zones for their children's schools and still others remain in hotels. And now it's less than three weeks before the Aug. 10 start of the 2011-2012 school year.

"We want to let those displaced families know that their children can continue attending the schools they were in before the storm and we will help them every way we can to do that," said Superintendent Craig Witherspoon. "We have an array of assistance for these families."

Most of the children in the affected families attended South Hampton Elementary School, Daniel Payne Middle School and Jackson-Olin High School.

"The principals of those schools have been receiving calls from parents who say they want their children to return to their schools but need help getting them there," said Phyllis Wyne, president of the Birmingham Board

## **Ramsay High gets nod for IB status**

Ramsay High School learned this week that it has been accepted as a candidate school for International Baccalaureate Diploma Program.

Phillips Academy has been accepted as a candidate for the Primary Program and Middle Years Program, which means the Birmingham City School System will have schools in the candidacy phase for all three levels of IB programs. No other district in the Birmingham metropolitan area offers IB programs from kindergarten through high school.

"This is wonderful news. We want to offer students and parents a wider variety of opportunities," said Superintendent Craig Witherspoon. "The IB program will offer students a rigorous curriculum that meets international standards."

During the candidacy phase, Ramsay's faculty will work toward fulfilling the requirements for gaining full IB status. Teachers, for example, will have access to an online IB curriculum center where they can obtain IB publications and teaching materials.

If Ramsay successfully completes the candidacy phase, it will become an IB World School. IB World Schools share a common philosophy – a commitment to high-quality, challenging, international education.

## **Registration set Aug. 1-5**

Registration will be held Monday, Aug. 1, through Friday, Aug. 5, at all schools.

Times for elementary, middle and K-8 schools are 8 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. High school times are 8:30 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

The first day of school for students is Wednesday, Aug. 10.

## **Housing expo set for July 30**

South Hampton Elementary School will be the site of a housing assistance expo from noon to 5 p.m. Saturday, July 30, for families displaced by the April 27 tornado. The Federal Emergency Management Agency and other agencies and organizations will be available to answer questions about housing and insurance. FEMA is sponsoring the event.

## Services, From Page 1

of Education, who represents the devastated neighborhoods. "The message we want to give to those parents is that we will provide transportation and other help if they enroll their children in our schools."

District officials will work with families to arrange busing, even if the families are living in neighboring districts. In some cases, pickup points will be established so that parents can take their children to a central location to board a school bus.

Other services will include assistance with school supplies and uniforms, waiver of registration fees and free tutoring.

"We want to go beyond those kinds of services, however," Witherspoon said. "Families have overwhelming needs that they have difficulty meeting when they lose their homes. Each family is different, and it can take two or three years to work through all the issues."

Working with non-profit agencies, the district will provide families who have registered with the Federal Emergency Management Agency with case managers who will work with them until all of their issues are solved.

"We want to help stabilize the families of our students. Children will do better not only in school but in life if their families are stable," Witherspoon said.

The district is planning a back-to-school rally for South Hampton, Daniel Payne and Jackson-Olin from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 6, at Jackson-Olin. The rally will include activities for families but also will be an opportunity for the district to provide information and link families with resources.

In addition, South Hampton is planning an event from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, July 30, in the school gym. Children who attend will receive backpacks filled with school supplies, lunch and dental screenings.

Ms. Wyne said the affected schools are receiving numerous offers of donations and other assistance from individuals, churches and organizations, some of them from other states. The district plans to coordinate those offers so that those who need help receive it without being overwhelmed.

District officials are asking anyone who wants to help to call the United Way's 211 line.

## Stories needed for newsletter

If you know of something good happening in the Birmingham City Schools and you want to tell others the news, write a few paragraphs for BCS News & Notes and e-mail the information to Michaelle Chapman, director of communications, at [mchapman@bhm.k12.al.us](mailto:mchapman@bhm.k12.al.us). Digital photos also are needed. Ms. Chapman is editor of "BCS News & Notes."