Faculty and staff throughout Birmingham City Schools rolled out the red carpet, turned up the music and welcomed scholars back on Aug. 2, 2021 for another exciting year of learning.

The academic year for BCS began earlier than previous years. The calendar provides for intersessions between grading periods to allow additional enrichment and remediation. Superintendent Dr. Mark Sullivan said the new calendar will give students an opportunity to continue recovering unfinished learning or gain other academic tools to help propel them forward in their achievement.

Schools throughout the district used their own brand of energy to motivate students on the first day. At Oliver Elementary School, Sparky the fire dog was on hand to greet students. Principal Jennifer Love-Lott and teacher Ternikolas Ramirez escorted Sparky and reminded the students to take learning to the next level in 2021-22.

At R.C. Hemphill Elementary, students entered through an arch of rainbow colored balloons and a Welcome Back sign. The faculty and staff cheered the arrival of their scholars.

Phillips Academy brought out the red carpet and Principal Dr. Emeka Nzeocha dressed in school colors from head to toe – a red suit and shoes. He was on the school steps as scholars arrived with cheerleaders performing and music playing on the loud speaker.

Educators said their goal was to make the first day an exciting launching point for a successful school year.

“Every day of learning is important. I have seen our teachers, principals, custodians, child nutrition staff members, and many other employees going that extra step to show our scholars the importance of their presence on the first day and throughout the school year,” Superintendent Sullivan said. “The first day of school was exciting, and we look forward to a great year.”
THE SUPERINTENDENT SPEAKS

We've been in school now for almost a full month, and it’s still exciting to see the work that is happening in our schools and the attention our scholars are giving to their studies. Aug. 2, is the earliest start date I can recall in Birmingham City Schools. When we look back on the gains this year brings for our scholars, I believe we will see great benefits in learning.

The early start has not come without challenges. I am grateful to all employees – child nutrition staff, custodians and maintenance team, teachers, administrative support, bus drivers and everyone who contributes toward the success of our students.

As educators, we never know what our students will become or the impact we may have on their lives. That’s what motivates all of us – the belief that many of the young people we encounter in Birmingham City Schools will one day be leaders, and they will make us proud.

We still have opportunities for educators who want to help shape the future of our eager students. The Human Resources Department is planning a Tailgate Recruitment event at Parker High School on Sept. 18, 2021, to attract educators and other vital team members to Birmingham City Schools. If you are aware of potential candidates, please encourage them to register for the event.

As you know, we continue to emphasize COVID-19 safety and public health protocol. First of all, if you are sick, stay home. When you are at work, please maintain social distance and practice good handwashing hygiene.

Masks are still required in all BCS buildings and facilities. You also should wear them to events, such as football games. Masks should cover your mouth and nose at all times. The school district provides personal protective equipment for employees and students. If you need PPE, please contact your school nurse or principal.

We are still in a space that none of us could have imagined in March 2020. By continuing to work together, we can successfully face the challenges that face us now and in the future, because we are BCS Strong!

District Dates

- Budget Hearing – September 1
- Labor Day – September 6
- Board Meeting – September 14
- Budget Hearing – September 14
- Work Session – September 28
L.I.T. Kits Give Scholars Boost On Literacy Skills

Kindergarten and first-grade students who attended Birmingham City Schools' 2021 Summer Reading Camps received Literacy Instructional Toolkits from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. On the last day of camp, young scholars were given the “L.I.T. Kits” to continue learning at home and prevent summer learning loss.

“Our goal is to build a partnership between home and school. Family involvement is essential in the literacy development of young children. With the support of our families, we can spark students’ interest in reading.

Increasing the academic achievement of our students involves us building the foundation they need as readers during their early childhood years. A solid foundation in literacy can have a lasting impact on a child's future. Therefore, we are working diligently to always provide our scholars with the resources they need to become proficient life-long readers,” said Dr. Pamela Williams, Birmingham City Schools, Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction.

World Games to Launch New Toolkit at Sun Valley Elementary

The World Games are coming to Birmingham in 2022, and on Sept 9, a new toolkit connecting schools to learning opportunities associated with the games, will be launched at Sun Valley Elementary School.

The World Games 2022 Live Healthy, Play Global Toolkit consists of a variety of downloadable digital educational assets. The toolkit was created and produced by an exceptional group of Alabama teachers representing a wide variety of disciplines with the goal of enhancing physical education and social studies curricula by offering relevant educational resources inspired by The World Games 2022, according to Dr. Sherri Huff. She serves as one of the co-chairs for education with The World Games, in addition to her role as the BCS program specialist for physical education, health and driver’s education.

The digital materials may be used by teachers, public and private schools, homeschoolers, afterschool programs and community organizations to engage students in learning about The World Games 2022. The activities can be incorporated into physical education, art, music, social and emotional learning, sportsmanship, civics, social studies, language arts, math, and science. While designed for children in grades K through 5, many of the assets can be adapted for use by middle school students, Huff said.
August Principal Highlight: Dr. Ann Jemison, Tuggle Elementary

Dr. Ann Jemison was accepted for the 4.0 Essential Fellowship. The 4.0 Fellowship invests in equitable, community-centered, education innovation, and removes barriers between people and power by investing in community- centered education ideas, encouraging big ideas and creating the space and support systems needed for those ideas to grow.

Dr. Jemison and a dynamic team of educators at Tuggle partnered with the Education Foundation to learn more about the 4.0 Fellowship in addition to important education topics such as transformational leadership, inclusion, diversity, and equity. The team met over the course of three months to develop the idea, complete the application, and prepare for the interview process.

The idea or concept, developed by Dr. Jemison and the Tuggle team consists of Launching DiscoverMe, a framework with a focus on developing academics and designing the DiscoverMe App for elementary students. The framework is designed to identify students’ interest and strengths and gain early exposure to career opportunities related to those interest.

The Essential Fellowship is a program for founders at the ideation stage. It asks fellows to reflect on their identity in relation to work and to define the problem they’re addressing with their idea.

As a fellow, Dr. Jemison will develop her ideas from a concept to a small-scale pop-up experience and will amass critical feedback from people she wants to work with, and skills needed to continue refining the idea (DiscoverMe). Each Essential Fellow spends dedicated time exploring the intersections of their identities and the work they seek to do, as well as a virtual camp experience, where she will build community, collaborate, and refine her ideas. She will then test her model with their community in a “pop- up” experience.

Dr. Jemison began the 4.0 Essential Fellowship and says she is “looking forward to the opportunity to learn and grow, and to develop the DiscoverMe framework with the support of the fellowship and the dynamic group of educators at Tuggle.” The following are the educators at Tuggle worked diligently with Dr. Jemison to develop the idea, concept: Maria Lopez, ESL Teacher, Tasha Guthrie, Art Teacher, Kenyatta Jackson, Assistant Principal, Ashlee James, Math Coach, Alana Dickie, 3rd-grade Teacher, Jessica Woods, 3rd-grade Teacher, Abigail Walker, Special Education Teacher, and Melba Shanks, Counselor.
Della Nicholas, 51, had dreams of becoming a model since childhood and saw that dream come to fruition when she was chosen to be in an issue of Essence magazine. Read the feature.

The isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown gave many time to reflect. For Makella Moore Harris, a 16-year music educator, it gave her time to “connect with her creative energy on a different level. Read her feature.

Huffman Middle School counselor Larice Manley received the RAMP (Recognized ASCA Model Program) Award 2021. She was one of the 15 recipients in the State of Alabama to receive an award (to maintain from 2021-2025) at the Awards Banquet at the National ASCA Conference in Las Vegas.

Harriette Thompkins, principal of Wylam Elementary School, has been recognized as a Certified Instructional Leader, credential from the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools. The certification requires rigorous coursework and in-field experiences essential to the role of an instructional school leader.

Congratulations to Dr. Steven Tarver, who was honored as the 2020-2021 Cash for College MVP among large-sized schools in Alabama. Dr. Tarver participated in the Alabama Goes to College Campaign, building a college-going culture by promoting the completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
Birmingham City Schools responded to the increasing number of COVID-19 cases and low rate of vaccinations by announcing plans to educate and offer vaccinations at schools throughout the district. COVID-19 testing will also be offered free of charge at BCS schools beginning in late September.

The district is joining several entities in these efforts, including the UAB Office of Minority and Health and Research, the UAB School of Public Health, Greater Birmingham Ministries, Alabama Regional Medical Services, Cahaba Regional Medical Clinics, MedsPlus Partners Consulting, Jefferson County Department of Health and the Housing Authority of the Birmingham District.

“We want all of our eligible students to roll up their sleeves and get vaccinated,” said Superintendent Dr. Mark Sullivan. “Already we have had to cancel a football game because of the impact of COVID-19. Hundreds of students have been excluded from class for several days because they were exposed to COVID-19 and were not vaccinated. We don’t want to see our children or employees sick or hospitalized when there is an option for avoiding some of that pain and discomfort.”

The education series called COVID Conversations launched on Wednesday, Aug 25 at Parker High School. Panelists included Dr. Khaliliah Brown of the Jefferson County Department of Health, Dr. Martha Dawson, President of the National Black Nurses Association, Dr. Pauling Long, Medplus Partners Consulting, and Dr. Paul Amamoo, longtime Birmingham pediatrician. Dr. Cameron Webb, the White House Senior Policy Advisor for COVID-19 Equity participated virtually. Art Franklin of CBS42 was the moderator.

Area residents at the in-person event asked questions about the virus and the vaccine. They also shared some of their reasons for hesitancy. COVID Conversations for students was held virtually and broadcast via Livestream on Thursday, Aug. 26. Two Phillips Academy students, Erin Harris and Tyson Aguillard, asked area medical professionals a questions about the virus and the vaccine. Panelists included Dr. Lindsey Harris, of the Alabama Nurses Association, Dr. Khaliliah Brown of the Jefferson County Department of Health, and Dr. Justin Bailey, a pediatric resident at Children’s of Alabama Hospital.

BCS began in-school vaccinations on Friday, Aug. 27 at Phillips Academy. On Saturday, Aug. 28, BCS was among several entities partnering with the UAB Minority Health and Health Disparities Research Center for the Stuck with Chuck Rally, featuring NBA great Charles Barkley.

Pop-up clinics are in the works for Ramsay High School on Thursday, Sept. 2. Clinics also are planned for Bush Hills STEAM Academy and Hudson K-8 on Friday, Sept 3.
Bush Hills S.T.E.A.M. Earns COGNIA Certification

DISCLAIMER: Former Bush Hills Principal Dr. Ashley Samuels details how COGNIA was earned.

What is COGNIA? Cognia is a nonprofit, non-governmental organization that accredits primary and secondary schools throughout the United States and internationally. Founded in 2006, Cognia represents more than 36,000 institutions with a total of 25 million students and 5 million educators in about 80 counties.

What is the significance of this certification? The certification comes from Cognia, the world’s largest education community dedicated to continuous improvement and recognition of outstanding education institutions and programs around the world. The certification represents a rigorous review process that validated the quality and sustainability of our STEM program.

Is Bush Hills the only BCS School to receive this designation? Yes. And one of only 41 schools in Alabama. And one of only 8 middle schools in Alabama.

How long was the application process? To apply, a school has to have at least two years of STEM programming available to students and be able to meet the rigorous performance standards of Cognia. At that point, schools or programs can request a review. After the request it took about four months to write the Impact Diagnostic and develop the STEM Portfolio in preparation for the STEM Review.

What did that process include? First and foremost, the leaders of Bush Hills STEAM Academy had to ensure alignment between what we do on a daily and weekly basis and the rigorous STEM Standards, which is the hard part. Then it took eight STEM Leaders about four months to complete the STEM Impact Diagnostic (an intensive self-evaluation) and develop a STEM Portfolio (examples of the implementation of all 16 STEM Standards). The final test was a three-day review from outside reviewers to determine the quality and sustainability of our STEM program.

What will this mean for Bush Hills STEAM Academy going forward? All 16 standards come with rubrics that measure engagement, implementation, results, sustainability, and embeddedness. We had areas of strength and room for growth. The standards and measures will guide our decisions around STEM integration moving forward.

Commissioner Tyson Donates $63,300 to District 8 Schools

Birmingham District 8 School Board Representative Sonja Smith, Jefferson County Commissioner Sheila Tyson and other community leaders joined with Bush Hills STEAM Academy to celebrate the school’s COGNIA designation on Wednesday, Aug. 19, at the school.

Bush Hills STEAM Academy is the first BCS school to earn COGNIA certification. Schools that are awarded this designation must have two years of STEM programs for its students and meet rigorous performance standards. “This prestigious certification is an honor and a testament to the incredible work the students, leaders and educators have put into this program,” said Superintendent Dr. Mark Sullivan.

“We are proud of our educators and our scholars at Bush Hills STEAM Academy,” Also, as part of the celebration, Commissioner Tyson announced additional support totaling $63,300 for schools in District 8.

“Bush Hills STEAM Academy is one of several strong schools in District 8 making a significant impact in the community,” Tyson said. “I want to encourage continued emphasis on learning, and particularly science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics.”
A season of celebration kicked off this summer for Birmingham City Schools at Woodlawn High. Woodlawn will be receiving a new football stadium, along with a state-of-the-art weight room. A groundbreaking ceremony was held July 14 with more than 200 in attendance, including former Woodlawn, Auburn and NFL great, Karlos Dansby who was the special guest speaker. "This has been a long time coming for us," Dansby said. "Now we will have a place to hang all our state championship banners."

"This means so much to us and to our community," Woodlawn Principal Dr. T.E. Brown told those assembled.

Huffman Middle School will have its gym renovated along with upgrades to the cafeteria. The groundbreaking ceremony there was held on July 21. "Here at Huffman Middle, we are moving forward," said Principal Genita Matthews. "Here at Huffman Middle our theme song is: We Win."

Huffman Academy broke ground on a playground renovation on Aug. 13.

A larger playground for its nearly 900 students, as well as tennis courts will be a welcomed addition.
More than 100 summer graduates received diplomas and celebrated the start of their next chapters on July 30. Students from six high schools participated in the 10 a.m. event at the Bill Harris Arena. Nadia Bryant, a student from Jackson-Olin High School, shared her personal story of challenge, hard work and triumph. After receiving her diploma, Bryant said she will go to work for an insurance company.

Jefferson County District Attorney Danny Carr, an alumnus of Jackson-Olin, was the speaker and encouraged graduates to continue their success in school or work. He commended them for staying on track and completing, high school. The number of summer graduates was significantly higher this year, as graduates worked throughout the summer to complete their diploma and reach their goal.
Congratulations to the Lady Rams on winning the Westside Volleyball Tournament at the Birmingham Crossplex! The Lady Rams will be bringing the trophy back to the #Nawf! Ashley L. Mason, job well done!

The BCS Report will be distributed monthly. Submit story ideas to Nikki Seaborn (cseaborn@bhm.k12.al.us) by the 10th day of each month.