**BCS PREPARES FOR SAFE RETURN**

The Lincoln Professional Learning Center is filled with boxes and it’s just one sign that Birmingham City Schools is working to ensure that faculty, staff and students have a safe return to school facilities.

The boxes contain a personal protection equipment for educators and scholars, such as masks and face shields.

Educators and support staff returned to their work locations on Monday, Oct. 26. Students will begin returning on Monday, Nov. 9. Scholars in grades Pre-K through 8th grade, and scholars with special needs will be the first to return. High school students will return on Nov. 16.

Birmingham City Schools began the academic year on Sept. 8, with remote teaching and learning. Jefferson County Health Officer Dr. Mark Wilson has said, we still have community spread of COVID-19, but “the relative risks related to the spread of COVID-19 versus the benefits of in-person instruction for secondary schools have shifted to the point that is now reasonable to consider a more flexible approach going forward.”

Wilson says he considers social-emotional health and academic achievement when studying the long-term public health implications.

Superintendent Dr. Mark Sullivan said, “the district weighs the risks vs. the benefit of in-person, virtual or blended instruction.

“Studies show that many of our scholars experience their best success through in-person learning. But since March 13th, they have been removed from the typical classroom since,” Sullivan said.

“Many of our scholars have embraced remote learning and continue to excel. But some have fallen behind.

“We must close that gap and give our students the tools, instruction and support they need to prepare for the future.”
Superintendent Speaks

These past seven months have changed the way we teach and learn in Birmingham City Schools, and in school systems throughout the country. I am pleased that our educators and support teams are embracing this change as we begin our Safe Return to in-person instruction.

The announcement of our return with a blended instruction model came after weeks of study and discussion. We surveyed employees and parents, then looked at the data to help guide our decisions.

Students will begin returning on Nov. 9, with Pre-K through 8th grade as well as students with special needs. The following week, high school students return.

Every department in Birmingham City Schools has been focused on our main goal of returning safely to in-person instruction.

Our surveys showed that employees and parents have concerns about issues such as social distancing, building cleanliness and air filtration.

Because students will be in blended learning, the number of students in each classroom should be reduced. Group A students will attend on Mondays and Tuesdays. Group B students will attend on Thursdays and Fridays. Many of our families are choosing to remain in virtual learning. This also will reduce the number of students assembled each day for in-person learning.

The custodial teams and the maintenance department are working diligently to ensure that the buildings are cleaned and sanitized on a regular basis. We’ve also changed air filters to improve ventilation in our schools.

These are just a few of the things we have done so far. I can assure you that the health and safety of each employee and every student is extremely important to me and the Board of Education. I encourage you to share your suggestions and concerns at any time. In BCS, we work together as a team, because that’s who we are.

We are BCS Strong!

- Dr. Mark Sullivan

District Dates

- Fall Break – Nov. 2
- Professional Development – Nov. 3
- Veterans Day – Nov. 11
- BBOE Board Meeting – Nov. 10
- BBOE Work Session – Nov. 24
- Fall Holiday – Nov. 25-27
What’s been the biggest struggle? I was diagnosed with breast cancer in March 2017. I had surgery during spring break and thought I would immediately go back to school. I started the aggressive chemotherapy in May because I was stage three. Throughout the summer I received aggressive treatment and returned to school as usual in August. I was bald but blessed to be able to return to what I love to do. Former students came to check on me which meant everything to me. The past three years have been some of my best experiences with my students. I value teaching my students more than ever. God continues to bless me in spite of this terrible disease.

Tell us about your support system: My doctor and oncology nurses are very supportive and attentive. My church also is very faithful in supporting me. The Jones Valley Middle School faculty and staff are absolutely the best. I have truly felt their love, prayers, and support. workers surrounded me while holding hands and prayed for me. My daughters are always there for me and fussing over me like “mother hens.” One of my best friends was fighting ovarian cancer when I was diagnosed. She lost her battle against cancer for the second time, but her courage inspires me to this day.

"WORDS OR SCRIPTURES YOU LIVE BY: JOHN 14:27, ROMANS 8:38-39 & PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7, 13."

How do you manage your treatments and teaching? At this time, my treatments are every three weeks and last about 30 minutes. I have a port in my chest that is used to receive medication. I usually only have to leave school an hour early to get to my oncologist. I only miss school when I have CT scans and heart echo tests which is usually every six months.

When did you know teaching was your calling? I knew from a very young age that I wanted to be a teacher. My sister and my cousins always enjoyed playing “school” at home. At Banks High School (a Birmingham City School) I had the best English teachers that gave me a true love of literature. I felt God’s call to the ministry of teaching young people. My former pastor was the President of Judson College in Marion, Alabama. I received the necessary scholarships and grants to make this ministry happen. I worked in the college dining room to make up the remaining tuition.

Does teaching provide an escape with all that you are dealing with? Teaching helps to give me focus and direction on something positive rather than feeling depressed on this terrible disease.
Princeton Elementary Principal, Dr. LaTausha Daniels, loves being an educator and Birmingham City Schools is near and dear to her heart. “I attended West End High School, Jones Valley Middle and Hemphill Elementary, so I grew up in our school system.”

The 19th-year educator and mother of three has worked her way up in the system. Life was going well and she was working on her dissertation, but on March 8, 2019, her life and her focus shifted. “I was diagnosed with Stage 2 breast cancer. I got the call at work,” she said. “I remember I was at a doctor’s appointment a few weeks earlier and they told me to go upstairs for a routine mammogram. It was raining that day and I just wanted to leave. I actually got on the elevator to leave, but turned around and went back.”

Dr. Daniels said during her initial test, they thought the machine was not working properly, but once her diagnosis was confirmed, “that changed the trajectory of my life.”

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“I wanted to share my story, because you just never know,” she said. We as a culture don’t like to talk about health disparities in our family or pass health information down. We have to do better and take better care of ourselves. I later discovered my maternal great-grandmother also had been diagnosed.”

Dr. Daniels elected to have the most invasive treatment. She underwent a double mastectomy with reconstructive surgery. “Recovery and my blood pressure almost took me out,” she said. “I remember thinking ‘why me, why now?’ but I know that no matter what we face or go through in life, it doesn’t happen by happenstance.”

With this in mind, Dr. Daniels said she has been intentional about her health, making lifestyle changes in diet and exercise. Now with COVID-19 in play, she’s increased precautions and upped home activities to safeguard herself and her family. “As a working mom, we find strength out of nowhere,” she said. We created structural boundaries with my parents and stuck to it. We go outside, play games, jump rope, ride our bikes.”

As educators are now preparing to return to in-school instruction, Dr. Daniels said she and her team have been proactive. “I have purchased 400 face shields out of my own pocket. We’ve been cleaning and adding signage for social distancing, along with other upgrades. We also have done check-ins and communication calls with every student each week.”

Dr. Daniels, currently in remission, says she gains her strength from her children, her support system and work family. “I know the strongest people get charged with the greatest battles. I want to encourage others who may be fighting or recently diagnosed to continue to go after the things they want.”

MAYA ANGELOU SAID, “THE WOMAN WARRIOR WHO IS ARMED WITH WIT AND COURAGE WILL BE AMONG THE FIRST TO CELEBRATE VICTORY.”
WOODLAWN SENIOR NEARS JUNIOR STATUS AT UAB

Nyla Boler decided to attend Woodlawn High School for the opportunity to participate in the Early College program. As she enters her senior year, Nyla is looking forward to continuing her coursework at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where she has already earned 59 hours of college credit. She is one credit hour shy of being classified as a college junior -- in her senior year of high school.

“Going to Woodlawn High School will forever be one of the best choices I’ve ever made,” Nyla said. “From sitting in the auditorium for the entire first day of freshman year until the present, I have gained life lessons, family, knowledge, and understanding of the world at large. This school continues to mold me.”

Nyla, the second child of six born to Nick and Shun Boler, says she is looking forward to her fall coursework challenges, which will include Statistics and Chemistry. “Having satisfied the Alabama High School Graduation requirements, Nyla is reaching new heights and demonstrating what is achievable through participation in the Early College initiative,” said Dana Wright Marshall, Woodlawn’s Early College Program Coordinator.

Nyla has shown leadership through various sports and activities. She is a member of the volleyball and basketball teams, as well as track and field. She also participates in Student Government Association, Academic Bowl, Choir, FBLA, and the Student Advisory Council to the Superintendent. Nyla’s passion is helping others, and that is evident through her desire to become a nurse and her work in her local church where she cares for children with disabilities during Wednesday night services. She also encourages other students to maximize their opportunities through her role as an Early College mentor. “Nyla embodies the Early College program’s goals, which include paving a pathway to college success, and she will be the first student to earn the original program goal of 60 hours of college credit before graduation,” Marshall said.

RAMSAY SENIOR COMMITS TO FLORIDA

Jeremiah Williams grew up an Auburn fan, but when the 2021 season rolls around, he’ll be donning different shades of orange and blue. Williams, a four-star defensive end out of Ramsay High School, announced his commitment to Florida on Wednesday in AL.com’s exclusive video.

He chose the Gators over offers from 35 other schools, including Alabama and Auburn. William’s Father, Terrance Moore, is an Alabama fan, and his mother, Jameka Williams, is an Auburn fan. While talking to Nick Saban was definitely a highlight for Moore, both of them plan to be wearing the colors of the school that best fits their son.

See video on www.AL.com
James Lewis taught tennis to Birmingham youths at no charge for more than 30 years. Now, a foundation named in his honor – the James Lewis Education and Tennis Foundation – is giving back in another way.

Rudy Lewis, president of the foundation, recently presented a check to Booker T. Washington K-8 School to sponsor an English Learning Program. The foundation’s $6,808.80 check will cover the cost for 30 Spanish speaking students and 10 Spanish speaking adults to using the Rosetta Stone program as a tool to learn the English language.

The foundation already had a relationship with Washington K-8 when Rudy Lewis learned of the need for additional language support.

“This is our second year working with Washington K-8. We had money in a grant and we were able to earmark it for the school,” Rudy Lewis said.

The foundation also has a relationship with Phillips Academy.

In addition to the support for the language program and programs that expose youths to tennis, the foundation works with STEM education at the school. They also offer a chess program.

DUPUY ANNOUNCES COMMUNITY MURAL PROJECT

On Nov. 7 at 9:00 a.m., Dupuy Alternative School is partnering with the Birmingham Artist Collective to paint a mural in the school courtyard. The community is invited to come and participate in this project. For more details, visit Birmingham Artist Collective (@birmingham_artist_collective) on Instagram.

Refreshments will be provided.
Thousands of students from Birmingham City Schools enjoy hands-on learning at the Jones Valley Teaching Farm every year. Next year, the center located on 7th Avenue North will have a new education center at the hub of its operation.

The non-profit broke ground on Oct. 21 on the new facility, bringing together stakeholders and supporters including Birmingham School Board President Daagye Hendricks, Vice President Michael Millsap and District 3 Representative Mary Boehm.

Superintendent Dr. Mark Sullivan spoke at the event and reflected on his long-term relationship with the farm that dates back several years when he was principal at Phillips Academy.

Dr. Jerone G. Wiggins, director of education programs and partnerships, also has been involved with the farm for several years. He discovered his love for the teaching farm when he took a field trip while working at Putnam Middle School. A few years later, JVTF selected Putnam as one of the schools for a buildout farm. This meant that scholars would have the opportunity to learn by growing food. This is a unique experience.

It’s cross curricular,” he said. In addition to touching subjects such as math and science, it also helps with social and emotional learning, he said. “When you grow something from seed to harvest, it teaches patience,” he said. “You nurture the plants and watch them grow.” For years, the JVTF education center downtown has been housed in a trailer. When the new Center for Food Education opens next year, Wiggins said they will be able to expand the Good School Food program.

The Center for Food Education will be a flagship learning center that includes a state-of-the art teaching kitchen, an indoor classroom, farm center, administrative and faculty wing, and plenty of outdoor space for even more learning and growing to happen.
SPROUTS’ GROCERY FOUNDATION AWARDS JONES VALLEY TEACHING FARM

This year, Sprouts’ Foundation awarded 120 grants to nonprofit organizations in the 23 states where the company operates, designed to help partners strengthen and expand their programs. Jones Valley Teaching Farm is honored to be one of those organizations.

“When our student-centered Teaching Farms felt the impact of COVID-19, we knew we had to pivot and we had to do it quickly,” said Amanda Storey, executive director of the Jones Valley Teaching Farm in Birmingham, Ala. “With support from our school partners and from funders like Sprouts, we turned our Teaching Farms into production farms and began distributing free produce and seedlings to our local community, resulting in over 15,000 pounds of fresh vegetables being distributed since April.”

CHARLES BARKLEY VIRTUALLY VISITS RAMSAY HIGH CLASS

When he was in the NBA, sportscasters often called Leeds native Charles Barkley the “Round Mound of Rebound” because of his commanding work off the backboard. But on Oct. 27, the basketball legend took on another role – sharing valuable lessons with students in the Theatre and Fine Arts Department at Ramsay High.

Speaking to about 30 people via Zoom, Barkley shared his personal story and encouraged students to strive for excellence.

“Get your education. Control the narrative of your life,” he said.

Charles Barkley was SEC Freshman of the Year at Auburn University but he said, initially, he didn’t get much playing time on the court. Coaches told him he needed to work harder at conditioning, and that’s what he did.

Jacqueline Crenshaw Lockhart invited Barkley to speak to her class and others in the schools’ sports programs. Students had an opportunity to ask questions following his speech.

“This virtual teaching environment gives us an opportunity to expand the classroom,” Lockhart said. “We can bring in guests virtually. We can explore and we can be even more creative in teaching our scholars.”
HUFFMAN MIDDLE SCHOOL COUNSELOR EARN A DISTINCTION

Huffman Middle Counselor Larice Manley earned the Alabama School Counseling Program of Distinction Award from the Alabama School Counselor’s Association. The application process for this award is very rigorous requiring an all-inclusive collection of 15 components that align with the American School Counselor Association National Model and the Comprehensive and Guidance Model for Alabama Public Schools. Schools who earn the Program of Distinction designation will also be eligible for the Recognized ASCA Model Program, which is awarded by ASCA as the highest national recognition for a school counseling program.

View the full story.

Ms. Manley is pictured with her trophy from Mrs. Cindy Davis, ALSCA Executive Board Program of Distinction Liaison (far right), Glenita Matthews, Principal (right), Dr. Mark Sullivan, Superintendent (center), and Dr. Clarissa Reese, School Counseling Coordinator (far left).

Ms. Larice Manley

CHILD NUTRITION UPDATE

October 30: Meals for students will be available for curbside school pickup only. (No community meal distribution)

November 2: Fall Break (No curbside or community meal distribution)

November 3: Professional Development Day (No curbside or community meal distribution)

November 4: Regularly scheduled meal distribution resumes.

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The BCS Report will be distributed monthly. Please submit story ideas to Nikki Seaborn at cseaborn@bhm.k12.al.us, by the 10th day of each month.