

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

Good News from Savannah Chatham County Public Schools



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Video highlights from the July Board Meeting from Public Information Manager Sheila Blanco. Click [here](#) to watch.

2020-21 Calendar/Learning Model Modification Approved

At the July 16 board meeting, board members approved modifications to the academic calendar for the 2020-21 School Year. The calendar modifications include a delay in the start of the school year to support the District's goal to ensure student and staff safety in a manner that mitigates exposure during a period of high transmission. A delay also will provide critical time for staff training and preparation for a return to teaching and learning, the implementation of new safety procedures, and preparation to ensure facilities are ready for social distancing protocols.

The proposed calendar modification would allow teachers to return August 3, 2020 and students to begin instruction virtually on August 19, 2020. The twelve intervening staff days would be dedicated to preparing all educators to deliver effective online instruction and face to face instruction as well as address other matters related to social emotional learning, hygiene protocols, student/family support services, accountability procedures, and revised Title IX regulations. The modified calendar:

- Offers 170 days of instruction
- Provides 12 days of pre-planning and training before the first day of instruction
- Begins the school year on Wednesday, August 19, 2020
- Begins the school year in a virtual "E-Learning" Districtwide model
- Adds two staff planning days for teachers at the end of the school year
- Includes the strategic use of Districtwide "E-Learning Days" on the November 3, 2020 Election Day, at the start of Second Semester, and after St. Patrick's Day.

See the modified 2020-21 SY calendar here:

<http://go.boarddocs.com/ga/sccs/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=BRBJZU4F7457>

The administrative e-learning model is subject to change based on the existing conditions of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Should health conditions dictate, a Virtual Learning Model (E-Learning Days) could extend beyond the Labor Day Break and throughout the first nine weeks of the school year.

Re-Opening Plan Presented

At the July 16 informal board meeting, the re-opening plan for the 2020-2021 SY was presented. The presentation included results of a recent survey of parents and staff regarding school reopening. Most parents – 48% – preferred either a full-time virtual or hybrid model. Forty-one percent preferred full-time in-person return to school. The parent survey was issued June 14 – July 6, 2020. Only 26% of employees favored a full-time return to the classroom at this time. See the complete report here:

<http://go.boarddocs.com/ga/sccs/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=BRBU2779E10A>

Tentative Adoption of Fiscal Year 2021 Budget

Staff presented the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget for All Funds for Tentative Adoption. This Budget consists of five components: The General Fund Budget, General Obligation Debt Budget, Special Revenue Funds Budget, Capital Projects Funds Budget, and Other Funds Budget. The tentative budget reflects no millage increase for a total combined millage of 18.881 mills (18.881 mills for maintenance and operations and 0 mills for general obligation bond debt). The tentative adoption is the first part of the budget process. Two public hearings must be scheduled before the final budget is adopted.

<http://go.boarddocs.com/ga/sccs/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=BRHSNN7369D7>

Before the Tentative Adoption, an update on the Budget Process was presented to the Board. The full presentation can be viewed here:

<https://youtu.be/-A9DIAM79mM>

Learning Management System Software Subscription Contract Ratified

Also at the July 16 board meeting, the Board approved a request by the Division of Data and Accountability and the Division of Academic Affairs to purchase the software license suite from Edgenuity, Inc. Edgenuity provides a full suite of initial credit courses for elementary, middle, and high school students in English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. It is aligned to the Georgia Standards of Excellence and is used in over 150 districts in the state of Georgia.

The self-paced learning and pre-testing aspects of Edgenuity allow students to spend more time on what they need and less time on content they have already mastered, thus helping students accelerate and graduate on time. The Board approved the purchase of the Digital Libraries Comprehensive Site Licenses to be used for all K-12 schools during the 2020-21 SY at a total cost of \$299,992.50.

<http://go.boarddocs.com/ga/sccs/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=BRAQ4W6695C4>

Amira – Learning Reading Tutor Software License Contract Ratified

The AMIRA Learning Reading Tutor Software is an artificial intelligence reading assessment, progress monitoring tool, and individual reading tutor for students in grades K-3. The program was piloted at five (5) schools in January 2020. In March 2020, AMIRA Learning was offered as a free program nationwide to all schools through July 31, 2020. SCCPSS students are actively utilizing the program for summer reading. At the July 16 board meeting, the Board approved a staff recommendation to contract with Houghton-Mifflin-Harcourt as a Sole Source to be used for all K-3 schools for the FY 20-21 school year at a total cost of \$162,976.00.

<http://go.boarddocs.com/ga/sccs/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=BRAQ3N66959C>

Sixty-six SCCPSS Students from Twelve Schools Invited to Join the Prestigious Duke TIP 7th Grade Talent Search Program

SCCPSS.com, June 12

Each year, a select group of students in the United States are identified as academically gifted based on their exceptional standardized test scores in school and are invited to participate in the TIP program. Only students scoring in the 95th percentile or better on standardized tests qualify. Participants are then invited to take the above-grade level ACT or SAT tests designed for college-bound tenth and eleventh graders so that their academic abilities and potential can be more accurately evaluated.

<https://spwww.sccpss.com/Pages/Sixty-six-SCCPSS-Students-from-Twelve-Schools-Invited-to-Join-the-Prestigious-Duke-TIP-7th-Grade-Talent-Search-Program.aspx>

Hubert Middle Students awarded \$1500 in Grants by National Lead4Change Student Leadership Program

SCCPSS.com, June 17

Three student teams from Hubert Middle School are being awarded \$500 grants each for their efforts in the national Lead4Change Student Leadership Program Challenge. Despite the unprecedented shutdown of schools this year due to COVID-19, the students managed to complete their projects virtually. They entered the challenge as part of their participation in the school's FCCLA Organization and are three of only 39 teams nationwide chosen as winners in the challenge.

[https://spwww.sccpss.com/Pages/Hubert-Middle-Students-awarded-\\$1500-in-Grants-by-National-Lead4Change-Student-Leadership-Program.aspx](https://spwww.sccpss.com/Pages/Hubert-Middle-Students-awarded-$1500-in-Grants-by-National-Lead4Change-Student-Leadership-Program.aspx)

Parents, students discuss what they want to see as schools plan reopening

WTOC, June 24

Savannah-Chatham leaders are re-imagining how they could reopen school safely. While they are testing their protocol and looking for family feedback on a survey. Some students say they want to get back to class.

<https://www.wtoc.com/2020/06/24/parents-students-discuss-what-they-want-see-schools-plan-reopening/>

SCCPSS Earns Rising STAR Award for Promising Practices

SCCPSS.com, June 22

The SSTAGE Site Team found that the district's Multi-tiered System of Supports/Response to Interventions – a tiered system of supports that integrates assessment and intervention within a school-wide, multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and reduce behavioral problems – were built on solid systems with outstanding characteristics of effective instruction and support.

<https://spwww.sccpss.com/Pages/SCCPSS-Earns-Rising-STAR-Award-for-Promising-Practices.aspx>

SCCPSS opens applications for virtual academy

WSAV, June 25

“It may work out for some of our older students for work schedules and other responsibilities,” Ball-Oliver said. “It may be some other types of health concerns or family concerns.”

<https://www.wsav.com/news/education/sccpss-finalizing-virtual-academy-for-upcoming-school-year/>

School nurses, teachers, social-emotional training aim to keep Savannah-Chatham students, staff safe

Savannah Morning News, June 26

The Savannah-Chatham County Public School System is the fifth largest district in Georgia and one of the few that has a nurse at every school site. School nurses will work to keep students and staff safe from COVID-19.

<https://www.savannahnow.com/news/20200626/school-nurses-teachers-social-emotional-training-aim-to-keep-savannah-chatham-students-staff-safe>

Savannah-Chatham's Elearning Academy opens for applications. What's next?

Savannah Morning News, June 29

"As of Friday, we have 2,000 applications," said Jim Heater, SCELA principal. However, a completed application doesn't mean acceptance. "After the closing of the application period (July 17) [if the student has been accepted] the parent will receive notification, then complete the registration process."

<https://www.savannahnow.com/news/20200629/savannah-chathamrsquo-s-elearning-academy-opens-for-applications-whatsquo-s-next>

Online survey seeks public opinion on 2021 GMAS waiver application

Savannah Morning News, July 6

"In anticipation of a return to in-person instruction this fall, we believe schools' focus should be on remediation, growth, and the safety of students. Every dollar spent on high-stakes testing would be a dollar taken away from the classroom."

<https://www.savannahnow.com/news/20200706/online-survey-seeks-public-opinion-on-2021-gmas-waiver-application>

Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools Wins Good Neighbor Award from American Red Cross

SCCPSS.com, July 6

The Good Neighbor Award recognizes a local organization that has partnered with Red Cross to raise awareness of the Red Cross mission and to expand the scope of communities that the Red Cross is able to serve.

<https://spwww.sccpss.com/Pages/Savannah-Chatham-County-Public-Schools-Wins-Good-Neighbor-Award-from-American-Red-Cross.aspx>

Beacon Views, Dr. Ann Levett: Pandemic helps us learn to adapt

Savannah Morning News, July 7

This pandemic is uncharted territory full of many unknowns for our educational system. Still, it is paving the way for limitless opportunities to improve and innovate teaching and learning. Just as our society has overcome crises in the past, we will overcome COVID-19. We are all looking for a return to normal. School helps us get there, but our normal will be full of innovation, new procedures, and a stronger sense of togetherness.

<https://www.savannahnow.com/news/20200707/beacon-views-dr-ann-levett-pandemic-helps-us-learn-to-adapt>

SCCPSS Nutrition Program awarded \$100,000 Farm to School grant

WSAV, July 8

“We are trying to encourage kids to try to use some knowledge to know how to grow things and this grant will help us to give them resources to do that,” says School Nutrition Director Onetha Bonaparte.

<https://www.wsav.com/news/education/sccpss-nutrition-program-awarded-100000-farm-to-school-grant/>

SCCPSS superintendent outlines reasons for virtual-only recommendation

Savannah Morning News, July 10

“We do hold certain principles: first, safety for students and staff; second, if we do a virtual format, we will do so in a manner that is meaningful and as engaging as possible and relevant to our instructional goal; and third, we will ask everyone to be flexible, compassionate and patient. As soon as we can see that is safe, we want to return to face-to-face instruction.”

<https://www.savannahnow.com/news/20200710/sccpss-superintendent-outlines-reasons-for-virtual-only-recommendation>

'Safest option': Savannah-Chatham schools superintendent planning for online learning in the fall

WJCL, July 10

The recent spike in positive COVID-19 cases reflects infections of neighbors, family members, and friends and led to closings of businesses, services, government offices, and permanent closings of some of our favorite places. The increase is alarming. Information about how the virus is transmitted can change and grow at unbelievable speed- often by the hour or day. These factors and others create an unpredictable and unsafe environment for many of us- staff, students, and families. Safety FIRST.

<https://www.wjcl.com/article/this-is-the-safest-option-savannah-chatham-county-public-schools-moving-online-in-the-fall/33274597#>

SCCPSS planning virtual start to school year pending board approval

WTOC, July 10

“I think the accountability, having the infrastructure, having the laptops and the Chromebook on order and on their way here and ready to be distributed that is, puts us in a much better position than it did when we closed March 13.”

<https://www.wtoc.com/2020/07/10/savannah-chatham-schools-planning-virtual-start-pending-board-approval/>

Savannah-Chatham superintendent: Virtual learning 'safest' way to start, but in-person classes still overall hope

Savannah Morning News, July 10

“Safety is the priority. While it may be disappointing that we cannot start school in the ideal mode we prefer, we can get there if we all work toward the goal of improving our community’s health.”

<https://www.savannahnow.com/news/20200710/savannah-chatham-superintendent-virtual-learning-rsquotasafestrquo-way-to-start-but-in-person-classes-still-overall-hope>

Savannah superintendent: It's still unsafe to reopen schools

Education Week, July 10

"It is very difficult to ignore the fact that cases are continuing to rise, and they are rising exponentially," Levett said, adding that school officials are "morally obligated" to protect students from infection.

https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/07/10/savannah-superintendent-its-still-unsafe-to_ap.html

Savannah school system considering online-only learning in the fall

Atlanta Journal-Constitution, July 10

"We know that choosing how staff and students will participate in school this year is an important and complicated decision that impacts many areas of our lives. SAFETY is the priority."

<https://www.ajc.com/news/savannah-school-system-considering-online-only-learning-the-fall/ydCCHaka1RSvQJzK0sGodO/>

SCCPSS recommending virtual learning for new school year

WSAV, July 10

"It is our desire to have students in front of us, but it is also our desire to ensure that we have a safe environment and the numbers are not increasing," she said.

<https://www.wsav.com/news/local-news/sccpss-recommending-virtual-learning-for-new-school-year/>

Savannah Chatham County PSS Calendar Modifications Recommended For 2020-21

Patch.com, July 13

Superintendent Dr. Ann Levett will make a recommendation to the Board of Education at their July 16, 2020 meeting.

<https://patch.com/georgia/savannah/savannah-chatham-county-pss-calendar-modifications-recommended-2020-21>

Consider This: Virtual start to the school year

WTOC, July 13

Consider this: as hard of a decision as this was for Dr. Levett and will be for Dr. Joe Buck and the school board, it is the right decision.

<https://www.wtoc.com/2020/07/13/consider-this-virtual-start-school-year/>

Virtual or in-person school? What to know about the Lowcountry's reopening plans

The Island Packet, July 13

"As you can see, the (coronavirus case) numbers are continuing to increase," Levett said Friday. "That makes face-to-face instruction, which is certainly our preference, undoable. We simply cannot do that and ensure safety for staff and students."

<https://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/education/article244184707.html>