

# HURRICANE WINDS

BEN HILL COUNTY SCHOOLS NEWSLETTER: JANUARY EDITION 2024

## NEW YEAR~ GREAT THINGS ARE HAPPENING

Happy New Year! I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season with family and friends. Thank you all for a great first semester. Keep up the good work for the rest of the school year. We are making excellent progress! We have a few items we are focusing on to wind up the school year.



1. Based on positive first semester gains, looking forward to end of year confirmation of our reading initiative and ELA focus along with the new math standards implementation using growth and achievement data.
2. Kicking off our led Aspiring Leaders Program
3. District Cognia Accreditation
4. Construction of the baseball/softball at FHSCCA
5. Anticipating confirmation of our grant application for a health clinic at FHSCCA for mental health services for students and staff in a partnerships with South Central Primary Care
6. Applying for an after school program for BHPS, BHES, BHMS and FHSCCA via the 21st Century Learning Grant open to school districts

Let's all be positive and spray the squeaky wheels with BELIEVER dust!

## RECOGNITIONS



Superintendent Dawn Clements presented Dr. David Sims, John Gamble, and Todd Thompson with a plaque in recognition of their dedication to the safety of our students. These gentlemen acted decisively and swiftly to remove an unknown, unauthorized minor who boarded a BHCS school bus in December. Thank you to Dr. David Sims, John Gamble and Todd Thompson for your dedication to safety and our students.



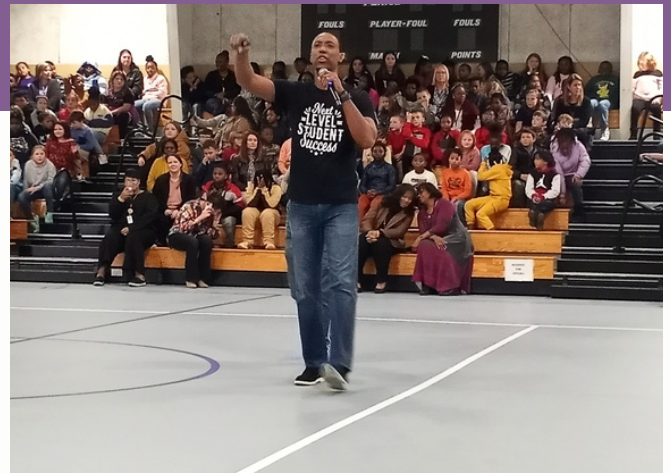
## Star Student Star Teacher Recognized

Fitzgerald - Ben Hill Co. Chamber of Commerce President & CEO Melissa Dark presented Ella Jenner with the Star Student award this morning. The Star Student is the senior student that earns the highest grade on the SAT in the school.

Ella chose Mrs. Sebitha Menon as her Star Teacher. Ella stated that she chose Mrs. Menon because she has always supported her, her love for Math, and wrote her an amazing recommendation that helped to secure her a full scholarship to Vanderbilt University.

Ella is a wonderful student at FHSCCA and represents our community and school well. We are so excited for Ella and Mrs. Menon.

Thank you to Fitzgerald-Ben Hill Chamber of Commerce for being our partner and supporting the students of Ben Hill County Schools. Thank you to Lynn Gay and the Culinary Canes for the wonderful snacks for this event.



## Dennard Mitchell speaks to schools

Dennard Mitchell is a FANTASTIC speaker and we highly recommend him! He motivated students at all of our schools last week. We are thankful that we could partner with Communities in Schools to have Dennard in town.

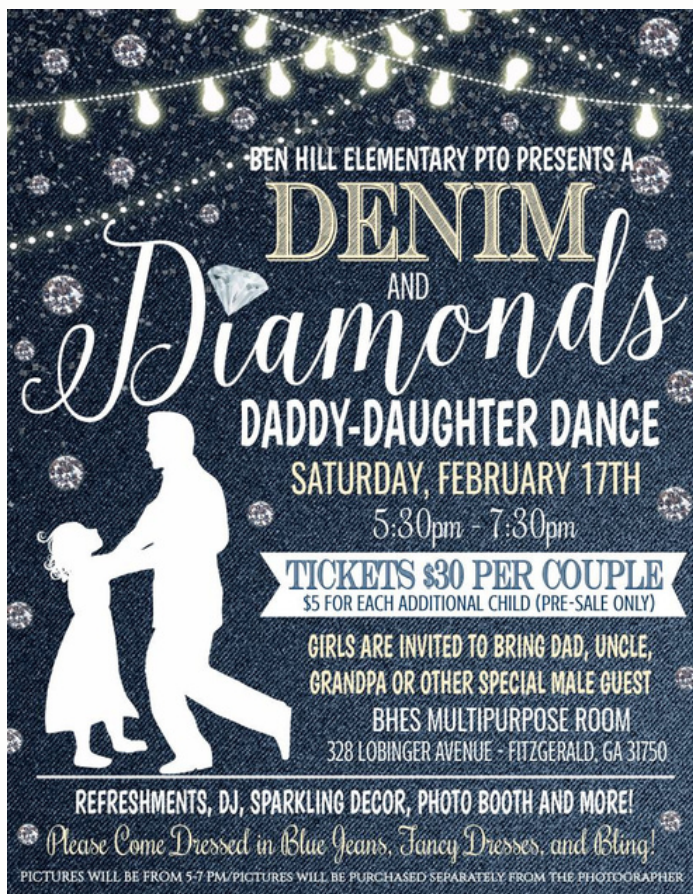


## Stock Market Winners at BHES

The school district winners for the Stock Market Game this past fall from Mrs. Spivey's class were Yahairy Avila, Randa Spivey, and Lyric McCray. They started with \$100,000 and in 10 weeks had a portfolio of \$110,774.74.



## Denim & Diamonds event coming in February at BHES



Ben Hill Elementary is hosting the Annual Father/ Daughter Dance in February "Denim and Diamonds". Please see flyer or BHES facebook page for more information.

## BHPK has fun days coming up



Ben Hill Preschool is having two fun days, 100th Day of School on January 23, 2024 and Pajama Day on February 2, 2024 to celebrate Groundhog day. See more information on their facebook page.

## FAMILY STEAM night at BHP

Ben Hill Primary Family Steam night was a huge success. The children were able to go to many STEAM activities. The parents and children had a "Rock"ing good time. Thank you to everyone who supported this event.





# Ben Hill Elementary's Reading Scores Soar A New Reading Program plus Perseverance equals Huge Payoff for BHES Students and Staff

## Transforming Literacy: A Success Story

by Christopher Alexander, IC at BHES

In a candid revelation, an anonymous parent expressed deep disappointment, declaring, "I believe the school system has failed my child. My fourth-grader cannot read! We have to try something else."

This poignant sentiment echoes across our town, state, and nation, where more than half of all parents and guardians share similar concerns about stagnant national reading scores over the past 30 years. The ongoing debate on teaching methods—whole language vs. phonics vs. balanced literacy—has left parents and educators searching for effective solutions.



Amidst this discourse, the Science of Reading emerges as a beacon of hope. Rooted in decades of research, this approach prioritizes five pillars: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary Acquisition, and Comprehension. Remarkably, 97% of individuals can learn to read successfully through a systematic and sequential application of the Science of Reading.

Recognizing the need for change, the Ben Hill County Literacy Team undertook a year-long exploration of best practices and available curricula. Their choice, HMH Into Reading, became the primary Tier 1 Reading Curriculum for grades K-5. Although met with early uncertainties and technical challenges, teachers and staff rallied behind the initiative.

The implementation of BHES's reading program yielded jaw dropping results, as reflected in various assessments such as HMH Growth Measure and Acadience Oral Reading Fluency (ORF). These assessments provided a comprehensive view of students' performance in the five pillars, showcasing remarkable growth and improvement.

### The Data is In

Examining the data reveals a significant increase in reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition as measured by HMH Growth Measure, with an average growth of 10.72 points per student. The percentage of students at or above grade level in reading soared from 27% to an impressive 53% in just one semester. In terms of actual students, that is an increase from 152 students on or above grade level at the beginning of the year to 292 students on or above grade level at the middle of the year. In concert, the number of students below grade level decreased from 409 to 258.

# Ben Hill Elementary's Reading Scores Soar

## A New Reading Program plus Perseverance equals Huge Payoff for BHES Students and Staff (cont.)

Looking at Acadience data is just as impressive, but some historical context must be considered to get the full understanding of how good the data really is. Notably, this year marked the first time all grade levels participated in Acadience testing, breaking the trend of mid-year declines; only third graders had previously participated in Acadience testing.

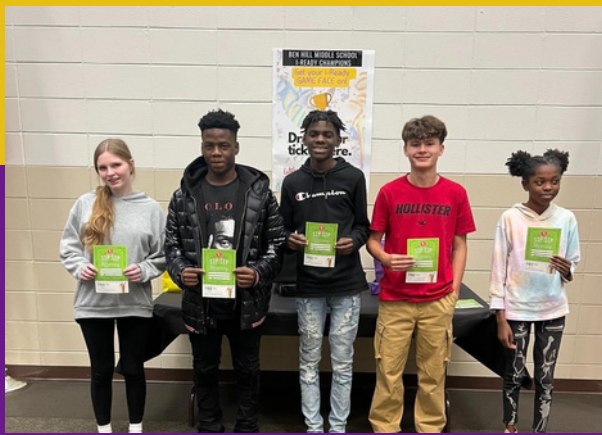
For the past two years, the beginning of year data started out higher than it ended, suffering terrible downward trends for middle of the year data. For instance, in 2021-2022, the beginning of year data showed that 101 students were at or above grade level whereas only 74 were below grade level. At the middle of the year testing, the results showed nearly a direct inverse of that number with 103 students falling below grade level and only 75 students maintaining at or above reading levels. 2022-2023 showed similar results: 93 students were at or above grade level at the start of the year with 75 students below grade level. Middle of the year data showed 75 still at or above with 92 students below grade level. Fast forward to this year, the first year where all grade levels were required to take the Acadience tests, and there were a total of 258 students who were at or above grade level at the first of the year with 281 students below grade level. Middle of the year testing showed that 271 students were at or above grade level with 279 students below grade level. For the first time in recent history, not only did the middle of the year Acadience data avoid a major drop, but it surpassed the beginning of year data, with 13 more students at or above grade level and 2 fewer students who were below grade level.

### What's Next for BHES

Christmas break is in the rearview mirror and the 100th day of school is quickly approaching along with the annual march towards standardized state testing. As teachers prepare for second semester, there will be a targeted focus on improving the areas of HMH Into Reading that can provide even greater gains for students. Foundational skills and literacy lessons that promote phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and comprehension will be at the forefront of the agenda moving forward as teachers attempt to turn this data worth celebrating into real momentum that produces the best reading scores BHES has ever seen.

Growth Measure 2023-24				
Year	BOY		MOY	
	WellBelow/ Below/ Approaching Benchmark	On/Above Benchmark	WellBelow/ Below/ Approaching Benchmark	On/Above Benchmark
BHE	73%	27%	47%	53% (+26) {143 Students}
3rd Grade	69%	31%	37%	63% (+32) {63 Students}
4th Grade	80%	20%	51%	49% (+29) {48 Students}
5th Grade	71%	29%	54%	46% (+17) {32 Students}

**BHES is soaring!**



## I-Ready Reading & Math Lessons Drawing held at BHMS

Ben Hill Middle School students are receiving tickets to place in a prize drawing each week for completing and passing their i-Ready Reading and Math lessons! i-Ready is an adaptive assessment that adjust it's questions to meet your child's needs. After the assessment in Reading and Math have been taken the students are placed on their own personalized path! Personalized Instruction provides students with lessons based on their individual skill level and needs, so your student can learn at a pace that is just right for them. These lessons are fun and interactive to keep your student engaged as they learn.

6th Grade Drawing Winners: Hunter Bashton, Ricky Zaketa, Liam Smith, Emely Williams. Not Pictured- Myla Heitzman

7th Grade Drawing Winners: Terrance Tillman, Zy'kia Darden, Devin Hardy, Julie-Ana Sebastian  
Not Pictured- Brooklyn Duarte

8th Grade Drawing Winners: Mylie Frazier, Braylon Mccray, Jamonte Cobb, Damien Dowdy, Ja'layiah Lane



## Cognia : BHCS Survey

Parents: Please fill out this important survey for us. <https://eprovesurveys.advanced.org/surveys/#/action/245039/p1016>

You can also view this survey on our website at [www.ben-hill.k12.ga.us](http://www.ben-hill.k12.ga.us) and any of our School and District Facebook pages.



## Southern Veneer donates NED's yoyos for every student at BHP

The NED Show visited BHP in December. NED talked about key mottos that children can use to stay encouraged. NED uses yo-yo tricks in their school performances. This bit of old-fashioned fun helps us be entertaining and unforgettable in the mind of a child as we share how "NED" learns to never give up, encourage others and do his best.

Southern Veneer donated The NED YoYo to each student at Ben Hill Primary on Thursday, January 18, 2024. This yo-yo will not only create fun for our students but remind them each time they are Yo-yoing that they should Never Give Up, Encourage Others and Do Your Best. Thank you so much Southern Veneer for donating these Yoyos to our students.



## Millex Rooster City Robotics teams at FHSCCA qualify for the State Championships

37116B made it to the semi finals and ranked 2nd in skills. We are excited that 37116B also took the Excellence Award which is the highest award given in VEX tournaments. 37116B will be advancing to the Georgia Robotics State Championship 🏆.

Three of our Millex Rooster City Robotics teams qualified and they are gearing up for the competition this weekend at Lowndes County Schools. Wishing them luck on a great competition.



# *Happenings in Events*

-  AFTER SCHOOL TUTORING BEGINS ~ JANUARY 16TH EVERY TUESDAY AND THURSDAY 2:45PM- 3:45PM
-  100TH DAY OF SCHOOL FOR BHPK AND BHP~ JANUARY 23RD
-  ROUND 2: FLEX COMPETITION AT FHSCCA~ FEBRUARY 2ND AT FHSCCA
-  BHP BOOKFAIR ~ FEBRUARY 5- 9, 2024 IN BHP MEDIA CENTER
-  KINDERGARTEN TEAM A PRIDE PROGRAM~ FEBRUARY 16TH
-  READ ACROSS AMERICA WEEK AT BHP ~ FEBRUARY 26- MARCH 1ST
-  VIRTUAL DAY~ STUDENT LED CONFERENCES FOR BHP- FHSCCA  
MARCH 29TH

For Athletic events, visit our website at [www.ben-hill.k12.ga.us](http://www.ben-hill.k12.ga.us)-click on Athletics at the top of the page -go to the sport to see all of the sport schedules.

\*\* New Website coming for the district and schools. Plan to launch July 2024. Great things are happening!



[www.ben-hill.k12.ga.us](http://www.ben-hill.k12.ga.us) or  
on Facebook at Ben Hill School District