

2003 Press Release Archive

Press Release

January 14, 2003

**Re: Called Board Meeting to Consider School Calendar
And Scheduled Workshop to Discuss Block Scheduling**

Contact: Donna Golden ph. 706-253-1700

The Pickens County Board of Education will conduct a workshop on Monday, January 20, 2003, at 5:00 p.m. to discuss block scheduling at Pickens High School. The board will then hold a called meeting at 7:00 p.m. The announced agenda item for the called meeting is a discussion and approval of the school calendar for 2003-04. The workshop and board meeting will be held at the Jasper Elementary School media center on D.B. Carroll Street in Jasper.

As always, the public and employees are invited to attend. -end-

Press Release January 27, 2003

Re: Special Week Honors Georgia's School Board Members

Contact: Donna Golden ph. 706-253-1700

The week of January 27-31, 2003, has been proclaimed School Board Member Appreciation Week in Georgia. The week-long observance calls attention to the contributions of members of local boards of education. "School board members are elected by citizens to be the governing bodies of local school systems, and therefore, must make decisions with students, parents, taxpayers and school employees in mind," said Pickens County Schools Superintendent Lee Shiver.

"While those decisions can be difficult at times, our board continues to make great progress in advancing higher standards, more accountability, better educational programs, and more open communication," said Shiver.

"Most board members willingly accept the challenges of their office without expecting to be praised. But we believe our board members deserve a pat on the back for their dedication and allegiance to the students of Pickens County."

As constitutional officers of Georgia, school board members are responsible for setting educational policies, employing school personnel, providing buildings and equipment, operating a transportation system and disbursing school funds. As community leaders, school board members serve as advocates for the children in local public schools and must study, evaluate and decide what actions are in the best interest of those students.

The Pickens County Board of Education is made up of five members elected locally: Tony Young, a farmer and former teacher, is chairman of the board. Mark Mitton is vice-chairman. Ervin Easterwood, along with Young and Mitton, is in his first year of service as a board member. Veteran board members Joan Locke and Shirley Whitaker are beginning their fifth year on the board.

The Georgia School Boards Association (GSBA), sponsor of the celebration, is a voluntary statewide organization of local boards of education. GSBA serves as an advocate for the interest of the state's public school students and local school boards. GSBA also provides in-service training and technical assistance to Georgia's local school systems and school board members. Information about GSBA is available at www.gsba.com. -end-

Press Release

February 7, 2003

Re: Called Board Meeting Tuesday, Feb. 11

And Policy Committee Meeting Tuesday, Feb. 18

Contact: Donna Golden ph. 706-253-1700

The Pickens County Board of Education will conduct a called board meeting on Tuesday, February 11, at 2:00 p.m. to consider approval of the construction manager for the new bus garage facility. The board is expected to meet in executive session at the beginning of the meeting to discuss pending litigation and property acquisition. The board's policy committee, chaired by Joan Locke, will meet Tuesday, February 18, at 4:00 p.m.

The called board meeting and policy committee meeting will be held at the Jasper Elementary School media center on D.B. Carroll Street in Jasper.

As always, the public and employees are invited to attend. -end-

Press Release

February 13, 2003

Re: Finance Committee Meeting Tuesday, Feb. 25

Contact: Donna Golden ph. 706-253-1700

The board's finance committee, chaired by Mark Mitton, will meet Tuesday, February 25, at 4:00 p.m. The finance committee meeting will be held at the Jasper Elementary School media center on D.B. Carroll Street in Jasper. As always, the public and employees are invited to attend. -end-

Press Release

February 26, 2003

Re: Monthly School Board Meeting Rescheduled

Contact: Donna Golden ph. 706-253-1700

The regular school board meeting for March has been rescheduled for Thursday, March 13, 2003, at 7:00 p.m. The board meeting will be held at the Jasper Elementary School media center on D.B. Carroll Street in Jasper.

As always, the public and employees are invited to attend. -end-

Press Release

April 4, 2003

Re: Called Board Meeting Friday, April 18

Contact: Donna Golden ph. 706-253-1700

The Pickens County Board of Education will conduct a called board meeting on Friday, April 18, at 4:30 p.m. to consider an easement at the Harmony School Road property and accept bids for the bus/maintenance facility. The called meeting will be held at the Jasper Elementary School media center on D.B. Carroll Street in Jasper. As always, the public and employees are invited to attend. -end-

Press Release

April 15, 2003

Re: Kindergarten Registration Saturday, April 26, 2003

Contact: Donna Golden ph. 706-253-1700

Kindergarten registration will be held on Saturday, April 26, 2003, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Parents should take their child to register at the school that their child will attend. If you have questions about what school your child will be attending please call the Central Office at 706-253-1700. Maps are available at the Central Office to assist in determining which school a child will attend. Also, parents will need to bring the following items to registration, their child's birth certificate, social security card, and immunization record. Hearing, vision, and dental screening will be performed at the school.

-end-

Press Release

April 18, 2003

Re: INVITATION TO BID

Contact: Donna Golden ph. 706-253-1700

The Pickens County BOE is accepting bids for a Construction Manager at Risk for an addition to Jasper Middle School. This addition is for a new kitchen and renovation of the existing lunchroom. Copies of the RFQ are available by contacting Mike Ballew at (706) 253-1700, or at 159 Stegall Drive, Jasper, Georgia 30143. The Pickens County Board of Education reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and to waive any technicalities.

Press Release

April 21, 2003

Re: Pickens County Schools Accreditation Renewed

Contact: Susan Reeves ph. 706-253-1700

The Pickens County Schools system has once again found itself in rare company. The Board of Education recently received notification that all of their schools will continue to be fully accredited by both the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and the Georgia Accrediting Commission (GAC). The Pickens County Schools system is one of only 51 out of 180 school systems across Georgia in which all schools are accredited by the rigorous standards of the SACS.

Board chairman Tony Young was pleased that all schools also met the GAC standards. "It's important to us and it's important to our community to know that we are meeting the standards of the two most widely known and highly regarded accrediting agencies in the southeast," said Young.

"We're proud of our accrediting status because it underscores our commitment to quality schools in this new era of accountability," he added.

Founded in 1895, the renown SACS is one of six regional accrediting agencies in the United States and includes more than 12,000 member public and private universities, colleges, community colleges, elementary, middle, and secondary schools with enrollments totaling almost six million students. Although its standards have evolved over the years to reflect the changes in expectations for schools and public demands for quality education, SACS standards today remain among the most visible and highly recognized educational barometers in the country.

The 99-year-old GAC rates all schools in Georgia according to multiple standards in five areas, i.e. organization, personnel, program of studies, school plant, and finances. GAC's accreditation process is designed to establish and uphold standards, to strengthen the quality of education in each school, and to assure its membership and the general public that the established standards are related to best educational practices.

Pickens County Schools Superintendent Lee Shiver noted that accreditation is important to the school system and the community because it assures a certain degree of accountability to taxpayers. "Accreditation means that our schools have met recognized, established standards and that we have been re-evaluated by professionals who focus on school improvement," said Shiver.

"It's certainly an equally important indicator for business and industry leaders who value high quality schools and who consider regional accreditation status as an important factor when relocating or expanding," he added.

A fully accredited school system compares favorably with schools in other parts of the country because the SACS is a charter member of the International Council of School Accreditation Commissions, which coordinates accreditation activities throughout the world.

School board members and administrators hope that citizens will look for their certificates of accreditation to be displayed prominently in each school with pride. "They

represent a lot of hard work and preparation by our teachers and support staff, and they are a recognized acknowledgment of our schools' commitment to continuous improvement," said Shiver.

Press Release

April 28, 2003

Re: Pickens County Schools Make Special Commitment to Economic Education

Contact: Donna Golden ph. 706-253-1700

The Pickens County Schools have formally affiliated with the EconomicsAmerica program coordinated by the Georgia Council on Economic Education, according to Dr. David Martin, Executive Director of the Council.

EconomicsAmerica is a model for incorporating economics instruction throughout the k-12 curriculum and across disciplines. EconomicAmerica implementation activities will include workshops for teachers; the preparation and distribution of resource materials; analysis and revision of the curriculum as appropriate; and measures to determine the progress of the implementation.

Superintendent Lee Shiver has selected Lloyd Shaddix, Principal of Pickens High School, to serve as EconomicsAmerica Coordinator. The Center for Economic Education at North Georgia College & State University will be helping with implementation activities, in cooperation with the program staff of the Georgia Council.

The Pickens County Schools are the 117th EconomicsAmerica commitment in Georgia , including 91 public school systems and 26 independent schools. There are more than 3,000 EconomicsAmerica school systems nationwide. -end-

Press Release

May 19, 2003

Re: Arrest of School Administrator

Contact: Ben Arp, Director of Personnel ph. 706-253-1700

The Pickens County Schools system has released a letter to parents of students who attend Jasper Elementary School regarding the arrest of assistant principal Jacque Smith last month. The letter, written by JES principal Peggy Andrews, emphasized that Mrs.

Smith's case had not been adjudicated in a court of law, and that an independent psychological evaluation did not indicate that she was unfit to perform her job duties.

Superintendent of Schools Lee Shiver confirmed that Mrs. Andrews made the report to his office the day after the arrest for aggravated assault. Personnel Director Ben Arp reported the incident, as required by state law, the same day to the Professional Standards Commission in Atlanta.

Shiver said he notified all school board members as well. "They were extremely concerned," said Shiver, "but, based on the information we had at the time, no one felt that Mrs. Smith's presence at school in any way jeopardized the safety and welfare of our students."

Mrs. Smith did not return to school for several days following the incident. The independent evaluation was also important for the school board, according to board chairman Tony Young.

"This was truly an unfortunate incident involving one of our administrators, but we were comfortable with her returning to work based on Mrs. Andrews' and Dr. Shiver's assessment of the situation," said Young, "along with the results of the psychological evaluation."

School officials were stung by some criticism following an Atlanta television station's report last week that featured a few parents complaining that they should have been told of the arrest when it occurred.

"I can understand that," said Shiver. "At the time this happened we expected some controversy, so we were extremely thoughtful about our decision to allow Mrs. Smith to return to the school pending the outcome of her case and the decision of the Professional Standards Commission."

"Our priority is always the safety and welfare of our students and staff," he said. "I have confidence in both Mrs. Andrews and Mrs. Smith, and I know their leadership at JES has always been focused on the best interests of their students."

Mrs. Smith was arrested on April 13, 2003, in Gilmer County and charged with aggravated assault following a complaint made by her husband, Tony Smith.

-end-

Press Release

May 20, 2003

**Re: Called Board Meeting Thursday, May 22
Contact: Donna Golden ph. 706-253-1700**

The Pickens County Board of Education will conduct a called board meeting on Thursday, May 22, at 4:30 p.m. for approval of Construction Manager for Jasper Middle School kitchen additions, lunchroom renovations, and acceptance of guaranteed maximum price for the fueling station at the new bus garage facility. The called meeting will be held at the Jasper Elementary School media center on D.B. Carroll Street in Jasper.

As always, the public and employees are invited to attend. -end-

Press Release

May 30, 2003

Re: Finance Committee Meeting Thursday, June 5

Contact: Donna Golden ph. 706-253-1700

The board's finance committee, chaired by Mark Mitton, will meet Thursday, June 5, at 6:00 p.m. The finance committee will discuss elements of the FY04 budget, but no official action will be taken.

The finance committee meeting will be held at the Jasper Elementary School media center on D.B. Carroll Street in Jasper.

As always, the public and employees are invited to attend. -end-

Press Release

June 6, 2003

Re: Finance Committee Meeting, Facilities Committee Meeting, and Called Board Meeting Thursday, June 12

Contact: Donna Golden ph. 706-253-1700

The board's finance committee, chaired by Mark Mitton, will meet Thursday, June 12, at 6:00 p.m. The finance committee will discuss elements of the FY04 budget, but no official action will be taken.

The board's facilities committee, chaired by Ervin Easterwood, will meet Thursday, June 12, at 7:00 p.m.

The Pickens County Board of Education has scheduled a called board meeting for Thursday, June 12, 2003, at 7:30 p.m. The board will conduct the superintendent's evaluation, and is expected to meet in executive session.

These meetings will be held at Jasper Elementary School media center on D.B. Carroll Street in Jasper.

As always, the public and employees are invited to attend. -end-

Press Release

June 17, 2003

Re: School Board Breaks Ground on New Bus Garage

Contact: Mike Ballew, Assistant Superintendent ph. 706-253-1700

Pickens County Schools officials are genuinely excited about the system's new bus garage now under construction on Harmony School Road. The \$2.1 million facility will provide the school system with a much needed bus repair and maintenance garage as well as bus and employee parking.

Assistant Superintendent Mike Ballew, who supervises facilities acquisition and construction for the system, said he appreciated how the new school board prioritized the project shortly after taking office. "This is a very important project for all of us and our board wants to make sure it's completed like the Hill City Elementary School --- on time and on budget."

Transportation Director Charlie Wright echoed Ballew's enthusiasm. "When I got here it was hard to believe that our drivers and mechanics were operating out of what they were calling a garage."

Over the last five years, the school system has rapidly outgrown the current dilapidated bus garage with the addition of dozens of buses to transport more students. The new facility, located on approximately seven acres, will feature four double bays which can accommodate eight buses at a time and a driving range for training bus drivers.

A computerized fueling station will enable the school system to more efficiently monitor fuel consumption and mileage costs. The expanded fuel storage capacities will allow the system to purchase fuel in larger quantities at lower costs.

Ervin Easterwood, who chairs the school board's facilities committee, said, "We've needed this for a long time." Easterwood proposed that a future board meeting take place at the new facility once it is completed.

"The public needs to see how their SPLOST dollars are being spent. Unlike a school, most people don't visit a bus garage very often," said Easterwood.

Board chairman Tony Young agreed. "It's definitely overdue. This facility should be able to accommodate quite a bit of future growth for our school system and our community when we need to expand it. I think the public will also appreciate the fact that the SPLOST money for the project has been collected and is in the bank earning interest."

The project is being constructed by Engineered Structures, Inc. out of Smyrna, Georgia, and should be completed by the end of the year. -end-

Press Release

June 30, 2003

Re: Finance Committee Meeting, Monday, July 14, and Personnel Committee Meeting, Friday, July 18

Contact: Donna Golden ph. 706-253-1700

The board's finance committee, chaired by Mark Mitton, will meet Monday, July 14, at 7:00 p.m. The finance committee will discuss elements of the FY04 budget, but no official action will be taken.

The board's personnel committee, chaired by Shirley Whitaker, will meet Friday, July 18, at 8:00 a.m. The personnel committee will discuss job descriptions.

These meetings will be held at Jasper Elementary School media center on D.B. Carroll Street in Jasper.

As always, the public and employees are invited to attend. -end-

Press Release

July 15, 2003

Re: Called Board Meeting Tuesday, July 22

Contact: Donna Golden ph. 706-253-1700

The Pickens County Board of Education will conduct a called board meeting on Tuesday, July 22, at 5:00 p.m. for further discussion of FY04 budget elements, approval of supplements, and acceptance of a guaranteed maximum price for the for Jasper Middle School kitchen additions and lunchroom renovations. The called meeting will be held at the Jasper Elementary School media center on D.B. Carroll Street in Jasper.

As always, the public and employees are invited to attend. -end-

Press Release

July 21, 2003

Re: Ethics Gadfly Files Complaint Against School System

Contact: Donna Golden ph. 706-253-1700

Pickens County Schools officials are shaking their heads over the latest salvo from ethics hired gun George Anderson. On July 17, Anderson filed a complaint with the State Ethics Commission against Superintendent Lee Shiver and the Pickens County Board of Education alleging that the school system's brochure informing the public of the Special Purpose Local Options Sales Tax (SPLOST) referendum in 2001 was illegal.

Anderson alleges the preparation and distribution of the brochure was a violation "because taxpayer time, money [and] employees were used illegally pursuant to [state law] (O.C.G.A. 21-5-30.2)."

Shiver had not seen or heard about the complaint until contacted by the Pickens County Progress. "We were very careful about the preparation of that brochure," said Shiver. "It was written under the supervision of our board attorney, and it was specifically designed not to conflict with the law."

The law that Anderson is alleging has been violated relates to the prohibition of the use of taxpayer money for political campaigns. School Board Attorney Phil Landrum said, "We were aware of the statute when the brochure was prepared and took steps to make sure that the information and its publication did not conflict with the law."

"The brochure did not advocate a position, nor did it tell citizens how to vote on the SPLOST issue," said Landrum. "It was merely informative in content and it was certainly within the scope of the school board's authority to inform citizens of such an important initiative."

Shiver said he is confident that the publication and distribution of the brochure was legal and appropriate. "I believe we have a duty and an obligation to inform the public of our intentions related to the status and future of our school system," said Shiver.

"According to the Atlanta paper, this is what Anderson does for a living," said Shiver. "He advertises that he can be hired to research complaints and alleged ethics violations and contact the media. It was reported that he charges individuals and community groups \$75 an hour, plus expenses."

The superintendent said that his office had processed 159 separate items requested by Anderson since May under the state's open records law. "If he (Anderson) doesn't prevail on this one, I'm sure he'll keep plugging away until he comes up with something that might satisfy his malevolent and obsessed benefactors," said Shiver.

Pickens County Board of Education Chairman Tony Young said, "We consider this to be a serious allegation, but we're not surprised by Mr. Anderson's latest action. We'll let the State Ethics Commission sort it out. These sorts of complaints get a lot of attention when they're filed, but you rarely hear anything about the ones that are judged to be without merit and are dismissed."

Of the five current board members on the school board, only Joan Locke and Shirley Whitaker were board members in 2001 when the brochure was developed and distributed.

The State Ethics Commission will consider the complaint and notify the school system if school officials need to respond. The school system will then have 14 days to respond. If the Commission decides to investigate after the school system responds, a preliminary hearing will be scheduled. -end-

Press Release

August 13, 2003

Re: State Ethics Commission Rejects Complaints Against School System

Contact: Donna Golden ph. 706-253-1700

The executive secretary of the State Ethics Commission has notified ethics gadfly George Anderson that his recent complaints against the Pickens County Board of Education and Superintendent Lee Shiver would not be considered by the commission because his complaints were defective.

In separate letters to Anderson, dated July 22 and 31, 2003, Executive Secretary C. Theodore Lee wrote, "The complaint is defective in that it fails to allege facts showing actions by either of the named Respondents which violated the Ethics in Government Act."

Anderson had filed complaints with the State Ethics Commission alleging that the school system's brochure informing the public of the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) referendum in 2001 was illegal.

After the first complaint was rejected, Anderson immediately filed a second complaint with the State Ethics Commission. The second complaint was rejected as well.

Pickens County Board of Education Chairman Tony Young said, "I think the decision speaks for itself and it speaks pretty clearly. We were confident we would be cleared after discussing it with the board attorney."

Shiver said he wasn't surprised by the rejection. "It was bogus to start with," said Shiver. "People in our community who have been following his antics probably have figured out his real agenda by now," Shiver said, referring to the recent revelation that Anderson is paid by disgruntled citizens to make open records requests, file complaints, and alarm the media.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported in their July 26 edition that Anderson was under investigation by the Georgia Bar Association to determine whether Anderson was practicing law without a license. The newspaper also reported that the Atlanta lawyer who filed the complaint, Robert Proctor, said that Anderson's company was not registered with the Georgia secretary of state's office as required by law. -end-

Press Release

August 13, 2003

Re: Facilities Committee Meeting Tuesday, August 26

Contact: Donna Golden ph. 706-253-1700

The board's facilities committee, chaired by Ervin Easterwood, will meet Tuesday, August 26, at 6:00 p.m. No official action will be taken.

This meeting will be held at Jasper Elementary School media center on D.B. Carroll Street in Jasper.

As always, the public and employees are invited to attend. -end-

Press Release

August 13, 2003

Re: 2003 SCHOOL NIGHT FOR SCOUTING

**Contact: Greg Montgomery, Scouting District Membership Chairman
at 404-457-6617**

For over 90 years, Scouting has offered an opportunity for parents and children to get involved in a program that teaches positive values, personal fitness, social skills and leadership. If you enjoy the great outdoors, helping your community and having fun, Scouting is the place for you! Boy Scouts of America will be holding their annual "School Night for Scouting" at elementary schools throughout Cherokee and Pickens Counties beginning August 14th. Please see the schedule below for dates/locations and be on the lookout for more information at your child's school as it becomes available. All interested boys and their parents are encouraged to attend. Please contact Greg Montgomery, District Membership Chairman, at 404-457-6617 with any questions.

**August 14th - Jasper ES, Tate ES, Hill City ES

Press Release

September 05, 2003

Re: "2002-2003 Super District for Quality Schools"

Contact: Donna Golden ph. 706-253-1700

The Pickens County Schools system was recently notified by the Executive Directors of the Commissions on Elementary, Middle, and Secondary Schools of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) of receiving special recognition to those schools districts where all eligible elementary, middle, and secondary schools are accredited. The district is considered a "2002-2003 Super District for Quality Schools," and was congratulated for its "...schools' accreditation accomplishments and continued success in improving educational opportunities for the young people served."

For 2002-2003, there were 512 school districts in the 11 state SACS region that qualified for this recognition. The number by state is: Alabama - 64, Florida - 39, Georgia - 53, Kentucky - 48, Louisiana - 11, Mississippi - 48, North Carolina - 48, South Carolina - 55, Tennessee - 77, Texas - 16, and Virginia - 53.

SACS accreditation is non-government and voluntary, and it helps educational institutions improve through a systematic process of evaluation that focuses on improving teaching and student learning. SACS accreditation assures not only that an institution meets minimum standards, but also that it demonstrates a commitment to continuously providing quality educational programs.

An alliance between SACS and the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA), which is comprised of the six regional accreditation commissions and several related organizations, i.e., the National Council for Private School Accreditation and the National Study of School Evaluation provides every elementary, middle, and secondary school that holds SACS accreditation the additional benefits of national accreditation and international recognition through CITA.

SACS accreditation ensures benefits to a school and its community, including:

- A mission and goals focused on improving student performance and the school's capacity to improve teaching and learning.
- A collaboratively developed improvement plan that includes methods for measuring student progress and involves key school stakeholders.
- An effective framework that integrates all types of school planning and evaluation requirements.
- Qualified staffing and limited class size.
- Regular review of the school's programs by a team of outside peer professionals.
- Accountability and value for tax dollars spent.
- Regional, National, and International Recognition as an accredited school.

Founded in 1895 and headquartered in Decatur, Georgia, SACS is one of six regional accrediting bodies in the United States and as an association is comprised of three Commissions. SACS serves 11 Southern states from Virginia to Texas, as well as American-International schools in Latin America. It accredits more than 13,000 institutions (public, nonpublic, early childhood centers and kindergartens; elementary, middle and high schools; vocational-technical schools, military schools, colleges and universities). For additional information, check the Association's web page at www.sacs.org. -end-

Press Release

September 08, 2003

Re: Local School Board Members Work to Ensure Educational Quality

Contact: Donna Golden ph. 706-253-1700

Members of the Pickens County Board of Education were recently recognized for successfully completing board member training activities sponsored by the Georgia Schools Boards Association. Receiving certificates of recognition at the September 4, 2003, meeting of the board were members: Chairman Tony Young, Vice-Chairman Mark Mitton, Joan Locke, Shirley Whitaker, and Ervin Easterwood.

Georgia was among the first states in the nation to require that local school board members receive training to ensure quality educational leadership. Board members receive training on topics such as: Georgia's Quality Basic Education Act (QBE), budgeting and financing, legal and policy issues, school and community relations and the roles and responsibilities of the school board.

"By participating in training and board development activities, local school board members show their dedication to improving the educational system for the students within their communities," said Jeannie M. (Sis) Henry, GSBA executive director. "Life-long learning doesn't just apply to our students, it applies to all of us-especially to those in a leadership role in public education."

The Georgia School Boards Association is a non-profit association representing Georgia's locally elected school boards. -end-

Press Release

September 9, 2003

Re: Called Board Meeting Monday, September 15

Contact: Donna Golden ph. 706-253-1700

The Pickens County Board of Education will conduct a called board meeting on Monday, September 15, at 6:00 p.m. to tentatively approve the 2003 millage rate for the school system. The board is also expected to discuss the status of out-of-county students. The called meeting will be held at the Jasper Elementary School media center on D.B. Carroll Street in Jasper.

As always, the public and employees are invited to attend. -end-

Press Release

September 16, 2003

Re: Board of Education Seeks Modest Property Tax Increase and Schedules Public Hearings

Contact: Amy Burgess ph. 706-253-1700

For the fourth consecutive year, the Pickens County Board of Education is planning to lower the millage rate which generates local tax revenues for the school system. At a called board meeting held Monday, September 15, the board voted to tentatively approve a local tax rate of 14.89, a decrease of .07 mills from last year.

Georgia law, however, requires that the board announce a property tax increase of 1.68% because the school system will receive more local tax revenue than last year's millage rate would have produced had no property reassessments occurred.

The board will conduct three public hearings, in accordance with state law, for concerned citizens to respond to the proposed property tax increase and to make their opinions on the increase known to the board. The hearings have been scheduled for Thursday, September 25, 2003, at 11:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., and Thursday, October 2, 2003, at 6:00 p.m. at the Jasper Primary School Media Center on D.B. Carroll Street. Board of Education Chairman Tony Young said, "We are pleased that it looks like we can lower the millage rate again this year. We thought we might be able to take it down a little bit more, but we are extremely concerned about the impact of anticipated state budget cuts on our local budget next school year."

Director of Finance Amy Burgess pointed out that the proposed overall budget increase is less than three percent, but added, "Although we continue to be warned about even more cuts from the state, we need to keep planning for projected growth, improving our facilities, and property acquisition."

School Superintendent Lee Shiver said that some people might be a little confused by the announcement that the board was increasing property taxes as they lowered the local tax rate. "That's what the law requires us to do when reassessments generate more tax revenues overall," said Shiver.

"The statutory reporting requirement is fair," he said, "because we will collect 8.18% more local tax revenues this year even though we know that most people will see reductions in their overall tax bills due to the reduction in the millage rate."

The board will not vote to finalize the proposed millage rate reduction and budget until the next regular monthly board meeting to be held October 2, 2003, at 7:00 p.m. As always, the public and employees are invited to attend. -end-

Press Release

September 29, 2003

Re: Vernie Jones Ford Sponsors Student Attendance Incentive

Contact: Donna Golden ph. 706-253-1700

Pickens County middle and high school students now have a new attendance incentive that promises to be considerably more exciting than a certificate of achievement or their teachers' heartfelt praise and appreciation. Vernie Jones Ford of Jasper will provide cash awards of \$100 to randomly selected students in grades 6-12 who miss no more than one day of school each grading period and are passing all of their classes.

Jim Jones, owner and general manager of Vernie Jones Ford, said, "We wanted to do something special for the students who were making the effort to be at school every day. When we learned that the public schools in Georgia were being labeled and graded by the state based, in part, on student attendance, it just seemed like a good thing to do for everyone involved."

At the end of each grading period, a drawing will be held to award \$100 to one student from each grade level at both middle schools and the high school. To be eligible for the drawing, students who have not missed more than one day of school and who are passing all of their classes must register at Vernie Jones Ford within one week of the end of the grading period.

The drawings will take place at Vernie Jones Ford beginning the week of October 20 when the company will award a total of \$1000 to ten students from the middle and high schools. Once the students' schools have confirmed their grades and attendance, each selected student will be presented with a cash award of \$100.

To help keep student and parent interest in good attendance a priority throughout the school year, Vernie Jones Ford will have a special drawing at the end of the year when one student will receive \$1000. This drawing will include the names of all students who registered and were eligible to win at the end of any grading period.

Pickens County Schools Superintendent Lee Shiver said the new program will really help the schools' efforts in getting students to school. "We thought our student attendance was pretty good at all of our schools, but the new state and federal regulations under the No Child Left Behind act have raised the bar of expectations considerably," said Shiver.

"Vernie Jones Ford has a long tradition of supporting our schools and various extracurricular programs, so the offer to help our middle and high schools with a new attendance incentive program is a welcomed surprise," said Shiver.

Shiver said that his principals will help promote the program at the middle school and PHS. For more information, parents and students may contact their school principals or Vernie Jones Ford at 706-692-6467. -end-

Press Release

October 6, 2003

**Re: State Test Scores Improve for Elementary and Middle Schools;
High School Graduation Tests Scores Slump**

Contact: Susan Reeves ph. 706-253-1700

Pickens County Schools officials are pleased, but not satisfied, with the results of last spring's state Criterion Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) which were given to all fourth, sixth, and eighth graders. At Pickens High School, the results of the Georgia High School Graduation Tests were cause for concern after sustaining top scores for several years.

Fourth graders in the system's three elementary schools improved their performance an average of 17 percentage points in reading, language arts, and math. The percentage of fourth graders meeting or exceeding state standards on the tests was above the statewide percentage in all subject areas.

The school system's sixth graders' performance was equally impressive with an average gain of 13 percentage points in the tested subject areas. The percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards likewise exceeded the statewide percentage in reading, language arts, and math.

Although the eighth graders' performance on the CRCT increased an average of nine points, they lagged the state percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards by one percentage point in reading and language arts and by seven percentage points in math.

At PHS, the percentage of 11th graders passing the Georgia High School Graduation Tests on the first try declined in all subject areas except writing. The passing rates for PHS juniors were above the state average in English/language arts and writing, at the state average in social studies and science, and below the state average in math by three percentage points.

Pickens County Schools Superintendent Lee Shiver praised the principals and teachers at the elementary and middle schools for their efforts and the unprecedented gains on the CRCT. "They've worked really hard and they've done a good job of aligning classroom

instruction with what the state is testing," said Shiver. "We are not where we want to be on the CRCT yet, but we are a lot closer than we've ever been," he added.

School board members also commended the principals who made presentations at the October 2 board meeting. School Board Chairman Tony Young said, "This is really good news and we are proud of the results. I know [PHS principal] Lloyd [Shaddix] and the teachers at the high school will make whatever adjustments are necessary to get us back to where we belong on the High School Graduation Tests. The school's record on these tests speaks for itself."

Hill City Elementary School principal Carlton Wilson noted the importance of collaboration among the elementary school principals and teachers to change student performance. "We are a competitive group," said Wilson, "but all three of our elementary schools can improve without hurting each other's performance on these tests."

The school system's standing goal is to be among the top ten percent of all school systems in the state every year in all standardized measures of academic performance. -end-

Press Release

October 14, 2003

Re: Called Board Meeting Wednesday, October 22

Contact: Donna Golden ph. 706-253-1700

The Pickens County Board of Education will conduct a called board meeting on Wednesday, October 22, at 5:30 p.m. to open bids for a tax anticipation note and to consider approval of a loan to meet school system operating expenses through the end of the calendar year. A tax anticipation note is a short term loan that the school board authorizes when local tax revenues are delayed. Pickens County Schools Finance Director Amy Burgess anticipates that local tax notices will not be sent out until late November or early December.

"A tax anticipation note is routine under these circumstances," said Burgess.

The called board meeting will be held at the Jasper Elementary School media center on D.B. Carroll Street in Jasper.

As always, the public and employees are invited to attend. -end-

Press Release

October 24, 2003

Re: Kay Harbin Selected as Pickens County Schools 2004 Teacher of the Year

Contact: Donna Golden ph. 706-253-1700

It probably comes as no surprise that the Pickens County Schools Teacher of the Year can't remember a day from her childhood that she didn't want to go to school. What distinguishes Kay Harbin, a third grade teacher at Jasper Elementary School, is her penchant for staying involved in her former students' lives long after they've learned the lessons taught by the veteran educator.

Harbin was named Teacher of the Year at the annual awards banquet sponsored by Regions Bank honoring Teacher of the Year nominees from each of the Pickens County Schools on October 20 at the Chamber of Commerce. She will represent the school system in the state competition.

Dr. Tom Isherwood, president of Reinhardt College, was the guest speaker for the event. "Teachers make the difference in our lives," said Isherwood. "We should celebrate them more often."

Harbin said her greatest accomplishment in education is the way her students feel about her as a teacher. "Many of my former students come up to me at ball games, grocery stores, and even on vacation to talk or ask my advice," she said.

"What greater compliment could anyone ask for? It makes me feel that I was an important part of their life, just as they will always be in mine," she said.

Also honored at the banquet were school Teachers of the Year Sharon Morgan from Hill City Elementary School, Cindy Arnold from Tate Elementary, Joeta Youngblood from Jasper Middle School, Lisa Galloway from Pickens County Middle School, and Stacy Gentry from Pickens High. Each school's Teacher of the Year also received \$250 from the Pickens County Board of Education.

Board Chairman Tony Young, a former teacher at Pickens High School, presented Harbin with an additional check for \$1000 in recognition of her achievement.

"Kay Harbin epitomizes everything that is good and right about public education," he said. "She's an example for all of us."

Jasper Elementary School Principal said, "Mrs. Harbin demonstrates the highest level of professional commitment and competency in her work with students and colleagues. To

carry out her professional responsibilities, she gives generously of her valuable time, and often her work extends beyond the school day."

Dr. Charles O. Walker, pastor emeritus of First Baptist Church of Jasper, noted Harbin's excellent record as a student in the Pickens County Schools and her reputation in the community. "Kay sets high standards for herself and her classes, and lets each student know that she has top expectations for each one's work," said Walker.

Harbin was chosen on the strength of her school's nomination package and performance in an interview conducted by a selection committee of citizens from the community.

Jasper Drug Store president Jack Dunn, who served on the selection committee, said that the committee's final decision was difficult because of the overall quality of the teachers from each school. "They are all great teachers and good people," said Dunn, "but Kay is really someone special who represents not just our best teachers, but our entire community."

Also serving on the selection committee were Ginny Painter, owner and manager of Ginny's Florist, Jasper City Councilwoman Hazel Mosley, Paul Kiker of Edward Jones Investments, and Crescent Bank President Don Boggus.

School Superintendent Lee Shiver called Harbin one of the teachers that parents and principals dream about. "I know a lot of people know her and she has touched and changed many young lives in our community," said Shiver. "I don't believe we have anyone in our school system more deserving of this recognition than Kay Harbin," he said.

Harbin has been teaching elementary school students for over 30 years, and has been at Jasper Elementary since 1991. She received her bachelor's degree in history from West Georgia College in 1970 and her masters in early childhood education from the University of Georgia in 1974. In 1997 she completed her specialist's degree in curriculum and instruction from Lincoln Memorial University. -end-

Press Release

October 27, 2003

Re: State Changes Pickens County Middle School Designation

Contact: Donna Golden ph. 706-253-1700

It took awhile and Pickens County Schools officials weren't happy with the delay, but the Georgia Department of Education finally notified the school system that Pickens County Middle School (PCMS) did in fact make "Adequate Yearly Progress" last year. In a letter

to Pickens County Schools Superintendent Lee Shiver received last week, State Superintendent of Schools Kathy Cox thanked the school system for working with them "to ensure that we have complete and accurate data for all schools."

Shiver said he respected Cox's position and he acknowledged the difficulties that the federal No Child Left Behind act had created for the Department of Education (DOE). "The data reporting error was ours," said Shiver, "but the timeline imposed by the DOE was unrealistic and unfair. They told us that they had received over 500 appeals statewide and they're still processing a lot of them."

"The faculty and staff at PCMS had worked awfully hard getting off the state list," said Shiver. "[PCMS Principal] Chris [Lemieux] and his teachers certainly deserved to celebrate when we got the final word."

School officials submitted their appeal of the state's designation for Pickens County Middle School in a 58 page document on August 19. Because the state had labeled the school as having not made "Adequate Yearly Progress" for two consecutive years, the school system had to notify all parents of PCMS students of their right to transfer to Jasper Middle School at the beginning of the school year.

Approximately 15 students made the move, but school officials do not plan to require them to move back to PCMS this school year. "We followed the state and federal guidelines when we notified the parents," said Shiver.

The school system plans to send out another letter to PCMS parents notifying them of the change in the state's designation for the school. In the meantime, the school is committed to avoiding the state's "Needs Improvement" label for a second consecutive year. Should PCMS make "Adequate Yearly Progress" again this year, the school would be removed from the state's list. -end-
