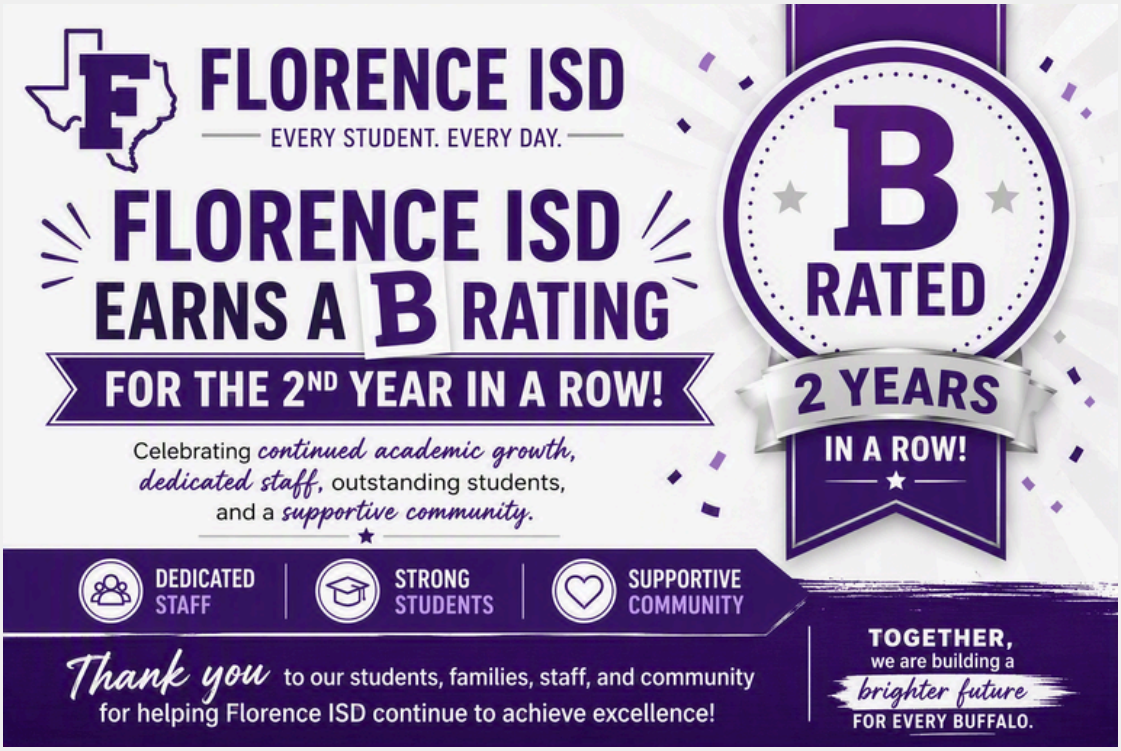
BUFFALO BYTES

August 2026 | UPDATE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT | Vol 4 Issue 1

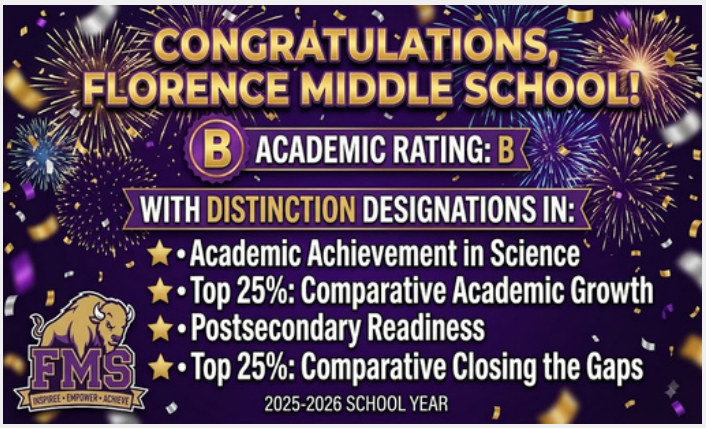


TEXAS EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY

This week, TEA released preliminary accountability ratings, and I am proud to share that Florence ISD improved from an 81 (B) to an 85 (B), while Florence High School earned its first-ever A rating and Florence Middle School earned its first ever B rating. This is all thanks to the incredible dedication and devotion of our teaching staff and the campus administrative teams who lead them. Final results will be released in December, but we do not anticipate any changes. Florence ISD continues to move forward.



For the 2024-2025 school year, FHS earned their first B rating with a score of an 82. This year, our students and staff improved to a **92** earning them an "A" Rating. They earned FOUR Distinction Designations out of a possible seven. Distinction Designations were in the categories of Academic Achievement in Reading/Language Arts, Academic Achievement in Math, Top 25%: Comparative Academic Growth, and Top 25%: Comparative Closing the Gaps. The growth at FHS is historic. What an A rating tells us is that the students graduating from Florence High School are prepared to enter college, the workforce, or whatever they decide is the next step in their life.

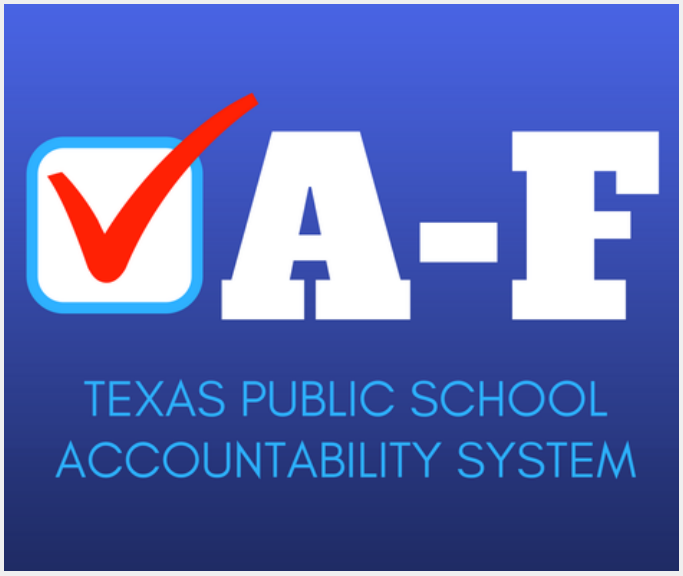


Florence Middle School also showed exceptional growth. For the 2024-2025 school year, FMS earned a C rating with a score of 75. This year, through the hard work and dedication by our staff and students, they earned a B rating for the first time in history with an 85. FMS also earned FOUR Distinction Designations from TEA out of a possible seven. Distinction Designations were in the categories of Academic Achievement in Science, Top 25%: Comparative Academic Growth, Postsecondary Readiness, and Top 25%: Comparative Closing the Gaps.

TEXAS EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY CONT.

This level of growth is uncommon and reflects the focused improvement efforts our campuses have implemented over the past two years. I want to publicly thank our campus administrators, instructional coaches, and teachers for inspiring our students to achieve at such a high level. I also want to thank our students for investing in their education and devoting their time to learn every day. And finally, thank you parents for your trust and support. Three years ago, we had two D campuses and a C campus and the district was rated as a D. That is now in our rearview mirror and our goal this year is to earn an A as a district.

Every campus had a different journey over the past couple of years. If you will recall last year, Florence Elementary improved from a 66 (D rating in 2023-2024) to an 87 (B rating in 2024-2025). While FES earned a 74 (C) in 2025-2026, the campus continued to improve in student achievement and has already demonstrated its ability to perform at a much higher level in the other two domains. As I told the staff at convocation, I don't see this as a setback, I see it as an opportunity for a comeback. The campus has already demonstrated what excellence looks like and I know they will respond with dedication and determination to return to at least a B rating this year.





The following students will be recognized on at Monday night's board meeting:
Dixie Bradford who earned second place in the state on her agriscience fair project in the Environmental Services/Natural Resources Division I. She just completed 8th grade and we can't wait to watch all of her success at FHS.
Mackenzie Atkinson, Cooper McAnelly, Aaley Ramirez, and **Heriberto Sanchez** for earning their Lone Star FFA Degree, the highest degree the state can award to an FFA member. The Lone Star Degree recognizes years of dedication through agricultural education, leadership, community service, and successful Supervised Agricultural Experience Projects.

Congratulations to the Florence FFA Chapter for being recognized as a National Gold Rated Chapter for the very first time. This prestigious honor reflects the passion, dedication, and commitment of our members, advisors, parents, volunteers, and supporters who make our chapter successful each year.

And last but not least, congratulations to the Florence High School band. This summer, they were recognized by the ATSSB Outstanding Performance Series as a State Runner-up for their performance of Strange Humors last year. They finished in third place in the state for this song and their song Galop Festivo earned a 6th place finish in the state. What an incredible year for the FHS band, and we are all looking forward your outstanding performances in the upcoming school year.





A special congratulations to FES 3rd grade teacher Janna Jackson for being named the Region 13 Elementary Teacher of the Year. Each year, all 53 school districts and 27 charter schools are invited to nominate both an elementary teacher of the year and a secondary teacher of the year. Janna was recognized as the top elementary teacher out of all the schools in Region 13 who nominated a candidate. She is believed to be the first teacher from Florence ISD to earn this award and this recognition reflects the hard work and dedication she shows in teaching our students. We are all proud to recognize you as the best elementary educator in Region 13. Congratulations again on this huge accomplishment!

FISD is also incredibly proud of Denielle Bailey who was recognized at the 98th Texas FFA Convention in Fort Worth as one of the Top 12 exceptional agriculture teachers in the State of Texas when she won the Here by the Owl Award. This recognition is a testament to your hard work, dedication, and passion that you pour into our students, agricultural education, and the Florence FFA program. We are extremely blessed to have you on our team and are proud to call you one of the best agriculture educators in Texas!

Not to be outdone, Misty Overfelt was recognized by the Texas Health Occupations Association at their summer conference with the THOA Experienced Health Science Teacher Award for Area 1. She was nominated by her peers for her dedication to CTE Health Science and her commitment to shaping the future of Texas Healthcare. Thank you to Mrs. Overfelt for ensuring that our students are prepared to enter the healthcare field when they graduate from FHS!

And finally, recognition for a former teacher. Missy Rosenbusch Spicer was recently inducted into the Ag Teachers Hall of Fame. Throughout her years teaching at Florence High School, she did far more than teach agriculture. She inspired generations of students, built confidence, cultivated leadership, and instilled a lifelong appreciation for agriculture and hard work. Her classroom was a place where students grew not only in knowledge, but in character. The impact she has made on her students, our school, and the Florence community is immeasurable. While awards recognize excellence, those who know her understand that her greatest legacy is found in the lives she has influenced over the years. Congratulations on this well-deserved recognition. Thank you for the lasting difference you've made and continue to make!

FLORENCE ISD BUDGET, TAX RATE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Why Are We Facing a Deficit - As I discussed in the May update and again in July, FISD is facing a growing budget deficit. What started this summer with an approximately $175,000 deficit for this school year has grown to a $275,000 deficit due in part to hiring a new teacher and aide at Florence Elementary School to teach Pre-Kindergarten. Our enrollment numbers increased this year in this grade level, which is a great thing, but it does require additional staff to maintain teacher/student ratios. Because of the deficit, a pay raise was not included in the budget for any staff members for this year, resulting in the same amount as last school year.

What the Propositions Would Do - On Monday night, I will ask the Board of Trustees to approve two orders that will appear on the November 3 ballot to help offset the deficit and allow us to provide a pay increase to our staff. The first proposition is a Voter-Approval Tax Rate Election. I explained the Copper Pennies in my May update, but if the voters will approve the district to collect the three Copper Pennies that we are not currently collecting, it would generate about $300,000 in revenue for this fiscal year. The second proposition is a bond to refinance a Maintenance Tax Note the district took out in 2015 to fund some renovations and construction, mainly for school safety. Currently, we pay $200,000 towards this note annually out of our operating budget. If the second proposition is approved, that payment would move to the debt service side of our budget, freeing up an additional $200,000 in revenue. Remember, the Operating budget, or the M&O budget, is used to pay all salaries, support programs, and meet the daily needs of our schools. The debt service budget, or the I&S budget, can only be used to pay debt. All of the funds on this side of the budget are derived from voter approved bonds, including the 2022 bond passed to build the new elementary school, FHS band hall, and FHS athletic annex. To summarize, Proposition A would generate approximately $300,00 in operating revenue. Proposition B would move a $200,000 annual payment from the operating budget to the debt service budget. The combined impact would be approximately $500,000 available for classrooms and employee compensation.

FLORENCE ISD BUDGET, TAX RATE AND RECOMMENDATIONS CONT.

What It Means for Taxpayers - **If both propositions pass in November, the total tax rate paid by Florence ISD taxpayers would remain unchanged from last year.** The board is being asked to adopt a $1.0182 total tax rate for the 2026-2027 school year, which is exactly the same as the tax rate for FISD in the 2025-2026 school year. We are simply maximizing the state funding formula to bring approximately $500,000 back into our classrooms and salaries.

Another item on the board agenda that I am asking the Board of Trustees to approve is a Resolution providing for a pay raise of 2% for all employees should both propositions pass. Our goal with these propositions is to generate sufficient revenue to offer competitive pay raises in an effort to attract and retain highly qualified teachers and staff. Should the Board of Trustees vote to approve both election propositions, I am happy to speak to any citizen that has questions about either proposition and I will send more information as the election gets closer. I am also planning to speak to the Florence Chamber of Commerce at their October meeting about these propositions. Thank you for your continued support of Florence ISD, our staff, and our students. For readers interested in additional background, a detailed explanation is available in the Special Buffalo Update from the Superintendent published on July 29, which is available on the district website.

765kV Transmission Line Update



FISD has been working hard to try and convince the Texas Public Utility Commission to choose an alternate path for the 765kV transmission line to avoid it running parallel to Florence Elementary School. The Board of Trustees authorized me to hire an attorney to cross-examine Oncor representatives at the PUC hearing held earlier this summer. They also filed a brief, supporting our concerns about the proposed location of the line. Since then, the Senate Committee on Business and Commerce held a hearing at the Capitol. I registered as a witness on behalf of the district and turned in written testimony asking for consideration of an alternate route that avoids schools. Next week, the House of Representatives Committee on State Affairs will hold a hearing to discuss the transmission lines. Thankfully, the House of Representatives allows written testimony to be filed electronically and I submitted our testimony for this hearing as well. I will keep you updated as the process moves forward.

Summer Projects in FISD



If you will recall from my May update, we had several projects going on throughout FMS and FHS. If you have been inside the schools, the work that was completed is evident. The FHS cafeteria and library underwent a complete facelift and look like brand new buildings. The paint used is in our school colors to continue to build pride. New, efficient LED lighting was installed along with a new sound system and display system which will allow everyone in the cafeteria to see presentations moving forward. We also replaced the old theater lights that were no longer functioning with modern, LED theater lighting. At FMS, the kitchen was remodeled with a new, resilient floor to replace the cracked tiles, new paint and new ceiling tiles. The cafeteria and hallways were upgraded to efficient LED lighting and the ceiling tiles were all replaced. The FMS band hall got a major facelift with new paint, carpeting, and a new tile floor, replacing the carpet that had been in place since the 1980s. The two big projects are still being completed. We began an HVAC replacement project at FHS and FMS to replace units that were up to 26 years old with new units. Unfortunately, the manufacturer could not supply all of the units needed and this project will have to be completed at night and on weekends. And finally, the meat market renovation at FHS will begin the rebuild phase after demolition and abatement over the summer. All construction on the meat market is expected to be completed by the end of December and we plan to reopen the market as early as possible in January.

FALL EVENTS

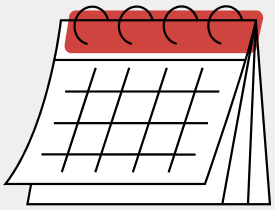
It is an exciting time of year with the start of school. You can feel the excitement in the air on all of our campuses. That means it is time to kick off our student events and I invite all of you to come out and support our students. Football, Volleyball and Cross Country are underway and I hope you are able to come out and watch our athletes in action. We started Fall Tennis this year to provide these athletes another opportunity to shine.

Our Marching Band has been at work since mid-July. After making the finals at Area last year, they are working hard to make it to the State Marching Band Competition this year.



An early reminder that FISD will once again host Trunk or Treat for our community this year. It is tentatively scheduled for October 27 from 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm. Start planning your trunks so you can be a part of the festivities. Florence ISD's success is possible because of our students, staff, parents, and community members working together.

Thank you for your continued support, and I hope to see you at our athletic events, performances, and community celebrations throughout the fall. Together, we are building something special for the students of Florence and I can't wait to start Lighting the Press Box Purple!



DATES TO REMEMBER

August 17 - Regular Board Meeting
Public Hearing-6:30 pm @ FHS Library
Regular Meeting-7:00 pm

August 21 - Student Early Release

September 4 - Student Early Release

September 7 - Student/Staff Holiday

FISD Academic Calendar

District Events Page