



The BOARD REPORT

September 22, 2026 • Issue 44

➤➤ Highlights in this report...

- > **Every family, reached:** ParentSquare now connects with 99.8% of district families — placing CCPS in the top ten nationally — meaning the district can reach every household instantly for the first time in its history.
- > **Field upgrades approved, under budget:** The board unanimously approved a \$1.55 million renovation of the RDC baseball and softball fields, below the \$1.6 million estimate.
- > **Renovation projects on track:** Roofs at RDC and Baker are moving on schedule, and athletic field work is advancing. Turf arrives for the GRC practice field this month, with RDC football field turf to follow after the new year.
- > **Fiscal watchdog hired at no cost:** The district approved an agreement with ERA Group to review non-instructional spending. The company is paid only from savings it finds.
- > **Budget approved for next year:** The 2026-27 working budget grows the general fund by \$2.7 million, boosted by higher SEEK funding and tax revenue.
- > **AI in the classroom:** Google Gemini launched for grades 9-12, with an AI literacy course required first and a clear “stoplight” system telling students when AI use is allowed on each assignment.

“NOTABLE & QUOTABLE”

“Through ParentSquare, we have contact with 99.8% of our parents. Every family can now have information instantaneously, and we’ve not been able to say that in the history of Clark County Schools. We’re making ParentSquare a centerpiece to Grow Greatness and to really live our vision, which is connecting the district and our community as one.”

-Superintendent Dustin Howard

Board of Education GREATNESS RECOGNITIONS

Pages 4-6

KATIE BERNER

2027 Kentucky Middle School Teacher of the Year



Baker media specialist Katie Berner is pictured here with husband Collin, also a Baker teacher, and the CCPS contingent who attended the recent Frankfort Teacher of the Year ceremony. Mrs. Berner was honored at the Board meeting with a Greatness Recognition. [See PAGE 4](#) to read Principal Mounts' nomination.

➤➤ NEXT REGULAR MEETING: Tuesday, Oct. 27 - 6pm



Clark County Board of Education - The Board Report - September 22, 2026

Dr. Dora Hall, Chair (District 2)
Carl Kiser, Vice Chair (District 1)

Ben Dorsey (District 4)
Ashley Ritchie-Rowland (District 5)
Paula Thomas (District 3)

CCPS
Supt. Dustin Howard
CAO/Asst. Supt. Kelly Fithen
COO Brandon Watkins
Full Admin Team

Construction Updates

Craig Music of Codell Construction provided updates on ongoing projects.

The RDC roof is approximately 85% complete and remains on schedule, while the Baker roof is progressing with additional crews and is expected to be completed by late October or early November, weather permitting. RDC HVAC installations and schedule door replacements are on track.

The GRC practice field remains on schedule, with turf installation expected to begin soon. Work on the RDC football field is progressing with turf installation not expected until after the first of the year.

The Board approved a \$1,554,847 bid to renovate the baseball and softball infields at RDC, marking the final piece of the district's athletics improvement program.

All renovation projects are being funded by the previously-approved bond sale, with no general fund impact.

The winning bid came in below the district's \$1.6 million estimate for the base work. The Board reinvested this savings into the project by selecting an upgraded backstop wall with protective netting and a brick masonry base.

The Board will revisit upgrading the softball field lighting once the project's contingency is known. The Board also approved several other routine related documents and payments.

Operations Director Brandon Watkins noted that the construction team has worked diligently to resolve project issues without change orders.



SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dustin Howard

Superintendent Howard celebrated strong gains in both student attendance and family communication.

On Kentucky High Attendance Day, September 9, the district saw more than 95% of students in attendance, one of its highest rates in recent years. He credited the district's attendance team, principals, and staff for their continued work to improve attendance.

Howard also highlighted the district's success with ParentSquare, which has reached 99.8% of CCPS families in its second year.

Several schools have achieved 100% family contact, including Robert D. Campbell, Phoenix Academy, Shearer Elementary, and Justice Elementary.

Our intentional approach to communication has put CCPS among the top 10 districts nationally for ParentSquare engagement and, more importantly, gives schools a reliable way to connect with families quickly when important information needs to be shared.

Howard described the progress as another example of CCPS "living" its vision of Grow Greatness by strengthening connections among schools, families and the community.

Fall break is October 12-16. A calendar committee will present the 2028-29 school calendar next month.



Clark County Board of Education - The Board Report - September 22, 2026

Dr. Dora Hall, Chair (District 2)
Carl Kiser, Vice Chair (District 1)

Ben Dorsey (District 4)
Ashley Ritchie-Rowland (District 5)
Paula Thomas (District 3)

CCPS
Supt. Dustin Howard
CAO/Asst. Supt. Kelly Fithen
COO Brandon Watkins
Full Admin Team

AI Guidance, Training

The Technology Department began evaluating generative AI in 2022–23, considering privacy, security, COPPA compliance, Google Workspace integration, grade-level controls, cost, and ease of use.

Technology Director Justin Cason informed the Board that Google Gemini for Education has been selected as the district's recommended platform. Gemini is available to grades 9–12 and includes enhanced safeguards and a required AI literacy course.

AI training is incorporated into professional learning, Cardinal Connections Academy, and new teacher training. We will continue evaluating AI tools, updating guidance, monitoring legislation, and addressing appropriate use and academic honesty through existing policies.

Partnering for savings

The Board approved a professional services agreement with ERA Group, contingent upon review by the Board attorney and Superintendent Howard, to conduct an operational expense review of selected non-instructional expenditures.

ERA Group will review areas including banking services, operational supplies, food service, technology, insurance, facility maintenance and contracted services to identify potential cost savings and ensure the district is receiving competitive value.

The company is compensated only when savings are realized and will assist with implementation and ongoing monitoring.

Working Budget

The **2026–27 Working Budget** was approved, completing the final step of the district's annual budgeting process.

Total Working Budget: \$92.56 million

Increase from Tentative Budget: \$6.91 million

General Fund: \$62.69 million, an increase of \$2.78 million

Increases reflect higher **SEEK** and tax revenue, updated fund balances, grant awards, approved salary/benefit increases, and \$3.6 million in carryover encumbrances.

School district working budgets must be submitted to KDE by Sept. 30 and includes the required minimum 2% contingency.

Additional Business

The Board unanimously approved:

- > District Amazing Shake winners travel to the national competition in Atlanta. The local competition is set for Nov. 16-20 for students in grades 5-8.
- > Job description title change from "guidance counselor" to "school counselor" to align with state EPSB certification requirements.
- > Monthly Financial Update, payment of salaries and accounts payable, and Consent Agenda items as presented.

[VIEW AGENDA](#)



GREATNESS RECOGNITIONS

The Clark County Board of Education Greatness Recognitions honor staff, students, and community members who exemplify one or more of the Portrait of a Clark County Learner competencies. Recipients must be nominated by staff, and are chosen by a selection committee based on set criteria related to the Portrait of A Learner.



**EMPOWERED LEADER
COMMITTED COLLABORATOR
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATOR**

**RESILIENT LEARNER
ENGAGED CITIZEN
REFLECTIVE INNOVATOR**

KATIE BERNER

2027 Kentucky Middle School Teacher of the Year

Tonight, we are incredibly proud to recognize Mrs. Katie Berner, who has been named the 2027 Kentucky Middle School Teacher of the Year. Katie is one of more than 40,000 public school teachers in Kentucky. She was one of more than 600 educators nominated for Kentucky Teacher of the Year. Through a rigorous application and selection process, she became one of nine semifinalists and was interviewed by a panel of distinguished educators in July. On September 9th in Frankfort, Katie and the other eight semifinalists were recognized as 2027 Kentucky Teacher Achievement Award Winners.

From those nine educators, three were selected as finalists for Kentucky Teacher of the Year, with Katie representing the Middle School Division. This honor is a tremendous reflection of the educator Katie has been for the past 19 years. As a classroom teacher and,

for the past six years, as Baker's Library Media Specialist, Katie has created learning experiences that challenge students to read, question, explore, create, collaborate, and discover. Her impact extends far beyond the library. She has served as a mentor, team leader, SBDM representative, district instructional leader, musical director, club sponsor, and advocate for children. Through 11 Baker musicals and her work with DanceBlue, she has also helped students discover the importance of creativity, teamwork, leadership, and service. Most importantly, Katie has accepted the challenge to Live the Clark County Portrait of a Learner. She is a Resilient Learner who continually grows and adapts, an Effective Communicator who advocates for children, a Reflective Innovator who continually finds new ways to engage students, a Committed Collaborator who strengthens those around her, an Empowered Leader who leads through action, and an Engaged Citizen who teaches students that their talents can be used to serve others.

Katie doesn't simply teach the Portrait of a Learner. She lives it. The state of Kentucky has now recognized what our students, families, and colleagues have experienced for years: Katie Berner is an exceptional educator who represents the very best of our profession. Please join us in congratulating Mrs. Katie Berner, the 2027 Kentucky Middle School Teacher of the Year.

-Josh Mounts, Nominator



Clark County Board of Education - The Board Report - September 22, 2026

Dr. Dora Hall, Chair (District 2)
Carl Kiser, Vice Chair (District 1)

Ben Dorsey (District 4)
Ashley Ritchie-Rowland (District 5)
Paula Thomas (District 3)

CCPS
Supt. Dustin Howard
CAO/Asst. Supt. Kelly Fithen
COO Brandon Watkins
Full Admin Team

GREATNESS RECOGNITIONS

The Clark County Board of Education Greatness Recognitions honor staff, students, and community members who exemplify one or more of the Portrait of a Clark County Learner competencies. Recipients must be nominated by staff, and are chosen by a selection committee based on set criteria related to the Portrait of A Learner.



ENGAGED CITIZEN

• for service to the Hannah McClure Cardinal Community Center •

DON POWELL



Ladies and gentlemen, today we have the privilege of recognizing someone who truly embodies the spirit of community, craftsmanship, and generosity: He approached me wanting to bring woodworking classes to the Hannah McClure Cardinal Community Center. Teaching a craft is one thing, but Don went above and beyond by opening up his personal arsenal of tools and equipment. He brought in his own gear, ensuring every single participant had access to top-quality tools and, most importantly, the knowledge to use them safely and confidently. Because of his patience and hands-on guidance, beginners walked in nervous and walked out with custom handmade pieces—and a genuine sense of pride. Mr. Powell, your dedication and willingness to share your passion have made a lasting impact on our center and our community. Thank you for your generosity, your mentorship, and for carving out such a wonderful experience for us all.

-Christy Bush, Nominator



Clark County Board of Education - The Board Report - September 22, 2026

Dr. Dora Hall, Chair (District 2)
Carl Kiser, Vice Chair (District 1)

Ben Dorsey (District 4)
Ashley Ritchie-Rowland (District 5)
Paula Thomas (District 3)

CCPS
Supt. Dustin Howard
CAO/Asst. Supt. Kelly Fithen
COO Brandon Watkins
Full Admin Team

GREATNESS RECOGNITIONS

The Clark County Board of Education Greatness Recognitions honor staff, students, and community members who exemplify one or more of the Portrait of a Clark County Learner competencies. Recipients must be nominated by staff, and are chosen by a selection committee based on set criteria related to the Portrait of A Learner.



EMPOWERED LEADER

ALYSON HILL
AMBER MURPHY



Webster's Dictionary defines being empowered as having the authority, confidence, and strength to act and make choices for oneself. They define a leader as someone who guides, directs, or influences a group, organization, or team. Clark County defines an Empowered Leader as one who brainstorms solutions, cultivates vision, and inspires others to do the same. When many picture leadership at the district level, they imagine big-picture strategy, system-wide initiatives, long term planning, and high-level meetings. But empowered leadership isn't created behind a desk, or at a table filled with other leaders. Empowered leadership requires service and heavy lifting, alongside teachers in the classroom. This month, I was reminded how much our district leaders fit that bill, and particularly two of our instructional specialists. Earlier this month, Mrs. Alyson Hill and Mrs. Amber Murphy dedicated an entire day to working alongside a teacher at Campbell who was navigating the rewarding, but overwhelming work of setting up a brand new learning space. Creating the structure, organization, and management systems for our new iLabs requires deep expertise, deliberate strategy, and a tremendous amount of energy. It is one thing to provide resources from afar, but it is an entirely different level of leadership to show up in person, dig into the details, and help build the foundation for hands-on, innovative student learning stepby step. Mrs. Hill and Mrs. Murphy bring instructional expertise, unmatched dedication, and a servant's heart to our school. They don't just support us; they elevate us. By pouring their time, talent, and energy into our teachers, they helped ensure that our new iLabs are not just physical rooms, but dynamic spaces where both educators and students are set up to thrive. We are incredibly grateful for Alyson and Amber's unwavering support, their hands-on approach to leadership, and their commitment to empowering our staff through their own empowered leadership.

-Tiffany Smith, Nominator



Clark County Board of Education - The Board Report - September 22, 2026

Dr. Dora Hall, Chair (District 2)
Carl Kiser, Vice Chair (District 1)

Ben Dorsey (District 4)
Ashley Ritchie-Rowland (District 5)
Paula Thomas (District 3)

CCPS
Supt. Dustin Howard
CAO/Asst. Supt. Kelly Fithen
COO Brandon Watkins
Full Admin Team