



2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT



# VESTAVIA HILLS CITY SCHOOLS

# MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

The 2019-20 school year will be etched in our memories as an unprecedented year. While it will be most remembered for the impact of COVID-19, the school year was also filled with many other significant events and accomplishments that add another layer of success to the legacy of Vestavia Hills City Schools. Together, we made the mission of providing every student the opportunity to learn without limits come alive.

A theme that emerged this year was the ability of our schools and community to grow and innovate through disruption. We began the year with the reconfiguration of elementary grades along with the opening of Dolly Ridge. Our schools received unparalleled community support from parents, the PTO, Vestavia Hills City Schools Foundation, and Partners in Education to make this change a success. What could have been viewed as a disruption was instead embraced as a new and exciting frontier.

Each of our schools focused on the strategic plan goal of enhancing opportunities for students to demonstrate a profound understanding of their knowledge and skills. The secondary schools developed advanced courses and career pathway courses to begin in the 2020-21 school year. These bold steps will broaden learning experiences for students as they prepare for college and career goals after high school.

Our system also committed to the goal of providing social and emotional support for our students. The focus on developing and strengthening student character was evident throughout each school. Several of our elementary schools were recognized at state and national levels for their emphasis on character. Their work enabled all of us to persevere through disruption.

Innovation was prevalent during the last quarter of the year when we implemented a virtual instruction plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers, students, and parents all adapted to the “new normal” with a positive and determined spirit. The experience was beneficial and helped to prepare us.

Though we had challenges that impacted our entire community, the Vestavia Hills City Schools family bonded together. For that, we have much to celebrate and appreciate. This Annual Report includes many of those notable achievements and affirms the hard work of our students and staff. I trust that this report will instill confidence in each of us that Vestavia Hills City Schools continues to strive for excellence no matter the disruptions that life brings.

**Dr. Todd Freeman**  
Superintendent



---

*Vestavia Hills City Schools would like to thank the many staff members, school volunteers, and community partners whose photographs appear throughout this year's Annual Report.*

# OUR MISSION

The mission of Vestavia Hills City Schools is to ensure each student learns without limits by pursuing knowledge and igniting curiosity about the world through a system distinguished by:

- ▶ A safe and nurturing environment
- ▶ The courage to be creative
- ▶ Unparalleled community support
- ▶ Appreciation of diversity
- ▶ Multiple paths to a bold future

# OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM

- Expanded advanced courses to all core content levels at both middle schools to provide new opportunities for gifted and advanced students
- Implemented a system-wide virtual instruction program with support from all faculty and staff during COVID-19 outbreak
- Expanded career and technical course offerings for all students
- Launched SafeSchools Alert app for anonymous reporting of school safety concerns
- Participated in Hope Academy partnership with Samford University
- Participated in Powerful Conversations Network and Key Leaders Network with Alabama Best Practices Center
- VHCS Director of Technology Keith Price received Chief Technology Officer designation from Alabama Leaders in Educational Technology Association
- VHCS Director of Public Relations Whit McGhee named 2020 Alabama Communicator of the Year by Alabama School Public Relations Association
- VHCS PTO provided more than \$400,000 in contributions to all 8 schools
- VHCS Foundation donated more than \$142,000 in grants to schools, its largest donation ever



## VHCS TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

**Kelly Bagby, VHEDR**

**Jennifer Dawsey, VHEE**

**Kathie Knickrehm, Pizitz**

**Tiffany Marron, VHECH**

**Martha Martin, VHELP**

**Lori Reeves, VHEW, Elementary Teacher of the Year**

**Michael Sinnott, VHHS, Secondary Teacher of the Year and Alabama Teacher of the Year Finalist**

**Chassi Waddell, LPMS, (not pictured)**



# VESTAVIA HILLS ELEMENTARY CAHABA HEIGHTS

- Named a National School of Character by Character.org
- Recognized as a Bicentennial School of Excellence by the State of Alabama
- Provided Heights Huddle in all classrooms to cultivate a caring classroom community
- Emphasized service learning by hosting two American Red Cross blood drives, participating in the Kids Heart Challenge, supporting RISE, visiting weekly with New Merkle House Senior Center, and collecting food items and socks for people in need
- Held a virtual faculty-student basketball tournament during COVID-19 outbreak to carry on a time-honored VHECH tradition



*Learning without limits took on a new persona this year. We may have faced hurdles such as virtual learning, social distancing, and quarantining, but we kept the heart of our mission to learn, serve, lead, and celebrate without limits. When challenges were rising, so did our team's resolve to stay connected to students and families. Our community came together to raise both kind and smart kids. In fact, this year, we earned the honor of becoming a National School of Character, and this is evidence of the people who model character for our kids every day. I am so proud to be part of the Cahaba Heights Crew.*

*– Dr. Alicia Hunsberger, Principal*



# VESTAVIA HILLS ELEMENTARY DOLLY RIDGE

- Opened Vestavia Hills' newest K-5 elementary school on the former Gresham Elementary School campus
- Completed a two-story, 14-classroom building addition in fall 2019
- Held inaugural "Ridge Fest" community carnival in October
- Received nearly \$100,000 in first Dolly Ridge PTO Fundraiser
- Established 56 new Partners in Education (PIE)
- Collected and distributed more than 1,000 healthy snacks for families at neighboring schools

*In Dolly Ridge's first year, Learning Without Limits was exemplified by a merging of school cultures to form a new K-5 elementary school. Many months of planning and hard work were realized when Dolly Ridge opened its doors and welcomed students. It was a tremendous effort that was only made possible with unparalleled support and dedication from the whole community. We were all very proud to be a part of establishing a legacy in the first year that will serve families in Vestavia Hills for many years to come.*

*– Dr. Ty Arendall, Principal*





*If ever there was an opportunity to see another dimension of “learning without limits,” it was during the 2019-2020 school year. After instruction within our school building was discontinued due to COVID-19, our East staff, like all of our district teachers, implemented a virtual learning plan. The participation, hard work, and positive attitudes of our students was a pleasure to observe. I can say that after seeing the happy faces of students on my screen as they participated in virtual classroom meets, we could revise this phrase to, “Learning without limits with joy.”*

*– Dr. Mark Richardson, Principal*

# VESTAVIA HILLS ELEMENTARY EAST

- Named Best Public Elementary School by *Birmingham Magazine*
- Deanna Bell named 2020 Lacey Powell Outstanding Music Educator by the Alabama Music Educators Association and quarterfinalist for GRAMMY Music Educator Award
- Donated thousands of items for children in need during annual Santa’s Workshop gift drive
- Completed second year of Friendship Initiative with emphasis on building and nurturing friendships for all students
- Placed first in the region in Continental Math League competition and placed third in the Engaging Elementary Engineers (E3) competition





*Learning without limits meant providing varied, engaging learning experiences for children and removing barriers throughout the school year. At Liberty Park Elementary, it also meant fostering leadership within our students and empowering them to take ownership of their learning.*

*– Abbie Freeman,  
2019-20 Principal*



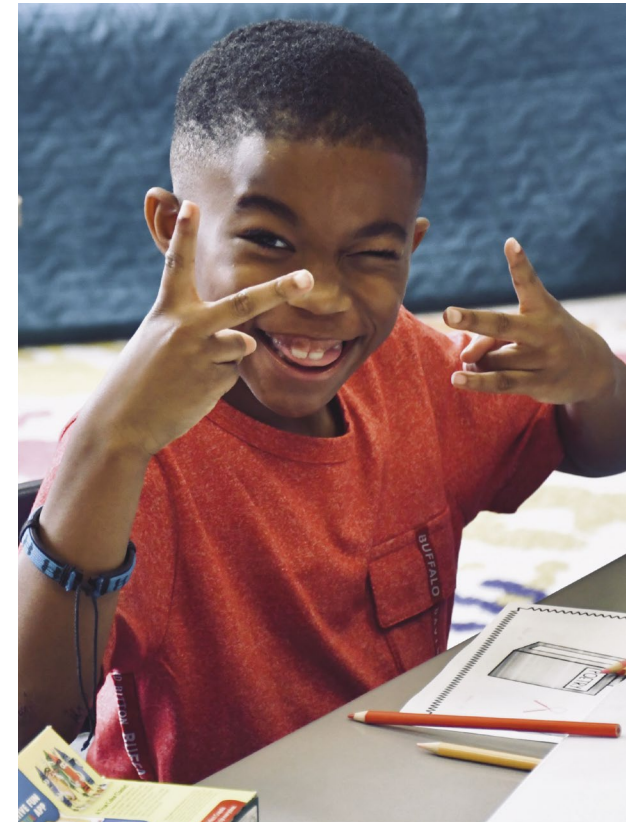
## VESTAVIA HILLS ELEMENTARY LIBERTY PARK

- Raised more than \$15,000 for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital
- Students wrote mission statements for each class as part of the school's Leader In Me programming
- Hosted inaugural Leadership Night with an emphasis on the "7 Habits" taught in the school's Leader In Me programming
- Hosted inaugural Careers on Wheels program, connecting students with hands-on learning about local career opportunities
- Created a schoolwide rock garden in partnership with art classes and the school's Leader In Me Environmental Action Team



# VESTAVIA HILLS ELEMENTARY WEST

- Had highest overall scores in Continental Math League with grades 2 - 5 participating
- Held Light Bulb Lunches with 5th graders to allow students to provide feedback on school improvement ideas
- Established Fifth Grade Student Safety Patrol to help post flag, monitor hallways, and assist with carpool each day
- Collected more than 7,000 food items for annual Canned Food Drive
- Received Promising Practices Award from Character.org for “Connect Five” student social/emotional program



*Learning without limits for 2019-2020 meant hands-on, engaging, and thoughtful instruction for three-fourths of the year, and COVID-19 launched this high level of learning into a virtual platform during the last nine weeks. Learning is truly without limits with the quality of teachers, staff, and students we have at West!*

*– Kim Hauser, Principal*

*It was a year of firsts at Liberty Park Middle. From our robotics and math teams achieving success on the state level, to our Scholar's Bowl team qualifying for national competition, our students far exceeded all expectations. Although we also experienced the first long-term closure of schools for a pandemic, our students, teachers, and staff continued to excel beyond any level we could have anticipated.*

*– Tonya Rozell, 2019-20 Principal*



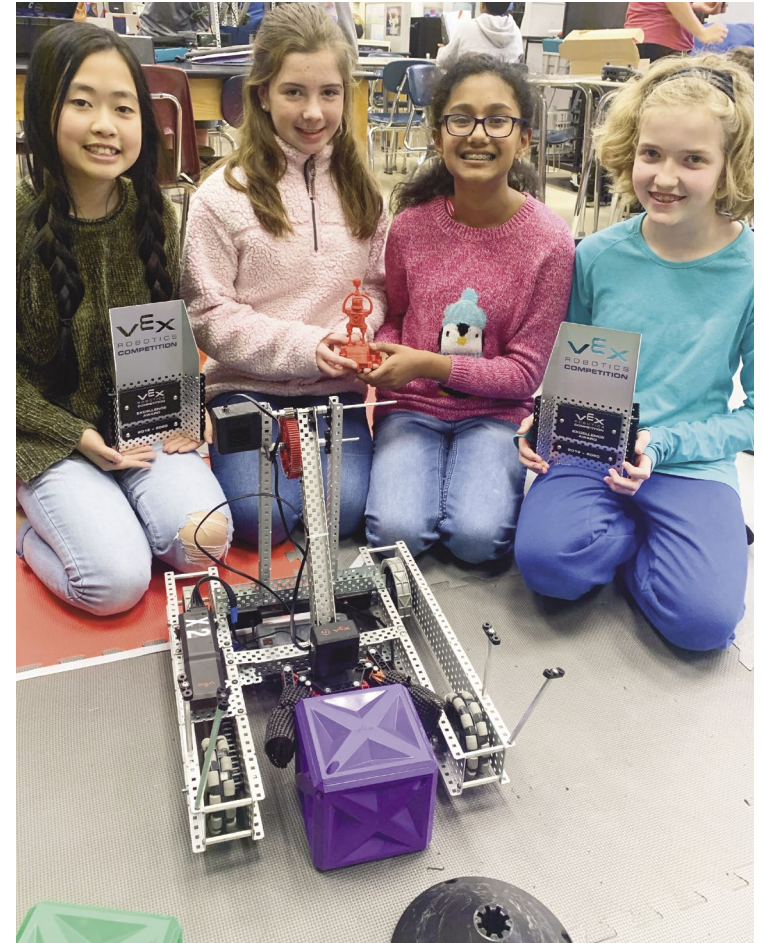
## LIBERTY PARK MIDDLE SCHOOL

- Scholar's Bowl team qualified for the Middle School National Championship Tournament in Chicago
- Two robotics teams collaborated to finish in second place at state competition
- 8th Grade Math Team placed first in state and regional Math League competition; 6th and 7th grade teams placed in top 3 in respective divisions
- Science Olympiad students placed 3rd in region in the Disease Detective category
- Raised more than \$13,000 to grant wishes to multiple children through partnership with Magic Moments
- LPMS cheerleaders won national championship for Junior Non-Building Routine at National High School Cheerleading Championship in Orlando



# LOUIS PIZITZ MIDDLE SCHOOL

- Robotics teams qualified to compete at VEX World Championships and U.S. Open Championship
- Hosted inaugural Alabama Junior Thespian Festival in February with four Pizitz students awarded Superior ratings in Acting and Music
- Multiple French students won gold, silver, and bronze medals in National French Contest, with two students placing first in Alabama
- Jason Williams named Cross Country Girls Coach of the Year
- 7th grade girls basketball team named Metro Champions for 2019-2020 season
- 7th grade math team won first place at every tournament they attended



*My first year has been an amazing experience as part of the Pirate family! Pizitz Middle School has a faculty and staff that continues to address the needs of our students in a way that is second to none. As we bid farewell to our original campus and welcome students to their new home, the Pirate traditions of character, excellence, and family will continue to define our future.*

*– Dr. Chris Pennington, Principal*

# VESTAVIA HILLS HIGH SCHOOL

- 15 National Merit Finalists and Semifinalists
- 73% of students offered scholarships totaling more than \$34 million
- We the People team won 16th consecutive state championship and won Southeast region at national competition
- Math Team recorded highest score in America at Mu Alpha Theta Log1 competition
- Theatre program selected to represent state of Alabama at International Thespian Festival
- Students won Alabama Tech Challenge
- More than 200 students inducted into World Language Honor Society, including school's first inductees for American Sign Language
- Mock Trial Team named best overall team at YMCA Youth Judicial Conference and qualified to compete at national competition in Chicago
- RISE raised more than \$201,000 for O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center at UAB and received Top 10 Community Service Project in America designation from Varsity Brands for second year in a row
- Students donated \$56,000 to Ady's Army during fall charity drive
- Students donated more than 16,000 food items to local food shelters during homecoming week



*Although our year on campus was cut short due to COVID-19, our students still managed to shine brightly on so many stages. We are proud of the accomplishments of our students, faculty and staff, and proud of the resiliency of our school through virtual learning and planning for times to come. This speaks to our culture and positive Rebel spirit! Learning without limits has never been more important of a mission than it is currently in VHCS, and we are ready for the challenge.*

*– Dr. Tyler Burgess, 2019-20 Principal*

# REBEL ATHLETICS

- 12 teams qualified for postseason play
- Junior Varsity Cheerleading won national championship in NHSCC Gameday Division
- Varsity Rebelettes won national championship at National Dance Association finals in Orlando
- Five students won individual state championships in cross country, track, and wrestling
- Varsity Cheerleading finished runner-up in state competition
- Boys Cross Country and Wrestling finished runner-up in state competition
- Brigid Meadow named NFHS South Section Girls Soccer Coach of the Year and National High School Coaches Association Girls Soccer Coach of the Year
- Chad Merrill named Alabama Football Coaches Association Assistant Coach of the Year
- Rick Grammer inducted into the AHSAA Hall of Fame



# EXCELLENCE IN VESTAVIA HILLS

244 seniors graduated with **Advanced Academic** diploma



# 92%

GRADUATES ENTERING COLLEGE

- ▶ 79 colleges
- ▶ 26 states
- ▶ 8% entering military or workforce

# 15 NATIONAL MERIT FINALISTS



# 73%

SENIORS OFFERED SCHOLARSHIPS

# \$34+

MILLION SCHOLARSHIPS OFFERED SCHOOL RECORD

## ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP) EXAMS - 2019

# 488

 STUDENTS TOOK

# 1,128

 AP EXAMS

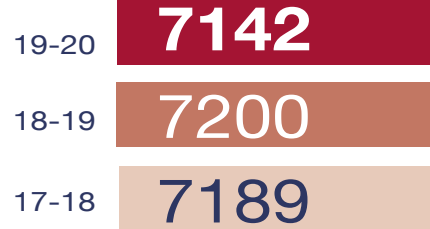
# 74%

 SCORED

# 3↑

## ENROLLMENT DATA

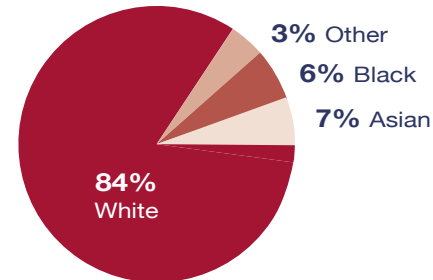
### STUDENTS:



**97.23%**  
**AVERAGE**  
 DAILY ATTENDANCE

English Learner Students:	142
Gifted Students:	1096
Extended Day Program Students:	759
Free and Reduced Lunch:	7.3%

### ETHNICITY



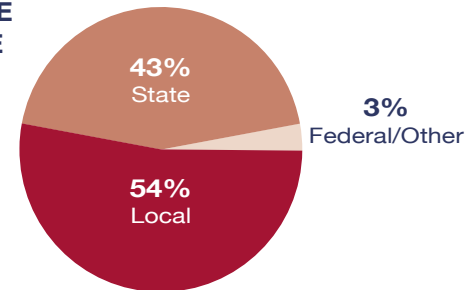
**OUR STUDENTS  
 ARE FROM  
 42 COUNTRIES  
 & SPEAK  
 38 LANGUAGES**



## FINANCE

Fiscal Year 2020 Budget:	\$92.7 million
Cost of one month's operations:	\$6.2 million
Ad valorem taxes:	52.05 mills
Per-pupil expenditure:	\$12,027

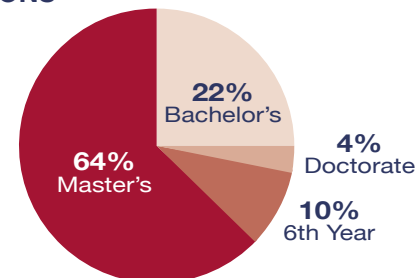
### PERCENTAGE OF REVENUE BY SOURCE



## FACULTY/STAFF

TOTAL EMPLOYEES 2019-20:	872
Certified/licensed:	573
Classified/staff:	299

### EMPLOYEES' EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS



**73 NATIONAL BOARD  
 CERTIFIED TEACHERS**





**VESTAVIA HILLS BOARD OF EDUCATION**

1204 Montgomery Highway, 35216  
(205) 402-5100  
<http://vestavia.k12.al.us>

**VESTAVIA HILLS ELEMENTARY EAST** Grades K-5

2109 Tyson Drive, 35216  
(205) 402-5200

**VESTAVIA HILLS ELEMENTARY WEST** Grades K-5

1965 Merryvale Road, 35216  
(205) 402-5151

**VESTAVIA HILLS ELEMENTARY DOLLY RIDGE** Grades K-5

2650 Gresham Drive, 35243  
(205) 402-5325

**VESTAVIA HILLS ELEMENTARY CAHABA HEIGHTS** Grades K-5

4401 Dolly Ridge Road, 35243  
(205) 402-5480

**VESTAVIA HILLS ELEMENTARY LIBERTY PARK** Grades K-5

17051 Liberty Parkway, 35242  
(205) 402-5400

**LOUIS PIZITZ MIDDLE SCHOOL** Grades 6-8

2826 Columbiana Road, 35216  
(205) 402-5350

**LIBERTY PARK MIDDLE SCHOOL** Grades 6-8

17035 Liberty Parkway, 35242  
(205) 402-5450

**VESTAVIA HILLS HIGH SCHOOL FRESHMAN CAMPUS** Grade 9

2020 Pizitz Drive, 35216  
(205) 402-5300

**VESTAVIA HILLS HIGH SCHOOL MAIN CAMPUS** Grades 10-12

2235 Lime Rock Road, 35216  
(205) 402-5250

Vestavia Hills City Schools



@vhcschools



@vhcschools



Vestavia Hills City Schools

