

FLORENCE SCHOOL DISTRICT 14-1

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September 2026 Superintendent Letter

We are off to a great start to the 2026–2027 school year! Students have settled into their schedules, activities are underway, and we continue to make progress on our facilities and instructional goals. I would like to share a brief synopsis of the September school board meeting and provide a few updates from around the district.

Celebrating Our Students and School Community

At our September meeting, we recognized Tyson Schwinger, Kollyns Blais, and Coy Hemmingson through our new Student Spotlight program. I really enjoy this addition to our board meetings because it allows us to begin by celebrating with our students and recognizing the great things happening at Florence.

Our elementary students have several exciting activities coming up, including Donuts with the Dudes on September 29th from 7:45-8:20 am and Muffins with the Ladies on September 30 from 7:45-8:20 am. The PreK–5 Grandparent Lunch on November 10. Homecoming week will take place September 28–October 2. Our Student Council is doing a great job organizing activities for the week!

School Updates and Student Achievement

Our middle and high school students have settled into their schedules, and the first-quarter midterm is already upon us. Rather than sending home traditional midterm report cards, Infinite Campus will email parents when a student is failing a class so families can stay informed and work with us to support student success.

Our September 21 Flex Day will provide additional academic support for students who are failing a class or have five or more missing assignments. Students attending from 8:30–11:00 a.m. will work directly with the teachers whose classes they are failing and to complete missing assignments. Parents and students will be notified if attendance is needed, and students who get off the list by Sunday evening may remain home.

We are also beginning to implement our revised Saturday School discipline policy, which includes 30-minute after-school detentions for students receiving their second and third points. We will monitor how this change supports student accountability. Student achievement continues to be a major priority. We are working on elementary math interventions that can extend into middle school, implementing the Science of Reading, and looking through data during our Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to guide instruction. We are also discussing the state's Comprehensive Needs Assessment as another way to evaluate our academic needs and plan for improvement.

Our dyslexia program continues to support students, including three students receiving before and after school services. We are also pleased that many families continue to utilize Clear Lake services.

Athletics and Activities

Football, volleyball, cross country, competitive cheer, and sideline cheer are all in full swing. We hosted our first games in Florence last week, and things got off to a great start. We also unveiled our new flag in the gym, which was generously donated by an anonymous donor, and held an observance commemorating the 25th

anniversary of the September 11 attacks. Thank you to the Florence Fire Department for helping us make this meaningful event possible.

Building and Grounds

I am very pleased with how our facilities are coming together. Window coverings are being installed, our football field looks great, and the new building continues to progress. HVAC installation is complete in the ceilings of the existing rooms, and we are waiting for windows before finishing the two new classrooms. The new sidewalk is expected to be completed within the next two weeks, and drainage has been working well.

The board decided to paint the new building in the spring, with an estimated cost of \$3,000–\$4,000. Because of a different company winning the bid and choosing a different building than what existed, we went with a lighter color due to price and availability. We are also waiting for the replacement HVAC unit in the Commons Area, which is expected during the last week of September.

Career and College Opportunities

Our partnership with NTHS and NESC continues to provide valuable opportunities for students. We currently have 35.5 students enrolled in NTHS programs. This fall, 30 juniors and seniors are taking a combined 55 dual-credit classes, and 20 students are participating in our internship program, including several online students.

These opportunities allow students to earn college credit, explore career pathways, and gain real-world experience while still in school. I was unable to attend the recent NESC meeting because Mr. Reed and Deputy Gutzmer participated in crisis plan training in Pierre, which was extremely beneficial to our district's preparedness efforts.

Enrollment and Financial Update

We have experienced a few enrollment changes, with one situation still being finalized. Our current enrollment is at 7.5 students, compared with six students budgeted. Our general fund balance increased approximately \$120,000, while capital outlay decreased approximately \$20,000. With our senior class being large and our upcoming kindergarten class being smaller, having more in our general fund balance will help to offset that. We are reviewing fund balances and cash on hand as we plan responsibly for the district's current needs and future growth.

We have had numerous people curious about class sizes and want to be as transparent as possible through this process. Here are the current class sizes: PreK- 21, K- 29, 1st- 30, 2nd- 30, 3rd- 25, 4th- 20, 5th- 27, 6th- 29, 7th- 34, 8th-32, 9th- 25, 10th- 24, 11th- 22, 12th- 29

We are currently split in our PreK-2 classrooms. 3rd and 5th Grades students are split in Math and ELA classes. 4th Grade is split for Math class. We also split math and some science courses in the high school as well.

Currently our biggest class periods are:

- 41 students in 7/8 Grade Girls PE/Music/Computers at the end of the day.
- 29 in 6th Grade Social Studies, 6th Grade Computers, 6th Choir, and 6th PE

A majority of our classes that are taught, especially in the middle school, have class numbers of 15-19 students.

Please take some time to look at our Enrollment study conducted last year. The numbers are not exact as they have not been updated, but it will give you a glimpse into how things are constructed.

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1-TOyzqGMhfiRZIQ9jTlvI4J_FpDA4vqu/edit?usp=sharing&oid=117601393443010058956&rtpof=true&sd=true

Looking Ahead

The board also reviewed and approved policy revisions addressing executive sessions, artificial intelligence, student conduct, bullying, agenda preparation and dissemination, the basic instructional program, and epinephrine auto-injectors and nasal spray.

Thank you for your continued support of the Florence School District. Our students benefit when our school, families, and community work together, and we are grateful for the many ways our patrons contribute to the success of our Falcons. We look forward to seeing everyone during Homecoming week and at Parent/Teacher Conferences on October 7!

Sincerely,

Mitch Reed
Superintendent
Florence School District