



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Halifax County, NC – December 7, 2022
HCS Celebrates Groundbreaking of New School

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Halifax County Schools (HCS) broke ground on December 5, 2022, for the new K-8 School. The groundbreaking ceremony took place at the site of the former Eastman school. The ceremony began with words of welcome from Mr. Tyus S. Few, HCS Board Chair, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence. Darian Pressley, Public Information Officer, provided the vision, mission statement, and board goals.

The program continued with celebratory remarks, starting with State Representative Michael Wray, who stated, “it’s an honor and privilege to be here with you. The new K-8 school will benefit our future generations and children. It takes everyone working together to bring back a school that you can look at now with a lot of history. This will be a great facility for the community and an excellent facility for our children”.

State Superintendent Catherine Truitt said she was amazed by the turnout. “All children deserve a highly qualified and excellent teacher in every classroom. But both teachers and students need high-quality learning spaces to achieve that”. She added, “All students deserve both. The environment that a student learns in truly has a lasting impact on that child’s ability to learn and grow”.

Truitt concluded her remarks by stating, “No one in this state cares more about their community than Dr. Eric Cunningham. No one in this state has given more blood, sweat, and tears to create the best school system possible for students in this community. No one stays up late at night thinking about how he can make things better for all students. He is the real deal. It is an honor to know you, to work with you, to see you when I get to see you, and I consider you my partner and my friend.”



Commissioner Vernon Bryant talked about the important change of the state law that allows the Needs-Based Public Schools Grant to become a vital option for schools in Halifax County to pursue funds for critical capital needs. “This new school will consolidate two aging elementary schools and reduce lengthy bus rides for our students. It will be a credit to the state of NC and



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Halifax County and serve as a beacon of light for Halifax County Schools. My fellow commissioners and I are happy to be a part of this new beginning”, said Bryant.

Mr. Few states, “It is an honor to be still affiliated with the HCS district, the Chairman of the Board of Education, and to share a sacred and historical moment that we all share, and just like a phoenix, this school will rise again. The school is the heart of every community. This school is so dear to this community from the comments I hear. It is a great day for this community and the children of HCS”.



Ashley Dennis, Managing Principal adds,

“This is no normal groundbreaking. It's not to turn a little bit of dirt; it's for the children and what this school stands for, and to be a part of that is an unbelievable feeling. This is a momentous moment, and this process did start years ago. Your school board and superintendent made a step to put all the pieces in place so that they could jump on it for approval when the funding was in place. It will not be the last step; it will be more moments for the community to come together as this project gets designed and built.”



Dr. Joyce Lashley, Vice Chair, said, “I would be remiss not even to say that this is a dream of one of our lost colleagues (Mrs. Susie Lynch Evans). We are so grateful that her family is here sharing this moment with us”.

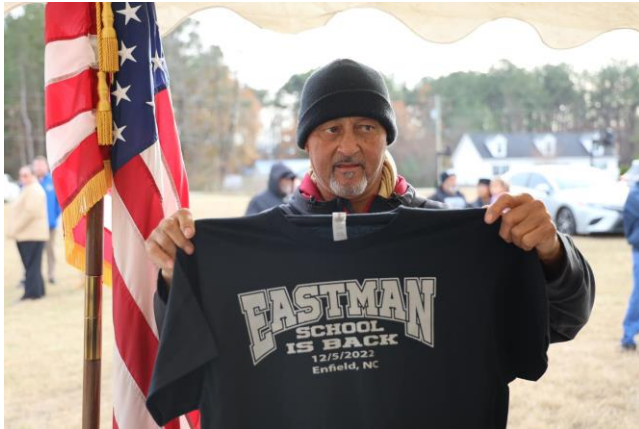
Mr. Michael Hawkins, HCS Board Member, said, “We had to make a hard decision to close the school years ago. I am thankful to God for seeing it rebuilt for this community. I thank God that a way has been made for it to be rebuilt.” Mr. Hawkins Sr. shared his experience of teaching at the former Eastman school.

Mr. Charles Hedgepeth, HCS Board Member, shared that his graduating class was the last class to graduate as a high school. He thanked Dr. Joyce Lashley for recognizing the Late Susie Lynch Evans and said he hates that she is not here to see it being rebuilt. Mr. Hedgepeth expressed his thanks for seeing all the Eastman Kodiaks.



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Mr. Claude Cooper, HCS Board Member, shared his memories of the former Eastman school. Mr. Copper states, “It took a while, but a change has come, and we will put it back together. Mr. Cooper also mentioned Mrs. Susie Lynch Evans and the dream she had. “When they closed the school, they took the hub of the community away. With this board of education, any vote will be a vote for the kids”, said Mr. Cooper. Mr. Cooper concluded his remarks by expressing his love for the community.



Mr. James Mills, HCS Board Member, said “This is a result of a lot of prayers. Susie Evans prayed for this community and this school; no one loved it more than Susie Evans. After she prayed, she worked. This is the result of a lot of work, and the people's names we can't remember, but they worked hard”. Mr. Mills expressed love and thanks to the Eastman

Community and the Evans family.

Ms. Carolyn Hawkins, HCS Board Member, shared her memories and history of Eastman High School and added a former chant that filled the audience with joy.

Dr. Eric Cunningham, HCS Superintendent, said, “This is about excellence and opportunity. Our children matter to the world. This day would not have come to fruition without the hard work, endless hours, and true dedication of our State Representative, State Superintendent, County Commissioners, County Manager, Board Members, staff, families, and the entire community. On behalf of the mighty board of education, I would like to thank you for working together because working together works”. Dr. Cunningham explained the following steps and the design-build process.



Halifax County Schools selected Bordeaux-Mosley Architect for the design-building project. The team will consist of Bordeaux Construction, Moseley Architects, and Raleigh Raised Development. CLD Design, P.A. will provide Civil Engineering, while Lynch Mykins will provide Structural Engineering. The new school will be built on the Eastman School site, and the estimated program is 101,000 sq. ft. formulate and construct a 540-student (600-student core) K-8 school