

Gaston County Schools
Board of Education
Monday, April 14, 2025
Meeting 5:30 p.m.
Regular Meeting

MINUTES

The Gaston County Board of Education met in a regular session on Monday, April 14, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. in the Board Room, 943 Osceola Street, Gastonia, NC. The meeting was live on Spectrum, Cable Channel 21 and the Gaston County Board of Education YouTube page. Those Board Members in attendance were: Chairman Josh Crisp, Vice Chairman Dot Cherry, Lee Dedmon, Tod Kinlaw (absent), Robbie Lovelace, Brent Moore (absent), Jeff Ramsey, Janna Smith and A.M. Stephens III.

Additional attendees include: Superintendent Dr. Morgen A. Houchard, Attorney Sonya McGraw, Associate Superintendents Gary Hoskins and Tonya Kales, Chief Communications Officer Todd Hagans, Chief Technology Officer Curtis Poplin and Board Clerk Dana Luoto.

Chairman Crisp called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

Invocation

Pastor Justin White from Frontline Worship Center led the invocation.

Character Trait

Alyxandra Childs, H.H. Beam Elementary School, reported on the Character Trait of Perseverance.

Pledge of Allegiance

Ranchan Chahil, Belmont Middle School led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Agenda Adoption - Action

The Board considered Agenda Adoption – Action

Motion to adopt the Agenda as presented was made by Mr. Jeff Ramey; seconded by Mr. A.M. Stephens III; motion carried unanimously. (7-0)

Good News – Information

Mr. Todd Hagans recognized All-State Band students – Alex Cornwell from Highland School of Technology, Bram Cromer from Forestview High School, Mackenzie Hart and Zeke Tucker from East Gaston High School and Iyanna Brienne Flores from W.C. Friday Middle School. These students auditioned in March and earned invitations to participate in the North Carolina All-State Honors Band Clinic which is scheduled for May 2-4 at UNC-Greensboro.

Mr. Jeff Ramsey presented a Certificate of Recognition to each student.

Mr. Todd Hagans recognized Diane Baxter from Stanley Middle School who was honored with the North Carolina Student Academy of Science (NCSAS) Award which recognizes educators across the state who support students in STEM research.

Mr. Jeff Ramsey presented a Certificate of Recognition to Ms. Baxter.

Mr. Todd Hagans recognized Kim Lynch an English/Language Arts Curriculum Facilitator. Ms. Lynch received the 2025 C. Kenneth McEwin Distinguished Service Award from the North Carolina Association for Middle Level Education. This honor signifies her significant contributions to the development and success of middle school students in Gaston County Schools.

Ms. Dot Cherry presented a Certificate of Recognition to Ms. Lynch.

Mr. Todd Hagans recognized representatives from Tindol Subaru and Amy Spencer Executive Director of the Gaston County Education Foundation. For 16 years, the annual Subaru Share the Love Event has shown Subaru's commitment to being more than a car company. During this event, Subaru of America donates \$250 for every new Subaru vehicle purchased or leased at participating retailers. Customers can choose to send that donation to one of four national charities or to a hometown charity selected by the retailer. For several years, Tindol Subaru has chosen the Gaston County Education Foundation as their hometown charity. In addition to Subaru of America's contributions, Tindol Subaru also gives a portion of every car sale directly to the Gaston County Education Foundation. This effort reflects Tindol Subaru's strong support for teachers and education in our community.

Tindol Subaru presented a check for \$25,245 to the Gaston County Education Foundation.

Ms. Dot Cherry presented a Certificate of Recognition plaque to the Tindol Subaru dealership.

Mr. Todd Hagans recognized the following to celebrate Library Recognition Month:

- Jeremy Tucker – Bessemer City Middle School – our current Media Specialist of the Year
- Nancy Olls – Cherryville High School – who is retiring after 30 years – 29 years as a media specialist
- Karen Lowrance – media assistant who is retiring
- Lauren Pekarek – Lowell Elementary School – Media Specialist of the Year for 2025-2026
- Laura Long – Lead Media Coordinator

Mr. A.M. Stephens III presented a Certificate of Recognition plaque to the group in honor of their dedication and role school library media coordinators play in student success.

Mr. Todd Hagans recognized the following Social Workers to bring attention to the importance of School Social Work Week. These dedicated professionals play a vital role in supporting students' academic success and well-being every day:

- Tabatha Lynch
- Chuck Harkey – current School Social Worker of the Year
- Michelle Black
- Beryl Miller
- Heather Baker
- Angela Ferguson
- Moran Stewart
- Elizabeth Lanier – School Social Worker of the Year for 2025-2026

Mrs. Janna Smith presented a Certificate of Recognition plaque to the group to recognize our social workers.

Mr. Todd Hagans announced that Gaston County Schools received a Blue Ribbon Award from the North Carolina School Public Relations Association. The award was presented on Friday, April 11, 2025 during a ceremony in High Point. It is a gold-level award in the special events and programs category for our "School Showcase and Parent Fair," which was held in February 2024 at Stuart W. Cramer High School. We would like to commend the Communications Department on winning another Blue Ribbon Award and bringing state-level attention to Gaston County Schools.

Teacher Appreciation Week Proclamation – Action

Chairman Crisp recognized Mr. Todd Hagans who presented the Teacher Appreciation Week Proclamation for consideration.

Motion

The Motion was made by Mr. Jeff Ramsey seconded by Mrs. Janna Smith that the Board

Approve Teacher Appreciation Week Proclamation

A vote was taken and motion to approve the item as presented carried unanimously. (7-0)

Mr. Todd Hagans recognized the following:

- Brandon Taylor – East Gaston High School – current Teacher of the Year
- Emma Richardson – North Belmont Elementary School – current Linda Rader New Teacher of the Year
- John Ramos – Forestview High School – top five finalist 2025-2026 for Teacher of the Year
- Richard Morris – Forestview High School – top five finalist 2025-2026 for New Teacher of the Year
- Alyssa Eckard – Ashbrook High School – top five finalist 2025-2026 for New Teacher of the Year

Chairman Crisp and Superintendent Houchard presented the Teacher Appreciation Week Proclamation Recognition plaque to the group.

(View Proclamation)

Classroom Moment – Information

Chairman Crisp recognized Emily Poag, Pre-K Director and Rita Evans, Lowell Elementary Pre-K Teacher who presented a PowerPoint on Pre-Kindergarten Services.

(View PowerPoint)

Public Expression – Information

Teresa MacFarlane
1139 E. Franklin Blvd.
Gastonia, NC 28054

Approval/Correction of Minutes – Action

Motion to adopt minutes of March 17, 2025 (Regular Meeting) as presented was made by Mrs. Janna Smith; seconded by Mr. A.M. Stephens III; motion carried unanimously. (7-0)

Operations Committee Report – Information

Brent Moore is chair of the committee and members are Dot Cherry, Lee Dedmon and Tod Kinlaw. Chairman Crisp recognized Ms. Dot Cherry who provided a summary of topics considered and discussed at the most recent meeting.

(View Report)

Curriculum & Instruction Committee Report – Information

Jeff Ramsey is chair of the committee and members are Robbie Lovelace, Janna Smith and A.M. Stephens III. Chairman Crisp recognized Mr. A.M. Stephens III who provided a summary of topics considered and discussed at the most recent meeting.

(View Report)

Innovation Schools Strategy - Information

Chairman Crisp recognized Ms. Tonya Kales who presented a PowerPoint on Innovation School Strategy.

(View PowerPoint)

Summer Program Plan Addendum: School Year Re-Administration Plan - Action

Chairman Crisp recognized Ms. Kelly Cunningham who presented a PowerPoint on the summer Program and School Year Re-Administration Plan 2025. Students who do not achieve proficiency on End of Grade (EOG) and End of Course (EOC) assessments in Reading and Math will be provided the opportunity to attend remediation for tested areas in which they were not proficient. This remediation will occur during the school year within the last five (semester) or ten (year-long) days of the school year. At the conclusion of the remediation period, students may retake their EOG or EOC test(s).

Motion

Motion was made by Mr. Jeff Ramsey; seconded by Ms. Dot Cherry that the Board

Approve the Summer Plan Addendum: School Year Re-Administration Plan

A vote was taken and motion to approve the item as presented carried unanimously. (7-0)

(View PowerPoint)

Consent Agenda – Action

The Board considered the Consent Agenda:

- A. Recommended Personnel
- B. Budget Amendments & Budget Transfers
- C. Construction/Repair Change Orders
- D. Out-of-County Tuition 2025-2026
- E. Gaston County School's Budget Request 2025-2026
- F. Contracts
 - Microsoft Software Agreement
 - BusPlanner Renewal (Sole Source)
 - Ida Rankin Elementary School — Mural Easement
 - Elementary School LED Light Conversions

—Melmark, Inc.

—Instructional Resources 2025-2026 — Academic Services

Motion to adopt the Consent Agenda as presented was made by Mr. A.M. Stephens III; seconded by Mr. Lee Dedmon motion carried unanimously. (7-0)

Superintendent's Comments

Superintendent Houchard announced that next week is Spring Break – April 21-25. When students return to school on April 28, there will only be 3½ weeks of school left. The focus will be on end-of-year testing, awards day and celebrating the Class of 2025.

Superintendent Houchard announced that a wonderful time was had at the Star Student-Star Teacher Ceremony on Thursday, April 10 celebrating our Star Students in the Class of 2025 and their Star Teachers. The ceremony will air on Channel 21 in a few weeks.

Superintendent Houchard announced our springtime job fair will be held on Tuesday, May 6 at the Linder Rader Staff Development Center in Cramerton. The event runs from 11:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. and we are seeking employees for both teaching and non-teaching positions.

Superintendent Houchard announced that tomorrow, Tuesday, April 15 our AIG (Academically Gifted and Intellectually Gifted) Department will host the Poetry and Prose Celebration at Highland School of Technology for all fourth-grade students.

Superintendent Houchard announced the annual Evening of Excellence Awards Ceremony will be held on Thursday, May 1 at 6:30 p.m. at Stuart Cramer High School. The event is being sponsored by Truist Bank and we are looking forward to recognizing our outstanding educators and finding out who our Teacher, Principal, Assistant Principal, New Teacher, Teacher Assistant and Central Office Administrator of the Year will be for 2025-2026.

Superintendent Houchard reminded everyone that our annual Sports Physical Day will be held on Saturday, May 10 at CaroMont Specialty Surgery in Gastonia. Appointment times are from 8:05 a.m. until 11:40 a.m. The cost is free, but space is limited.

Superintendent Houchard reminded everyone that the “Through An Artist’s Eyes” art exhibit runs through Saturday, May 10 at Loray Mill. The exhibit features the most outstanding artwork by students in Gaston County Schools.

Superintendent Houchard reminded everyone that registration for kindergarten is on-going and parents can register on the Gaston County Schools website. While kindergarten registration continues throughout the summer, registration for pre-kindergarten ends in May.

Chairman Crisp wished Mr. Brent Moore a “Happy Birthday”.

Chairman Crisp announced that graduation will be held on Friday, May 23.

Closed Session

Chairman Crisp asked the Board to consider going into Closed Session under, N.C.G.S. §143-318.11(a)(3) Consultation with Attorney, N.C.G.S. §143-318.11(a)(5) Real Property and N.C.G.S. §143-318.11(a)(6) Personnel.

Motion to go into Closed Session was made by Ms. Dot Cherry; seconded by Mrs. Robbie Lovelace; motion carried unanimously. (7-0)

The Board went into Closed Session at 6:34 p.m.

The Board returned to Open Session at 7:05 p.m.

Motion

The Motion was made by Mr. A.M. Stephens; seconded by Mr. Lee Dedmon that the Board
Award a four-year Principal contract for the following:

- NaKishia Glenn

A vote was taken and motion to approve the item as presented carried unanimously. (7-0)

The Motion was made by Mr. A.M. Stephens; seconded by Mrs. Janna Smith that the Board
Award a one-year Principal contract for the following:

Melissa Knick

A vote was taken and motion to approve the item as presented carried unanimously. (7-0)

The Motion was made by Mr. A.M. Stephens; seconded by Mrs. Janna Smith that the Board
Award a two-year Principal contract for the following:

Stephanie Gust

A vote was taken and motion to approve the item as presented carried unanimously. (7-0)

The Motion was made by Mr. A.M. Stephens; seconded by Mrs. Janna Smith that the Board
Award a two-year Principal contract for the following:

Sierra Jennings

A vote was taken and motion to approve the item as presented carried unanimously. (7-0)

Superintendent Houchard announced the following placements:

NaKishia Glenn — Catawba Heights Elementary School

Melissa Knick — Tryon Elementary School

Stephanie Gust — North Belmont Elementary School

Sierra Jennings — Brookside Elementary School

Superintendent Houchard announced the following Principal placements:

Staci Bradley — York Chester Middle School

Kristie Gornto — John Chavis Middle School

Mitch Allen — Cherryville High School

Miriam Harvey — Chapel Grove Elementary School

Lorinda Brusie — Costner Elementary School

Adjournment

All business having been conducted, Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Jeff Ramsey; seconded by Mr. Lee Dedmon motion carried unanimously. (7-0)

The Board Meeting adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

Approved:



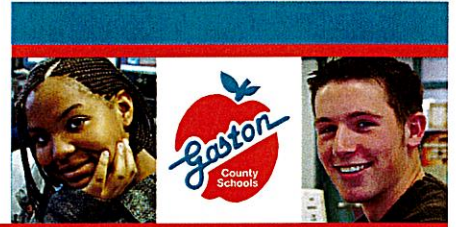
Josh Crisp, Chairman
[Corporate Seal]



Morgen A. Houchard, Secretary

Date Approved: 5/19/2025

PRIDE



PROCLAMATION

Teacher Appreciation Week

MAY 5-9, 2025

WHEREAS, Gaston County Schools is pleased to join school districts across the United States in celebrating Teacher Appreciation Week (May 5-9) and National Teacher Day on Tuesday, May 6; and

WHEREAS, Teacher Appreciation Week is an important annual observance as it is a time when everyone can show support for teachers and other educators who go above and beyond for students; and

WHEREAS, we know that teachers shine a light on brighter futures as they illuminate paths and guide students toward limitless possibilities – through all of their work, from planning meaningful lessons and focusing on academic growth to offering support and developing young minds, teachers spark curiosity, kindle creativity, and inspire success; and

WHEREAS, teachers in Gaston County Schools are often referred to as the “superheroes of public education” because they are a dynamic force in the learning process and work to ensure that children discover, grow, and thrive in a safe, caring, and nurturing school environment; and

WHEREAS, our teachers embrace the awesome responsibility of ensuring that children gain the knowledge and skills necessary to be productive in life beyond graduation, thus preparing them to become lifelong learners and contributing members of our community.

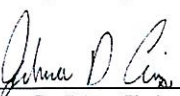
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, to honor all teachers for their important contributions to our schools and diligent efforts to positively influence the leaders of tomorrow, the Gaston County Board of Education is proud to proclaim the week of

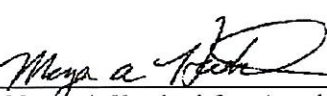
MAY 5-9, 2025

Teacher Appreciation Week

in Gaston County Schools and encourages students, parents, alumni, and others in the community to express their appreciation for our teachers.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this proclamation be made a part of the minutes of the Board of Education, adopted this the fourteenth day of April, 2025.


Joshua D. Crisp, Chairman
Gaston County Board of Education

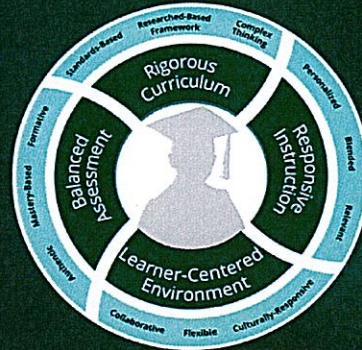

Morgan A. Houchard, Superintendent
Gaston County Schools

Gaston
COUNTY SCHOOLS

shaping our future

Classroom Moment

Pre-Kindergarten Services



PreK In Gaston County

- We are funded by NC PreK, Title 1 and the Department for Exceptional Children.
- We currently serve over 800 children
- GCS has 24 PreK classrooms in 18 different elementary schools, and 25 NCPREK classrooms in 12 different day care centers.
- Over 650 applications have already been received for 2025-2026.

Collaboration with the Department for Exceptional Children

To help support all of our children, we provide:

- EC PreK classrooms
- Developmental Day license
- 2 evaluation teams for IEP testing
- 1 traveling team for specialized services

North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development

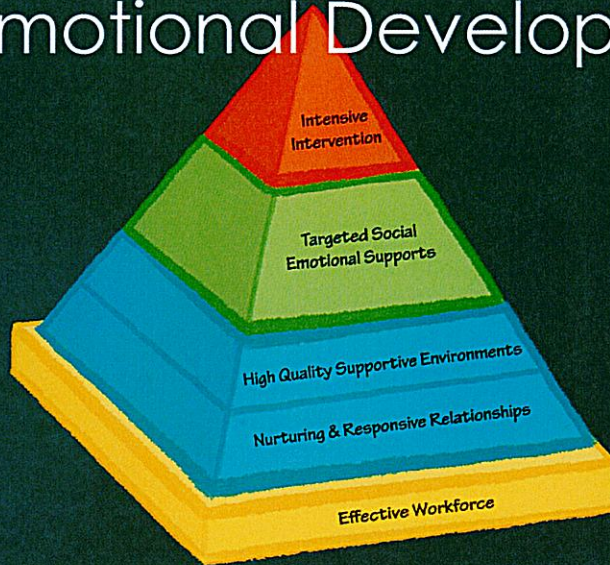
- Approaches to Play and Learning
- Emotional and Social Development
- Physical Development and Health
- Language Development and Communication
- Cognitive Development



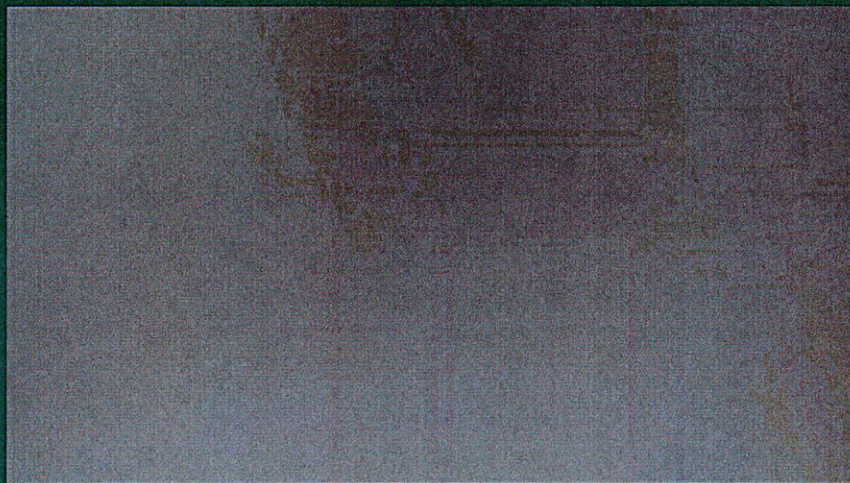
Frog Street Curriculum



Pyramid Model for Social and Emotional Development



Classroom Moment Video



Registration for Pre Kindergarten and Kindergarten is available on the Gaston County Schools Website!



Gaston County Schools

Operations Committee Report – March 31, 2025

The Operations Committee met at the Central Office Board Room on Monday, March 31, 2025 at 8:30 a.m. The committee consists of Chairman Brent Moore, Dot Cherry, Lee Dedmon and Tod Kinlaw (absent).

Our agenda discussions included the following:

- Technology Support Services Update

—We are continuing to transition from PowerSchool to Infinite Campus which is a State driven mandate. Meetings are underway with all departments who use PowerSchool to prepare for the conversion to Infinite Campus with DPI's support. Data Managers are receiving monthly support meetings that are critical to the success of this project.

- Human Resources Updates

—Human Resources is in the process of transitioning to Bchex for pre-employment background screening. This process is just as rigorous as our current company but with a faster turn-around time.

- School Bond Proceeds Update

—Information was presented concerning school bond proceeds update. The County recently informed us that we will be receiving approximately \$4M from bond interest that must be spent prior to July 1, 2025. The County Commissioners will allocate this money at their April Board Meeting. Staff is currently looking at projects that can be completed prior to this deadline.

In addition, the following items were discussed by the Committee and recommended for approval on the Consent Agenda:

- Mural Easement at Ida Rankin Elementary School
- Out of County Tuition
- Superintendent's Budget Request 2025-2026
- Microsoft Software Agreement
- Bus Planner Renewal – Sole Source

The next Operations Committee Meeting will be held on Monday, May 5 beginning at 8:30 a.m. in the Central Office Board Room.

Gaston County Schools

Curriculum & Instruction Committee Report – March 31, 2025

The Curriculum & Instruction Committee met at the Central Office Board Room on Monday, March 31, 2025 at 11:30 a.m. The Committee consists of Chairman Jeff Ramsey (absent), Robbie Lovelace, Janna Smith (absent) and A.M. Stephens III (absent). Mrs. Lovelace presided over the meeting.

Our agenda discussions included the following:

- CTE Updates

- Information was presented on recent modifications to the CTE Department. A revised organizational chart of the CTE Leadership Team was reviewed and Career Development Plans were reviewed.

- Organizational Alignment

- Information was presented on a realignment of Curriculum & Instruction Facilitators and Content Teachers to the district's vision for the support needed moving forward for Academic Services.

- Innovation Schools' Next Steps

- Information was presented on Innovation Schools' Purpose Statement and next steps. This item will be presented later in the meeting.

The following items are on the Consent Agenda for approval:

- Superintendent's Budget Request
- Melmark, Inc.
- Instructional Resources for Elementary and Secondary Schools

The next Curriculum & Instruction Committee Meeting will be held on Monday, May 5 beginning at 11:30 a.m. in the Central Office Board Room.

Innovation School Strategy

GCS Board of Education Meeting
April 14, 2025

Focus Areas

- High Quality Teaching and Learning
- Positive School and Workplace Culture
- Strong Communication Habits
- Teacher and Student Retention and Recruitment
- Focused Support for School and District Leadership

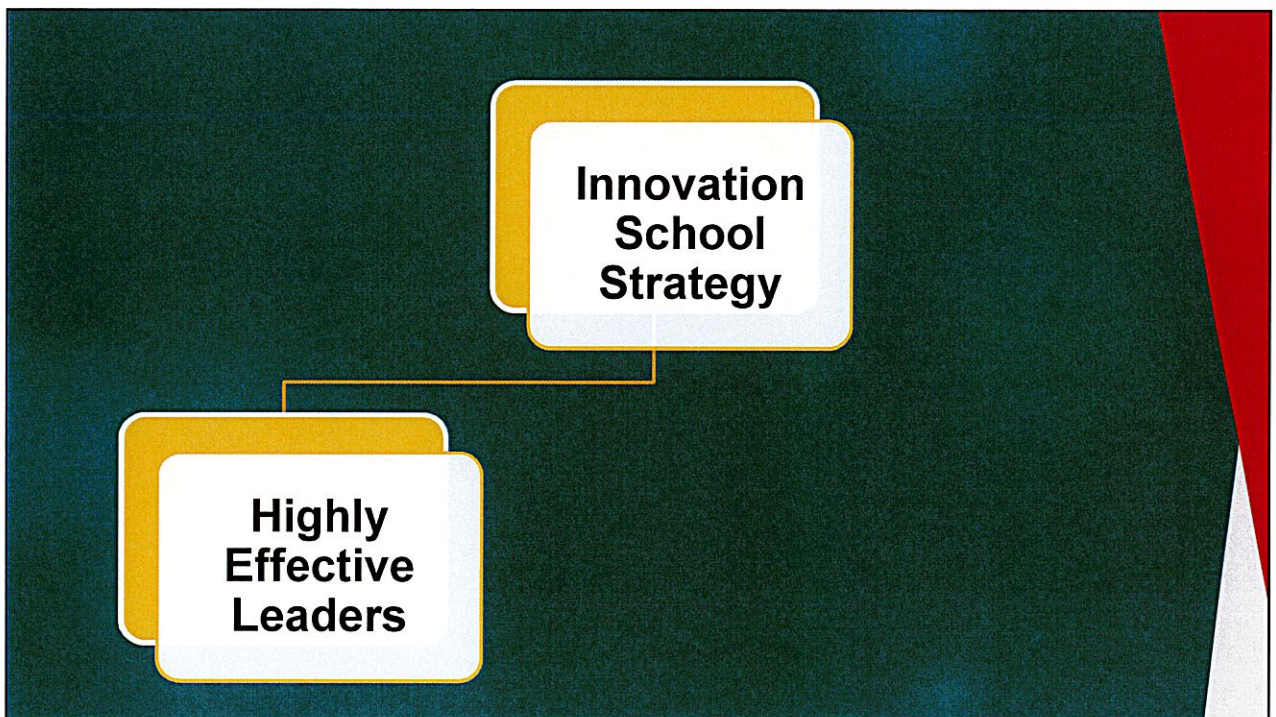
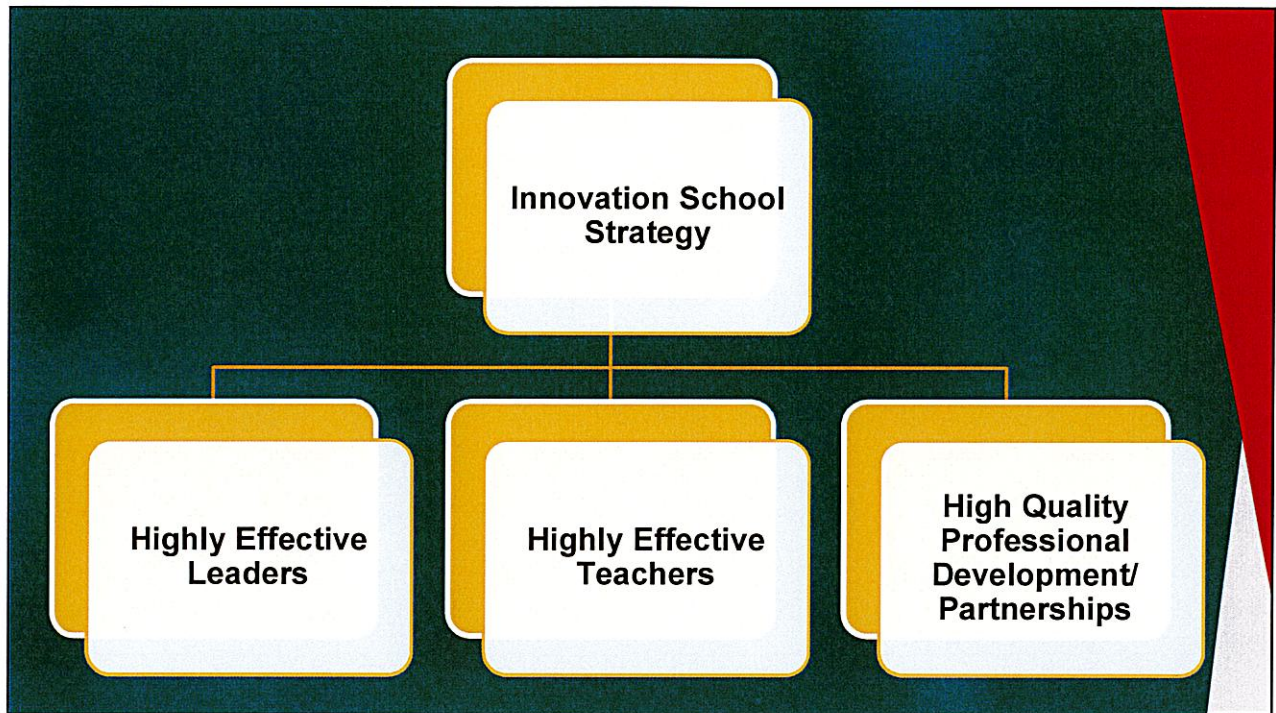
Innovation Schools' Purpose Statement



Gaston County's Innovation Schools will serve as a replicable model for high quality teaching and learning, ensuring every student has access to exemplary educators who embrace growth through coaching and data-driven instruction, preparing them for lifelong success.

2025-2026 GCS Innovation Schools

Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools
Bessemer City Central HH Beam Lingerfeldt Sherwood Pleasant Ridge Woodhill	Grier Southwest	Ashbrook Hunter Huss



Principal Selection

State Principal Supplemental Salary Initiative

Superintendent Houchard:

You are receiving this letter as your LEA has at least one school that may be eligible to participate in the Principal Recruitment Supplement Program (§ 115C-285.1). The eligibility list has been updated based on the 2023-2024 accountability results. The purpose of the program is to provide significant, time-limited salary supplements to qualifying principals who accept employment as principals of qualifying schools. *A qualifying principal is one who is paid on the Exceeded Growth column of the Principal Salary Schedule. A qualifying school is one that received an overall school performance score that placed it in the bottom five percent (5%) of all schools in the State in the prior school year.* The recruitment supplement is \$30,000 annually for up to 36 months.

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graph TD; A[Innovation School Strategy] --- B[Highly Effective Teachers]
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**Innovation
School Strategy**

**Highly Effective
Teachers**

Advanced Teaching Roles

Students having access to a highly effective teacher is one of the most important factors for improving student achievement and the overall experience of students in school.



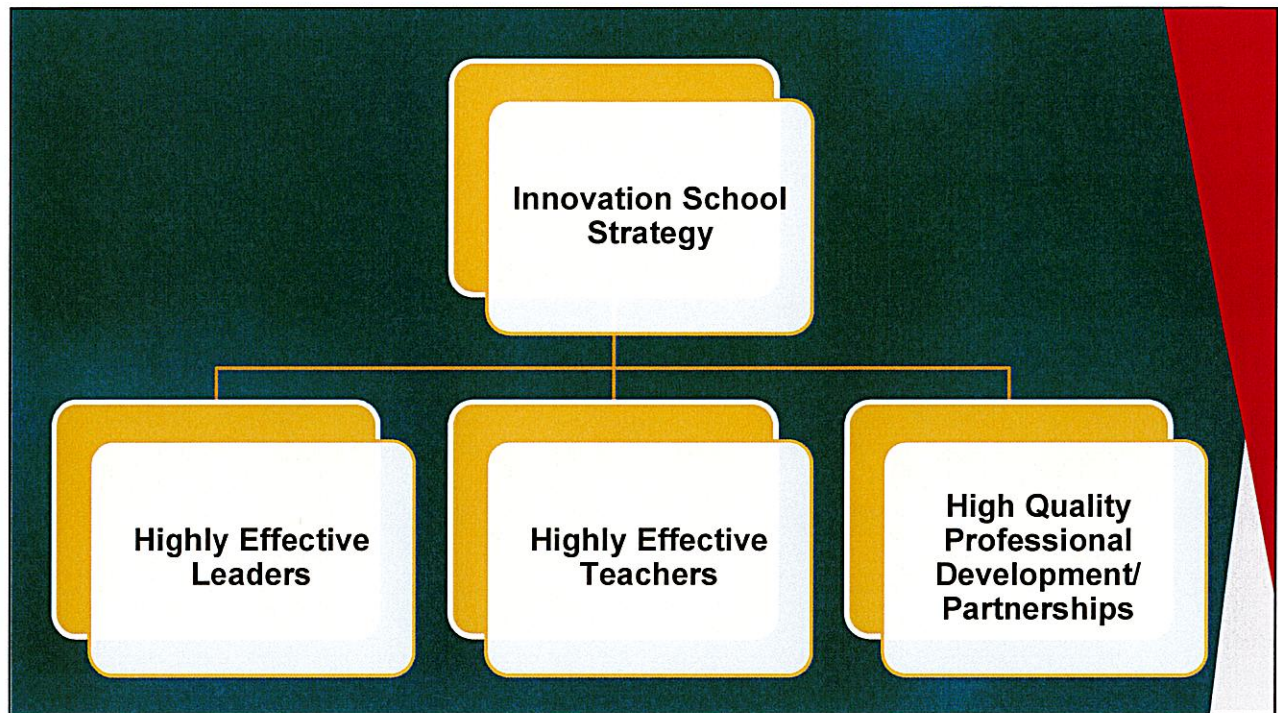
Advanced teaching roles provide an opportunity to increase the number of students who have access to highly effective teachers, while also increasing the effectiveness of the teachers led by an advanced teacher.



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graph TD; A[Innovation School Strategy] --- B[High Quality Professional Development/Partnerships]
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Innovation School Strategy

High Quality Professional Development/Partnerships



Gaston County School District Summer Program and School Year Re- Administration Plan 2025

(Updated as of 4.2.25)

Kelly Cunningham
Chief Accountability Officer

Summer Program Plan

- ▶ Students who score non-proficient on EOGs and EOCs are permitted to re-take the assessment after participation in a remediation program during the summer.
(approved by BOE 3/17/25)

Additional Reassessment Opportunity

- ▶ Per an update from NCDPI on 4/2/25, Students who score non-proficient on EOGs and EOCs **are also permitted an opportunity to retake the assessment after remediation during the last five (semester) or ten (year-long) days of the school year.**

Proposal: Combined Re-Administration Plan

- ▶ Provide schools with flexibility to administer the re-assessment during or after the school year providing as many students as possible with the opportunity to demonstrate proficiency.

New- Grades 3-8 School Year Re- Administration Program

Instructional Date(s)

- Friday, May 9th-Wednesday, May 21st

Re-Administration Testing Dates

- Monday, May 12th-Wednesday, May 21st

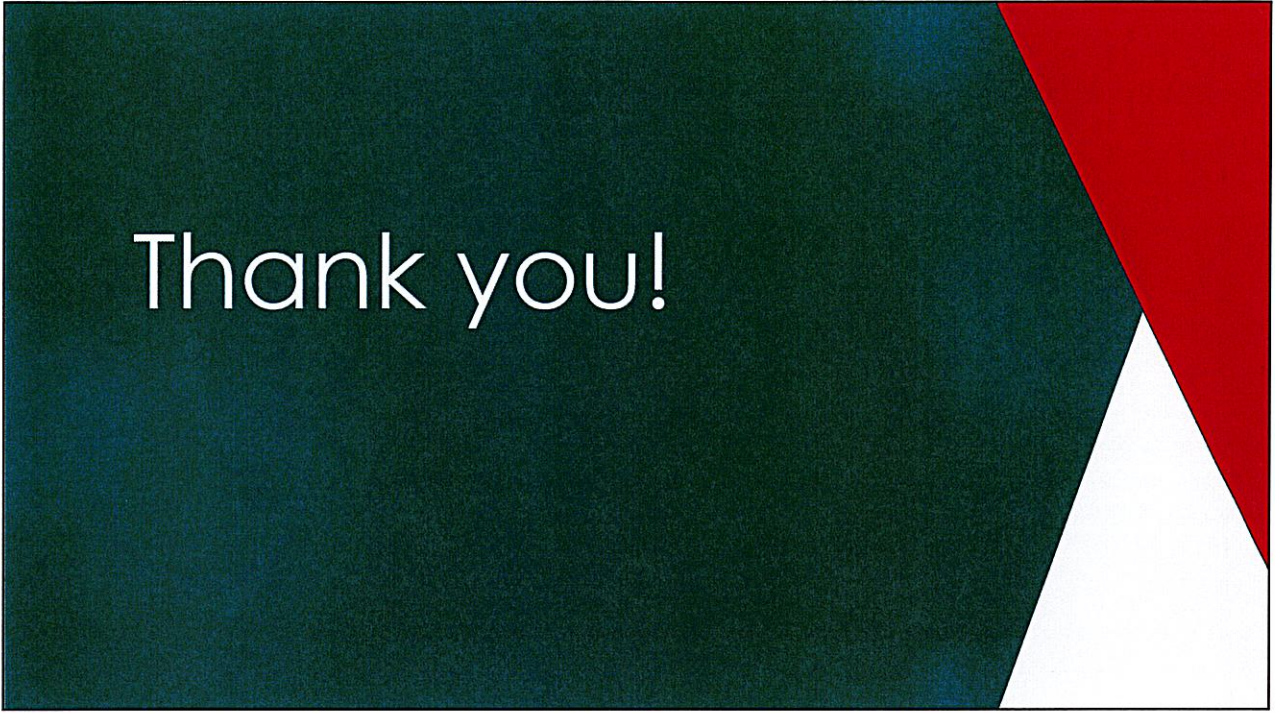
New- Grades 9-12 School Year Re-Administration Program

Instructional Date(s)

- Friday, May 16th-Wednesday, May 21st
- Tuesday, May 13th-Friday, May 16th (Early College)

Re-Administration Testing Dates

- Monday, May 19th-Wednesday, May 21st (Traditional)
- Wednesday, May 14th-Friday, May 16th (Early College)



Thank you!