

Gaston County Schools
Board of Education
Monday, October 20, 2025
Meeting 5:30 p.m.
Regular Meeting

MINUTES

The Gaston County Board of Education met in a regular session on Monday, October 20, 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, Robbie Lovelace, Brent Moore, Jeff Ramsey, Janna Smith, and A.M. Stephens III. Tod Kinlaw was absent and excused.

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

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

Invocation

Bobby Holtsclaw, Cherryville Christian Fellowship, led the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance

Students Valentina Giler and Anderson West, both eighth graders at Cramerton Middle School, led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Character Trait

Hilty Alexander (4th) and Ben Cass (5th), New Hope Elementary, reported on the Character Trait of Responsibility.

Agenda Adoption - Action

The Board considered Agenda Adoption – Action

Motion to adopt the Agenda as presented was made by Mr. Brent Moore; seconded by Mr. A.M. Stephens III, motion carried unanimously. (8-0)

Good News – Information

Mr. Todd Hagans presented the Good News for October:

Gaston County Schools' AIG Local Endorsement (G.A.L.E.)

In compliance with the North Carolina Academically and Intellectually Gifted state standards, 14 of our classroom teachers recently completed a year-long coursework titled "Gaston County Schools AIG Local Endorsement" or "G.A.L.E." to obtain credentials to work with our gifted students.

The G.A.L.E. coursework is designed to highlight and promote best instructional practices and provide training for educators. In addition to the coursework, the teachers had to complete 12 modules on gifted topics and conduct a case study.

- Sierra Jenkins, Belmont Middle School
- Michael Solomon, Belmont Middle School
- Morgan McCarey, Cramerton Middle School
- Sarah Snipes, Cramerton Middle School
- Lacey Pruett, John Chavis Middle School
- Sydney Russell, John Chavis Middle School
- Sarah Word, John Chavis Middle School
- Emily Trakas, East Gaston High School
- Morgan Hannifin, W.C. Friday Middle School
- Jasmin Melton, Holbrook Middle School
- Taylor Helms, Pinewood Elementary School
- James Prince, Southwest Middle School
- April Deal, Stanley Middle School
- Mary Bowen, Springfield Elementary School

Mr. Hagans recognized and commended teachers for earning the G.A.L.E. endorsement, noting their extra effort and the positive impact this achievement will have on the AIG program and students.

Ms. Dot Cherry presented a plaque of recognition to each teacher.

Cramerton Middle School - Paideia Classroom Certification

With us this evening from Cramerton Middle School are teachers Sidney Cole, Andrea Miers, Brooke Richardson, Misty Medlin, and Brenda Bradley.

Cramerton is our Paideia School in Gaston County, and in May, Cramerton achieved an important milestone by advancing from the “Paideia Seminar” level to the distinguished “Paideia Classroom Certification” level.

This is the second of three stages in the Paideia certification and accreditation process. At this stage, teachers work to use the three main parts of Paideia teaching in every classroom. These include direct instruction to share information, coaching to build academic skills, and seminar discussions to explore ideas and values.

Together, these approaches create a strong and balanced learning experience. Earning Paideia Classroom Certification means that high expectations and fairness are a part of every lesson, thus setting the foundation for the final stage of the certification process — the Paideia Project.

This accomplishment highlights the school’s strong commitment to fostering a learning environment where students and teachers engage in meaningful discussion, critical thinking, and creative exploration.

The Paideia approach serves as the foundation of Cramerton’s Gifted and Talented Academy and continues to inspire academic excellence and a love of learning throughout the school community.

Mr. A.M. Stephens II presented a plaque of recognition to the group.

Cramerton Middle School National Banner Unified Champion School

Next, we would like to recognize the Unified Champion School Club at Cramerton Middle School. With us this evening are Principal Aimee Tolleson, Mindy Townsend, Christy Dearing, Jennifer Pugh, and Carrie Curtis. Recently, the club earned the National Banner School title, which is a significant recognition from the Special Olympics for promoting a sense of community, involving everyone, and showing acceptance, kindness, and understanding within the school.

Over the past year, Cramerton Middle has hosted a variety of activities that brought all students together, including a unified volleyball event and weekly club meetings that focus on fun, friendship, and teamwork. Students have also participated in Special Olympics events such as the unified track and field contest and a unified basketball game.

Cramerton is the second school in Gaston County to receive this honor from the Special Olympics. The first was Ashbrook High School, which earned the recognition two years ago. We commend the students and staff at Cramerton Middle for their outstanding dedication to inclusion and unity.

Mr. A.M. Stephens presented a plaque of recognition to the group.

Upcoming reminders:

First, the annual fundraising campaign for the United Way of Gaston County begins next Monday, October 27, 2025, and runs through Friday, November 7, 2025. We want to thank our schools, students, employees, and parents in advance for their support, and with everyone's help, we can meet or even surpass our fundraising total this year of \$125,000. Funds that are contributed go to support the United Way's programs that focus on education, financial stability, and health and wellness in our community.

Vote for Caleb Gordon and Patrick Blee

Second, we have some exciting news to share. You may recall having Caleb Gordon of Ashbrook High School and Patrick Blee of South Point High School a couple of months ago when we recognized them for being named to the WSOC-TV Big 22 Player of the Year contest.

Thanks to everyone voting, we are pleased to announce that both Caleb and Patrick are two of the five finalists. Now, it is time to vote again in the finalists round. Voting will run until 10:00 a.m. next Monday, October 27. So go to the WSOC-TV website and vote every day for Caleb and Patrick as they vie for Player of the Year honors.

And, Chairman Crisp, that completes our "good news" recognition for the month of October.

National Principals Month Proclamation – Action

Chairman Crisp recognized Mr. Todd Hagans, who reported that October is National Principals Month. Mr. Hagans read the National Principals Month Proclamation.

Motion

The Motion was made by Mr. Brent Moore, seconded by Mr. Jeff Ramsey, that the Board

Approve National Principals Month Proclamation

A vote was taken, and a motion to approve the item as presented carried unanimously. (8-0)

Classroom Moment

Executive Director Kevin Doran introduced the *No-Nonsense Nurturer* training, currently active in 10 elementary and middle schools, with 2 more joining midyear. This research-based approach to classroom management aims to improve student engagement and school culture.

Greer Middle School piloted the program last spring, contributing to the school's improvement from not meeting to exceeding growth expectations.

Mr. Doran was joined by Principals Jamie Wallace and William Winston, along with three recognized teachers: Ms. Crystal Hall (Holbrook Middle), Ms. Kayla Lipscomb (Grier Middle), and Davia Steven-Stewart (Woodhill Elementary).

The training uses a four-step framework:

1. **Give Precise Directions**
2. **Use Positive Narration**
3. **Implement Accountability Systems**
4. **Build Strong Relationships**

A short video demonstrated the model in action.

Thanks were extended to the Gaston County Education Foundation for funding the program. The team emphasized the program's positive impact on student engagement and overall classroom culture.

(View PowerPoint)

Public Expression – Information

Aaron Jordan
441 Neal Road

Bessemer City, NC 28016

Re: Policy and Procedure for investigating unwanted comments and contact from a teacher to a student.

Approval/Correction of Minutes – Action

Motion to adopt minutes of September 15, 2025, as presented was made by Mrs. Janna Smith; seconded by Ms. Dot Cherry, motion carried unanimously. (8-0)

Operations Committee Report – Information

Brent Moore is chair of the Operations Committee, and members are Dot Cherry, Lee Dedmon, and Tod Kinlaw. Ms. Dot Cherry provided a summary report of topics considered and discussed at the most recent meeting.

(View report)

Curriculum & Instruction Committee Report – Information

Mr. Jeff Ramsey is chair of the Curriculum & Instruction Committee, and the members are Robbie Lovelace, Janna Smith, and A.M. Stephens III. Mr. Jeff Ramsey provided a summary report of topics considered and discussed at the most recent meeting.

(View report)

2025–2026 Academic Services Path Forward

Presented by: Associate Superintendent Tonya Kales and Executive Directors Anarah Henderson, Tyler West, Bryan Denton, and Kevin Doran

The team shared the district's strategic plan to improve teaching and learning, centered on three core areas: **Leading, Teaching, and Learning**. The overall goal is to improve student outcomes and support educators system-wide.

Key Goals: The Team shared the following goals: Increase student proficiency in core subjects, Improve school academic growth, Reduce low-performing schools, Raise graduation rates, Support and boost ACT/WorkKeys results

Leading:

Executive Directors provide coaching and monthly school visits. A feedback system and redesigned admin meetings support instructional leadership.

Teaching:

Refined curriculum guides, targeted professional development, and improved PLCs support teacher growth, especially for new educators.

Learning:

Regular interim assessments and the use of SchoolNet provide immediate data to guide instruction. Teachers engage in full-day planning sessions for data analysis and collaboration.

Districtwide Commitment:

The strategy is implemented across all schools to ensure consistency, while still allowing teachers flexibility in their instructional style.

Consent Agenda – Action

The Board considered the Consent Agenda:

A. Recommended Personnel

B. Budget Amendments & Budget Transfers

C. Construction/Repair Change Orders--none

D. First Semester Final High School Exams 2025-2026

E. Contracts

1. Replacement of the Intercom System at Woodhill Elementary due to Electrical Storm Damage
2. Lightspeed Systems Renewal
3. Cisco SMARTNet Renewal
4. School Staff Chromebook Purchase

Motion to adopt the Consent Agenda as presented was made by Mr. Jeff Ramsey; seconded by Mr. A.M. Stephens III. Motion carried unanimously. (8-0)

Superintendent's Comments

Superintendent Houchard addressed the Board and shared several important updates:

Superintendent Houchard officially announced that Don and Mary Doctor have generously donated the former Armstrong Athletic Club property, located on Robinwood Road in Gastonia, to Gaston County Schools. The property, valued at over \$2 million, will be transformed from a gymnasium into a multi-purpose facility for academic programs, workshops, and events for teachers, administrators,

students, and the community. A ribbon-cutting and grand opening ceremony is scheduled for January. The Board expressed its sincere appreciation to Don and Mary Doctor for their significant contribution to the district.

October is designated as North Carolina Countdown to College Month. During this time, high school counselors actively encourage students to complete college applications and financial aid forms. Of particular note is College Application Week, during which many colleges and universities waive application fees. Students and parents were encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity and reach out to their school counselors for guidance on the application process.

A recent Parent Advisory Council meeting was held at Gaston Early College High School. The meeting was well-attended, with 68 parents representing various schools across the district. Superintendent Houchard delivered a presentation highlighting accomplishments and academic initiatives within Gaston County Schools. The district's strategic plan was introduced, and parents participated in small-group discussions to provide valuable feedback on both the current draft and future considerations. Parental input from the meeting will be incorporated into the ongoing development of the strategic plan. Superintendent Houchard expressed appreciation to the parents for their engagement and support.

The Board was informed that the Annual Gaston County Marching Band Fanfare will be held on Saturday, November 1st, from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the stadium of Stuart W. Cramer High School. Tickets are \$10.00. The event will feature performances from all ten Gaston County high school marching bands, and community attendance is encouraged.

Report cards for the first nine weeks will be distributed on Thursday. Additionally, there will be no school for students or staff on Tuesday, November 11th, in observance of Veterans Day. The district recognizes and honors the contributions of veterans to our nation and community.

Closing Remarks

Chairman Crisp thanked Superintendent Houchard for the update and reiterated his appreciation for the continued support from the Gaston County Schools community.

The next scheduled meeting will be held on Monday, November 17, 2025.

Closed Session

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

Motion to go into Closed Session was made by Ms. Dot Cherry; Mr. Brent Moore seconded, and the motion carried unanimously. (8-0)

The Board went into Closed Session at 6:39 p.m.

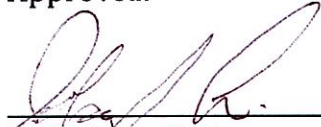
The Board returned to Open Session at 7:42 p.m.

Adjournment

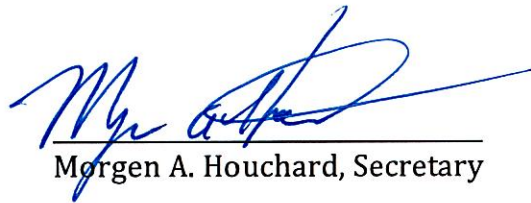
All business having been conducted, Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. A.M. Stephens III; seconded by Mrs. Janna Smith, and motion carried unanimously. (8-0)

The Board Meeting adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

Approved:



Josh Crisp, Chairman
[Corporate Seal]



Morgen A. Houchard, Secretary

Date Approved: 11-17-25