

Gaston County Schools
Board of Education
Monday, November 17, 2025
Meeting 5:30 p.m.
Regular Meeting

MINUTES

The Gaston County Board of Education met in a regular session on Monday, November 17, 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, , Jeff Ramsey, Janna Smith, and A.M. Stephens III. Brent Moore was absent and excused.

Additional attendees include: Superintendent Dr. Morgen A. Houchard, Attorney Sonya McGraw, Associate Superintendent Gary Hoskins, Assistant Superintendents Bessie Harvey and Rebekka Powers, Chief Communications Officer Todd Hagans, Chief Technology Office Curtis Poplin, Director Chris Mills, and Board Clerk Cindy Beck.

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

Invocation

Mr. Dwayne Burks from The Gateway Gaston, led the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance

Students, Alivia Miller and Brody Self, 6th graders at John Chavis Middle School, led the Pledge of Allegiance.

JROTC Students Alyssa Curtis (Color Guard Commander), Katheryn Escobar, Victoria Reep, James Soto led the Presentation of Colors.

Character Trait

The following students from W.B. Beam Intermediate reported on the Character Trait of Kindness:

Tanisha Cobb

Finn Sermersheim

Hailey Shultz

Rosalind Shuford

Jacob Ward

Agenda Adoption - Action

The Board considered Agenda Adoption – Action

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

Good News – Information

Mr. Todd Hagans presented the Good News for November:

Stuart W. Cramer High School – Girls Golf Team

Team members Audrey Leazer, Mackenzie Blackledge, Winsley Crotts, and Coach Brad Sloan finished as runner-up in the 4A state championship. Winsley placed 3rd individually, Mackenzie 11th, and Audrey 16th, with the 4A Sportsmanship Award. The team also finished 2nd in the West Regionals, where Winsley placed 1st and recorded a hole-in-one.

Mr. Tod Kinlaw presented a plaque of recognition to the team.

South Point High School – Girls Golf Team

Madison Pruden, Sophia Travenski, Chloe Villarreal, Sammie Clements, Caroline Mumford, and Coach Allison Lord were recognized for winning back-to-back 5A state championships. Madison was the state runner-up; Sophia received the 5A Sportsmanship Award. The team also won the Big South Conference title and finished runner-up at Regionals.

Mr. Tod Kinlaw presented a plaque of recognition to the team.

North Carolina Student Science Teacher of the Year

Elizabeth Woodruff, student teacher and Belmont Abbey College senior, was named the North Carolina Student Science Teacher of the Year and received the NC Science Teachers Association Elementary Student Teacher Award.

Mr. A.M. Stephens III presented a certificate of recognition.

Cafeteria Staff – Consecutive 100% Ratings

The cafeteria teams from Belmont Central, Catawba Heights, Hawks Nest STEAM Academy, Hunter Huss High School, and Rankin Elementary maintained 100% inspection ratings for six consecutive school years and were recognized and honored.

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

Bethany Jennings – Stuart W. Cramer High School

Bethany Jennings was recognized as the 2025 North Carolina High School Choral Teacher of the Year. She was honored by the NC Music Educators Association for excellence in choral instruction and leadership.

Mr. Jeff Ramsey presented a plaque of recognition.

North Carolina Honors Chorus Students

The following middle and high school students were selected for the NC Honors Chorus Festival:

- *Middle School:* Carmelo Raymond (Mount Holly), Worth Helms, Raven Miller, Pyper Whitworth (Cramerton), and multiple students from Belmont Middle School.
- *High School:* Matthew Heilig and Olivia Jenkins (Forestview) and Zachary Hatfield (Stuart W. Cramer).

Mr. Jeff Ramsey presented each student with a certificate of achievement.

National American Education Week Proclamation – Action

Chairman Crisp recognized Mr. Todd Hagans, who reported that November 17th-21st is National American Education Month. Mr. Hagans presented a plaque in recognition of the National American Education Week Proclamation.

Motion

The Motion was made by Mr. A.M. Stephens III, seconded by Mr. Lee Dedmon, that the Board
Approve National American Education Week Proclamation

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

Classroom Moment

Dr. Shannon Hullett presented the Classroom Moment for November. The Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) program prepares high school students for leadership roles while making them aware of their rights, responsibilities, and privileges as American citizens. It provides instruction and rewarding opportunities that will benefit the student, community, and Nation. JROTC teaches young men and women the kind of self-discipline, self-confidence, and leadership skills that can help them successfully meet the challenges of adulthood. This program is conducted at secondary schools throughout the Nation by instructors who are retired Navy, Army, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard officers and enlisted personnel.

Col. Robert Kudelko MSgt. JROTC Instructor from East Gaston listed the benefits of JROTC students.

(View PowerPoint)

Public Expression – Information

Dot Gurthrie

300 South Firestone Street, Suite P

Gastonia, NC 28052

Re: The African American Museum of History and Culture Programs and Activities

Litasha White

1013 Rankin Avenue

Gastonia, NC 28052

Re: The importance of teaching Juneteenth year-round as a literacy opportunity.

Melody Hill

101 Bryant Street

Belmont, NC 28012

Re: Teacher Attendance Letter

Sandy Larson

3603 Furman Circle

Gastonia, NC 28056

Re: Implementation of LifeWise Academy

(Public Expression Continued)
Dionna Graham
305 Zander Woods Court
Mt. Holly, NC 28120
Re: McKenney Vento Data/Academics

Brenda Eskridge
220 Stowe Creek Lane
Mt. Holly, NC 28120
Re: Bus shortages

Terri Ellerbe
212 Augustus Lane
Mt. Holly, NC 28120
Re: College Day

Ann Helms
316 Gaither Road
Belmont, NC 28012
Re: Homeless students in Gaston County

Approval/Correction of Minutes – Action

Motion to adopt minutes of October 20, 2025, as presented was made by Mr. Tod Kinlaw; 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)

Policy Committee Report - Information

Ms. Dot Cherry is chair of the Policy Committee, and the other members are Janna Smith and A.M. Stephens III. Mr. Stephens provided a summary report of topics considered and discussed at the most recent meeting.

Budget Resolution - Action

Mr. Gary Hoskins presented updates on the State, Local, and Federal Budgets, Special Revenue, and Factors that could impact the Budget, as well as Budget Resolutions.

Motion to adopt the Budget Resolution as presented was made by Mr. Lee Dedmon; seconded by Mr. Jeff Ramsey. Motion carried (6-2), with Mr. Tod Kinlaw and Mrs. Robbie Lovelace opposed.

Classified Employee Bonus - Action

Mr. Hoskins presented the information on the annual Classified Employee Bonus to be paid on November 21, 2025.

Motion to adopt the proposed Classified Employee Bonus as presented was made by Ms. Dot Cherry; seconded by Mr. Lee Dedmon. Motion carried (8-0).

Consent Agenda - Action

The Board considered the Consent Agenda:

- A. Recommended Personnel
- B. Budget Amendments & Budget Transfers
- C. Construction/Repair Change Orders--none
- D. Adult Meal Price Increase
- E. Mental Health Services
- F. No Nonsense Nurturing - 1.5-2.0
- G. Proposed Policies
- H. School Improvement Plans (SIP) for All Schools, Including those with State or Federal Designations.
- I. Contracts
 - 1. Gardner Park Elementary School LED Light Conversion
 - 2. FitFields selected as Design Firm for Renovations

Motion to adopt the Consent Agenda as presented was made by Mrs. Janna Smith; seconded by Mr. Lee Dedmon. Motion carried (7-1), with Mrs. Robbie Lovelace opposed.

Superintendent's Comments

Superintendent Houchard addressed the Board and shared several important updates:

Football Playoffs: Three High School teams, Ashbrook, South Point, and Stuart W. Cramer, will advance to round three of the state playoffs.

Science & Engineering Fair: Belmont CityWorks will be the location. The Elementary students will be on December 4th-5th, and Middle and High School students will compete on January 8th-9th.

Attendance: Continued emphasis will be on strong student attendance for the school year.

Holiday Parades: Parade season will begin on November 23 with many school groups participating.

Several schools are holding canned food drives to support the Webb Street School pantry, where students help distribute donations to families in need.

Thanksgiving Break is next week: Wednesday is a student holiday/teacher leave day, and Thursday and Friday are holidays for all employees. Superintendent Houchard wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Closing Remarks

Chairman Crisp thanked everyone for their support of the Board and Gaston County Schools.

The next scheduled meeting will be held on Monday, December 15, 2025.

Adjournment

All business having been conducted, a Motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Dot Cherry, seconded by Mrs. Janna Smith, and the motion carried unanimously. (8-0)

The Board Meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Approved:

Josh Crisp, Chairman
[Corporate Seal]

Morgen A. Houchard, Secretary

Date Approved: _____

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Approved:



Josh Crisp, Chairman
[Corporate Seal]

Morgen A. Houchard, Secretary

Date Approved:

12-15-25