Gaston County Schools
Board of Education
Friday, January 23, 2026
Board Retreat Meeting
MINUTES

The Gaston County Board of Education met in a Retreat Work session on Friday, January 23, 2026, at 9:25 a.m. in The Linda Rader Staff Development Center, Cramerton, NC. Those Board Members in attendance were: Chairman Josh Crisp, Vice Chairman Dot Cherry, Lee Dedmon, Tod Kinlaw, Brent Moore, Jeff Ramsey, Janna Smith, and A.M. Stephens III. Robbie Lovelace was excused.

Additional attendees include: Superintendent Dr. Morgen A. Houchard, Attorney Sonya McGraw, Associate Superintendents Gary Hoskins and Tonya Kales, Assistant Superintendents Bessie Harvey and Rebekka Powers, Chief Communications Officer Todd Hagans, Chief Technology Officer Curtis Poplin, Executive Director of Human Resources Beth Suber, and Board Clerk Cindy Beck.

Welcome

Chairman Crisp called the meeting to order at 9:23 a.m. and welcomed everyone.

State of the Schools Address

Chairman Crisp recognized Superintendent Houchard, who presented a PowerPoint on the State of the Schools.

(View PowerPoint)

Board Responsibilities and Roles

Chairman Crisp recognized Chris Campbell, Attorney with the law firm Campbell Shatley, PLLC, who shared information on Board responsibilities and roles.

Board discussion occurred.

Demographic Study Update

Chairman Crisp recognized Chief of Staff Tom Nencetti and Matthew Cropper, President of Cropper GIS Consulting, LLC, who shared information on Gaston County Schools Demographic Study and Utilization Report.

Board discussion occurred.

(View PowerPoint)

Budget Discussion

Chairman Crisp recognized Associate Superintendent Gary Hoskins, who presented a PowerPoint on the current status of the Budget for 2026-2027 process and challenges.

(View PowerPoint)

Board discussion occurred.

Facilities Report/Plan
Bond and Capital Work - Present/Future
Chairman Crisp recognized Assistant Superintendent Bessie Harvey, who presented a PowerPoint on the importance of Bond Funding and why it matters, Status of Bond Projects–Completed, In-progress, and future plans.

(View PowerPoint Below)

Board discussion occurred.

Student Support Services
Assistant Superintendent Rebekka Powers presented a PowerPoint on School Choice with a discussion on the alignment and the purpose of choice programs, focusing on the current status, and planning our path forward

(View PowerPoint)

Board discussion occurred.

Academic Services
Associate Superintendent, Tonya Kales presented the first semester High School State EOC results.

(View PowerPoint)

Board discussion occurred.

Adjournment
All business having been conducted, a Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Lee Dedmon, seconded by Mr. Brent Moore, and the motion carried unanimously. (8-0)

The Board Meeting adjourned at 3:12 p.m.

Approved:

Josh Crisp, Chairman
[Corporate Seal]

Morgen A. Houchard, Secretary

Date Approved: 2-16-26

Gaston County Schools

Board of Education Retreat

January 23, 2026

Dr. Morgen Houchard, Superintendent

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

Agenda
Board of Education Retreat
Rader Staff Development Center
Cramerton, NC 28032
January 23, 2026
Josh Crisp – Chairman
Dot Cherry – Vice Chairman

Lee Dedmon, Gastonia Township
Tod Kinlaw, South Point Township
Robbie Lovelace, Cherryville Township
Brent Moore, Crowders Mountain Township

Jeff K. Ramsey, At Large
Janna Smith, Gastonia Township
A.M. Stephens, III, Riverbend Township

9:00 a.m.
Board of Education Meeting
(See Agenda)

Board of Education Work Session
(Following the Regular Monthly Meeting)

Welcome
Chairman, Josh Crisp
- *The vision of Gaston County Schools is to inspire success and a lifetime of learning.*

State of the Schools Address
Superintendent, Morgen Houchard
- *Mission Statement – Through outstanding employees and community partners, Gaston County Schools provides innovative educational opportunities for all students in a safe and nurturing learning environment.*

Board Responsibilities and Roles
Chris Campbell, Attorney, Campbell Shatley, PLLC Attorneys at Law
- *GCS Policy Code 2010: The Board recognizes the importance of an effective working relationship between the Board and Superintendent. The Board further recognizes the distinct and separate areas of responsibilities of the Board and Superintendent of the school system. The Superintendent is responsible for the administration of the system of schools consistent with the Board's policies.*

Demographic Study Update
Tom Nencetti, Chief of Staff
- *Mission Statement - Through outstanding employees and community partners, Gaston County Schools provides innovative educational opportunities for all students in a safe and nurturing learning environment.*

Lunch

Budget Discussion
Associate Superintendent, Gary Hoskins
- *Innovation – Every employee uses innovative practices to serve all students, parents and other stakeholders.*

Facilities Report/Plan
Bond and Capital Work - Present/Future
Assistant Superintendent, Bessie Harvey
- *Healthy, Safe, and Responsible Schools - Every student has the opportunity to learn in a safe school environment.*

Student Support Services
Assistant Superintendent, Rebekka Powers
- *Mission Statement - Through outstanding employees and community partners, Gaston County Schools provides innovative educational opportunities for all students in a safe and nurturing l earning environment.*

Academic Services
Associate Superintendent, Tonya Kales
- *College and Career Ready – Every student will graduate prepared for college, the workforce and other life-enhancing opportunities.*

Closing Remarks

Adjournment

Gaston County Schools

Why we are proud

Board of Education Retreat

January 23, 2026

Dr. Morgen Houchard, Superintendent

Why we are proud




THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT

Gaston County Schools

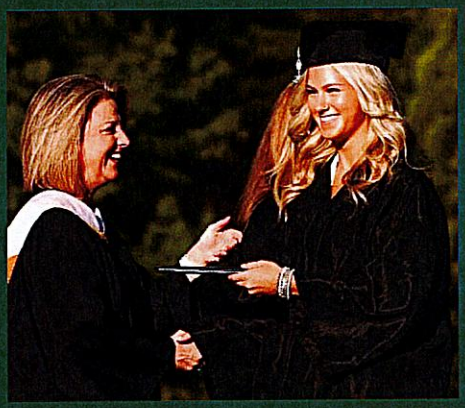
Certificate of Accreditation

Full Accreditation

All schools receive the "quality school" status

Why we are proud



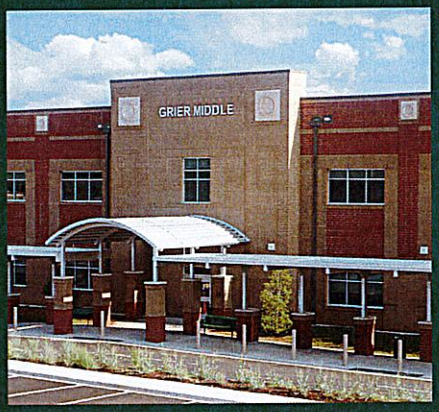


Record-breaking graduation rate

88.8 percent is our highest rate ever

Why we are proud

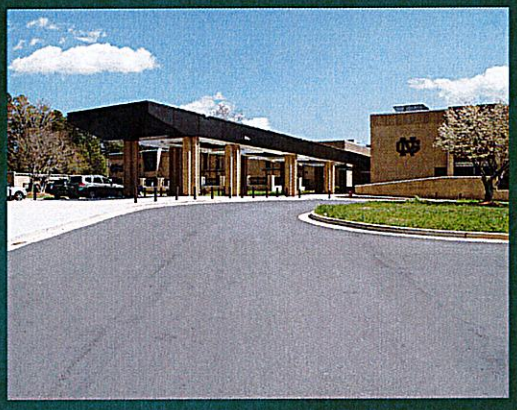


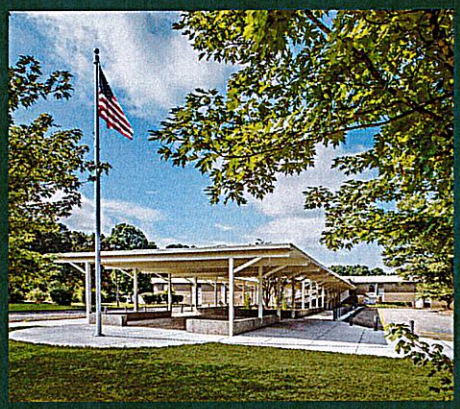


Grand Opening

New building for W.P. Grier Middle School

Why we are proud





Bond/Capital Projects

Renovations and repairs at various schools

Why we are proud

INNOVATION

The process of bringing about new ideas, methods, or solutions that have a significant positive impact and value.

H.H. Beam *Bessemer City* *Central* *Lingerfeldt* *Pleasant Ridge*
Sherwood *Woodhill* *Grier* *Southwest* *Ashbrook* *Hunter Huss*

Innovation Schools

Leading the way for school improvement

Why we are proud

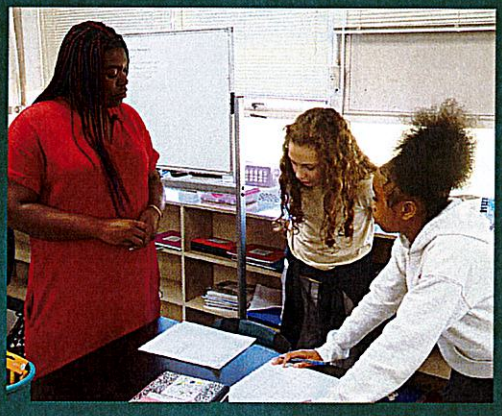


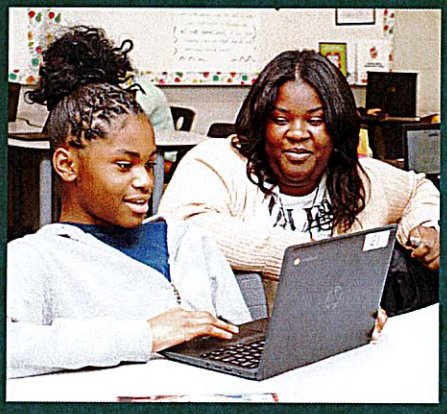


Advanced Teaching Roles

Leaders for enhanced teaching and learning

Why we are proud



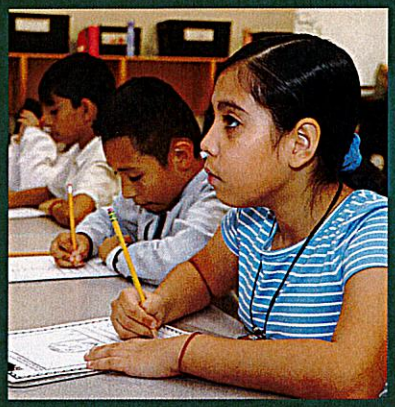


No-nonsense nurturing

A model for effective classroom management

Why we are proud



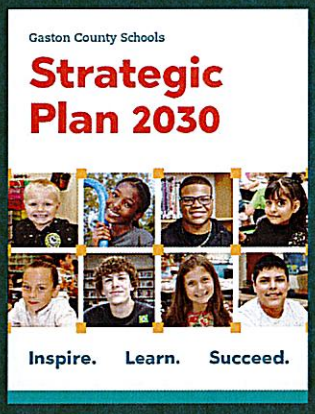


Partnership with ESS

Efficiency for substitute teacher process

Why we are proud





Strategic planning process

Developing our "road map" for next five years

Student Support Services

Students learn best when they feel safe supported, and connected. Increasing access to services improves attendance, supports mental and physical health, strengthens family engagement, reduces barriers to learning, and promotes positive school climate.

Operations

Operations are the backbone of learning. When buses run on time, buildings are safe and clean, technology works properly, students are fed and systems respond quickly, students and staff can focus on teaching and learning.

Academic Services

Every student deserves access to strong engaging instruction, a supportive learning environment, and pathways that lead to success in school, college, careers, and life.

Budget 2025 - 2026 School Year

- The Problem
- What has been done so far
- What is needed now
- Factors for Budget 2026-2027

2025-2026 Budget Information

THE PROBLEM

- The State of North Carolina is currently operating without a full budget
- We have experienced a $7.2 million reduction in "Low Wealth Supplemental Funds" from the state. The reduction is based on a legislated formula that uses the most recent property tax valuation.
- Inflation has a significant compounding effect on our budget. Last year alone, the 3.0% inflation rate had a $2.8 million negative impact on our operating expenses.

2025-2026 Budget Information

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE SO FAR

- Eliminated 14 central office positions and reduced 69 school level positions
- Implemented a temporary hiring freeze (Central Office - September / Districtwide - December)
- Delayed technology purchases (Chromebooks).
- Examined our operating budget to see where any cuts/reductions can be made.

2025-2026 Budget Information

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE SO FAR

- Transitioned employees to federally funded positions.
- Planning to use $900,000 in "indirect cost payments" from School Nutrition.
- Implementing a 10% reduction in local funds for schools and central office.
- Have and continue to have discussions with our state legislators about the lack of a state budget and budget cuts.

2025-2026 Budget Information

WHAT IS NEEDED NOW

- Maintain the system-wide hiring freeze.
- Continue to search for cost saving measures, cuts, and reductions.
- We need funding of $5.2 million to support our operating expenses to maintain our current workforce.
- We need the N.C. General Assembly to address the $7.2 million reduction in "Low Wealth Supplemental Funds"

Factors for Next School Year, 2026-2027

- We are not planning for an increase of "Low Wealth Supplemental Funding."
- A reduction in student enrollment (about 400 fewer students) will have a negative impact on our state funding.
- We need to consider the likelihood of losing state and federal funds when planning for the 2026-2027 fiscal year.
- There is no guarantee that federal funds for Title II, Title III, and Title IV will be made available next fiscal year.







Why we are proud



Board Responsibilities and Roles

Chris Campbell, Attorney
Campbell and Shatley, PLLC Attorneys at Law

Demographic Study Update

Tom Nencetti, Chief of Staff

Gaston County Schools Demographic Study and Utilization Report

January 23, 2026

Presentation Overview

Review of the purpose and results of last year's Demographic Study and Utilization Report

Evaluation of the Cropper GIS Report

NC Department of Public Instruction 5 Year Forecast

Next Steps: Matthew Cropper, President, Cropper GIS

Demographic Study and Utilization Report

- **Demographic study:** a prediction of how many students are expected to enroll in a school district
- **Utilization Report:** measures the number of students enrolled compared to the capacity of each school building

2024 Demographic Report

Received December 21, 2024

Forecast: Most likely scenario over the next ten years

- Fertility rates
- Migration patterns
- Mortality trends
- Home sales
- Mortgage rates
- Proposed future housing developments

Summary of 2024 Demographic Report

- Fertility Rate is just below replacement level: 1.8 vs 2.1
- Most in-migration age group (0-17 and 25-49)
- Primary factor causing district's enrollment increase is new construction and in-migration of younger families
- Elementary enrollment will increase over next ten years
- Magnitude of new construction and mortgage rates will be key factors to enrollment change

Summary of 2024 Demographic Report

- Area of immediate concern is south eastern Gaston County
- Future area of concern is north/central Gaston County.

The forecast for total population growth in the Dallas feeder area: 42.3% - 46.6%

2024 Utilization Report

		2025-25 Elementary School Enrollment and Utilization								
Elementary School	Capacity	KG	1	2	3	4	5	Current Enrollment	Current Utilization	Trend
Bessemer City Primary	502	134	137	135				406	81%	0.5
Bessemer City Central Elem	490				169	113	110	392	80%	-29.5
Brookside Elementary	528	74	97	82	94	86	80	513	97%	0.257142857
Carr Elementary	743	106	101	113	101	144	99	664	89%	2.342857143
Catawba Heights Elementary	411	35	44	44	43	41	31	238	58%	-0.857142857
Chapel Grove Elementary	528	84	55	62	62	41	62	366	69%	-4.342857143
Cherryville Elementary	500	89	98	96	83			366	73%	-2
W B Beam Intermediate School	221					100	91	191	86%	-9
Costner Elementary	489	62	56	78	77	77	64	414	85%	2.057142857
Gardner Park Elementary	665	78	88	100	115	92	71	544	82%	-0.228571429
H H Beam Elementary	723	88	103	110	95	86	99	581	80%	-0.314285714
Lingerfeldt Elementary	547	71	70	83	83	58	73	438	80%	-0.742857143
Lowell Elementary	567	48	52	58	70	58	53	339	60%	1.571428571
McAdenville Elementary	215	42	22	29	32	35	30	190	88%	-0.514285714
New Hope Elementary	528	91	86	100	97	101	95	570	108%	1.771428571
North Belmont Elementary	411	59	55	53	58	59	69	353	86%	1.914285714
J B Page Primary School	339	169	204					373	110%	35
Belmont Central Elementary	619			142	198	181	175	696	112%	8.2
Pinewood Elementary	606	87	71	79	77	95	85	494	82%	1.714285714
Pleasant Ridge Elementary	800	143	131	154	167	157	145	897	112%	2.885714286
Ida Rankin Elementary School	665	80	84	91	95	73	90	513	77%	0.6
Robinson Elementary	535	67	76	50	74	71	55	393	73%	-1.457142857
Edward D Sadler Jr Elementary School	508	59	81	51	63	48	56	358	70%	-2.914285714
Sherwood Elementary	743	99	89	88	92	73	88	529	71%	-2.828571429
Springfield Primary	536	112	115	97				324	60%	-7.5
Kiser Elementary	592				85	120	123	328	55%	19
Tryon Elementary	626	49	57	45	54	49	65	319	51%	1.857142857
W A Bess Elementary School	665	106	112	117	123	116	103	677	102%	0.085714286
Woodhill Elementary	587	97	95	106	94	84	85	561	96%	-3
Total	15,889	2,129	2,179	2,163	2,301	2,158	2,097	13,027	82%	-2.428571429

School Capacity Issues *(2024-2025)*

	Capacity	Enrollment	
Belmont Central	619	696	112%
Page Primary	339	373	110%
New Hope	528	570	108%
W.A Bess	665	677	102%

School Capacity Issues *(2024-2025)*

	Capacity	Enrollment	
Cramerton Middle	884	959	108%
Forestview High	1105	1138	103%
Hunter Huss	1193	1174	97%
Ashbrook	1459	1430	98%

School Capacity Issues *(2024-2025)*

	Capacity	Enrollment	
Woodhill	**587**	**561**	**96%**
Brookside	**528**	**513**	**97%**

2024 Demographic Study and Utilization Report

Data Evaluation

- **Cropper GIS**
- **North Carolina Department of Public Education Report**

Data Evaluation - Cropper GIS

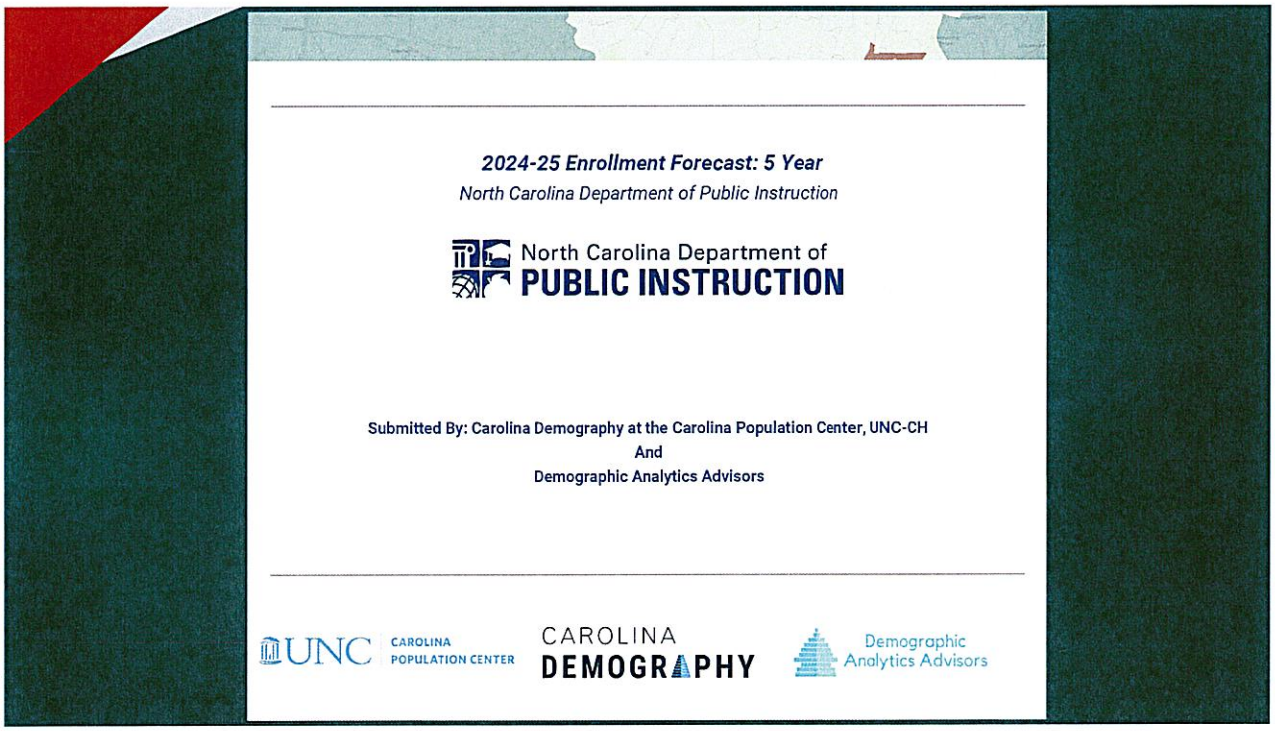
	Building Capacity	2024 Enrollment	2025 Enrollment	Cropper Pojection
Belmont Central	619	696	716	740
Page Primary	339	373	334	341
New Hope	528	570	599	587
W.A. Bess	665	677	699	706

Data Evaluation - Cropper GIS

	Building Capacity	2024 Enrollment	2025 Enrollment	Cropper Pojection
Cramerton Middle	884	959	950	957
Forestview High	1105	1133	1105	1156
Hunter Huss High	1193	1165	1195	1178
Ashbrook High	1459	1386	1439	1385

Data Evaluation - Cropper GIS

	Building Capacity	2024 Enrollment	2025 Enrollment	Cropper Pojection
Woodhill Elementary	587	**561**	**513**	**578**
Brookside Elementary	528	**513**	**470**	**519**
Carr Elementary	743	**665**	**676**	**694**
McAdenville Elementary	215	**190**	**181**	**197**



Data Evaluation
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

2024-25 | 5-Year Enrollment Forecast

complete set of spreadsheets with all forecast data for each year by public school LEA, charter school, private schools by county, and home school students by county, is available as an attachment to this report.

Table 1. Top 10 Fastest-Growing Public Schools in North Carolina by Student Enrollment Increase

Projected Growth 2024-25 to 2029-30

LEA	County	LEA Name	2024-25 Enrollment	2029-30 Enrollment	Projected Growth	Projected Growth Total Percent	Projected Annualized Growth Rate
600	Mecklenburg	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	141,726	151,255	9,529	6.72%	1.31%
920	Wake	Wake County Schools	161,115	168,068	6,953	4.32%	0.85%
510	Johnston	Johnston County Public Schools	37,030	40,757	3,727	10.06%	1.94%
130	Cabarrus	Cabarrus County Schools	35,142	38,644	3,502	9.97%	1.92%
360	Gaston	Gaston County Schools	30,573	33,670	3,097	10.13%	1.95%
010	Alamance	Alamance-Burlington Schools	22,338	24,049	1,711	7.66%	1.49%
550	Lincoln	Lincoln County Schools	11,426	12,795	1,369	11.98%	2.29%
490	Iredell	Iredell-Statesville Schools	20,696	22,016	1,320	6.38%	1.24%
290	Davidson	Davidson County Schools	17,688	18,987	1,299	7.34%	1.43%
900	Union	Union County Public Schools	40,870	42,145	1,275	3.12%	0.62%

Enrollment Forecast

2024-2025: 30,573*

	2029-2030	Projected Growth	Projected Growth Total Percent	Projected Annualized Growth Rate
Cropper GIS	30,958	144	.004%	-
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction	33,670	3097	10.13%	1.95%

*** Source: NCDPI**

Next Steps

Matthew Cropper, President
Cropper GIS

Gaston County Schools
shaping our future

2026 Utilization Study

Board of Education Meeting
January 23, 2026

Presented by: Gaston County Schools and Cropper GIS Consulting



Cropper GIS

Cropper GIS

Welcome and Introductions

Cropper GIS

Who We Are

The Facilitator

Cropper GIS

Cropper GIS Consulting, LLC

- K-12 school planning is our business and our passion. Our specialty is facilitating Redistricting studies.
- Cropper GIS works with K-12 school districts to:
  - Develop Redistricting strategies
  - Facilitate community engagement
  - Perform demographic & utilization studies
  - Prepare long-range facility master plans
  - Conduct housing and pupil yield-factor studies

Matthew Cropper, Cropper GIS

- 25+ years experience providing GIS mapping and analysis services to school districts and other clients
- Facilitated boundary change study projects across the U.S.
- Published numerous times on topics related to K-12 facility and Redistricting processes

The Company

Cropper GIS

Recent Projects:

- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, NC
- York School District 1, SC
- Baltimore County Public Schools, MD
- Wicomico County Public Schools, MD
- Spotsylvania County Public Schools, VA
- Dublin City Schools, OH
- Columbus City Schools, OH
- Huber Heights City Schools, OH
- Akron Public Schools, OH
- MSD Washington Township, IN
- Charleston County Schools, SC

SPOTSYLVANIA COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Project Objectives

Cropper GIS

With the support of the Board of Education, Gaston County Schools is undertaking a utilization study to maximize the use of their facilities and pro-actively plan for long-term enrollment. Gaston County Schools has begun a Utilization Study to meet the following key objectives:

- Maximize utilization of school facilities
- Reduce capital expenditures
- Align utilization of facilities with current and forecasted enrollment, including considering potential consolidation and/or additional construction
- To identify solutions that provide students with opportunities to learn in engaging and supportive environments

Requires Board input for approval

Utilization Study

Cropper GIS

Cropper GIS Consulting was hired by Gaston County Schools to facilitate and manage the project. Our firm is tasked to:

A. ***Develop*** supporting materials to help facilitate the study.

B. ***Facilitate*** an expert-based process of developing a student enrollment plan.

C. ***Empower*** the community throughout the process.

D. ***Leverage*** expertise to develop logical, efficient, and effective student enrollment options with the planning team.

E. ***Deliver*** information & recommendations to determine next steps to the School Board.

Criteria

Cropper GIS

- Balance school facility utilization – Make every effort to have equitable utilization (where possible) across the district and in accordance with school capacities. Make efficient use of available space.
- Consider economic, cultural, and ethnic diversity – Ensure schools are inclusionary and not adversely affected by enrollment decisions.
- Close Proximity – Students should be assigned to the school within the closest proximity to their homes where possible. As well as avoiding creating zones that are not connected to primary attendance zone
- Maximize busing efficiencies in transportation of students – Make every effort to account for transportation (school bus and car rider), parent commuting patterns, balance busing travel time, and costs.
- Allow for highest-grade at current school to legacy enroll -Allow for students who will be in the 5th, 8th, or 12th grades in the first school year of realignment to stay at their current school. This provision does not extend to siblings and transportation will not be provided. These will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- Make every effort to establish contiguous zones – Avoid creating zones that are not connected to the primary attendance zone, where possible.
- Account for future economic growth to Allow for increasing attendance in high growth areas.
- Establish clear feeder patterns and continuity – Make every effort to establish a clear feeder pattern system.
- Use major roads and natural boundaries wherever feasible to define attendance zones – Minimize the number of students who need to cross major intersections and other barriers to maximize the safety and security of students.
- Minimize impact on students -Attempt to minimize the number of students impacted when making boundary adjustments Impact on specialized school programs or a change to school capacity.

Requires Board input for approval

Cropper GIS

Stakeholders

Stakeholders

Cropper GIS

Outline of Stakeholder Responsibilities	
Consultant	• Schedule and facilitate Internal Planning Team meetings. • Communicate updates with planning team, including updated handout and meeting schedule logistics. • Conduct public meetings to solicit feedback related to draft options that are under consideration. • Support the district in providing materials such as presentations, handouts, and online interactive maps for the public's consumption. • Coordinate and summarize online feedback received from general public and internal planning team.
Internal Planning Team	• Consists of key GCS district administrators including central office, senior leadership, department staff personnel, planning, and Gaston community members. • Group will work to review draft options that are being developed in preparation to share with the Board of Education and public. • Review input provided from the consultant and general public regarding draft options and continue to modify maps with a focus on the best solution for all students as a whole. • Share a recommendation plan with the Board of Education.
General Public	• Informed through website. • Invited to submit comments and input throughout the entire process. • Invited to participate in public information sessions and to provide input via surveys and online general feedback form.
Board of Education	• Charge internal planning team with its responsibilities. • Identify questions the IPT is expected to answer. • Advise staff and the process regarding policy-related considerations and other board-level decisions. • Receive information & recommendations to determine next steps.

Cropper GIS

Timeline

Timeline

Cropper GIS

Process & Timeline for Utilization Study

	May '26	June '26	July '26	Aug. '26	Sept. '26	Oct. '26	Nov. '26
Data Collection							
Data Analysis / Assimilation							
Baseline Options Development							
Internal Planning Team Work (1-2 meetings per month)							
Public Information Session #1 : Present Project Process, Criteria, Timeline, and Redistricting Objectives to Community. Web-based meeting.							
Public Information Session #2: Present DRAFT Redistricting Options to General Public for Comment/ Feedback. On-site meeting (or virtual if preferred) to review options and q/ a at end of session.							
Presentation of Final Recommendations to the Board of Education							
Board of Education recieves recommendations & determine next steps							

Cropper GIS

Forecast Evaluation

2025-26 Utilization Forecast vs 2025-26 Actual: Elementary

Gaston County Schools Utilization Forecast

Elementary Schools

School Name	Capacity		Forecasted 2025-26	Actual 2025-26	Difference
Bessemer City Primary	502	Enrollment	399	371	-28
		Utilization	79%	74%	-6%
Bessemer City Central Elem	490	Enrollment	419	435	16
		Utilization	86%	89%	3%
Brookside Elementary	528	Enrollment	519	470	-49
		Utilization	98%	89%	-9%
Carr Elementary	743	Enrollment	694	676	-18
		Utilization	93%	91%	-2%
Catawba Heights Elementary	411	Enrollment	243	254	11
		Utilization	59%	62%	3%
Chapel Grove Elementary	528	Enrollment	353	339	-14
		Utilization	67%	64%	-3%
Cherryville Elementary	500	Enrollment	354	353	-1
		Utilization	71%	71%	0%
W B Beam Intermediate School	221	Enrollment	186	182	-4
		Utilization	84%	82%	-2%
Costner Elementary	489	Enrollment	434	442	8
		Utilization	89%	90%	2%
Gardner Park Elementary	665	Enrollment	558	540	-18
		Utilization	84%	81%	-3%
H H Beam Elementary	723	Enrollment	566	584	18
		Utilization	78%	81%	2%
Lingerfeldt Elementary	547	Enrollment	436	431	-5
		Utilization	80%	79%	-1%
Lowell Elementary	567	Enrollment	335	383	48
		Utilization	59%	68%	8%
McAdenville Elementary	215	Enrollment	197	181	-16
		Utilization	92%	84%	-7%
Elementary Schools Totals:	15,889	Enrollment	13,085	12,860	-225
		Utilization	82%	81%	-1%

2025-26 Utilization Forecast vs 2025-26 Actual: Elementary

Gaston County Schools Utilization Forecast

Elementary Schools

School Name	Capacity		Forecasted 2025-26	Actual 2025-26	Difference
New Hope Elementary	528	Enrollment	587	599	12
		Utilization	111%	113%	2%
North Belmont Elementary	411	Enrollment	345	343	-2
		Utilization	84%	83%	0%
JB Page Primary School	339	Enrollment	341	334	-7
		Utilization	101%	99%	-2%
Belmont Central Elementary	619	Enrollment	740	716	-24
		Utilization	120%	116%	-4%
Pinewood Elementary	606	Enrollment	491	481	-10
		Utilization	81%	79%	-2%
Pleasant Ridge Elementary	800	Enrollment	896	769	-127
		Utilization	112%	96%	-16%
Ida Rankin Elementary School	665	Enrollment	504	508	4
		Utilization	76%	76%	1%
Robinson Elementary	535	Enrollment	400	443	43
		Utilization	75%	83%	8%
Edward D Sadler Jr Elementary	508	Enrollment	351	348	-3
		Utilization	69%	69%	-1%
Sherwood Elementary	743	Enrollment	518	539	21
		Utilization	70%	73%	3%
Springfield Primary	536	Enrollment	330	323	-7
		Utilization	62%	60%	-1%
Kiser Elementary	592	Enrollment	306	324	18
		Utilization	52%	55%	3%
Tryon Elementary	626	Enrollment	299	280	-19
		Utilization	48%	45%	-3%
W A Bess Elementary	665	Enrollment	706	699	-7
		Utilization	106%	105%	-1%
Woodhill Elementary	587	Enrollment	578	513	-65
		Utilization	98%	87%	-11%
Elementary Schools Totals:	15,889	Enrollment	13,085	12,860	-225
		Utilization	82%	81%	-1%

Cropper GIS

2025-26 Utilization Forecast vs 2025-26 Actual: Middle

Gaston County Schools Utilization Forecast

	School Name	Capacity		Forecasted 2025-26	Actual 2025-26	Difference
Middle Schools	Belmont Middle	1,000	Enrollment	741	735	-6
			Utilization	74%	74%	-1%
	Bessemer City Middle	751	Enrollment	470	469	-1
			Utilization	63%	62%	0%
	Cramerton Middle	884	Enrollment	957	950	-7
			Utilization	108%	107%	-1%
	W P Grier Middle	1,000	Enrollment	664	709	45
			Utilization	66%	71%	5%
	Holbrook Middle	774	Enrollment	667	586	-81
			Utilization	86%	76%	-10%
	John Chevis Middle	619	Enrollment	403	392	-11
			Utilization	65%	63%	-2%
	Mount Holly Middle	796	Enrollment	575	580	5
			Utilization	72%	73%	1%
	Southwest Middle	906	Enrollment	816	715	-101
			Utilization	90%	79%	-11%
	Stanley Middle	800	Enrollment	629	628	-1
			Utilization	79%	79%	0%
	W C Friday Middle	729	Enrollment	606	577	-29
			Utilization	83%	79%	-4%
	York Chester Middle	530	Enrollment	408	354	-54
			Utilization	77%	67%	-10%
	Middle School Totals:	8,789	Enrollment	6,936	6,695	-241
			Utilization	79%	76%	-3%

Cropper GIS

2025-26 Utilization Forecast vs 2025-26 Actual: High

Gaston County Schools Utilization Forecast

	School Name	Capacity		Forecasted 2025-26	Actual 2025-26	Difference
High Schools	Ashbrook High	1,459	Enrollment	1,385	1,439	54
			Utilization	95%	99%	4%
	Bessemer City High	685	Enrollment	591	578	-13
			Utilization	86%	84%	-2%
	Cherryville High	707	Enrollment	495	479	-16
			Utilization	70%	68%	-2%
	East Gaston High	1,238	Enrollment	869	895	26
			Utilization	70%	72%	2%
	Forestview High	1,105	Enrollment	1,156	1,105	-51
			Utilization	105%	100%	-5%
	Hunter Huss High	1,193	Enrollment	1,178	1,195	17
			Utilization	99%	100%	1%
	North Gaston High	1,127	Enrollment	1,067	1,035	-32
			Utilization	95%	92%	-3%
	South Point High	1,061	Enrollment	1,023	996	-27
			Utilization	96%	94%	-3%
	Stuart W Cramer High	1,326	Enrollment	963	949	-14
			Utilization	73%	72%	-1%
	High School Totals:	9,901	Enrollment	8,727	8,671	-56
			Utilization	88%	88%	-1%
	District Totals:	34,579	Enrollment	28,748	28,226	-522
			Utilization	83%	82%	-2%

Next Steps

Cropper GIS

By April 2026

- Confirm Project Objectives and Criteria
  - Consider Consolidation if viable?
  - Any Comments, Thoughts, Changes, to the Criteria?

Thank You!








Cropper GIS

Lunch

Gaston County Schools

Board of Education Retreat

January 23, 2026

Budget Discussion

Gary Hoskins, Associate Superintendent

Gaston County Schools 2026-2027 Budget



Budget Discussion

- Budget Process
- Budget Challenges
- Local Funding
- Capital Maintenance
- Discussion



Five Focus Areas

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

Budget Calendar

- January 23 – Board of Education (BOE) Retreat
- January to March – Gather information from Directors and Department Supervisors
- February 23 - Present Superintendent's Budget Request to BOE
- March 11 – BOE to Discuss Superintendent's Budget Request



Budget Calendar

- March 16 – Approve BOE Budget Request
- March/April – Budget Work Session between BOE and County Commissioners
- March/April – Deliver BOE Budget to County Commissioners
- June – BOE approves balanced interim budget
- After June – BOE approves final budget resolution after State Budget is approved

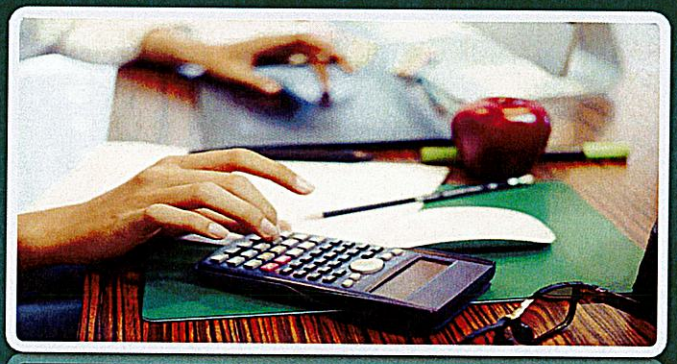
Budget Process

Some of the questions that need to be asked

- What new initiatives and/or expansions should be funded
- Which existing programs should be modified and/or eliminated
- How do we best realize cost savings
- How do we prioritize facility needs



Budget Challenges



Budget Challenges

State Budget Challenges

- No Comprehensive State Budget for 2025-2027
- Uncertainty of Low Wealth Funding ($7.2 million decrease this year)
- Impact of a 447 Decrease in ADM to 30,169 ($4.4 million decrease this year)

Budget Challenges

Local Budget Challenges

- Funding for Increases in Salaries and Benefits
- Funding Level Consistent with Peer Group
- Provide a competitive Local Salary Supplement for our Teachers
- Impact of Inflation

Budget Challenges

Local Budget Challenges

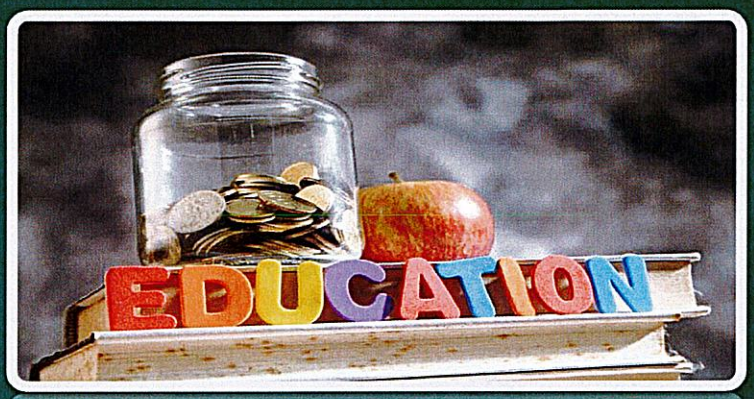
- Impact of Inflation
  - Recent local operating funding increases were earmarked solely for teacher supplements
  - Annual average CPI/Cumulative average CPI:
    - 2020 1.2% 1.2%
    - 2021 4.7% 5.9%
    - 2022 8.0% 13.9%
    - 2023 4.1% 18.0%
    - 2024 3.0% 21.0%

Budget Challenges

Federal Budget Challenges

- Title II - Improving Teacher Quality - $1.3M - Nine Academic Services Positions, PD and Supplies
- Title III - Language Instruction - $375K - Six ASPIRE program positions, supplies, contracted services
- Title IV - Student Support - $939K - Six Academic Services Positions and Supplies

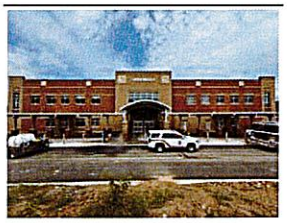
Local Funding



Local Bond Funding

$250 Million School Bond Authorization

- New Schools:
  - Pleasant Ridge ES
  - Stanley MS
  - Belmont MS
  - Grier MS



- Currently Funding Capital Projects from the $110M Bond Offering

Local Operating Funding

Description	Amount
Local Operating Funds	$ 54,001,704
Charter Schools	(6,800,000)
Teacher Supplements	(9,000,000)
Net Local Operating Funds	38,201,704
Capital Outlay	4,000,000
SRO Salaries/Benefits	2,302,623
Commissioners' School	65,000
TOTAL GCS LOCAL FUNDING (1)	$ 53,569,327

(1) Does not include any bond funds or bond interest payments

Local Operating Expenses

What is included in local operating expenses?

- Teacher/Instructional employee supplements
- Utilities and Insurance
- Central Services and Support
- Instructional supplies
- Technology - hardware, software, wireless, etc.
- Facilities salaries/benefits/contracted services
- Charter school payments

Local Teacher Supplements

- The current budgeted expense for local teacher supplements is about $9.0 million
- This averages $4,082 per teacher which is below the state average of **$7,028.**
- GCS is below all similar sized school districts
- GCS is below almost all neighboring school districts

Capital Maintenance



Capital Maintenance Request

- Last year the BOE proposed a 3-year Capital Maintenance funding schedule as follows:
  - 25-26 - $2.2 million ($0.43/sq. foot)
  - 26-27 - $4.5 million ($0.88/sq. foot)
  - 27-28 - $6.9 million ($1.35/ sq. foot)
- In 25-26 we received $2.0 million for capital maintenance, or about $0.39 per square foot and $2.0 million for student electronic devices.

Capital Maintenance

These funds are used to maintain, upgrade or repair capital assets such as the following:

- Roofing
- HVAC
- Vehicles
- Plumbing
- Site improvements
- Electrical systems
- Technology
- Furniture
- Life safety equipment
- Other capital assets

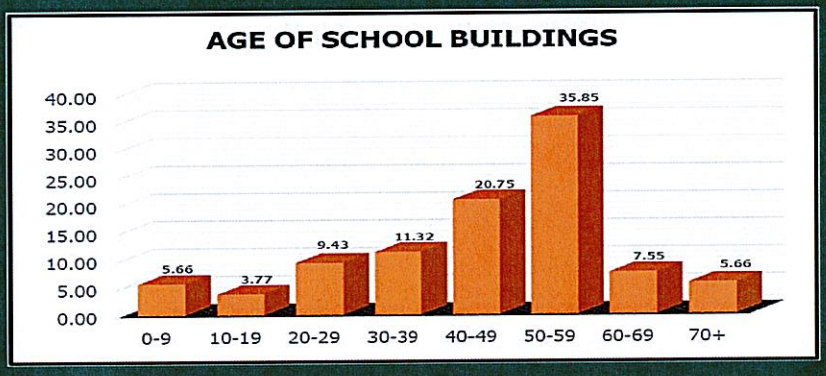
Capital Maintenance

Capital maintenance costs are affected by:

- Age and usage of the capital assets
- Quality and experience of custodial staff
- Timely inspections/monitoring of major systems
- Deferred maintenance backlog

Age of Buildings

Wtd Avg Age (Years)	Number of Schools
0-9	3
10-19	2
20-29	5
30-39	4
40-49	8
50-59	22
60-69	5
70+	4
Total	53



74% of our school buildings have a weighted average age of 40 years or older

Discussion

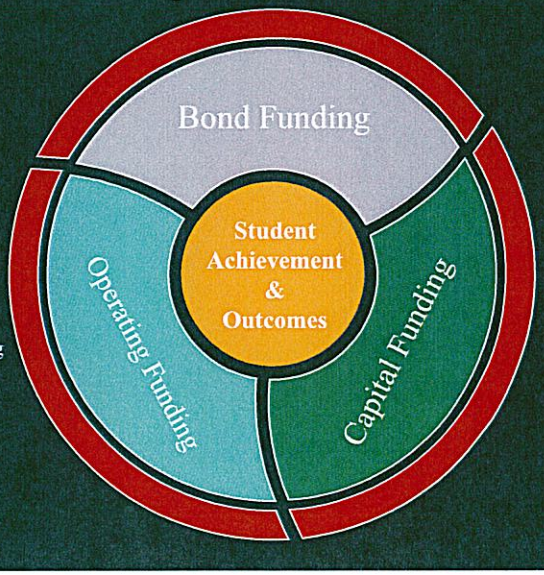
Bond and Capital Work Present/Future

Bessie Harvey, Assistant Superintendent

Presentation Overview

- Overview for the importance of Bond Funding and why it matters
- Status of Bond Projects
  Completed, In-progress, and Future
- Budget Strategies
- Future Plans

Bond Funds
Fills in the GAPS of funding to complete large scale projects, equipment replacement and upgrades to reduce backlog and increase district sustainability

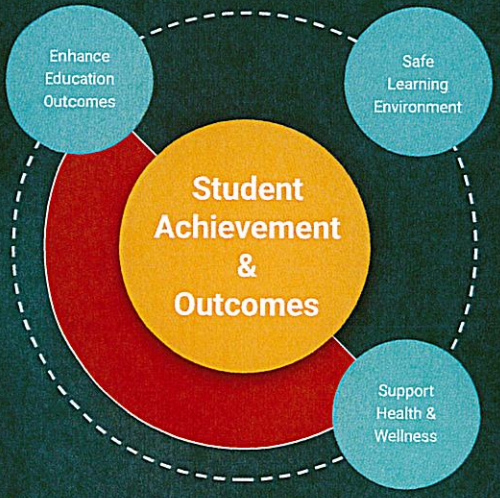


Operating Funds
Support the district by maintaining the day to day operations.

Capital Funds
major and minor construction projects outside of the routine maintenance work orders.

Why it Matters?

Why it Matters…



Maintain efficient and responsive operational systems & technology that provide a safe, healthy, and supportive learning environment for all students and staff.

Bond Projects

Bond Projects Completed

- **Freezer/Cooler Replacements**
  - Catawba Heights ES
  - Sherwood ES
  - Mt. Holly MS
  - W.C. Friday MS
  - Hunter Huss HS
- **HVAC Equipment Replacement and Upfit**
  - Bessemer City MS chiller replacement
  - W.A. Bess chiller replacement
  - Hunter Huss HS cooling tower replacement
  - Minor replacements

Bond Projects Completed

- **Lighting Upgrades**
  - Belmont Central Elementary School
  - Catawba Height Elementary School
  - McAdenville Elementary School
  - New Hope Elementary School
  - Robinson Elementary School
- **Grier Middle School (Phase 1)**
- **Miscellaneous Projects:**
  - ADA site work
  - Fencing
  - Minor building upfits
  - Various sewer, water, and drainage repairs.
- **School Nutrition Facility Generator**

Bond Projects In-Progress

Emergency Radio Project

COMPLETED SITES	SITES IN-PROGRESS	FUTURE SITES
New Hope Elementary School	Brookside Elementary School	Ashbrook High School
Forestview High School	Lowell ELementary School	Belmont Middle School
Sadler Elementary School	HH Beam Elementary School	South Point High School
WA Bess Elementary School	Page Primary	North Gaston High School
Cramerton Middle School	W.C. Friday Middle School	Stanley Middle School
Gardner Park ELementary School	Belmont Central Elementary	Pleasant Ridge Elementary School
Hawks Nest STEAM Academy	Stuart Cramer High School	Catawba Heights Elementary School
N. Belmont Elementary School	Southwest Middle School	Mt. Holly Middle School
Warlick Academy	East Gaston High School	Ida Rankin Elementary School
		Pinewood Elementary School

Bond Projects In-Progress

- **HVAC Equipment Replacement and Upfit**
- **Camera System Upgrades**
  Catawba Heights Elementary, Cherryville Elementary School, John Chavis Middle School, Page Elementary School, Southwest Middle School
- **Security Vestibule Upgrades**
  Bessemer City Primary, Cherryville Elementary School, Sherwood Elementary School, Ashbrook High School, East Gaston High School
- **Lighting Upgrades**
  Cherryville Elementary School, Costner Elementary School, Gardner Park Elementary School, Lingerfeldt Elementary School, Rankin Elementary School
- **Webb Street Sewer Line Project:** Project will address the sewer line needs at one of our most high-needs schools.

Bond Projects In-Progress

Belmont Central Expansion: 10 classrooms/cafetorium addition



- ❑ Architect selected
- ❑ Request for Qualifications (RFQ) issued for General Contractor (GC)
- ❑ Received nine GC submissions
- ❑ Submission reviews conducted
- ❑ Final GC interviews scheduled for Feb. 10th
- ❑ Cross-functional Design Committee invitations to be issued following final GC selection on February 16

Construction Management At Risk (CMAR)

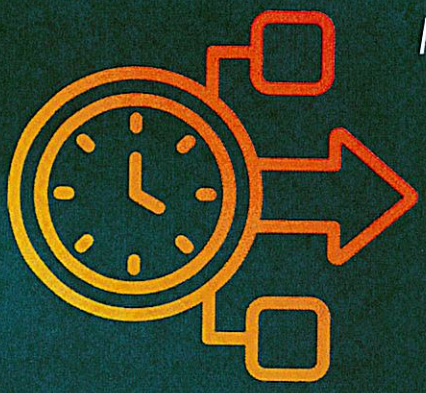
Future Bond Projects

- **Cameras/Security Vestibule Upgrades:** Continue to upgrade our security vestibules and cameras, increasing safety and security for our students and staff.
- **HVAC Equipment Replacement and Upfit**: Continue replacing aging HVAC equipment that has exceeded its useful life.
- **Lighting Upgrades**: Continuing our phase work on lighting upgrades, with a focus on elementary schools, as many high schools and middle schools have been completed.
- **Miscellaneous Projects:** ADA site work, minor construction projects and sewer, water, and drainage repairs.

Budget Strategies

- ❑ Strengthen Procurement Practices
- ❑ Define and Refine Scope of Work
- ❑ Adjust Competitive Bidding Thresholds
- ❑ Enhance Vendor Accountability
- ❑ Reinvest Savings to Maximize Bond Impact

Plan Ahead…



Make data driven decisions:

- ❑ Renovations
- ❑ Replacement
- ❑ New School Construction
- ❑ Building Capacity
- ❑ Future Bond Referendum

Evaluate the feasibility of a district-wide facilities condition assessment (FCA) to support long-term strategic planning and capital prioritization.

Discussion

Student Support Services

Rebekka Powers, Assistant Superintendent

GCS Choice Programs

January 23, 2026

Purposeful, Focused, and Forward-Looking

Today we will:

- Align on the purpose of choice programs.
- Focus on the current status.
- Begin to plan our path forward.

Excellence. Integrity. Community. Innovation.

Student Support Services: Strategic Plan Goals

Goals	By 2030, Gaston County Schools will:
S1	Increase daily average attendance to 95% or higher.
S2	Increase to 100% of schools meeting Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) implementation thresholds.
S3	Expand access to student support services.

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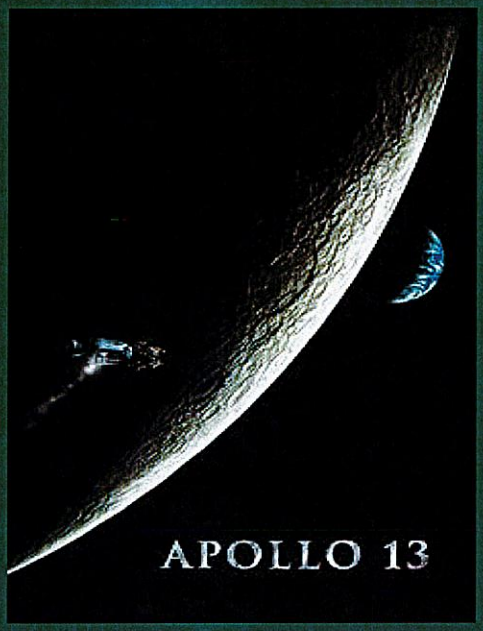
The Purpose of School Choice

- Increases student engagement and belonging.
- Aligns learning environments to student needs.
- Strengthens family trust and confidence.
- Provides differentiated pathways within a comprehensive system.

Context

- Choice programs are funded primarily through local dollars.
- Available instructional space across the district is increasingly constrained.
- Several choice programs show low or declining enrollment.
- Current demand does not always align with current locations.





Questions That Help Programs Thrive

- Where are programs showing strong and growing interest?
- How can space be used to best support student learning?
- Which programs might benefit from redesign or relocation?
- Where do we see opportunities to innovate based on emerging needs?

2025-2026 GCS CHOICE DATA SUMMARY

2024-2025 Lottery for 2025-2026 SY				
School	Total Applications	Denied - Did not Qualify	Parent Accepted Seat	Number that appear to live in district already
Ashbrook High	96	30	21	14
Costner Elementary	107	31	15	
Cramerton Middle	98	52		
East Gaston High	117	6	53	28
Forestview High	92	16	20	15
Gaston Virtual Academy	334	39	76	
Grier Middle	56	4	18	7
Hunter Huss High	30		5	2
North Gaston High	43	8	10	4
Pinewood Elementary	126	25	14	1
Pleasant Ridge Elementary	181	90	23	4
Stanley Middle	66	7	41	1
W.C. Friday Middle	26	2	11	3

2026-2027 INITIAL APPLICATION TOTALS (thru 1/20)

School	As of 1/20/2026 at 11:30am
Costner Elem	32
Hawks Nest	274
Pinewood Elem	35
Pleasant Ridge Elem	61
Cramerton Middle	38
WC Friday Middle	6
Grier Middle	25
Stanley Middle	18
Ashbrook	13
East Gaston	23
Forestview	20
Gaston Early College	48
Gaston Early College Medical Sc	37
Highland	177
Hunter Huss	9
North Gaston	6
Gaston Virtual Academy	79
Total	**901**

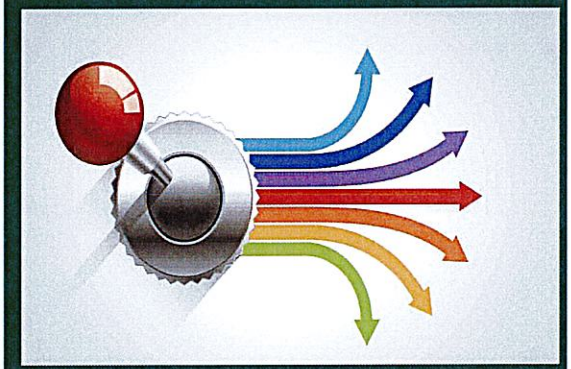
So we must ask…

?

- Are programs fully utilized relative to available seats?
- Are we using limited space where it has the greatest student impact?
- Do we have the right programs at the right location?
- Are student needs reflected in our current offerings?

Strategic Pathways Forward

- Invest more deeply in high-interest, high-impact programs
- Relocate programs to settings that better support growth
- Refresh or redesign programs to meet changing needs
- Celebrate and conclude programs that have fulfilled their purpose
- Explore new choice options aligned to future demand



Purposeful, Focused, and Forward-Looking

Today we will:

- Align on the purpose of choice programs.
- Focus on the current status.
- Begin to plan our path forward.

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Thank you

Academic Services

Tonya Kales, Associate Superintendent

Leading, Teaching and Learning In ACTION

Board Retreat
January 23, 2026

Today's Focus:
High School
First Semester **State** EOC Results

Teaching and Learning In ACTION First Semester

August 2025	Academic Services SMART Goals	Curriculum and Instruction Committee Meeting
September 2025	2024-2025 State Accountability Results	Curriculum and Instruction Committee Meeting and September Board Meeting
October 2025	2025-2026 Academic Services Path Forward	Curriculum and Instruction Committee Meeting and October Board Meeting
December 2025	High School End of Course (EOC) Accountability Exams	January 2026 Board Retreat

Teaching and Learning In ACTION First Semester

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Academic Services: Strategic Plan Goals

Presented August 2025 Curriculum and Instruction Committee Meeting

Goals	By 2030, Gaston County Schools will:
A1	Increase Grade Level Proficiency (GLP) from 48.4 to 60%
A2	Increase the percentage of schools meeting or exceeding growth from 71% to 75%
A3	Reduce the number of low performing schools from 15 to 5 or less
A4	Increase the NCDPI 4 year cohort graduation rate from 88.8% to 91%
A5	Increase the percentage of students meeting the EL progress indicator from 33% to 48%
A6	Increase ACT/Workkeys composite percentile from 47% to 62%

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North Carolina Accountability Model

Elementary/Middle School	High School
End-of-Grade (EOG) Test Proficiency • Reading Grades 3-8 • Math Grades 3-8 • Science Grades 5 and 8 **End-of-Course (EOC) Test Proficiency** • Math I **English Learner (EL) Progress** **EVAAS Academic Growth**	**End-of-Course (EOC) Test Proficiency** • English II • NC Math 1 • NC Math 3 • Biology **English Learner (EL) Progress** **ACT/WorkKeys (combined)** **Math Course Rigor** **Cohort Graduation Rate** **EVAAS Academic Growth**

Formative vs. Summative Assessments

FORMATIVE	SUMMATIVE
Assessment **FOR** Learning • **Purpose:** To monitor student learning and provide *ongoing* feedback to improve teaching and learning. • **Example:** Interim Assessments	Assessment **OF** Learning • **Purpose:** To evaluate student learning at the *end* of an instructional period, comparing against a standard. • **Example:** State EOG and EOC Tests



"When the cook tastes the soup, that's formative assessment. When the customer tastes the soup, that's summative assessment."

Summary of First Semester EOC Proficiency Results

as of Tuesday, 1/20/26

*All results are unofficial, and no business rules have been applied to this year's results.

Subject	24-25 Fall Proficiency (WITHOUT RETESTING)	25-26 Fall Proficiency (WITH RETESTING)	Difference 24-25 to 25-26
Biology	42.9	51.2	8.3
Eng 2	46.9	53.8	6.9
Math 1	43.9	54.3	10.4
Math 3	57.1	56.1	-1.0

HS Data After Action Review

Math 1 EOC Data (Fall)

School	24–25 Fall Proficiency (Without Retesting)	25–26 Fall Proficiency (With Retesting)	Difference 24–25 to 25–26
GCS Total	43.9	54.3	10.4
	47.4	60.0	12.6
	65.6	58.3	-7.3
	19.3	41.8	22.5
	100.0	100.0	0.0
	64.4	86.7	22.3
	39.2	41.5	2.3
	47.3	75.0	27.7
	22.3	34.4	12.1
	2.6	20.3	17.7
	49.1	60.8	11.7

Biology EOC Data (Fall)

School	24–25 Fall Proficiency (Without Retesting)	25–26 Fall Proficiency (With Retesting)	Difference 24–25 to 25–26
GCS Total	42.9	51.2	8.3
	49.0	62.0	13.0
	52.3	49.0	-3.3
	28.8	51.6	22.8
	98.0	100.0	2.0
	28.6	50.0	21.4
	32.7	38.2	5.5
	33.6	55.6	22.0
	54.3	66.4	12.1
	15.8	33.3	17.5
	19.4	28.8	9.4

Guiding Questions



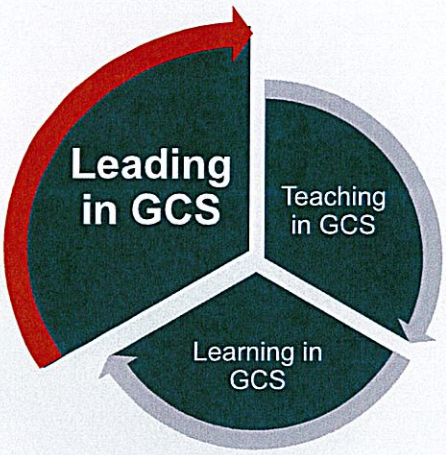
1. What do you notice in the data?
2. What wonderings do you have?

Leading, Teaching and Learning in ACTION

Second Semester

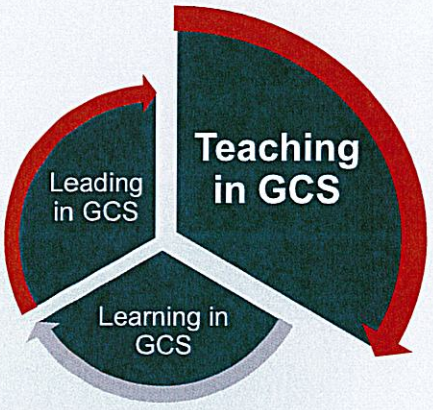


As you watch the video clip, what leadership lessons can we learn from Rocky's final fight?



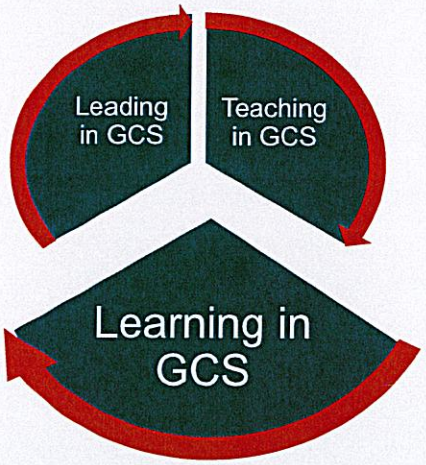
FIRST SEMESTER: Continued Strategies	• **78** Monthly High School Visits with classroom walkthroughs • **5** Instructional Principal and **3** AP meetings

Excellence. Integrity. Community. Innovation.



FIRST SEMESTER: Continued Strategies	• **19** HS PD Offerings for First Semester • **167** HS New Teacher Coaching Sessions • Development and Revision of HS Curriculum Documents

Excellence. Integrity. Community. Innovation.



FIRST SEMESTER: Continued Strategies	• **13** HS interim assessments taken focused on the EOC's • **5** Data Driven Instruction (DDI) Days provided • **107** HS teachers attended the DDI days

Excellence. Integrity. Community. Innovation.

Coming Soon

Elementary and Middle School Local Interim Results

Final Thoughts

Closing Remarks

Board of Education Retreat

Friday, January 23, 2026

Adjournment