

Gaston County Schools
Curriculum & Instruction Committee Meeting
Monday, December 1, 2025

MINUTES

The Curriculum and Instruction Committee met on Monday, December 1, 2025, at 11:30 a.m. in the Central Office Board Room, 943 Osceola Street, Gastonia, NC. Those members in attendance were: Chairman Jeff Ramsey, Robbie Lovelace, Janna Smith, and A.M. Stephens III, who joined by conference call.

Additional attendees included: BOE Chairman Josh Crisp, Vice Chairman Dot Cherry, Superintendent Dr. Morgen A. Houchard, Attorney Sonya McGraw, Associate Superintendent Tonya Kales, Assistant Superintendent Rebekka Powers, Executive Director of Human Resources, Executive Directors Bryan Denton, Kevin Doran, Anarah Henderson, and Tyler West, Chief Technology Officer Kelly Cunningham, Chief of Staff Tom Nencetti, and Board Clerk Cindy Beck.

Call to Order

Mr. Jeff Ramsey called the meeting to order at 11:40 a.m.

Approval/Correction of Minutes

Motion to adopt minutes of November 3, 2025, as presented was made by Mrs. Robbie Lovelace, seconded by Mrs. Janna Smith, motion carried unanimously. (4-0)

Right Reader Grant - Information

Ms. Tonya Kales advised the Committee Members that First Presbyterian Church of Gastonia provided a Reading Grant for Sherwood Elementary. Through this grant, third-grade students will receive a curated selection of books from Right Reader tailored to each student's interests and reading level.

EC Contracts - Action

Mr. Chris Mills recommended to the Committee members that, as needs for exceptional children continue to grow and the level of support required by our students is expected to rise throughout the year, the Department for Exceptional Children is requesting approval of an adjustment for the 2025–2026 school year, increasing the allowable expenditure amount from \$7 million to \$10 million for Contract Services Increase as allowed within the current budget.

Motion

The Motion was made by Mr. A.M. Stephens III and seconded by Mrs. Janna Smith that the Board:

Approve the Agency Contract Services Increase to be placed on the Consent Agenda for the December 15, 2025, Board Meeting.

A vote was taken, and a motion to approve the increase as presented carried unanimously.

(4-0)

(View Presentation)

2026-2027 Academic Calendar

Three draft versions of the 2026-2027 Academic Calendar were presented to the Committee for review in consideration of current North Carolina state law. The draft calendars will be made available on the Gaston County Schools website for public comments and feedback. The calendars and submitted feedback will be presented at the Board approval at the meeting on December 15, 2025.

(View Presentation)

New Teacher Support

Dr. Shannon Hullett, along with Mr. David Grimes and Ms. Samantha Reichard, presented information on the Teacher Support Facilitators who provide targeted coaching and guidance to first-year teachers to build instructional effectiveness, classroom management skills, and professional growth.

(View Presentation)

SHAC (Student Health Advisory Council) Updates - Information

Mrs. Sandie Rudisill shared in accordance with Policy 3530 Student Wellness, SHAC meets three times per year to oversee and recommend student and staff wellness initiatives. The Health initiatives which align with the new NCDPI Healthful Living Standards are taught throughout the school year in Health class.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Update – Information

Dr. Rusty Parker shared an update on Career and Technical Education, including school-level expectations, career development continuum, and program offerings.

(view presentation)

Student Support Services: Choice Programs - Information

A discussion concerning Choice Programs and corresponding historical lottery results was facilitated by Dr. Rebbekah Powers. More information will be presented at the Board Retreat in January.

(view presentation)

K-3 Class Size Waivers - Action

Mrs. Tyler West recommended to the Committee members that the following Class Size Waiver be put in place:

Kindergarten: 21
First Grade: 19
Second and Third Grade: 20

Motion

The Motion was made by Mrs. Janna Smith and seconded by Mr. A.M. Stephens III that the Board approve the Class Size Waiver to be placed on the Consent Agenda for the December 15, 2025, Board Meeting.

A vote was taken, and a motion to approve the increase as presented carried unanimously.
(3-0)

Legal/Policy Updates - Information

Ms. Dot Cherry gave the following update on the Policy Committee, which met on November 25, 2025.

Policy 3610, *Extracurricular Activities and Student Organizations*, was revised to align with North Carolina law.

Policy 7100, *Recruitment and Selection of Personnel*, underwent a review of its nepotism language and was deemed current.

Policy 4318, *Use of Wireless Communication Devices*, was discussed, and a draft policy will be included on the Consent Agenda for the December 15, 2025, Board Meeting.

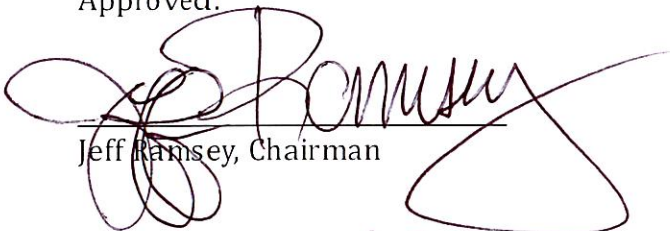
(View Presentation)

Adjournment

All business being conducted, the meeting was adjourned. Motion to adjourn was made by Mrs. Janna Smith and seconded by Mr. A.M. Stephens III. The Motion carried unanimously.
(4-0)

The Operations Committee Meeting adjourned at 1:42 p.m.

Approved:

A large, stylized handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jeff Ramsey", is written over a horizontal line.

Jeff Ramsey, Chairman

Date Approved: 3-2-26

Curriculum and Instruction Board Committee Meeting

December 1, 2025

How Take-Everywhere Literacy Packs™ Work

See our Take-Everywhere Literacy Packs™ in action in this 2-minute video!



Just Right Reader

<https://pages.justrighthereader.com/winter-break-reading-program-2025>

Excellence. Integrity. Community. Innovation

November 2025

Curriculum and Instruction Committee Minutes

Gaston County Schools
Curriculum & Instruction Committee Meeting
Monday, November 3, 2025

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Additional attendees included: BOE Chairman Josh Crisp, Vice Chairman Dot Cherry, Superintendent Dr. Morgan A. Houchard, Attorney Sonya McGraw, Associate Superintendent Tonya Kales, Assistant Superintendents Rebekka Powers and Bessie Harvey, Executive Directors Bryan Denton, Kevin Doran, Anarah Henderson, and Tyler West, Chief Technology Officer Kelly Cunningham, Chief of Staff Tom Nencetti, and Board Clerk Cindy Beck.

Approval/Correction of Minutes

Motion to adopt minutes of October 6, 2025, as presented was made by Mrs. Janna Smith, seconded by Mrs. Robbie Lovelace, motion carried unanimously. (4-0)

Health Plan Update

Mr. Hoskins presented the following updates in the State Health Plan:

- 2026 Open Enrollment: October 13 - October 31.
- Health Insurance Provider: Aetna remains the provider.
- Effective Date: January 2026.
- Deductions Begin: December 2025.
- Premiums: Now based on employee salary, including teacher supplements.
- Updates: Revised salary file sent in October due to inclusion of supplements, leading to increased premiums for some employees.

Human Resources Update

The Executive Director of Human Resources presented the November Human Resources Report:

- ESS Update-Substitute FTE Rate: 88%
- Teacher Vacancy Update District Wide: 43
- Upcoming Recruiting Event-11/5 Employ a Veteran Job Fair, Shelby, NC
- Classroom Central and the Carolina Panthers donated over 7,000 backpacks with school supplies for Gaston County Schools' students.

Teaching and Learning in Action

Ms. Kales and the Academic Services' Data Integration Specialists presented the Deep Dive on Teaching and Learning in Action as aligned to the Strategic Plan Goals:

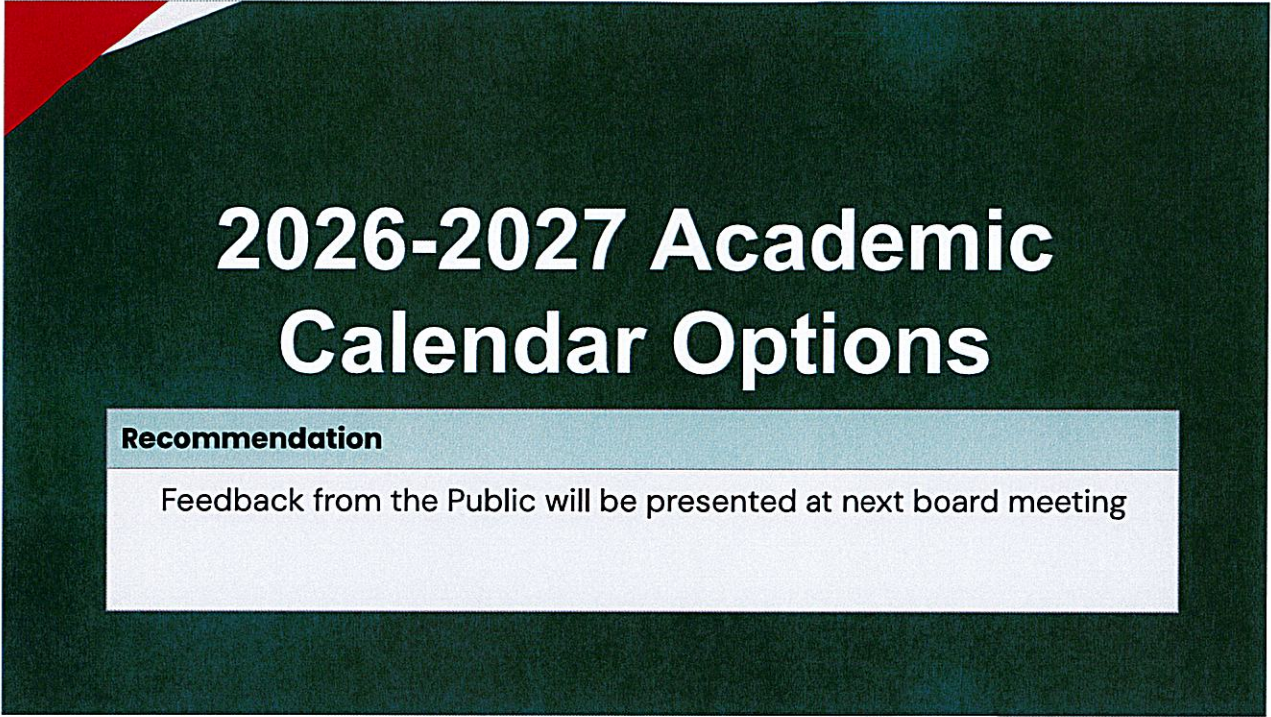
Recommendation

Approval of November Curriculum and Instruction
Committee Minutes

Academic Services: Strategic Plan Goals

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%

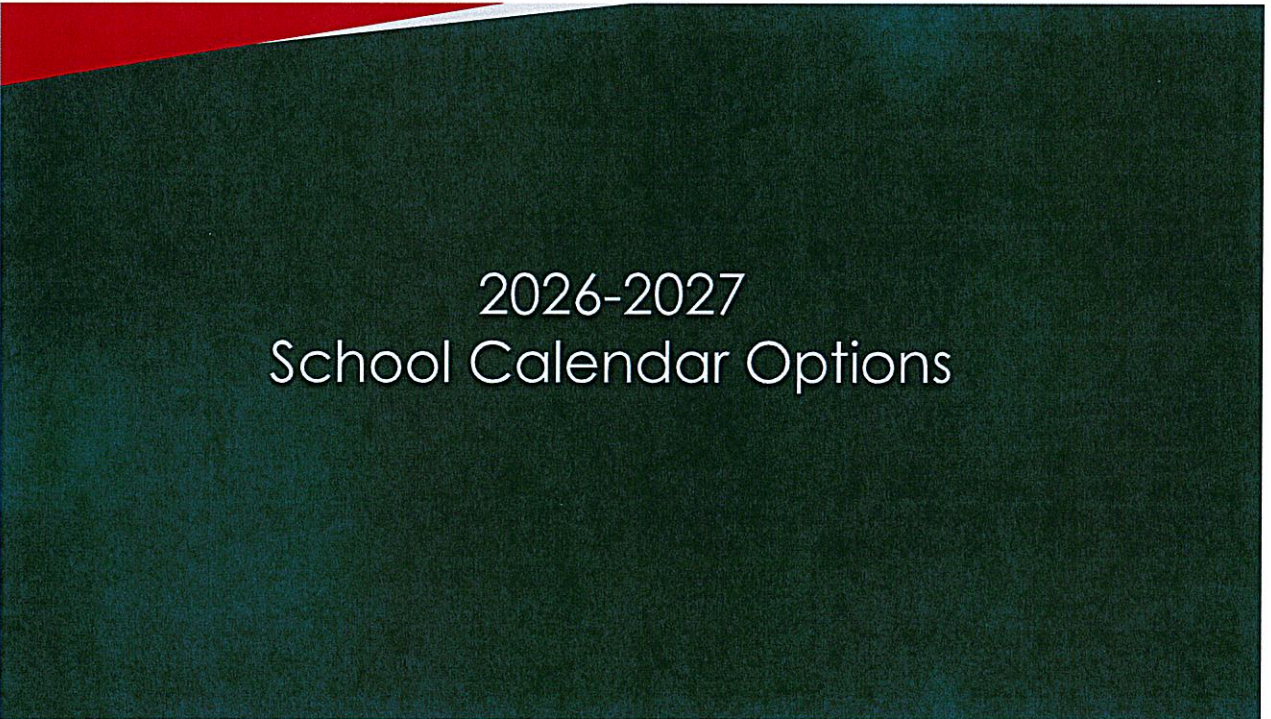
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2026-2027 Academic Calendar Options

Recommendation

Feedback from the Public will be presented at next board meeting



2026-2027
School Calendar Options

- ❑ Current North Carolina School Calendar Law
- ❑ Potential North Carolina School Calendar Law Changes
- ❑ School Calendar Requirements
- ❑ 2026-2027 Calendar Options
- ❑ Next Steps

Current School Calendar Law

- 2012 Senate Bill 187 (Session Law 2012-145), applies beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, rewrites a portion of the calendar law (General Statute 115C-84.2). Legislation: Session Law 2012-145, Senate Bill 187, Section 7A.11.
- § 115C-84.2. North Carolina General Statute regarding School Calendar Law

Potential Changes to the Current School Calendar Law

- ❑ [Senate Bill 754](#)
- ❑ "School Calendar Law Flexibility: A New Alternative"
- ❑ Would allow school to begin the Monday closest to August 19th
- ❑ Would require the end of school by the Friday before Memorial Day
- ❑ Requires balanced semesters
- ❑ Includes a penalty mechanism that could affect funding

Current School Calendar Law Requirements

- ❑ Start date no earlier than the Monday closest to August 26
- ❑ End date no later than the Friday closest to June 11
- ❑ *Dates can change with an approved weather related calendar waiver
- ❑ Veterans day shall be a holiday for all personnel and students enrolled in public schools

Current Calendar Law Requirements (continued)

- ☐ Calendar must cover at least 9 calendar months
- ☐ Must have a minimum of 185 days or 1,025 hours of instruction
- ☐ Must include at least 9 teacher workdays
- ☐ Must include 10 annual leave days for teachers

Current School Calendar Law Requirements (continued)

- ☐ Local Boards shall designate 2 workdays on which teachers may take annual leave
- ☐ Inclement weather days must be built into the calendar
- ☐ Must include the same or an equivalent number of legal holidays occurring within the calendar as those designated by the State Personnel Commission for State employees
- ☐ School shall not be held on Sunday

Professional Development

Due to overwhelming feedback from teachers, we have added days for Professional Development into all three calendar options.

Taking the day to allow educators to engage and process information in this setting was amazing. Thank you.

This was everything I needed! Thank you for giving us practical and necessary information and ideas for our classrooms that will help drive our instruction.

This was the best PD. I love how we got to work with our school team on things that are practical and help us with improving our instruction now.

I really liked getting to dive into the data from the check in and use that data to begin planning for the next week of reading instruction.

I think this was very needed with our teachers and an excellent use of time.

This was one of the most informative PDs I have attended. I appreciate the interactive activities at a table and not necessarily around the room. I liked having the time to collaborate with my team.

2026-2027 Draft School Calendars

Sample A Calendar

Gaston County Schools 2026-2027 Academic Calendar Worksheet

JULY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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JANUARY

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OCTOBER

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Calendar Information

- 215 Employee Days
- 176 Student Days - 85 First Semester; 91 Second Semester
- 42 days - First; 43 - Second; 45 - Third; 46 - Fourth (semesters are balanced; more days in second semester for inclement weather)
- 1,050 Instructional Hours (1,025 hours required)
- 10 teacher annual leave days
- 11 state holidays for employees
- 12 Mandated Teacher Workdays
- 6 Optional Teacher Workdays
- Inclement Weather Makeup Days
 - December 21
 - January 14
 - March 25
 - April 14
 - April 2
 - April 1
 - March 31
- End of 8-Week Grading Periods
 - October 22, January 13, March 23, and June 8
- Report Cards Distributed
 - October 29, January 21, April 8, mailed by June 17
- Graduation Day is Friday, June 11
- October 22 and March 24 - Parent-Teacher Conferences (Early Dismissal for Students)
- September 16, October 28, February 10, April 14 - Mandated Teacher Workdays/Professional Development

SAMPLE A

- Mid-year break and exams in January
- * Semesters are balanced

- 85 First Semester Days
- 91 Second Semester Days
- August 24, 2026 Start Date
- June 11, 2027 Graduation
- Mid-Year break and exams in January
- 176 student days; 1,050 instructional hours (1,025 hours required)
- September 16, October 28, February 10, and April 14: Mandated Teacher Workdays for PD

Sample B Calendar

Gaston County Schools 2026-2027 Academic Calendar Worksheet

JULY

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SEPTEMBER

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JANUARY

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OCTOBER

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FEBRUARY

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JUNE

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Calendar Information

- 215 Employee Days
- 176 Student Days - 77 First Semester; 99 Second Semester
- 39 days - First; 38 - Second; 50 - Third; 49 - Fourth (semesters are balanced; more days in second semester for inclement weather)
- 1,050 Instructional Hours (1,025 hours required)
- 10 teacher annual leave days
- 11 state holidays for employees
- 12 Mandated Teacher Workdays
- 4 Optional Teacher Workdays
- Inclement Weather Makeup Days
 - December 21
 - January 3
 - March 25
 - April 14
 - April 2
 - April 1
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- End of 8-Week Grading Periods
 - October 19, December 18, March 18, and June 8
- Report Cards Distributed
 - October 27, January 7, April 8, mailed by June 17
- Graduation Day is Friday, June 11
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- September 16, October 28, February 10, April 14 - Mandated Teacher Workdays/Professional Development

SAMPLE B

- Mid-year break and exams in December
- * Semesters are not balanced

- 77 First Semester Days
- 99 Second Semester Days
- August 24, 2026 Start Date
- June 11, 2027 Graduation
- Mid-Year Break with exams in December
- 176 student days; 1,050 instructional hours (1,025 hours required)
- September 16, October 28, February 10, and April 14: Mandated Teacher Workdays for PD

Sample C Calendar

Gaston County Schools

2026-2027 Academic Calendar Worksheet

JULY						
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Calendar Information						
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JUNE						
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17 Mandated Teacher Workdays	7 Optional Teacher Workdays					

☐ Laptop	☐ Mobile	☐ Head Start Class Discontinued
☐ Student Teacher Website	☐ Student Counselor	☐ Teacher's Manual
☐ Web Resource: Parent Teacher Conference		

Calendar information provided by Communications/Public Instruction Department

SAMPLE C

Early start in August, mid-year break, and exams in December (like 2025-26 calendar)

- 85 First Semester Days
- 91 Second Semester Days
- August 12, 2026 Start Date
- Friday, May 28, 2027 Graduation
- Mid-Year Break with exams in December
- 176 student days; 1,050 hours (1,025 hours required)
- September 16, October 28, February 10, and April 14: Mandated Teacher Workdays for PD

Next Steps

- Drafts of the calendars will be published on the GCS website for public comments and feedback
- Feedback and calendars will be presented at the December 15, 2025 Board meeting for approval.

EC Contracts

- Due to the increasing needs of students who require higher levels of support—including nursing services, one-on-one assistance, related services, psychological services, and behavioral supports—the Department for Exceptional Children received approval to increase expenditures from \$7 million to \$10 million for the current year.
- Increasing funding for two of our contracted school psychologists is essential to meet growing demands for timely initial evaluations and reevaluations as our student population and the complexity of student needs continue to rise. The increase is due to the psychologist working 12 months instead of 10 months.

EC Contracts

Recommendation

Approval of Amended EC Contracted Services Contracts

and

Consent Agenda for December Board Meeting

Teacher Support Facilitator Updates



Meet the Teacher Support Facilitators



Davisha Moore



David Grimes



Samantha Reichard



Pamela Mabry

Role of a New Teacher Support Facilitator

Providing targeted coaching and guidance to first-year teachers to build instructional effectiveness, classroom management skills, and professional growth.

Planning and delivering district-level professional learning tailored to the unique needs of beginning teachers at the TIPs monthly meetings.



Beginning Teachers-Year 1

131

47

84

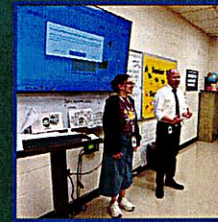
13



Coaching Targets

How to Be a "Teacher"

- ▶ Best Practices



Lesson Planning/Grade Level Learning

- ▶ Getting teachers to study and present their lessons prior to lesson delivery

Classroom Management

- ▶ Getting 100% of students following the teacher directions

6+5

47

584

Data Driven Instruction focused on
TEACHING



"There are several benefits to the Teacher Support Facilitator role- 1. It supports the Principal, especially at a high-needs school with many BT teachers and it provides supports for the many needs of the BT1's that I can't always get to. 2. It allows the BT teachers to hear from someone else coming in with a different perspective, and 3. And most important, if we continue and do this right, it will maintain employment of teachers of those that probably would not stay at at-risk schools."

~ Principal Jennifer Cabe

"I'm observing Ms. Womack's class today. She is doing phenomenal! I want to thank you personally for the work you have put in. I'm so proud of her!!"

~ Principal Curtis Mitcham

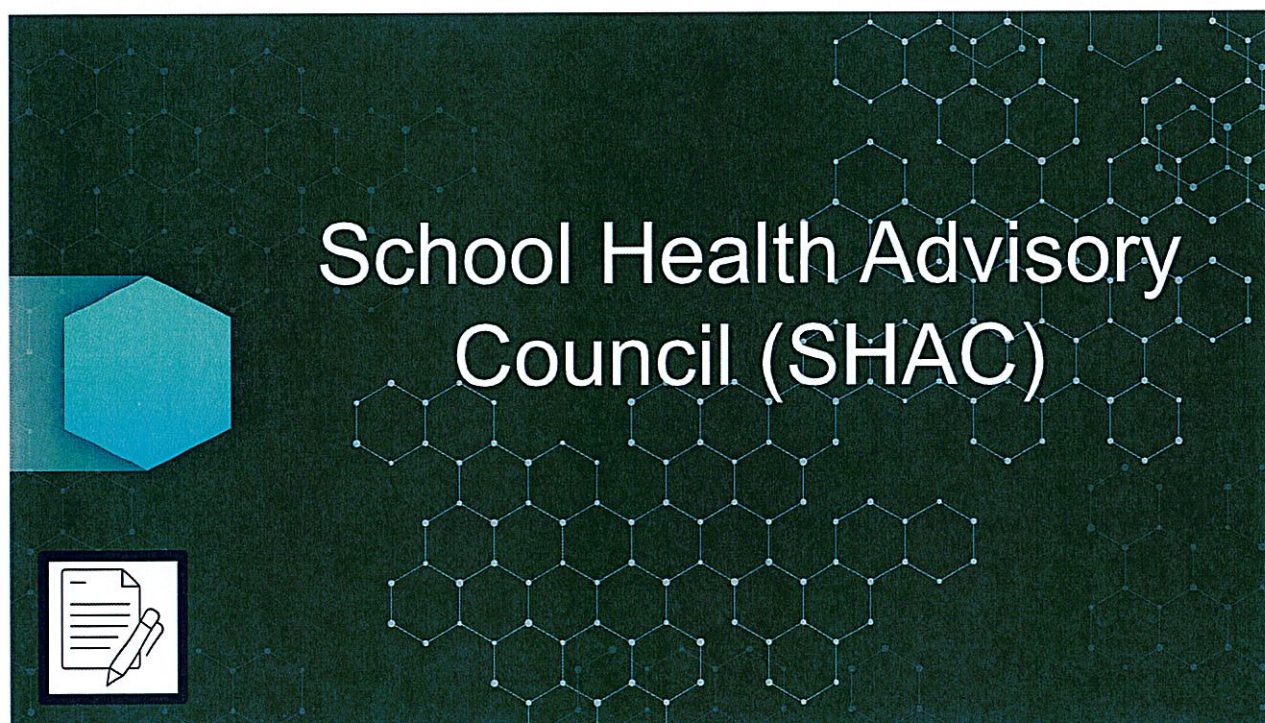


"From management tips to lesson approaches to creative affirmation, David allowed me to feel empowered through structured reinforcement, helping me not simply imitate, but internalize. Please know that between him and the support of my team at Huss, my progress has been inconceivable."

~ Katrina Robinson, Teacher, Hunter Huss

"I was nervous to be observed at the end of my day on Monday because it was during my students packing up and getting ready for dismissal and it was so chaotic, loud, and unorganized, but now, I am so grateful to have support during that time of day because I have a calm, quiet, structured routine for my students packing up and my classroom flows so smoothly. I have received so many useful tips on how to improve things like these procedures that make my classroom run so much smoother now!"

~ Kennedy Morrison, Teacher, Lingerfeldt Elementary

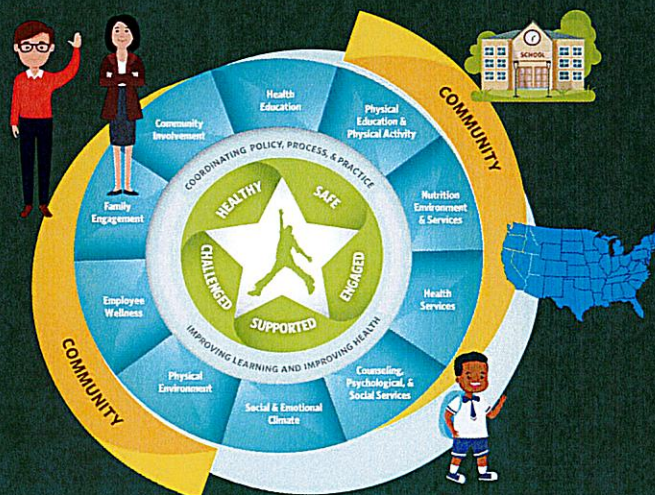


School Health Advisory Council (SHAC)

Policy 3530: Student Wellness

- Oversees and recommends student and staff wellness initiatives
- Members include: school staff, public health representatives, parents, students, healthcare representatives
- Meets three times per year

Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) Model



Goal 1: Strengthen Health Education

- Align curriculum with new NCDPI Healthful Living Standards
- Provide trainings for teachers on local health topics (ex., vaping, healthy relationships, nutrition)
- Partner with community organizations to enhance lessons (ex., Cancer Services and Crisis Pregnancy Center)
Vaping and Teen Dating Violence lessons
- We provide the the curriculum and the training for the outside partners

Goal 2: Increase Student Engagement

- Support peer-led programs (ex., Teen Action Council)
- Promote school-wide activities on fitness, nutrition, and overall wellness
- Partner with community groups for interactive learning experiences (ex., CaroMont Health)

CaroMont Health

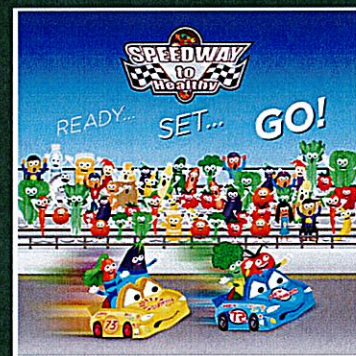


- Dietician created nutrition lessons for K–5 PE classes
- Fun physical activities are integrated in the lessons
- Balanced Meal Guide to keep on the fridge



Gaston Cooperative Extension

- Interactive Health Exhibit for 3rd graders at 3 elementary schools
- 1,200 sq. ft. human body structure from NC A&T
- Students race through 11 body pit stops: Brain, Mouth, Stomach, Small Intestine, Heart, Lungs, Kidneys, Bones, Muscles, Skin



2025-2026 Meeting Dates

- October 29, 2025
- January 28, 2026
- April 29, 2026



GASTON COUNTY SCHOOLS

Career Development Continuum

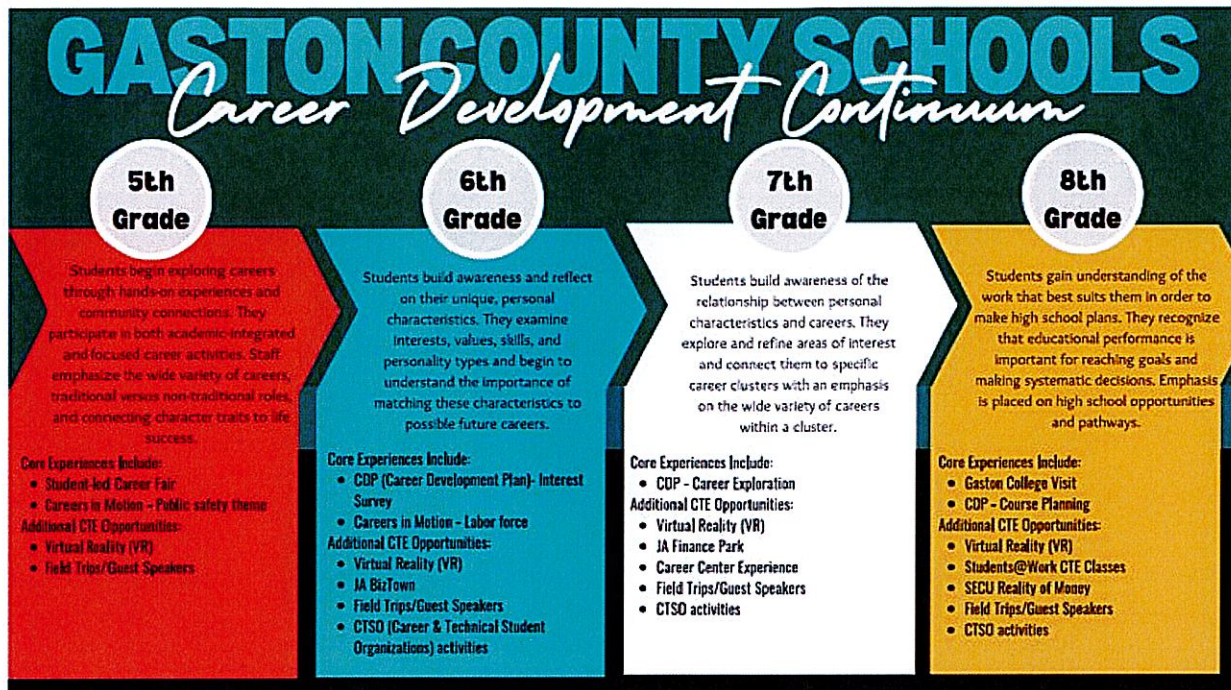
Career & Technical Education

Dr. Rusty Parker



CTE Department Focus Areas

Elementary Support	Career Awareness
Middle School	Career Exploration
High School	Career Preparation



Elementary CTE begins with Fifth Grade.

Focus is Career Awareness.
“What is Work?”

Sample Activities:

- Career-Related Field Trips
- Student-Led Career Fairs
- Industry-Specific Guest Speakers
- Virtual Reality

Elementary School Support



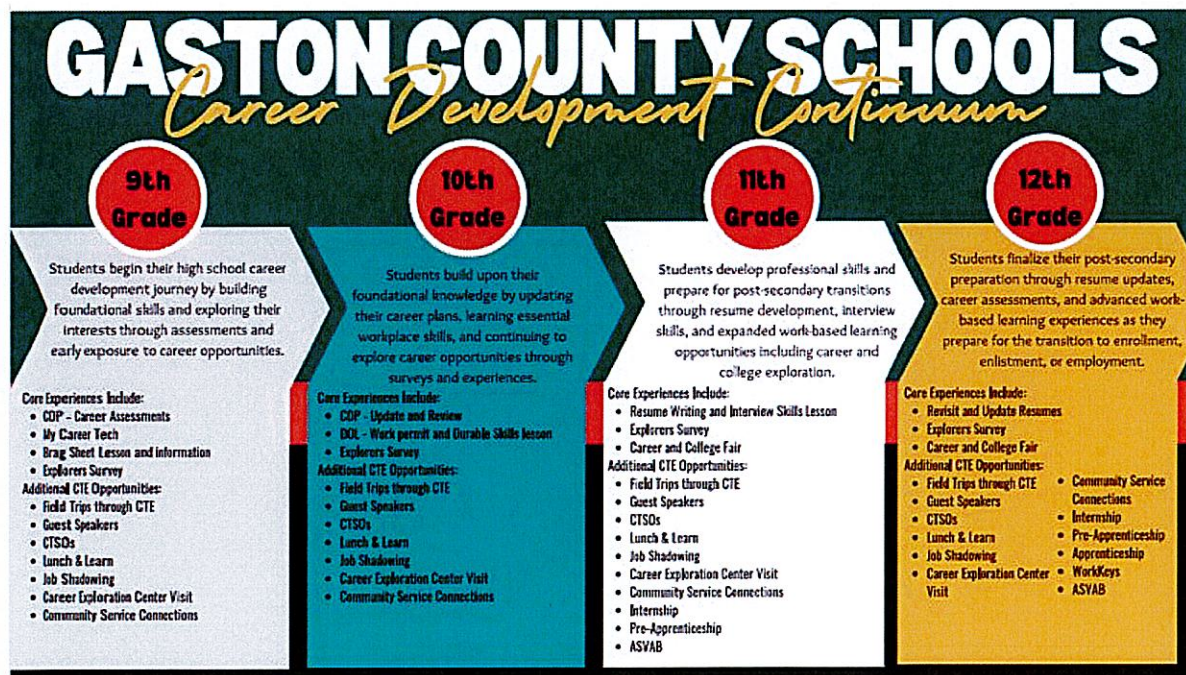
Middle School Areas of Focus:

- Computer Science
- Engineering/Technology Education
- Career Exploration

Goals:

- Introduce Students to Computer Science.
- Introduce Students to Engineering.
- Encourage students to explore career options.

Middle School Support



Provide Pathways based on the National Career Cluster Guide.

Provide opportunities for students to complete an industry-related credential.

Provide opportunities for student to complete a work-based learning opportunity.

High School Support

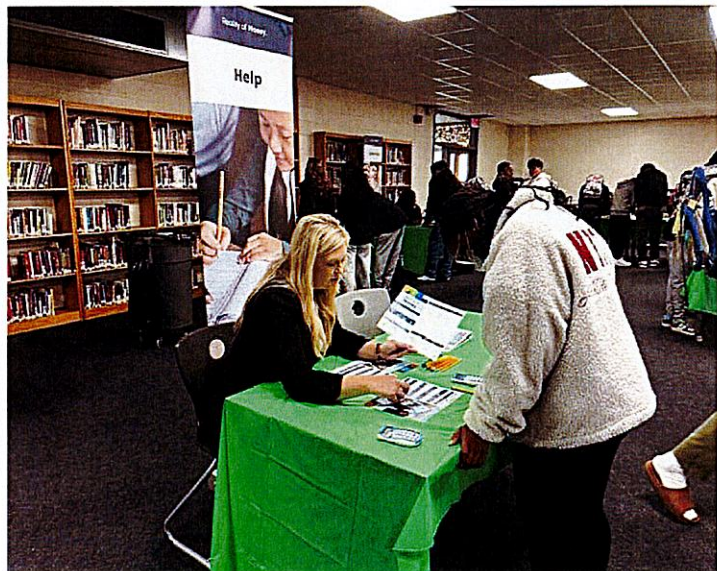


Students continue to update their Career Development Plan started in middle school.

Career Development Coordinators ensure students are on track to complete their plan.

Career Development Coordinators provide support through career fairs and guest speakers.

Career Development



Program Offerings

Agriculture Education

- Animal Science Courses
- Open Future Farmers of America (FFA)

Business / Finance / Marketing

- Economics and Financial Planning Courses
- Business Ethics and General Management Courses

Program Offerings

Computer Science, IT, Technology Education

- Advanced Placement Courses
- Microsoft Office Suite

Family & Consumer Science Education

- Hospitality and Tourism Courses
- Counseling and Mental Health Courses

Program Offerings

Health Science Education

- Pharmacy Technician Courses
- Upgrade our Nursing Fundamentals classrooms with new equipment

Trades & Industrial Education

- Courses in Plumbing and HVAC
- Open a SkillsUSA Chapter

Awards and Recognitions

National Technical Honor Society

- Include 11th grade students in the induction process
- Mirror the entry requirements of National Honor Society

CTE Awards Night

- Partnership with Gaston College
- NTHS Seniors will receive cords and stoles for graduation
- *Tuesday, May 5, 2026 - 6:00 p.m. at the Myers Center- mark your calendar.*



Student Support Services

Dr. Rebekka Powers



Choice Program Discussion

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



K-3 Class Size Waivers

Recommendation

Approval of K-3 Class Size Waivers and
Consent Agenda for December Board Meeting

Legal/Policy Updates

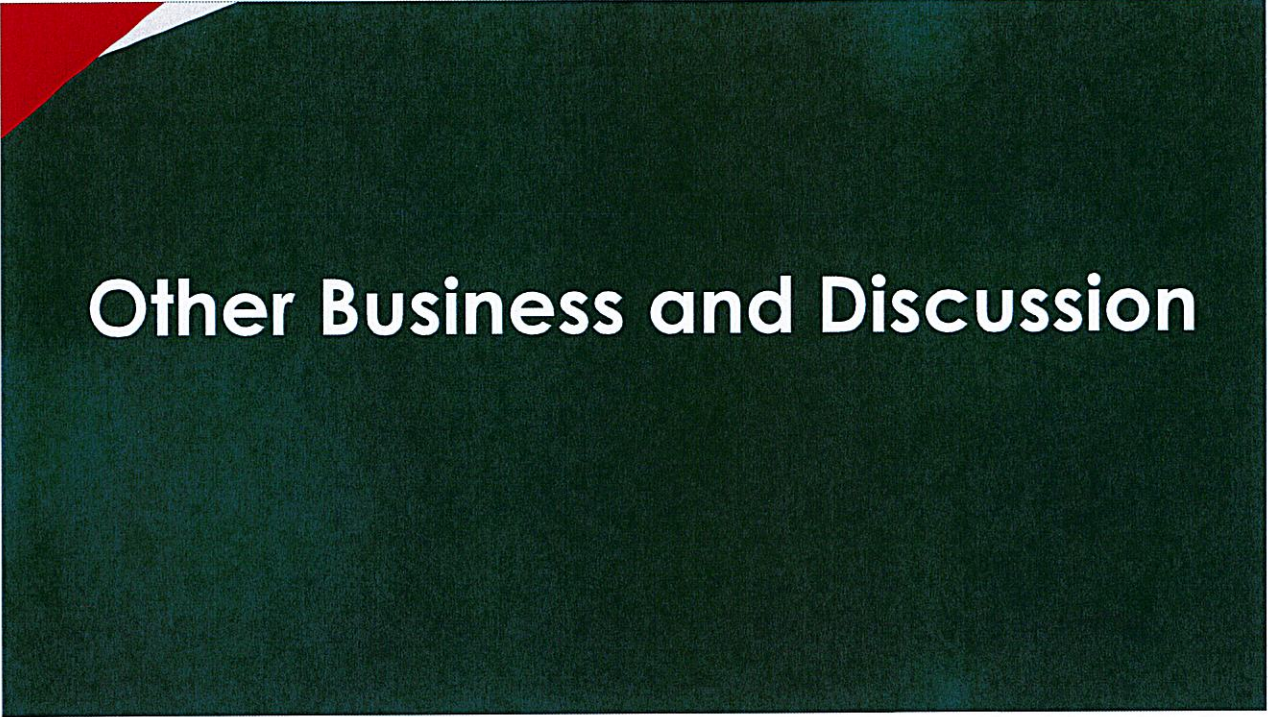
Sonya McGraw

Current GCS Policy 4318-Use of Wireless Communication Devices

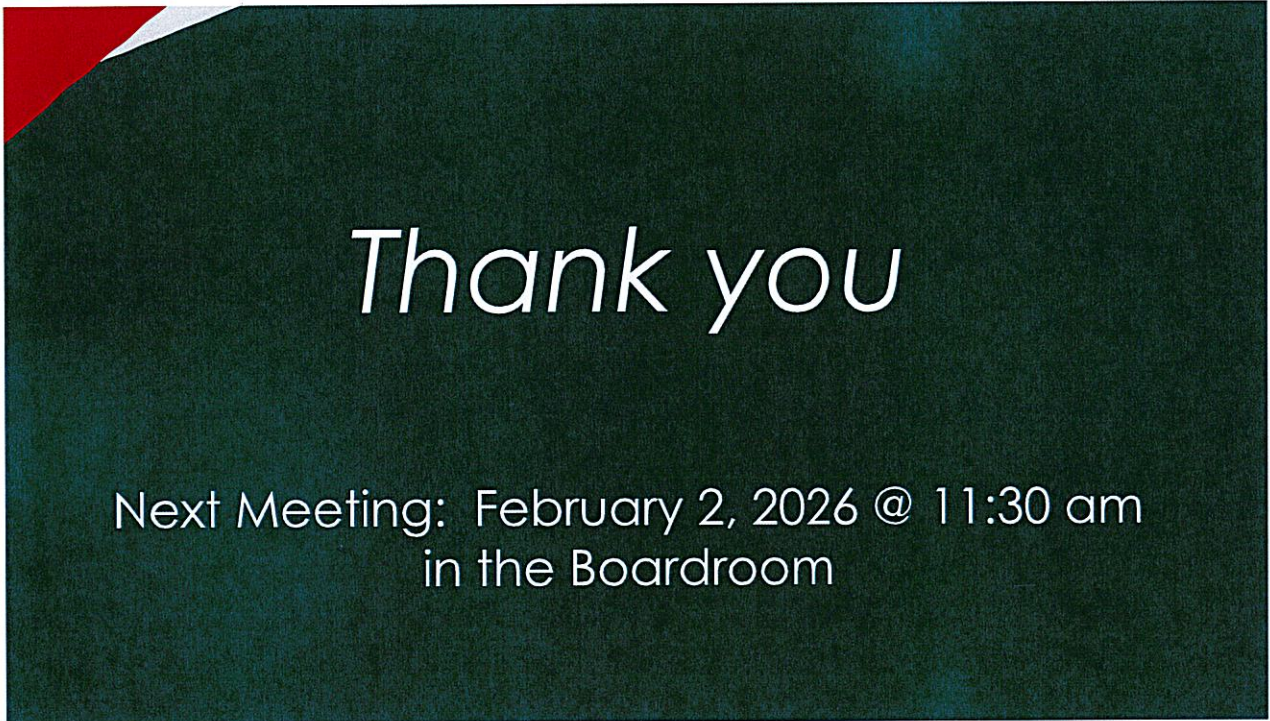
HB 959- Created a new requirement for school boards to have a policy prohibiting students from displaying devices or having them turned on during instructional time (with few exceptions) and to establish consequences for violations

Next Steps...





Other Business and Discussion



Thank you

Next Meeting: February 2, 2026 @ 11:30 am
in the Boardroom