

**GASTON COUNTY
BOARD OF EDUCATION
Regular Session**



943 Osceola Street, Gastonia, NC 28054

April 20, 2026

5:30 p.m.

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 4/20/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Agenda Adoption

Type of Item: ☐ Consent ☒ Action ☐ Information

Main Points:

Consideration of Formal Agenda for Monday, April 20, 2026

Roberts Rules of Order (Revised) adoption of Agenda for meeting sequence and structure.

Fiscal Implications:

None

Recommendation:

Adoption of Agenda

Policy Implications:

Policy Code: 2350 Board Meeting Agenda.

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Effective Communication and Partnerships

Submitted by: Dr. Morgen A. Houchard

Department: Superintendent

GASTON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Josh Crisp, Chairman, Dallas Township
Lee Dedmon, Gastonia Township
Robbie Lovelace, Cherryville Township
Jeff K. Ramsey, At Large
A.M. Stephens, III, Riverbend Township



Dot Cherry, Vice Chairman At Large
Tod Kinlaw, South Point Township
Brent Moore, Crowders Mountain Township
Janna Smith, Gastonia Township

Dr. Morgen A. Houchard, Superintendent
943 Osceola Street, Gastonia, NC 28054
Monday, April 20, 2026
5:30 p.m.
Agenda
Regular Meeting

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Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 4/20/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Good News

Type of Item: ☐ Consent ☐ Action ☒ Information

Main Points:

Each month, the Communications/Public Information Department compiles “Good News” about our schools, students, employees, and community partners. See attachment.

Fiscal Implications:

None

Recommendation:

None

Policy Implications:

None

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Effective Communication and Partnerships

Submitted by: Todd Hagans
Chief Communications Officer

Department: Communications
(Superintendent’s Office)

BOARD AGENDA INFORMATIONAL ITEM

DEPARTMENT:

Communications/Public

Information

Department

TOPIC: GOOD NEWS

FOR THE MONTH OF: April 2026

1. Thirteen students from **Gaston County Schools** were selected to attend the 2026 session of the prestigious North Carolina Governor's School. Students attending Governor's School East at Meredith College are **Daniel Nguyen, Forestview High School; Swara Patel, Highland School of Technology; Shanzay Rahim, Highland School of Technology; Mariam Raja, Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences; Sadie Revels, Stuart W. Cramer High School; Katelyn Smith, East Gaston High School; and Madison Verne, Hunter Huss High School.** Students attending Governor's School West at Greensboro College are **Milton Chicas, Forestview High School; James Hatley, Gaston Early College High School; Sophie Hoerst, Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences; Andrew Popa, Stuart W. Cramer High School; Sheronna Spencer, Hunter Huss High School; and Lillyan Wall, East Gaston High School.**
2. The following students earned awards at the North Carolina Science and Engineering Fair on March 21: **Virginia Villarreal, Gardner Park Elementary**, third place, Elementary Association of Women in Science - North Carolina Chapter (AWIS-NC) Award; **Nathan Hansel, W.A. Bess Elementary**, honorable mention, Chemistry; and **Selah Smith, Belmont Middle School**, Office of Naval Research - Junior Naval Science Award.
3. **Gaston County Schools'** Department for Exceptional Children hosted an Employability Bowl at Gaston College, where students worked on job skills through a quiz bowl-style competition. **Cherryville High School** earned first place, followed by **Hunter Huss High School** in second and **Ashbrook High School** in third. **Cherryville** also received the Team Spirit and Outstanding Professionalism awards, while **Hunter Huss** was presented the WOW Award for energy, confidence, and teamwork.
4. For "Bring Your Legislator to School Week," N.C. House Representative Donnie Loftis visited **Stuart W. Cramer High School** and **South Point High School**, and N.C. House Representative John Torbett visited **Springfield Elementary School** and **Stanley Middle School**.
5. **Cramerton Middle School** earned the "Paideia Schools for Creative Thinking" national accreditation. This is the highest level of certification that a school can achieve from the National Paideia Center, and Cramerton is the only Paideia-accredited middle school in North Carolina. The honor recognizes the dedication, commitment, and efforts of the faculty, staff, administration, and students to adopt and implement the Paideia model.

6. U.S. Congressman Tim Moore visited **Hunter Huss High School** to celebrate the 5A state basketball champions. He also recognized the school during a speech on the U.S. House floor.
7. **Gaston County Schools** conducted its springtime Parent Advisory Council meeting on March 18 at the Gaston Early College High School and had about 50 parents to attend. After a presentation by **Superintendent Morgen Houchard**, the parents participated in breakout groups to discuss the six priorities in the district's new strategic plan.
8. The Gaston Arts Council approved a \$1,600 donation for **Gaston County Schools** to help cover expenses related to having guest clinicians for the middle school all-county band concert.
9. **Gaston County Schools** held its RoboGASTON robotics competition on March 28 at **Forestview High School**. In the elementary division, **New Hope Elementary** was named the overall champion. **Sherwood Elementary** placed first in teamwork, followed by **Bessemer City Central** in second. **McAdenville Elementary** earned first place in project presentation, with **Lowell Elementary** taking second. In robot performance, **New Hope Elementary** finished first, and **Pinewood Elementary** placed second. In the middle school division, **Belmont Middle School** was named the overall champion. **Grier Middle School** earned first place in teamwork, followed by **John Chavis Middle School** in second. **W.C. Friday Middle School** placed first in project presentation, with **Mount Holly Middle School** finishing second. **Belmont Middle School** also earned first place in robot performance, and **Cramerton Middle School** placed second. **Tryon Elementary** earned the Spirit Award, while the **Gardner Park Elementary** Robotic Restorers were recognized as the Innovative Team. **Chapel Grove Elementary** received the Gracious Professionalism Award.
10. The Day 1 winners in the 2026 Math Masters competition were **Pleasant Ridge Elementary**, first place; **W.A. Bess Elementary**, second place; **New Hope Elementary**, third place; and **Belmont Central Elementary**, fourth place. The Day 2 winners were **North Belmont Elementary**, first place; **Catawba Heights Elementary**, second place; **Tryon Elementary**, third place; and **Sherwood Elementary**, fourth place.
11. The Day 1 winners in the 2026 Battle of the Books competition were **Pleasant Ridge Elementary**, first place; **W.A. Bess Elementary**, second place; **Belmont Central Elementary**, third place; and **New Hope Elementary**, fourth place. The Day 2 winners were **Chapel Grove Elementary**, first place; **North Belmont Elementary**, second place; **W.B. Beam Intermediate**, third place; and **Tryon Elementary**, fourth place.
12. **Pleasant Ridge Elementary** was named the overall champion of the Elementary Battle of the Books competition and advanced to the regional competition.
13. The following teachers are recipients of the Glenn Sisters Legacy grants from the Gaston County Education Foundation: **Sandy Ellison, Sherwood Elementary; Elizabeth Grant, Hawks Nest STEAM Academy; and Katie Johnson, Hawks Nest STEAM Academy.**

14. The North Carolina Basketball Coaches Association released its all-district teams for the 2025-2026 season. **Troy Phillips** of **Hunter Huss High School** was named the all-district boys coach of the year. **Jaleel Smith** and **Zaiyir Phillips** of **Hunter Huss** were selected to the first team. **O.B. Lowery** of **South Point High School** earned second-team honors. **O'Shauna Holland** of **Stuart W. Cramer High School** was named all-district girls player of the year and chosen as a first-team selection. **SaRyah McCorkle** of **Hunter Huss** earned second-team honors, and **Shemiah McCoy** of **Hunter Huss** was named to the third team.
15. **Belmont Middle School** athletic director **Carey Galbreath** was recognized at the North Carolina Athletic Directors Association state meeting and received the award of excellence for middle school athletic directors.
16. **W.A. Bess Elementary School** held its "Community & Country" event on March 12 as part of the school's yearlong celebration of America's 250th birthday. Students learned from community members about their careers, service, and contributions. Participants included representatives from the Gaston County Museum, CaroMont Health, Gaston County Police Department, Gastonia Fire Department, Gaston County Emergency Medical Services, Gaston College, and Fairwood Construction, along with local professionals and student groups.
17. **W.A. Bess Elementary School** student **Sterling Elliott** was named runner-up in the America 250 NC County Flag Challenge. He was recognized at the Gaston County Board of Commissioners work session on April 14.
18. The **Bessemer City High School** band earned a superior rating at the Music Performance Adjudication (MPA). **Keith Grush** is the band director.
19. The **Cherryville High School** band earned a superior rating at the Music Performance Adjudication (MPA). **Cole Crawford** is the band director.
20. The **Stuart W. Cramer High School** Raging Storm wind ensemble earned a superior rating at the Music Performance Adjudication (MPA). **Kameron Radford** is the band director.
21. **East Gaston High School** student **Ramon De La Oz** earned a perfect score on the ACT. In addition, he placed fourth in the cybersecurity competition at the North Carolina Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) State Leadership Conference.
22. The **East Gaston High School** band earned a superior rating at the Music Performance Adjudication (MPA). **Brandon Taylor** is the band director.
23. The **Forestview High School** wind ensemble earned a superior rating at the Music Performance Adjudication (MPA). **Austin Berry** is the band director.
24. The **Forestview High School** concert choir performed at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City on March 26. **Steven Austin** is the director.

25. The **W.C. Friday Middle School** concert band was selected and performed in the Disney Performing Arts at Disney Springs program.
26. **Gaston Early College High School** placed first at the Region VI Battle of the Books competition and will compete for the state championship on April 20.
27. **Highland School of Technology** had a strong showing at the 2026 Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) State Leadership Conference. The following students placed in the top 10 in their individual events: **Fiona Oudinarath**, accounting; **James Gutierrez**, advanced accounting; **Swara Patel**, advanced accounting; **Abigail Anderson**, business communication; **Joseph Beam**, computer applications; **Raya Smith**, customer service; **Kelsey Johnson**, digital video production; **Madison Darnell**, future business leader; **Fernanda Tovar Ibarra**, introduction to FBLA; **Manas Suleimenov**, journalism; **Henry Davis**, public administration and management; and **Iris Zhang**, securities and investments. **James Gutierrez**, advanced accounting, and **Fernanda Tovar Ibarra**, introduction to FBLA, placed fourth. **Abigail Anderson**, business communication, and **Henry Davis**, public administration and management, placed third. **Highland** was also one of nine schools in North Carolina to earn the FBLA Gold Seal Chapter Award of Merit.
28. The **Hunter Huss High School** band earned a superior rating and an excellent rating at Music Performance Assessment (MPA). **Heaven Watson-Weary** is the band director.
29. The **North Gaston High School** band earned an excellent rating at the Music Performance Assessment (MPA). **Nicholas Bolick** is the band director.
30. Five students from **South Point High School** assisted with the American Red Cross “Sound the Alarm” event, helping crews reach 61 homes, install 105 smoke alarms, and improve safety for more than 200 residents.

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 4/20/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Teacher Appreciation Week Proclamation

Type of Item: ☐ Consent ☒ Action ☐ Information

Main Points:

To recognize Teacher Appreciation Week in Gaston County Schools (May 4-8, 2026), a proclamation is presented to the Board of Education for consideration and approval.

See the attachment for the proclamation.

Fiscal Implications:

None

Recommendation:

It is recommended for the Board of Education to approve the Teacher Appreciation Week Proclamation. Doing so will signify the importance of observing Teacher Appreciation Week in Gaston County Schools.

Policy Implications:

None

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Talent and Workforce Development

Submitted by: Todd Hagans, Chief Communications Officer

Department: Communications/Public Information (Superintendent's Office)

PRIDE



PROCLAMATION

Teacher Appreciation Week

MAY 4-8, 2026

WHEREAS, Gaston County Schools is proud to join school districts across the country in celebrating Teacher Appreciation Week (May 4-8) and National Teacher Day on Tuesday, May 5; and

WHEREAS, Teacher Appreciation Week is a time for communities to come together to lift up teachers and show support for what all educators do each day to go above and beyond expectations and provide a quality teaching and learning experience for all students; and

WHEREAS, in the classroom, teachers transform ordinary moments into extraordinary opportunities, and they turn curiosity into confidence, challenges into triumphs, and passion into purpose; and

WHEREAS, the teachers in Gaston County Schools are committed to ensuring student success through a concentrated focus on higher academic achievement and life-enriching opportunities in a variety of areas, including athletics, the fine arts, extracurricular activities, college prep, career training, and internships; and

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

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

MAY 4-8, 2026

Teacher Appreciation Week

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this proclamation be made a part of the minutes of the Board of Education, adopted this the twentieth day of April, 2026.

Joshua D. Crisp, Chairman
Gaston County Board of Education

Morgen A. Houchard, Superintendent
Gaston County Schools

Gaston
COUNTY SCHOOLS

shaping our future

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 4/20/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Classroom Moment

Type of Item: ☐ Consent ☐ Action ☒ Information

Main Points: As the nation approaches the 250th anniversary of the signing of the United States Declaration of Independence on July 4, 2026, our schools are engaging students in meaningful learning experiences connected to this historic milestone. Schools across the district are integrating the America250 Celebration into classroom instruction, literacy events, fine arts performances, and family engagement opportunities. Students have participated in creative projects and community partnerships, including a statewide fourth-grade flag contest. Tonight's Classroom Moment highlights examples from Bess Elementary and H.H. Beam Elementary, showcasing how students are connecting history, civic pride, and creativity. These efforts reflect how our students are learning about the nation's past while actively shaping its future.

Fiscal Implications: N/A

Recommendation: N/A

Policy Implications: N/A

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Academics that Build Pathways to Student Success ▾

Submitted by: Tyler West

Department: Academic Services

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 4/20/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Public Expression

Type of Item: ☐ Consent ☐ Action ☒ Information

Main Points:

The Board of Education agenda has been made available to the public for review. Citizens wishing to speak before the Board about an agenda item or other topic may do so during Public Expression.

Fiscal Implications:

None

Recommendation:

The Board of Education will establish time (30 minutes) during the regular monthly meeting for Public Expression. Any citizen not heard during this time may be heard at the end of the business session.

Policy Implications:

Policy Code: 2310 Public Participation at Board Meetings.

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Effective Communication and Partnerships

Submitted by: Todd Hagans
Chief Communications Officer

Department: Communications
(Superintendent's Office)

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 4/20/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Approval/Correction of Minutes

Type of Item: ☐ Consent ☒ Action ☐ Information

Main Points:

Approval of Minutes from:

March 16, 2026 (Regular Meeting)

Efficient consideration of matters pertinent to the successful operation of the school system.

Fiscal Implications:

None

Recommendation:

The Board will approve accurate minutes consistent with the Open Meetings Law.

Policy Implications:

Policy Code: 2320 Compliance with the Open Meetings Law.

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Effective Communication and Partnerships

Submitted by: Dr. Morgen A. Houchard

Department: Superintendent

Gaston County Schools
Board of Education
March 16, 2026
Regular Meeting

MINUTES

The Gaston County Board of Education met in a regular session on Monday, March 16th, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. in the Central Office Boardroom at 943 Osceola Street, Gastonia, NC 28054. Those Board Members in attendance were: Chairman Josh Crisp, Vice Chairman Dot Cherry, Lee Dedmon, Tod Kinlaw, Robbie Lovelace, Brent Moore, Jeff Ramsey, Janna Smith, and A.M. Stephens III.

Additional attendees include: Superintendent Dr. Morgen A. Houchard, Attorney Sonya McGraw, Associate Superintendent 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.

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

Invocation

Pastor Jeff Allen, First Baptist Church of Mount Holly, led the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance

Asher Loftin and Zy'marion Dickey, both 7th grade students from Stanley Middle School, led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Character Trait

River Guyton, 2nd grade and Harlow Case, 5th grade both from Pinewood Elementary School reported on the Character Trait of Honesty.

Agenda Adoption - Action

The Board considered Agenda Adoption – Action

Superintendent Houchard recommended that the following items be removed from the Consent Agenda for further Administrative and Policy Review:

- H. Proposed Renaming of Memorial Stadium to Henry Jones Stadium
- I. Name Press Box at Fraley Field (Danny Eaker)
- J. Proposed Naming of the Basketball Court at North Gaston HS

Motion to adopt the Agenda as Amended (excluding the Consent Items H, I, and J) was made by Mr. Tod Kinlaw; seconded by Mr. Brent Moore, motion carried unanimously. (9-0)

Good News – Information

Mr. Todd Hagans presented the Good News for March.

The Hunter Huss Boys Basketball Team was recognized as the State 5A Champions for North Carolina. The team scored the most points ever in a North Carolina High School Athletic Association Boys' Championship game.

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

Next, O'Shauna Holland, representing Stuart W. Cramer High School and holding the NCHSAA record for most points scored by a girls' basketball player, was recognized.

Mr. Jeff Ramsey presented a certificate of recognition to O'Shauna.

The Wrestling State Champions and Runner-up were recognized for their accomplishments.

- Bentley Sly, Stuart W. Cramer High School, 4A State Championship in the 150-pound weight class
- Cameron Massey, North Gaston High School, 5A State Championship in the 138-pound weight class
- Nick McClellan, East Gaston High School, 4A State Championship in the 285-pound weight class
- Jonathan Moore, Ashbrook High School, 6A State Championship in the 285-pound weight class
- Ammon Scott, South Point High School, 5A State Runner-up in the 150-pound weight class

Mr. A.M. Stephens III presented a certificate of recognition to each student.

Swimming State Champions and Runner-Up were honored.

- Philip Johnson, East Gaston High School, two State Championships at the 4A Swim Meet
- Wyatt Smith, East Gaston High School, placed third in the State 4A Diving Event
- Ila Turner, South Point High School, silver medalist 5A 50 Yard Freestyle

Mr. Tod Kinlaw presented a certificate of recognition to each athlete.

Gastonia Sister Cites Youth Ambassadors to Germany and Peru

Mr. Todd Hagans recognized a group of high school students who will experience life in another country as they serve as youth ambassadors for the Gastonia Sister Cities student exchange program. Some of the students will visit Gotha, Germany, this summer, while others will travel to Santiago de Surco, Peru.

The following students will be visiting Germany:

- Emmy Nelms, East Gaston
- Ryleigh Autry, Forestview
- Lucy Boudreaux, Forestview
- Tucker Peoples, Forestview
- Annabelle Radford, Forestview
- Cameron Cook, Highland
- Ginny Shoemaker, Highland
- Nixon Sipe, Highland
- Natalie Sanchez, Hunter Huss

The following students will be visiting Peru:

- William Cook, Highland
- Eli Dunn, Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences
- Vienne Hoffard-Cosky, Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences
- Erin Cassell, Highland, will visit Germany. She was unable to attend and was recognized.

Mrs. Janna Smith presented each student with a certificate of recognition.

Department of Exceptional Children Grant

The Good News continued by celebrating an exciting opportunity that will support our youngest learners at Gardner Park Elementary.

Recently, Gaston County Schools received a grant that will support the implementation of K-2 School Ready Resource classes. This initiative is designed to provide intensive, specialized instruction for students in kindergarten through second grade who need additional support in developing foundational academic and behavioral skills necessary for success in school.

The School Ready Resource program focuses on individualized instruction aligned with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and each student's Individualized Education Plan. Students in these classrooms benefit from smaller learning environments, consistent routines, and targeted support in core academic areas while also developing important school-ready behaviors.

Thanks to the grant funding, Gardner Park Elementary will add one Exceptional Children Teacher and one Exceptional Children Teacher Assistant to support this program.

Gaston County Schools has also been awarded grant funding to implement Amira Learning, an AI-powered reading assistant that integrates assessment, instruction, and tutoring into one platform to support reading proficiency.

The program listens to students read aloud, provides real-time coaching, and gives teachers actionable data to identify skill gaps in phonics, decoding, and vocabulary, thus helping students improve reading fluency and comprehension. Through this grant, we will receive more than 1,600 licenses for the Amira AI Phonics Tutoring Program to support Exceptional Children students in grades K-8 with daily, individualized phonics tutoring through personalized lessons that function like a one-on-one reading tutor. The grant will also provide headphones with microphones for participating students, ensuring they can fully engage with the program's interactive features while strengthening literacy outcomes.

Mr. Chris Mills and Amanda Hulse from the Department of Exceptional Children were present and accepted a certificate of recognition presented by Mrs. Janna Smith.

NCAEOP Professional Standards Program Certification

Mr. Todd Hagans recognized a group of our educational office professionals who have completed the requirement for their Professional Standards Program Certificate. The North Carolina Association of Educational Office Professionals grants the state-level certification.

- Ruth Dionicio - Professional Certificate
- Louise Howell - Advanced Associate III Certificate
- Samantha Reid - Professional Associate Certificate
- Shannon Wright - Advanced Associate III Certificate

Mr. Hagans also acknowledged the following office professionals, who were unable to attend the meeting:

- Mary Erlan - Advanced Associate II Certificate
- Savannah Grigg - Advanced Associate II Certificate
- Temika Middlebrooks - Professional Certificate
- Emily Walters - Professional Associate Certificate

Ms. Dot Cherry presented each office professional with a certificate of recognition.

Recognition of School Social Workers

The importance of School Social Work Week was highlighted, and Mr. Hagans recognized and honored the district's school social workers. Social Workers play a vital role in supporting students' academic success and well-being every day.

The following school social workers were honored for their commitment and service:

- Brittan Smith
- Tabatha Lynch
- Angela Ferguson
- Beryl Miller
- Michelle Black
- Meg Richards; and
- Paris Goudy, who was chosen recently to serve as our School Social Worker of the Year for 2026-2027.

In recognition of their continued efforts to strengthen connections between home and school for the students and families they serve, a "Celebrate!" plaque was presented to the group, alongside Director of Social Workers Bobbi Mills, in appreciation of their daily dedication and hard work.

Ms. Dot Cherry presented the plaque of recognition.

United Way of Gaston County

Mr. Hagans spotlighted the 10 schools that led the charge in our 2025-2026 fundraising campaign for the United Way of Gaston County.

Gaston County Schools has long been a cornerstone of local fundraising efforts for the United Way, playing a vital role in supporting United Way programs across three key areas: education, health and wellness, and financial stability. This year, Gaston County Schools achieved a total contribution of \$118,878.84. We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed and participated in this year's campaign.

It's truly inspiring to see our school community come together every year to support the important United Way programs that make a difference right here at home.

Leading the way for 2025-2026 is Mount Holly Middle School. Under the leadership of principal Curtis Mitcham and assistant principal Deon Kennedy, Mount Holly raised a total of \$7,028.65 to become our top fundraising school for the 2025-2026 year.

The remaining top nine fundraising schools and the dedicated coordinators who helped make this success possible were:

- Holbrook Middle School contributed \$6,427.92.
- Southwest Middle School contributed \$5,841.73.
- North Gaston High School contributed \$5,200.
- Cramerton Middle School contributed \$4,800.
- Belmont Middle School contributed \$4,540.19.
- Hunter Huss High School contributed \$4,050.
- Carr Elementary contributed \$3,620.
- Ashbrook High School contributed \$3,514.
- H.H. Beam Elementary contributed \$3,063.40.

Mrs. Janna Smith presented a plaque of recognition to each school's principal.

Classroom Moment – Information

Ms. Kelly Cunningham presented the Classroom Moment that highlighted how teachers collaborate to analyze student data, identify learning gaps, and plan targeted reteaching to ensure every student moves toward mastery. This collaborative approach allows educators to respond quickly to student needs and provide the right support at the right time, strengthening instruction and improving outcomes for every student.

(View Presentation)

Public Expression – Information

Karen Elrod

611 Costner School Road

Bessemer City, NC 28016

Re: Release Time Bible Education

Holly Skibo

1409 Baxter Road

Cherryville, NC 28021

Re: Change of placement of W.B. Beam Intermediate School students

Jennifer Hamilton

10195 Claybrooke Drive

Charlotte, NC

Re: NCRising

Jamie Sherrill

Cherryville Township

Re: Beam Intermediate possible closing

Destyani Harris

327 S. Pink Street

Cherryville, NC 28021

Re: Against moving 5th grade to middle school

Angie Anthony
356 Tot Dellinger Road
Cherryville, NC 28021

Re: Splitting W.B. Beam Intermediate to move 4th graders to Cherryville Elementary and 5th graders to Chavis Middle

Wade Stroup
101 C S Elm Street
Cherryville, NC 28021
Re: W.B. Beam Intermediate

Elizabeth Shuford
315 Linwood Avenue
Cherryville, NC 28021
Re: Closing of W.B. Beam and its negative impact on students and community

Approval/Correction of Minutes – Action

Motion to adopt minutes as presented for:

February 16, 2026, regular meeting,

February 23, 2026 –2026-2027 Budget Work Session Meeting, and

March 11, 2026 –2026-2027 Budget Work Session Meeting Minutes

Motion made by Mr. A.M. Stephens III; seconded by Mr. Tod Kinlaw, motion carried unanimously.
(9-0)

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. Ms. Janna Smith 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.

(View report)

Superintendent's Budget Request 2026-2027 - Information

Superintendent Houchard shared a presentation of the Superintendent's Budget Request for the upcoming 2026-2027 school year, including a focus on Sustainable Financial Stewardship.

Key Points covered:

- Historical Information
- Planning Allotment
- Operating Requests
- Capital Maintenance Requests
- Funding Request Summary

(View Presentation)

The Board received the Superintendent's Budget Request recommendation for the 2026-2027 school year. The Board will discuss and review this request in anticipation of adopting their Budget Request to send to the commissioners at their April meeting.

Consent Agenda – Action

The Board considered the Consent Agenda:

Consent Agenda – Action

Consent Agenda Item (s) will be adopted with a single motion, second vote, unless a request for removal from the Consent Agenda is heard from a Board Member.

- A. Recommended Personnel
- B. Budget Amendments & Budget Transfers
- C. Construction/Repair Change Orders
- D. 2026-2027 Calendar Change
- E. Reduction In Force (RIF)
- F. High School Exam Schedule
- G. ESS Contract
- H. ~~Proposed Renaming of Memorial Stadium to Henry Jones Stadium~~ (removed from the agenda)
- I. ~~Name Press Box at Fraley Field (Danny Eaker)~~ (removed from the agenda)
- J. ~~Proposed Naming of the Basketball Court at North Gaston HS~~ (removed from the agenda)
- K. U-5821 051 (NCDOT) S. New Hope Rd. Widening
- L. Contracts
 - 2026-2027 Academic Resources
 - Google Workspace
 - Selection Process for General Contractor
 - Cherryville ES Lighting Conversion
 - Lawn Care Services Amendment
 - Ida Rankin Rooftop Unit Replacement
 - Page Primary Rooftop Replacement
 - Stadium Field Maintenance
 - Stuart Cramer Baseball/Softball Field Renovations

Motion

Motion to adopt the Consent Agenda as presented was made by Mr. A.M. Stephens III ; seconded by Mrs. Janna Smith. Motion carried unanimously. (9-0)

Superintendent's Comments

Superintendent Houchard shared a few announcements about upcoming events and activities.

This week, our Academically Gifted Department will be hosting the Math Masters and Battle of the Books competitions for elementary schools, and then Saturday, March 28, we will hold our annual RoboGASTON robotics competition at Forestview High School.

On Saturday, March 21, Forestview High School will host a Prom Closet from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m., giving students in need an opportunity to receive a free prom dress.

On Tuesday, March 31, the Star Teacher-Student Awards for the Class of 2026 will be held at 5:30 p.m. at Gaston Early College High School. GSM Services was thanked for sponsoring this year's ceremony.

Spring Break begins on Friday, April 3, with a holiday for all students and employees. Spring break continues April 6–10, with Friday, April 10, as an optional teacher workday. Students return to school after spring break on Monday, April 13.

Next month, our middle school fine arts performances include the all-county chorus concert on Tuesday, April 14, beginning at 7:00 p.m. in the Holbrook Middle School auditorium, and the all-county band concert on Saturday, April 18, starting at 2:00 p.m., also in the Holbrook Middle School auditorium.

Superintendent Houchard shared that a spending and purchasing freeze was implemented effective March 1, 2026, to address budget concerns, in addition to the hiring freeze enacted in December. The district will continue to pursue cost-saving measures while maintaining a quality educational experience for students.

A loss of \$7.2 million in Low Wealth Supplemental Funds from the state, coupled with the expiration of ESSER funds and continued inflationary increases, has created operational challenges.

Several contracts for renovation and repairs were approved this evening – these are capital expenses. We have funds for capital improvements; where we are lacking is in operational funds. And, capital and operations are two separate funds of money.

Superintendent Houchard shared that discussions with county management, county commissioners, and state officials are ongoing regarding the budget and that a conservative approach is being taken for next year's planning.

He expressed that the district is in need of additional budgetary support and noted that, without timely funding, difficult decisions may be necessary that could affect employees in schools during the current school year.

The county commissioners have approved the transfer of \$3.2 million in our capital funds to operating funds. That funding transfer helped, but we are going to need more help, and we are going to continue the critical conversations with our elected leaders.

He indicated that the district is approaching the point of implementing layoffs and workforce reductions, which may become necessary soon without additional operating funds.

Closing Remarks

Chairman Crisp thanked the Board members and the community for their support of our schools and the Board of Education.

Chairman Crisp wished the following a "Happy Birthday" :

Superintendent Houchard - March 2

Mr. A.M. Stephens III - March 3

Mrs. Robbie Lovelace - March 24

The next Board meeting will be held on Monday, April 20, 2026.

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; seconded by Mr. Brent Moore; motion carried unanimously. (8-0)

The Board went into Closed Session at 7:44 p.m.

The Board returned to Open Session at 8:52 p.m.

Adjournment

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

The Board Meeting adjourned at 8:53 p.m.

Approved:

Josh Crisp, Chairman
[Corporate Seal]

Morgen A. Houchard, Secretary

Date Approved: _____

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 4/20/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Operations Committee Report

Type of Item: ☐ Consent ☐ Action ☒ Information

Main Points:

The Gaston County Board of Education's Operations Committee meets regularly to discuss operations-related projects and issues. Brent Moore is Chair of the committee, and members are Dot Cherry, Lee Dedmon and Tod Kinlaw. A report of the Operations Committee's actions and discussions will be made at the Board meeting by a member of the Committee.

Fiscal Implications:

As indicated in the report.

Recommendation:

Committee recommendations are reflected in the report.

Policy Implications:

Policy Code: 2230 Board Committees

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Effective Communication and Partnerships

Submitted by: Bessie Harvey,
Assistant Superintendent of Operations

Department: Operations

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 4/20/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Curriculum & Instruction Committee Report

Type of Item: ☐ Consent ☐ Action ☒ Information

Main Points:

The Gaston County Board of Education's Curriculum & Instruction Committee meets regularly to discuss curriculum and instruction-related topics and issues. Jeff Ramsey is chair of the committee and members are Robbie Lovelace, Janna Smith and A.M. Stephens III. A report of the Curriculum & Instruction Committee's actions and discussions will be made at the Board meeting by a member of the Committee.

Fiscal Implications:

As indicated in the report.

Recommendation:

Committee recommendations are reflected in the report.

Policy Implications:

Policy Code: 2230 Board Committees

Strategic Goal Alignment :

Effective Communication and Partnerships

Submitted by: Tonya Kales, **Department:** Academic Services
Associate Superintendent of Academic Services

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 4/20/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Policy Committee Report

Type of Item: ☐ Consent ☐ Action ☒ Information

Main Points:

The Gaston County Board of Education's Policy Committee meets regularly to discuss policy updates and revisions. Dot Cherry is chair of the committee, and members are Janna Smith and A.M. Stephens III. A report of the Policy Committee's actions and discussions will be made at the Board meeting by a member of the Committee.

Fiscal Implications:

As indicated in the report.

Recommendation:

Committee recommendations are reflected in the report.

Policy Implications:

Policy Code: 2230 Board Committees

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Effective Communication and Partnerships

Submitted by: Policy Committee

Department: Legal

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: Apr 20, 2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: 2026-2027 Gaston County Schools Budget Request

Type of Item:

☐ **Consent**

☒ **Action**

☐ **Information**

Main Points: The school district is required by N.C.G.S. 115-425 to operate under an annual balanced budget resolution. The 2026-2027 budget process led to the presentation of the Superintendent's Budget Request at the Board's March 16, 2026 regular meeting. The request for consideration for 2026-2027 was for \$68.4 million for operating funds and for \$4.5 million for capital outlay.

The final budget will be approved by the Board of Education and presented to the County by May 15, 2026 as required by State Law.

Fiscal Implications: The final budget will be approved by the Board of Education and presented to the County by May 15, 2026 as required by State Law.

Recommendation: Board of Education approval of the Gaston County Schools 2026-2027 Budget Request and presentation to the County by May 15, 2026 as required by State Law.

Policy Implications:

Section 8000 - Fiscal Management ▾

District Priorities:

Sustainable Financial Stewardship ▾

Submitted by: Morgen A. Houchard, Superintendent

Department: Superintendent

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: April 20, 2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Process/Timeline for consideration of School Consolidation

Type of Item: ☐ **Consent** ☐ **Action** ☒ **Information**

Main Points: Sound fiscal responsibility with respect to expenditure of public funds leads to audit of current facilities and assessment of the need for continued current use. The Board will receive information related to the process and timeline for consideration of school consolidation options.

Fiscal Implications: Potential savings of both capital and operational funds

Recommendation:

Policy Implications:

Section 9000 - Facilities -

District Priorities:

Sustainable Financial Stewardship -

Submitted by: Dr. Morgen A. Houchard, Superintendent

Department: Superintendent's Office

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 4/20/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Consent Agenda

Type of Item: ☒ **Consent** ☒ **Action** ☐ **Information**

Main Points:

Approval of the Consent Agenda by the Board for the following items:

- A. Recommended Personnel
- B. Budget Amendments & Budget Transfers
- C. Construction/Repair Change Orders
- D. Cramerton MS Right of Way and Easement acquisition from NCDOT
- E. Policy Revisions
- F. Contracts
 - Microsoft Software Agreement
 - Baseball Stadium Press Box & Concession Design
 - Belmont Central and New Hope Preconstruction and Master Agreement
 - Emergency repair for Hunter Huss Cooling Tower
 - Forestview Synthetic Turf Field and Track Installation
 - South Point Boiler Header Replacement
 - Leader in Me
 - 2025-2026 Content Pedagogy
 - ATSI Schools - Federal Grant Path Forward

Fiscal Implications:

As stated in each Agenda item.

Recommendation:

Consent items will be adopted with a single motion, second, and vote, unless a request for removal from the Consent Agenda is heard from a Board member.

Policy Implications:

Policy Code: 1010 Board Authority and Duties.

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Efficient and Responsive Operations and Technology
& Academics that Build Pathways to Student Success

Submitted by: Dr. Morgen A. Houchard

Department: Superintendent

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 4/20/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Recommended Personnel

Type of Item: ☒ Consent ☒ Action ☐ Information

Main Points:

In accordance with the provisions of G.S. 115C-276(j), "It shall be the duty of the Superintendent to recommend and the Board of Education to elect all principals, teachers, and other school personnel in the administrative unit." It is also within the powers of the Board to hear requests for approved leave, retirement and resignations or terminations in accordance with employment and dismissal regulations.

Fiscal Implications:

N/A

Recommendation:

Approve personnel as recommended.

Policy Implications:

Policy Code: 7100 Recruitment and Selection of Personnel.

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Talent and Workforce Development

Submitted by: Dr. Morgen A. Houchard

Department: Human Resources

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 4/20/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Budget Amendments and Budget Transfers

Type of Item: ☒ **Consent** ☒ **Action** ☐ **Information**

Main Points:

Budget amendments are needed to adjust the approved budget to reflect actual changes in revenue and budget transfers are needed to transfer money to proper expenditure codes as requested by fund managers.

Fiscal Implications:

Makes adjustments to the 2025-2026 budget.

Recommendation:

Approval of the attached listing of recommended budget amendments and transfers.

Policy Implications:

Policy Code: 8300 Fiscal Management Standards

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Other: Policy or Gen Statute. See above.

Submitted by: James Beckford

Department: Finance

Assistant Director of Finance • Business Services

Gaston County Schools
Changes in Appropriations
2025-2026 Budget Resolution - March
Transfers Between Functions

State Public School Fund

Function	Description	Expense Increase	Expense Decrease
51000	Regular Instructional Services		1,944,474
52000	Special Population Services		812,849
53000	Alternative Programs and Services	199,783	
54000	School Leadership Services	987,143	
55000	Co-Curricular Services	124,844	
58000	School-Based Support Services	1,310,216	
61000	Support and Development Services		8,349
62000	Special Population Support and Development Services	10,000	
64000	Technology Support Services		462,503
65000	Operational Support Services		726,568
66000	Financial and Human Resource Services	935,303	
67000	Accountability Services	204,607	
68000	System-Wide Pupil Support Services	269,753	
69000	Policy, Leadership and Communication/Public Information Services		40,314
72000	Nutrition Services		46,592
		<u>4,041,648</u>	<u>4,041,648</u>

Explanation: These transfers adjust budgeted amounts per requests from fund managers/principals.

Gaston County Schools
Changes in Appropriations
2025-2026 Budget Resolution - March
Transfers Between Functions

Local Current Expense Fund

Function	Description	Expense Increase	Expense Decrease
51000	Regular Instructional Services		863,440
52000	Special Population Services		38,114
53000	Alternative Programs and Services		37,579
54000	School Leadership Services	109,775	
55000	Co-Curricular Services	43,284	
58000	School-Based Support Services	281,491	
61000	Support and Development Services		19,671
62000	Special Population Support and Development Services	3,307	
63000	Alternative Programs and Services - Support and Development Services		7,067
64000	Technology Support Services		218,166
65000	Operational Support Services		34,313
66000	Financial and Human Resource Services	811,955	
67000	Accountability Services		5,956
68000	System-Wide Pupil Support Services	651	
69000	Policy, Leadership and Communication/Public Information Services		26,158
		<u>1,250,463</u>	<u>1,250,463</u>

Explanation: These transfers adjust budgeted amounts per requests from fund managers/principals.

Gaston County Schools
Changes in Appropriations
2025-2026 Budget Resolution - March
Transfers Between Functions

Federal Grants Fund

Function	Description	Expense Increase	Expense Decrease
52000	Special Population Services		58
53000	Alternative Programs and Services	8,329	
61000	Support and Development Services		546
63000	Alternative Programs and Services - Support and Development Services		9,544
65000	Operational Support Services	983	
81000	Payments to Other Governmental Units	837	
		<u>10,149</u>	<u>10,149</u>

Explanation: These transfers adjust budgeted amounts per requests from fund managers/principals.

Gaston County Schools
Changes in Appropriations
2025-2026 Budget Resolution - March
Transfers Between Functions

Restricted Grants Fund

Function	Description	Expense Increase	Expense Decrease
51000	Regular Instructional Services	18,000	
54000	School Leadership Services	100,000	
58000	School-Based Support Services		100,000
65000	Operational Support Services		25,000
71000	Community Services		18,000
81000	Payments to Other Governmental Units	25,000	
		<u>143,000</u>	<u>143,000</u>

Explanation: These transfers adjust budgeted amounts per requests from fund managers/principals.

Gaston County Schools
Changes in Appropriations
2025-2026 Budget Resolution - March
Proposed Expenditures and Sources of Revenue

State Public School Fund

#	Function	Description	Expense Increase (Decrease)	Revenue Increase (Decrease)
1	31000	Revenue - State Public School Fund		(75,216)
	51100	Regular Instructional Services	(75,216)	
		This amendment adjusts funds for the Classroom Teacher allotment - - NCVPS Sure-Up per Enrollment - DPI Allotment Revision # 55 - FY26 (PRC0001)		
2	31000	Revenue - State Public School Fund		501
	54000	School Leadership Services	501	
		This amendment budgets funds for the Non-Instructional Support allotment - Holocaust Reimbursement - DPI Allotment Revision # 59 - FY26 (PRC0003)		
3	31000	Revenue - State Public School Fund		200,801
	51000	Regular Instructional Services	64,855	
	52000	Special Population Services	39,431	
	53000	Alternative Programs and Services	18,625	
	58000	School-Based Support Services	35,424	
	65000	Operational Support Services	14,263	
	66000	Financial and Human Resource Services	28,203	
		This amendment budgets funds for the Non-Contributory Emp Benefits Allotment - FY26 (PRC0009)		
4	31000	Revenue - State Public School Fund		(7,500)
	51000	Regular Instructional Services	(7,500)	
		This amendment adjusts funds for the Career Technical Education - Dollars allotment - Adobe License Reduction - DPI Allotment Revision # 60 - FY26 (PRC0014)		
5	31000	Revenue - State Public School Fund		5,366
	54000	School Leadership Services	5,366	
		This amendment budgets funds for the Staff Development allotment - DPI Allotment - FY26 (PRC0028)		
6	31000	Revenue - State Public School Fund		5,400
	52000	Special Population Services	5,400	
		This amendment budgets funds for the Children with Disabilities - Special Funds allotment - DPI Allotment Revision # 60 - FY26 (PRC0063)		
7	31000	Revenue - State Public School Fund		71,254
	53000	Alternative Programs and Services	71,254	
		This amendment budgets funds for the Literacy Intervention allotment - Twice Retained - DPI Allotment Revision # 56 - FY26 (PRC0085)		

8	31000	Revenue - State Public School Fund		27,076
	52000	Special Population Services	27,076	
This amendment budgets funds for the Children with Disabilities - Special State allotment - DPI Allotment Revision # 60 - FY26 (PRC0089)				

Total State Public School Fund Amendments			<u>227,682</u>	<u>227,682</u>
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Gaston County Schools
Changes in Appropriations
2025-2026 Budget Resolution - March
Proposed Expenditures and Sources of Revenue

Local Current Expense Fund

#	Function	Description	Expense Increase (Decrease)	Revenue Increase (Decrease)
1	41100	Local Sources - Restricted		9,844
	66000	Financial and Human Resource Services	9,844	
	This amendment budgets funds for the Non-Instructional Support allotment FY26 (PRC0003)			
2	48900	Local Sources - Restricted		(2,254,023)
	51000	Regular Instructional Services	(2,254,023)	
	This amendment budgets funds for the E-Rate allotment FY26 (PRC519)			
Total Local Current Expense Fund Account			<u>(2,244,179)</u>	<u>(2,244,179)</u>

Gaston County Schools
Changes in Appropriations
2025-2026 Budget Resolution - March
Proposed Expenditures and Sources of Revenue

Federal Current Expense Fund

#	Function	Description	Expense Increase (Decrease)	Revenue Increase (Decrease)
1	36000	Federal Revenue		(23,185)
	52000	Special Population Services	(23,185)	
This amendment adjusts funds for the IDEA - Special Needs - Target Assistance Allotment - FY26 (PRC0118)				

Total State Public School Fund Amendments

(23,185)	(23,185)
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Gaston County Schools
Changes in Appropriations
2025-2026 Budget Resolution - March
Proposed Expenditures and Sources of Revenue

Restricted Grants Fund

#	Function	Description	Expense Increase (Decrease)	Revenue Increase (Decrease)
1	48000	Local Sources - Restricted		69,334
	61000	Support and Development Services	6,637	
	66000	Financial and Human Resource Services	9,150	
	81000	Payments to Other Governmental Units	53,547	
	This amendment budgets funds for the Central Office Administration allotment - FY26 (PRC0002)			
2	48000	Local Sources - Restricted		100,497
	66000	Financial and Human Resource Services	100,497	
	This amendment budgets funds for the Non-Contributory Emp Benefits allotment - FY26 (PRC0009)			
3	48000	Local Sources - Restricted		2,000
	51000	Regular Instructional Services	2,000	
	This amendment budgets funds for the Instructional/Student Support allotment - FY26 (PRC0216)			
4	37000	Restricted		38,331
	52000	Special Population Services	38,331	
	This amendment budgets funds for the Medicaid allotment - FY26 (PRC0305)			
5	48000	Local Sources - Restricted		86,477
	55000	Co-Curricular Services	86,477	
	This amendment budgets funds for the Positions From School Funds allotment - FY26 (PRC0540)			
6	48900	Local Sources - Restricted		2,254,023
	51000	Regular Instructional Services	2,254,023	
	This amendment budgets funds for the E-Rate allotment FY26 (PRC519)			
7	48000	Local Sources - Restricted		2,345
	71000	Community Services	2,345	
	This amendment adjust funds for the Community Use allotment - FY26 (PRC0704)			
Total Restricted Grants Fund Amendments			<u>2,553,008</u>	<u>2,553,008</u>

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 4/20/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Construction/Repair Change Orders

Type of Item: ☒ **Consent** ☒ **Action** ☐ **Information**

Main Points:

There were no construction and repair change orders that were submitted since the last Board meeting. Any change orders that were less than \$100,000 were approved by the Superintendent or his designee in accordance with Board Policy 9030 – Facility Construction. Change orders greater than \$100,000 must be approved by the Board.

Fiscal Implications:

All change orders were prefunded prior to recommendation for approval.

Recommendation:

Approval of the attached listing of construction/repair change orders.

Policy Implications:

Policy Code: 9030 Facility Construction

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Other: Policy or Gen Statute. See above.

Submitted by: Bessie Harvey, Assistant
Superintendent of Operations

Department: Facilities

GCS CHANGE ORDER NOTIFICATION

In accordance with GCS Board Policy 9030 - Facility Construction, all construction and repair change orders approved by the Superintendent, or his designee, shall be reported to the Board. In addition, any change orders that involve amounts over \$100,000 must be approved by the Board. This GCS Change Order Notification provides the required information for change orders \$100,000 or less that have already been approved by the Superintendent, or his designee, and change orders over \$100,000 that need Board approval.

Presented to		Contractor's Name	Project name	Description of Change	Change	
BOE					Contract Amount	Order Amount
4-20-26	None to Report					

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 4/20/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Cramerton MS Right of Way and Easement acquisition from NCDOT

Type of Item: ☐ Consent ☒ Action ☐ Information

Main Points:

Gaston County Schools has received a request from the State Transportation to acquire easements associated with the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Project U-5821. This project will upgrade N.C. 279 (South New Hope Road) from Union New Hope Road to Redbud Drive in Gastonia. The planned improvements include widening N.C. 279 to a four-lane divided roadway and completing road work in front of Cramerton Middle School.

For the portion affecting district property (38.958 acres with road access), the State is requesting the following:

- **Right-of-way acquisition:** approximately 0.332 acres
- **Temporary construction easement:** approximately 0.066 acres
- **Permanent utility easement:** approximately 0.128 acres

Planned improvements within this area include asphalt paving, concrete curbing, and landscaping.

Fiscal Implications: The District will receive \$34,800 from NCDOT for this acquisition.

Recommendation:

Approve the attached Right-of-way and Easement acquisition from NCDOT.

Policy Implications:

Board Policy 9400 - Sale, Disposal, and Lease of Board-Owned Real Property

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Efficient and Responsive Operations and Technology

Submitted by: Bessie Harvey,
Assistant Superintendent of Operations

Department: Operations

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 04/20/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Board Policy Updates

3220 - Technology in the Educational Program

3230/7370 - Technology Responsible Use

3280/7322 - Web Page Development

Type of Item:

☒ **Consent**

☒ **Action**

☐ **Information**

Main Points: Audit of current policies leads to revisions/adoptions of Gaston County Board of Education Policies. The Policy Committee has reviewed the proposed changes and approved them for adoption/revision by the Board of Education.

Fiscal Implications:

Recommendation: Board of Education approval of proposed policy updates.

Policy Implications: Board of Education Policies will be updated to the required standards.

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Efficient and Responsive Operations and Technology

Submitted by: Sonya McGraw, Attorney

Department: Legal

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 4/20/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Contracts and Expenditures >\$100,000

Type of Item: ☒ Consent ☒ Action ☐ Information

Main Points:

The attached listing of contracts and expenditures more than \$100,000 was reviewed by staff and recommended for approval by the Board, or are contracts less than \$100,000 but recommended to the Board for approval.

Fiscal Implications:

All contracts and expenditures will be paid using bond funding, capital proceeds or operational savings.

Recommendation:

Approval of Contracts with the Board.

Policy Implications:

Policy Code: 8640 Contracts with the Board.

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Sustainable Financial Stewardship

Submitted by: James Beckford
Assistant Director of Finance and Business Services

Department: Finance

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 4/20/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Microsoft Software Agreement

Type of Item: ☒ Consent ☒ Action ☐ Information

Main Points:

Microsoft Enrollment for Education Solutions (EES) is the Microsoft volume licensing agreement for academic institutions with 1,000 or more users. This renewal of this agreement provides the following items:

1. Windows operating system
2. Microsoft Office Suite
3. Active Directory (The software used to manage our Windows network)
4. Windows Server operating system

Fiscal Implications:

The cost is \$158,900 which is included as a budget item in the current TSS operational budget.

Recommendation:

The Operations Committee recommends approval of the renewal of the Microsoft EES license agreement.

Policy Implications:

Policy Code: 3220 Technology in the Educational Program

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Efficient and Responsive Operations and Technology

Submitted by: Curtis Poplin, Chief Technology Officer

Department: TSS

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 4/20/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Baseball Stadium Press Box & Concessions Building Design

Type of Item: ☒ Consent ☒ Action ☐ Information

Main Points:

Architectural and engineering services are being procured for the replacement of the baseball stadium press box and concessions building at South Point High School. The total appraisal value of this building structure is \$368,562.00, with a \$50,000 deductible responsibility. **The remaining project costs will be funded through school bond funds.**

Fiscal Implications:

The estimated cost for this project is \$160,000.00.

Recommendation:

Authorization to move forward with McMillan Pazdan Smith Architecture on the design of the replacement press box and concessions building.

Policy Implications:

Policy Code 9000 – Planning to Address Facility Needs

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Efficient and Responsive Operations and Technology

Submitted by: Bessie Harvey,
Assistant Superintendent of Operations **Department:** Operations

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 4/20/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Master Agreement and Preconstruction Services for Belmont Central Elementary and New Hope Elementary Additions and Renovations

Type of Item: ☒ Consent ☒ Action ☐ Information

Main Points:

This project will provide needed additions and renovations at Belmont Central Elementary School and New Hope Elementary School. Edifice Construction was selected as the Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) for this project.

Fiscal Implications:

The cost for preconstruction services for the addition and renovation projects at Belmont Central Elementary and New Hope Elementary is \$191,360.00. **School bond funding will be utilized for this project.**

Recommendation:

Approve the master agreement and preconstruction services contract with Edifice Construction for additions and renovations at Belmont Central Elementary School and New Hope Elementary School.

Policy Implications:

Policy Code 9000 – Planning to Address Facility Needs

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Efficient and Responsive Operations and Technology

Submitted by: Bessie Harvey
Assistant Superintendent of Operations

Department: Operations

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 4/20/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Emergency repair for Hunter Huss Cooling Tower

Type of Item: ☒ **Consent** ☒ **Action** ☐ **Information**

Main Points:

Both heat exchangers are busted on evaporative cooling towers. A valve failure caused the coils to freeze during the ice/snow storms and busted the coils. There is potential for no heat or A/C throughout the majority of the school with a lead time of 12 weeks on the replacement coils. **The project will be funded through school bond funds.**

Fiscal Implications:

The estimated cost for this project is \$185,005.47.

Recommendation:

Authorization to move forward with emergency repairs of the Hunter Huss cooling tower.

Policy Implications:

Policy Code 9000 – Planning to Address Facility Needs

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Efficient and Responsive Operations and Technology

Submitted by: Bessie Harvey, Assistant
Superintendent of Operations

Department: Operations

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 4/20/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Forestview Synthetic Turf Field and Track Installation

Type of Item: ☒ **Consent** ☒ **Action** ☐ **Information**

Main Points:

On March 17th, 5 companies signed into the mandatory pre-bid meeting. On March 23, at the bid opening, only 4 companies submitted bids. Motz Group LLC was the lowest bidder at \$2,491,307.00; followed by GeoSurfaces at \$2,544.445.00, SprinTurf at \$2,647,185.00, and AstroTurf at \$2,654.578. **School bond funding will be utilized for this project.**

Fiscal Implications:

The estimated cost for this project is \$2,491,307.00.

Recommendation:

Authorization to move forward with the Motz Group for the installation of the synthetic turf field and track installation at Forestview High School. **School bond funding will be utilized for this project.**

Policy Implications:

Policy Code 9000 – Planning to Address Facility Needs

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Efficient and Responsive Operations and Technology

Submitted by: Bessie Harvey, Assistant
Superintendent of Operations

Department: Operations

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 4/20/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Replacement of Boiler Headers at South Point HS

Type of Item: ☒ **Consent** ☐ **Action** ☐ **Information**

Main Points:

To remove and replace the existing hydronic supply and return headers serving the 2-pipe hydronic system located above the ceiling in the hallways from front office to classroom 110 and from office to classroom 124. Work shall include all associated piping modifications, valves, supports, insulation, flushing, pressure testing, and system startup to return the system to full operational status.

Fiscal Implications:

The estimated cost for this project is \$228,898.11.

Recommendation:

Authorization to move forward with replacement of the boiler headers at South Point High School utilizing **repair and renovation funds**.

Policy Implications:

Policy Code 9000 – Planning to Address Facility Needs

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Efficient and Responsive Operations and Technology

Submitted by: Bessie Harvey, Assistant
Superintendent of Operations

Department: Operations

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: April 20, 2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: 2026-2027 Leader in Me Contract for Carr Elementary School, Costner Elementary School, WC Friday Middle School and North Gaston High School

Type of Item: x **Consent** x **Action** **Information**

Main Points: The Leader in Me framework aligns directly to the district’s Academic Pathway by strengthening the conditions necessary for high-quality Tier 1 instruction and improved student outcomes. By establishing a common language around leadership, goal setting, and accountability, Leader in Me supports schools in building a positive, high-expectations culture where students take ownership of their learning. This focus on student agency and clarity of expectations reinforces the district’s priorities of increasing grade-level proficiency, strengthening instructional coherence, and creating environments where both adults and students are aligned to shared academic goals.

Additionally, Leader in Me complements the district’s Data Driven Instruction (DDI) work by embedding goal setting, progress monitoring, and reflection into daily practice. Students actively track their learning, engage in data conversations, and participate in student-led conferences, mirroring the same DDI cycles used by teachers and leaders. This alignment creates a cohesive system in which instructional practices, leadership development, and student ownership work together to drive measurable gains in achievement, growth, and overall school performance.

Fiscal Implications: Funded by 2026-2027 State 069 budget – At Risk and Disadvantaged Students

Investment Detail

Year	Subscription	Professional Development	Total
2026-2027 Contract Year 1	\$30,532.50	\$16,000.00	\$46,532.50

Recommendation: Approve one year contract: Leader in Me – Carr Elementary School, Costner Elementary, WC Friday Middle School and North Gaston High School f

Policy Implications:

Section 3000 - Educational Program

District Priorities:

Academics that Build Pathways to Student Success

Submitted by: Tonya Kales

Department: Academic Services

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: April 20, 2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: 2025-2026 Content Pedagogy

Type of Item: **x Consent** **x Action** **Information**

Main Points: For Summer 2026, the district will implement a Coach Pedagogy Training to build the capacity of Advanced Teacher Roles and Instructional Coaches in Getting Better Faster (GBF)-aligned pedagogy, including Do Nows and Exit Tickets as well as Focused Instruction. This investment will ensure coaches develop a shared instructional framework and the skills necessary to consistently support high-quality Tier 1 instruction across classrooms. By aligning instructional strategies to the GBF rubric, the training advances the district's Academic Pathway by strengthening instructional coherence, ensuring access to grade-level content, and building the adult capacity required to increase the percentage of students performing on grade level.

Additionally, this work directly supports the district's Data Driven Instruction (DDI) priorities by equipping coaches to lead cycles of data analysis, targeted reteach, and standards-aligned instructional adjustments. Coaches will serve as key drivers in translating interim and classroom data into actionable instructional moves, reinforcing consistent practices across schools. The total cost of \$59,375 represents a strategic investment in developing internal expertise and sustainable systems that accelerate student growth, increase the number of schools meeting or exceeding growth, and reduce the number of low-performing schools in alignment with the goals outlined in the Strategic Plan 2030 Academic Pathway.

Fiscal Implications:

Timeframe	Initiative	Outcome	Cost
Summer 2026	Coach Pedagogy Training – Train coaches in GBF-aligned pedagogy including DNET and Focused Instruction (FI).	Coaches develop a shared instructional framework and the skills to consistently support high-quality teaching across classrooms. Instructional Strategies will align with GBF Rubric	\$59,375

Key:

GBF: GCS Getting Better Faster Walkthrough tool

DNET: Do Now and Exit Tickets: GCS Data Driven Instruction Tools.

Recommendation: Approve the use of remaining ATR grant and Title I professional development funds to provide professional development in June 2026 to the teachers who hold the ATR and Instructional Coach positions for the 2026-2027 school year.

Policy Implications:

Section 3000 - Educational Program

District Priorities:

Academics that Build Pathways to Student Success

Submitted by: Tonya Kales

Department: Academic Services

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: April 20, 2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: ATSI Schools - Federal Grant Path Forward

Type of Item:	x Consent	x Action	Information
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Main Points: Abre Data Solution

The Abre data solution, funded by state resources for ATSI (Additional Targeted Support and Improvement) subgroups, will also be used to benefit all students across the district. It directly supports the Strategic Plan 2030 by centralizing assessment, attendance, behavior, and demographic data in one platform, enabling real-time, actionable insights. This tool is key to advancing our Data Driven Instruction (DDI) priorities, helping school leaders and teachers identify gaps and take targeted actions, particularly for ATSI subgroups.

Abre enhances student outcomes by providing a comprehensive, unified view of each student's progress, making data actionable at every level of the organization. It replaces manual spreadsheets with dynamic, up-to-date reporting, improving decision-making, resource allocation, and ultimately increasing student growth, proficiency on EOG/EOC assessments, and reducing low-performing schools. This solution supports our long-term goals of accelerating academic achievement and creating sustainable, efficient systems across the district.

Fiscal Implications: ATSI federal grant funds will be allocated towards a contract with Abre providing a Core Analytics Premium Unlimited Solution to include holistic and detailed, real-time insights with prebuilt and custom Abre-Built data dashboards. The three year contract will be financially handled 100% by the federal grant.

Solution	List Price	Total
Core Analytics - Premium Unlimited Holistic and detailed, real-time insights with prebuilt & custom Abre-built DaaS dashboards, AI-driven business intelligence, Mode license for district-built dashboards, and secure, role-based access to actionable student data for all district and community stakeholders. (Unlimited DaaS with simultaneous dashboard builds/project work)	\$11.10/Student	\$335,808.30
Plans & Forms Allows you to create robust learning & support plans for students. Accessible to relevant community stakeholders so that supports, services and growth can be easily monitored over time. (PEP, 504, BIP, EL/MLL, AIG, IGP)	\$.50/Student	\$15,126.50
Professional Development*	\$7,500	\$7,500
Abre Strategic Investment (20%)**	\$70,186.96	
Total	\$358,434.80	\$288,247.84

* Includes 4 60-minute virtual sessions OR 1 day onsite session covering basic platform navigation, product configuration enablement & use case aligned learning.

** If formal signature is placed by 4/30/2026

Contract begins May 1, 2026. Billing aligned to July 1 to match funding availability.

36-Month Partnership Paid Annually

Invoice	Amount	Date
Invoice 1 - July 1, 2026	\$288,247.84	5/1/26 - 4/30/27
Invoice 2	\$280,747.84	5/1/27 - 4/30/28
Invoice 3	\$280,747.84	5/1/28 - 4/30/29

Recommendation: Approve the use of ATSI federal grant funds to purchase a data solution that will centralize assessment, attendance, behavior, and demographic data in one platform for all students and ATSI designated subgroups.

Policy Implications:

Section 3000 - Educational Program

District Priorities:

Academics that Build Pathways to Student Success

Submitted by: Tonya Kales and Kelly Cunningham

Department: Academics

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 4/20/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Closed Session

Type of Item: ☐ Consent ☐ Action ☒ Information

Main Points:

Closed sessions shall be held when required to permit a public body to act in the public interest as permitted by law.

– N.C.G.S. §143-318.11(a)(6) Personnel

– N.C.G.S. §143-318.11(a)(3) Consultation with Attorney

In order to consult with the Board's attorney and protect the attorney client privilege, and to receive advice with respect to the lawsuits captioned:

—19-CVS-3893 McKinney et al. vs. Goins and The Gaston County Board of Education

—21-CVS-5018 Brittain vs. Beason and The Gaston County Board of Education

—3:23-CV-643-RJC-DCK Roger Perkins vs. The Gaston County Board of Education

—Any other legal matters.

Fiscal Implications:

TBD

Recommendation:

Board to consider information provided in Closed Session in accordance with G.S. §143-318.11.

Policy Implications:

Policy Code: 2610 Board Attorney

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Other: Policy or Gen Statute. See above.

Submitted by: Sonya McGraw, Attorney **Department:** Legal/Superintendent's Office