

Gaston County Schools
Board of Education
Monday, June 16, 2025
Meeting 5:30 p.m.
Regular Meeting

MINUTES

The Gaston County Board of Education met in a regular session on Monday, June 16, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. in the Board Room, 943 Osceola Street, Gastonia, NC. The meeting was live on Spectrum, Cable Channel 21 and the Gaston County Board of Education YouTube page. Those Board Members in attendance were: Chairman Josh Crisp, Vice Chairman Dot Cherry, Lee Dedmon, Tod Kinlaw, Robbie Lovelace, Brent Moore, Jeff Ramsey, Janna Smith and A.M. Stephens III (arrived at 5:43 p.m.).

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

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

Invocation

Rev. Melissa Lowe from First United Methodist Church of Gastonia led the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance

Spencer Powers, John Chavis Middle School led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Agenda Adoption - Action

The Board considered Agenda Adoption – Action

Motion to adopt the Agenda as presented was made by Mr. Jeff Ramsey seconded by Janna Smith; motion carried unanimously. (8-0)

Good News – Information

Mr. Todd Hagans recognized Darryl Thompson, who is the Engineering and Graphics Academy coordinator at the Highland School of Technology. Mr. Thompson is the Technology Student Association High School Chapter Advisor of the Year for North Carolina. This significant, state-level honor recognizes Mr. Thompson for his service and dedication to the mission and values of the Technology Student Association. As chapter advisor, he carries the responsibility of recruiting students to participate in the club, guiding their work, encouraging them to participate in local, state, and national competitions, and serving as a mentor and role model. As the North Carolina Chapter Advisor of the Year winner, Mr. Thompson will be honored at the Technology Student Association's national conference in Nashville, Tennessee. Board Member Janna Smith presented the award.

Mr. Todd Hagans recognized Tryon Elementary student Rylee Jordan, representatives from Tryon Elementary School, Tryonota Fire Department, Gaston County Emergency Management and Fire Services. In February, these agencies worked together to launch the "Flash A Light on Literacy" reading program at Tryon Elementary School. Students in grades 3-5 were challenged with reading as many books as possible over a two-month span. Rylee read 55 books, and won the contest, which

gave her the opportunity to arrive at school one day riding in a Tryonota fire truck. In addition to Rylee's win, the fourth grade won a pizza party for reading the most books in a competition against the third and fifth grades. In total, the students read 521 books, which is an outstanding achievement. Chairman Crisp congratulated Rylee and presented her with a Certificate from the Board of Education. Chairman Crisp presented the award.

Mr. Todd Hagans recognized our school data managers who achieved a perfect score of 100% and 99% on their PowerSchool audit during the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 school years.

Schools that achieved a perfect score of 100 percent on the PowerSchool audit, meaning they had no errors are:

- Cherri Johnston, Belmont Middle School
- Toni Lowrance, Cramerton Middle School (who is now enjoying life in retirement)
- Taylor Johnson, who is at Cramerton Middle School now, but earned a perfect score while at W.C. Friday Middle School
- Brittany Lucas, Gaston Early College High School
- Toni Wilson, McAdenville Elementary School
- Wendy Hawkins, Catawba Heights Elementary School
- Natasha Fulbright, Hawks Nest STEAM Academy
- Tami Brady, Kiser Elementary School
- Amy Muse, Rankin Elementary School
- Melissa Knox, Sherwood Elementary School; and
- Cyndi Hibbler, Webb Street School.

Schools that scored a 99 percent on the PowerSchool audit are:

- Teresa Whitesides, Belmont Central Elementary
- Sara Scott, Lowell Elementary
- Susan Johnson, Mount Holly Middle School
- Dolly Bristol, East Gaston High School
- Sherrie Angstadt, Carr Elementary
- Kelly Hoagland, New Hope Elementary
- Bonnie Saylor, Ashbrook High School
- Beth Quattlebaum, Forestview High School; and
- Blair Henderson, South Point High School.

Todd Hagans also recognized our district-level PowerSchool specialists, Scott Cassell and Leah Stewart, for working with our school data managers and ensuring that our student data is current

and accurate. Vice-Chair Cherry presented all with a Certificate of Appreciation from the Board of Education.

Todd Hagans announced that Gaston County Schools has earned the United Way Golden Eagle Award for the third year in a row raising nearly \$132,000 this past year which is a record amount. The funds will go toward the United Way's efforts to support programs related to three areas: education, health and wellness, and financial stability.

South Point High School Scholar-Athlete teams.....

The GCS Class of 2025 earned over \$35 Million in scholarships.

A video showcasing the good work of the Leadership Conference recently held by the Academic Services Team at Forestview High School for Principals and Assistant Principals was shared with the Board.

*See 2-minute Video [Leadership Conference](#)

Classroom Moment – Information

Chairman Crisp recognized Dr. Bryan Denton Executive Director who presented a PowerPoint on the James S. Forrester Commissioners' School of Excellence.

(View PowerPoint) [James S. Forrester Commissioners' School of Excellence](#)

Public Expression – Information

Sheila Christenbuy
2824 Monterey Park Drive
Gastonia, NC

RE: Allowing homeschool students to play sports in public school without being dual enrolled.

Approval/Correction of Minutes – Action

Motion to adopt minutes from May 19, 2025 (Regular Meeting) as presented was made Mr. Lee Dedmon; seconded by Ms. Dot Cherry; motion carried unanimously. (9-0)

Operations Committee Report – Information

Brent Moore is chair of the committee and members are Dot Cherry, Lee Dedmon and Tod Kinlaw. Chairman Crisp recognized Ms. Dot Cherry who provided a summary of topics considered and discussed at the most recent meeting.

(View Report)

Curriculum & Instruction Committee Report – Information

Jeff Ramsey is chair of the committee and members are Robbie Lovelace, Janna Smith and A.M. Stephens III. Chairman Crisp recognized Mrs. Janna Smith who provided a summary of topics considered and discussed at the most recent meeting.

(View Report)

2025-2026 Interim Budget – Action

Associate Superintendent Gary Hoskins presented a PowerPoint on 2025-2026 Interim Budget.

(View PowerPoint) [2025-2026 Interim Budget](#)

Motion

The motion was made by Mr. A.M. Stephens; seconded by Ms. Dot Cherry that the Board Approve the 2025-2026 Interim Budget at the level of 80% of the 2024-2025 Budget.

A vote was taken and motion to approve the item as presented carried. (7-2)

Mr. Tod Kinlaw and Mrs. Robbie Lovelace voted against

Consent Agenda – Action

The Board considered the Consent Agenda:

- A. Recommended Personnel
- B. Budget Amendments & Budget Transfers
- C. Construction/Repair Change Orders
- D. CTE Grant
- E. Alternative School's Modified Accountability System – Warlick Academy
- F. Alternative School's Modified Accountability System – Webb Street School
- G. Contracts
 - Academic Services Resources and Contract Services
 - No Nonsense Nurturer Professional Development
 - Holbrook Middle School Boiler Replacement
 - Holbrook Middle School Canopy & Walkway Replacement, Tree Removal and Grading
 - Security Vestibule Design for Ashbrook High School, Bessemer City Primary School
 - East Gaston High School and Sherwood Elementary School
 - Hunter Huss High School Boiler Replacement
 - DRM (Finance) Roof Replacement

Motion to adopt the Consent Agenda as presented was made by Mr. Jeff Ramsey; seconded by Mr. Lee Dedmon motion carried unanimously. (9-0)

Superintendent's Comments

Superintendent Houchard congratulated the 28 students in the Class of 2025 who earned valedictorian or salutatorian honors. The students were recognized during high school graduation for their commitment to academic excellence. We want to give a shout-out to the Class of 2025 on being awarded more than \$35 million in scholarships.

Superintendent Houchard reported that we have transitioned to our summer work schedule for both our schools and central office locations. Monday through Thursday, we are open from 7:30 a.m. until

5:30 p.m. to serve the public and closed on Fridays. Our summer schedule will be in effect until Friday, August 1.

Superintendent Houchard reported that we have several summer programs which includes the Commissioners School of Excellence, summer enrichment, and our summer nutrition program, which offers convenient access to meals at various school and community sites throughout the county. We have information about the summer meals program on our website, and we want to thank our school nutrition staff for the tremendous amount of work they are doing to make the summer meals program happen.

Superintendent Houchard announced that on Thursday, August 7 we will have the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Grier Middle School. The ceremony will begin at 4:30 with tours of the building afterward. We are very excited about the opening of Grier, and we invite the community to join us for the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Superintendent Houchard reminded everyone that new student enrollment and kindergarten registration are ongoing throughout the summer. Parents have the option to register online, and we highly recommend doing so to avoid the rush before school starts on Wednesday, August 13.

The Board recognized, honored, and thanked Board Clerk Dana Luoto for her more than 15 years of service as Board Clerk and 30 years of dedication to Gaston County Schools. Chairman Crisp acknowledged Mrs. Luoto as a valuable asset to the Board, commending her for maintaining accurate minutes and keeping Board members informed about training and events. In appreciation of her service, Mrs. Luoto was presented with a gift basket filled with gift cards and well-wishes upon her retirement.

Closed Session

Chairman Crisp asked the Board to consider going into Closed Session under, N.C.G.S. §143-318.11(a)(3) Consultation with Attorney, N.C.G.S. §143-318.11(a)(5) Real Property and N.C.G.S. §143-318.11(a)(6) Personnel.

Motion to go into Closed Session was made by Ms. Dot Cherry; seconded by Mrs. Janna Smith; motion carried unanimously. (9-0)

The Board returned to Open Session at 7:23 p.m.

Superintendent Houchard recommended the following be awarded a four-year Assistant Principal contract:

Savanna Abernathy
Laura Costner
Tiffany Gardner
Carole Hamblin
Kristen Haskett
April McGee
Angie Molla
Phillip Morris
Wanda Reid

Alicia Roberts
Karen Smith
Megan Sneed
Paris Suttentfield
Daphne Templeton
Molly Tessnear
Dustin Weaver
Marcia White
Rebecca Wray

Motion

The motion was made by Ms. Dot Cherry seconded by Mr. Lee Dedmon that the Board extend the four-year Assistant Principal contracts.

A vote was taken and motion to approve the item as presented carried. The motion carried unanimously. (9-0)

Superintendent Houchard recommended the following be awarded a one-year Principal contract:

Doneen Johnson
Melissa Knick

Motion

The motion was made by Ms. Dot Cherry seconded by Mr. A.M. Stephens III that the Board extend the one-year Principal contracts.

A vote was taken and motion to approve the item as presented carried. The motion carried unanimously. (9-0)

Superintendent Houchard recommended the following be awarded a four-year Principal contract:

Justin Beam
Josh Bromley
Lorinda Brusie
Beth Crosby
Nakisha Glenn
Shawn Hubers
Rebecca Huffstetler
Dawn Lavinder
Tammy Mims
Curtis Mitchem
Susan Redmon
Jaime Wallace

Motion

The motion was made by Mr. A.M. Stephens III seconded by Mr. Brent Moore, that the Board extend the four-year Principal contracts.

A vote was taken and motion to approve the item as presented carried. The motion carried unanimously. (9-0)

Ms. Dot Cherry recommended that a contract extension be made to Dr. Morgen A. Houchard, Superintendent through June 30, 2029 and increase the Superintendent's salary by 10% effective July 1, 2025.

Motion

The motion was made by Mr. Brent Moore; seconded by Mr. Lee Dedmon that the Board Extend Dr. Houchard's contract through June 30, 2029 and to increase the Superintendent's salary by 10% effective July 1, 2025.

A vote was taken and motion to approve the item as presented carried. (7-2)
Mr. Tod Kinlaw and Mrs. Robbie Lovelace voted against.

Ms. Dot Cherry made the motion for contracts for the following Cabinet members be extended until June 30, 2029:

Bessie Harvey
Gary Hoskins
Tonya Kales
Sonya McGraw
Rebekka Powers

Motion

The motion was made by s Dot Cherry; seconded by Mr. Lee Dedmon that the Board extend the contracts as presented.

A vote was taken and motion to approve the item as presented carried. (8-1)
Mr. Tod Kinlaw voted against.

Chairman Crisp announced that the next Board Meeting will be held on Monday, August 18.

Board Members thanked Dr. Houchard for his vision, passion for the school system and for his leadership.

Adjournment

All business having been conducted, Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Lee Dedmon; seconded by Mr. Jeff Ramsey, motion carried unanimously. (9-0)

The Board Meeting adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

Approved:

Josh Crisp, Chairman
[Corporate Seal]

Morgen A. Houchard, Secretary

Date Approved: _____