

Gaston County Schools
Operations Committee
Monday, March 30, 2026

MINUTES

The Operations Committee met in a regular session on Monday, March 30 at 12:30 p.m. at the Central Office Board Room, 943 Osceola Street, Gastonia, NC. Those Board Members in attendance were: Dot Cherry, Lee Dedmon, and Tod Kinlaw. Vice Chair Cherry ran the meeting in the absence of Chairman Brent Moore.

Additional attendees included: Superintendent Dr. Morgen A. Houchard, Attorney Sonya McGraw, Assistant Superintendent of Operations Bessie Harvey, Executive Director of Human Resources Beth Suber, Chief Communications Officer Todd Hagans, Chief Technology Officer Curtis Poplin, Chief of Staff Tom Nencetti, and Board Clerk Cindy Beck.

Vice Chair Ms. Dot Cherry called the meeting to order at 12:31 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

Approval/Correction of Minutes

Motion to adopt minutes of March 2, 2026, as presented was made by Mr. Lee Dedmon; seconded by Mr. Tod Kinlaw; motion carried unanimously. (3-0)

Finance Updates -Information

Superintendent Houchard updated the Board members on the following:

He thanked the Gaston County Board of Commissioners for the transfer of the ten million dollars to Gaston County Schools.

The Superintendent and Hurd Isenhour Lopes (HIL) LLC, a consulting group of experts in school finance, human resources, operations, and finance, will meet regarding the Gaston County Schools 2025-2026 budget.

Systematically, purposeful alignments of state allotments and reviews of financial practices have been taking place over the last six months.

Reduction in Force (RIF)- Information

Superintendent Houchard and Mrs. Suber presented information on the Reduction in Force and the process in accordance with Policy 7820 Reduction in Force pursuant to state law.

Utilization Study - Information

Chief of Staff Tom Nencetti presented information to the Board that Gaston County Schools is undertaking a utilization study to maximize the use of their facilities and proactively plan for long-term enrollment. Project Objectives include:

- Maximize utilization of school facilities

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

(View Presentation)

School Closings/Consolidations (process/timeline) - Information

Assistant Superintendent of Operations Bessie Harvey presented the School Closings and Consolidations process and timeline for W.B. Beam Intermediate and Gaston Virtual Academy, including dates on strategic Forums, Public hearing, Senior Leaders Meetings, Operations Committee Review, and Cabinet Reviews.

(View Presentation)

TSS Updates - Information

Chief Technology Officer Curtis Poplin reported the following TSS updates:

The E-Rate Program for Schools and Libraries Universal Service Support Program reimburses the following:

Category 1 (Internet connectivity)

Category 2 (Switches, APs, UPSs)

TSS will submit the 471 form, which is the official request for discounts on eligible services and equipment for the upcoming funding year.

Instead of purchasing the equipment in advance and seeking reimbursement, TSS will wait until funding is confirmed before proceeding with the purchase of \$1,358,556.61.

The state requirement of the Digital Learning and Media Inventory (DLMI) at each school should be completed by May 29, 2026.

(View Presentation)

Human Resources Update - Information

Executive Director of Human Resources Beth Suber presented the April Human Resources Report:

The Optional Benefits Open Enrollment for Employees is open until May 29, 2026.

In March 2026, the fill rate for substitutes was 90%, with 4,832 absences entered into the system. In March 2025, the fill rate was 82%.

Retirements: A total of 126 employees have retired during this academic year or will retire this summer. Of those, 66 certified employees, 13 administrators, and 47 classified employees have completed the retirement process paperwork.

Human Resources is in the planning stages of a Retirement Information Session for interested employees. More details are forthcoming.

(View Presentation)

Operations Updates - Information/Action

Assistant Superintendent of Operations Bessie Harvey presented the following:
Cramerton MS Right of Way and Easement acquisition from NCDOT

Motion: The Motion was made by Mr. Lee Dedmon, seconded by Mr. Tod Kinlaw that the Board
Approve the Cramerton MS Right of Way and Easement acquisition from NCDOT as presented.

A vote was taken, and the item as presented carried unanimously. (3-0)

This item will appear on the Consent Agenda at the April 20, 2026, Regular meeting for consideration and approval by the full Board.

Contract Review – Action

The following contracts were reviewed and recommended for approval:

1. Microsoft Software Agreement

Motion:

The Motion was made by Mr. Lee Dedmon, seconded by Mr. Tod Kinlaw, that the Board
Approve the Microsoft Software Agreement

A vote was taken and Motion to approve the item as presented carried unanimously. (3-0)

This item will appear on the Consent Agenda at the April 20, 2026, Regular meeting for consideration and approval by the full Board.

2. South Point High Baseball Stadium Press Box & Concession Design

Motion:

The Motion was made by Mr. Lee Dedmon; seconded by Mr. Tod Kinlaw, that the Board
Approve the South Point Baseball Stadium Press Box & Concession Design

A vote was taken and Motion to approve the item as presented carried unanimously. (3-0)

This item will appear on the Consent Agenda at the April 20, 2026, Regular meeting for consideration and approval by the full Board.

3. Belmont Central and New Hope Preconstruction and Master Agreement

Motion:

The Motion was made by Mr. Tod Kinlaw, seconded by Mr. Lee Dedmon, that the Board

Approve the Belmont Central and New Hope Preconstruction and Master Agreement

A vote was taken and Motion to approve the item as presented carried unanimously. (3-0)

This item will appear on the Consent Agenda at the April 20,2026 Regular meeting for consideration and approval by the full Board.

4. Emergency repair for Hunter Huss Cooling Tower

Motion:

The Motion was made by Mr. Tod Kinlaw; seconded by Mr. Lee Dedmon that the Board

Approve the Emergency repair for Hunter Huss Cooling Tower

A vote was taken and Motion to approve the item as presented carried unanimously. (3-0)

This item will appear on the Consent Agenda at the April 20, 2026, Regular meeting for consideration and approval by the full Board.

5. Forestview Synthetic Turf Field and Track Installation

Motion:

The Motion was made by Mr. Lee Dedmon; seconded by Mr. Tod Kinlaw that the Board

Approve the Forestview Synthetic Turf Field and Track Installation

A vote was taken and Motion to approve the item as presented carried unanimously. (3-0)

This item will appear on the Consent Agenda at the April 20,2026 Regular meeting for consideration and approval by the full Board.

6. South Point Boiler Header Replacement

Motion:

The Motion was made by Mr. Tod Kinlaw; seconded by Mr. Lee Dedmon that the Board

Approve the South Point Boiler Header Replacement

A vote was taken and Motion to approve the item as presented carried unanimously. (3-0)

This item will appear on the Consent Agenda at the April 20, 2026 Regular meeting for consideration and approval by the full Board.

Superintendent's Comments

Superintendent Houchard expressed that the Strategic Plan has been rolled out on many occasions and that our six District Priorities will help to achieve success and a lifetime of learning for our students.

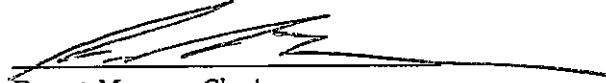
The next Operations Committee meeting will be held on Monday, May 4, 2026, at 12:30 p.m.

Adjournment

All business being conducted, Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Tod Kinlaw; seconded by Mr. Lee Dedmon motion carried unanimously. (3-0)

The Operations Committee Meeting adjourned at 1:37 p.m.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brent Moore', written over a horizontal line.

Brent Moore, Chairman

Date Approved: 5/4/20

Board of Education

Operations Committee Meeting

Central Office Board Room
March 30, 2026

Operations Committee Agenda

- Call to Order
- Review and Approve Minutes
 - **March 2nd Meeting**

Finance Updates

Dr. Mogen Houchard
Superintendent

Discussion

Human Resources Updates

Beth Suber

Executive Director of Human Resources

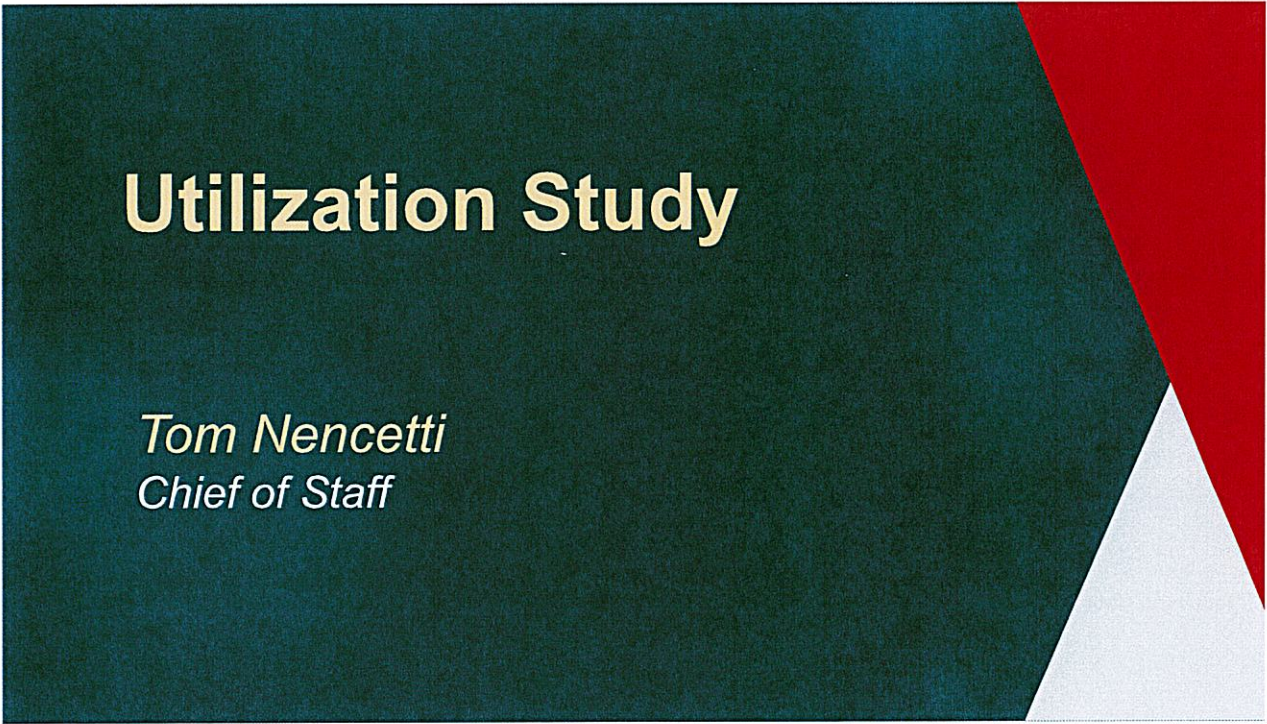
Board Policy 7820: Reduction in Force:

Should there be a need for a reduction in the workforce, the Superintendent shall present to the Board his recommendation, to include:

- The grounds for a reduction
- Positions to be reduced
- Background data/rationale that supports the recommendation



Discussion



Utilization Study

Tom Nencetti
Chief of Staff

Project Objectives

With the support of the Board of Education, Gaston County Schools is undertaking a utilization study to maximize the use of their facilities and proactively plan for long-term enrollment.

Gaston County Schools has begun a Utilization Study to meet the following key objectives:

Project Objectives

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

Criteria

- Balance school facility utilization – Make every effort to have equitable utilization (where possible) across the district and in accordance with school capacities. Make efficient use of available space.
- Close Proximity – Students should be assigned to the school within the closest proximity to their homes where possible. As well as avoiding creating zones that are not connected to primary attendance zone
- Maximize busing efficiencies in transportation of students – Make every effort to account for transportation (school bus and car rider), parent commuting patterns, balance busing travel time, and costs.

Criteria

- Allow for highest-grade at current school to legacy enroll - Allow for students who will be in the 5th, 8th, or 12th grades in the first school year of realignment to stay at their current school. This provision does not extend to siblings and *transportation will not be provided*. These will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- Make every effort to establish contiguous zones - Avoid creating zones that are not connected to the primary attendance zone, where possible.
- Account for future economic growth to allow for increasing attendance in high growth areas.

Criteria

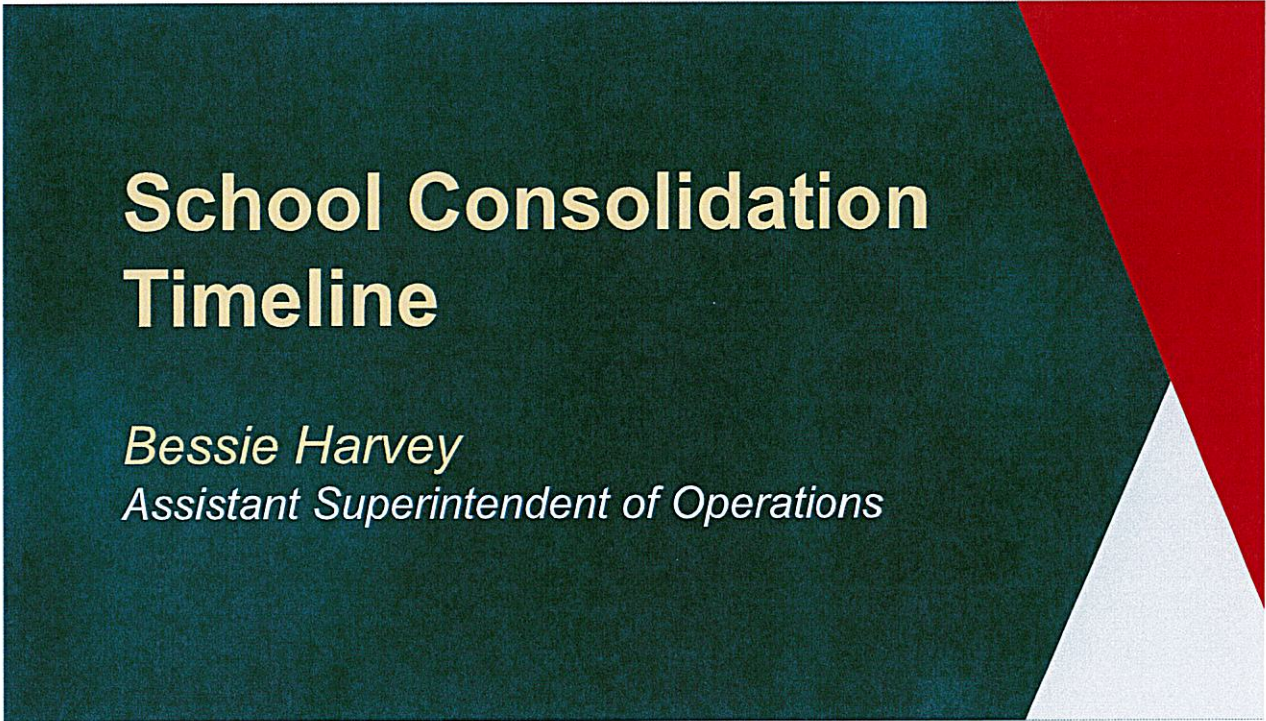
- Establish clear feeder patterns and continuity - Make every effort to establish a clear feeder pattern system.
- Use major roads and natural boundaries wherever possible to define attendance zones - Minimize the number of students who need to cross major intersections and other barriers to maximize the safety and security of students.
- Minimize impact on students - Attempt to minimize the number of students impacted when making boundary adjustments impact on specialized school programs or a change to school capacity.

Process and Timeline for Utilization Study

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



Discussion



School Consolidation Timeline

Bessie Harvey
Assistant Superintendent of Operations

Consolidation Timeline

March 23rd

March 30th

March 30th

Week of April 12



Leadership Discussion
(Pros & Cons)

Review benefits,
challenges, and impacts

Senior Leadership, Key
Department Leads

Identify risks,
opportunities, and
necessary supports

Operations Committee
Presentation

Present initial
considerations (Pros &
Cons)

Operations Committee,
District Leadership

Refine approach

Meeting with Region
Principals

Identify challenges and
support. Collaborate for
community forums.

Academics and Operations
Leadership

Create community forum
events that provide an
immersive experience.

Community Forums (large
and small group/school visit)
notification

Broad communication of
plans; gather community input

Sr. Leadership Teams

Create community forum
events that provide
an immersive experience.

Consolidation Timeline

Week of April 19th

April 26th

May 4th

May 11th



Community Forums (Large
and Small Group /School
Visits)

Targeted engagement and
deeper conversations at
impacted schools

School Communities,
District Staff

Address specific concerns
and school-level questions

Senior Leadership Meeting

Review all feedback and
finalize recommendations

Senior Leadership Team

Align on final proposal for
committee and board
consideration

Operations Committee
Presentation

Present updates
recommendations based on
community forms

Operations Committee, District
Leadership

Confirm readiness for board
action

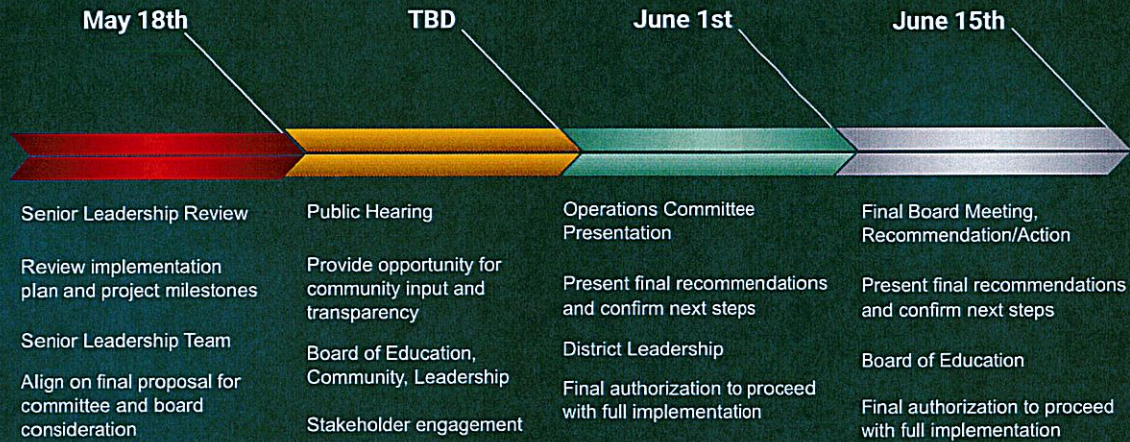
Cabinet Review

Review implementation plan
and project milestones

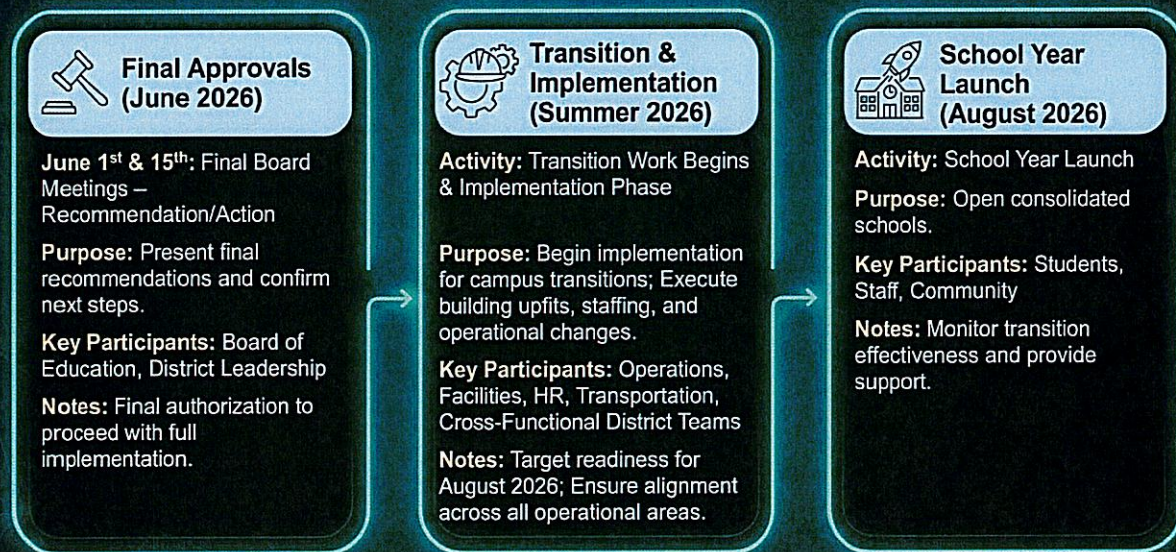
Cabinet Leadership Team

Identify barriers and/or support
needed for final plan
implementation

Consolidation Timeline



Consolidation Timeline



Gaston Virtual Academy (GVA) Early College(s)

Consolidation Timeline

March 23, 2026

Purpose: Review benefits, challenges, and impacts of GVA/Early Colleges consolidation

Key Participants: Senior Leadership, Key Department Leads

Notes/Considerations: Identify risks, opportunities, and necessary supports

March 30, 2026

Purpose: Present consolidation plan and gather feedback

Key Participants: Board Committees, District Leadership

Notes/Considerations: Refine approach in preparation for board consideration

April 20, 2026

Purpose: Seek approval to move forward with staff notifications and operational adjustments

Key Participants: Board of Education, District Leadership

Notes/Considerations: Approval enables transition planning and communication rollout

Parallel Workstreams (Ongoing: April – Summer 2026)



Facilities / Building Upfits

Focus Area: Renovations, space readiness, safety compliance

Key Considerations: Timing, contractor coordination, budget adherence



Transportation Planning

Focus Area: Route redesign, efficiency, ride times

Key Considerations: Minimize disruption; ensure equitable access



Operations Staffing

Focus Area: Custodial, nutrition, technology and support services alignment

Key Considerations: Maintain service levels while optimizing staffing



School-Based Staffing

Focus Area: Teacher and administrative staffing adjustments

Key Considerations: Transparent processes; minimize disruption to instruction



Finance / NCDPI Coordination

Focus Area: Budget alignment, state reporting, and NCDPI notification requirements

Key Considerations: Ensure compliance, accurate reporting, and funding adjustments



Student Support Services

Focus Area: Student records management and transfer processes

Key Considerations: Ensure seamless transitions, data accuracy, and continuity of services

TSS Updates

Curtis Poplin
Chief Technology Officer

TSS Updates

Engineers

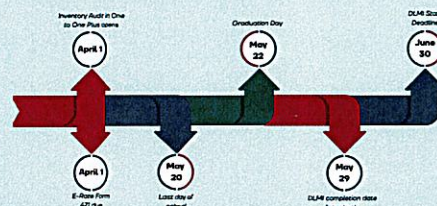
85-90% E-Rate reimburses 90% of GCS Category 1 & 85% of Category 2 purchases

- Category 1 (Internet connectivity)
 - Currently working with AT&T
 - Keep current equipment to minimize downtime and requested the local techs to be consistent
- Category 2 (Switches, APs, UPSs)
 - Submit the 471 form which is the official request for discounts on eligible services and equipment for the upcoming funding year
 - Instead of purchasing the equipment in advance and seeking reimbursement, we will wait until funding is confirmed before proceeding with the purchase.
 - \$1,358,556.61

Technicians

5/29 DLMI (Digital Learning & Media Inventory) completion date for schools.

- Have asked schools to complete by 5/29
 - Inventory Audit in One to One Plus will open 4/1
 - Enter the data into DLMI dashboard and complete sign-off form
 - Principal verification
- State's firm deadline is 6/30



Discussion

Human Resources Updates

Beth Suber

Executive Director of Human Resources

Human Resources Updates

Present Monthly HR Report

(copy provided in your folder)



MARCH ESS FILL RATE

Coping check 2024, pen in ten bat babiteman wek 50%, letut obaz progress an employment! Digs up for data bermet from gear in Sprint 2024, thus more tion GOLL.

RETIREMENT INFO SESSION

Human Resources is afirew planning ortagar ofrio evolution Estematory prgeber har meclimored one wvd interetee cop propores one fonstoniening



RETIREMENTS

There re 103 employees stus have report throught & apitions user or repooticolet parweres live even lla abetoponpressores of d'scadentmate lme of data bermet ovotpes who beon of criminal paperyork.

CURRENT FOCUS AREAS

- Fegamiscope toolcaules
- Cockloft Resources and Mart Honteeed
- Inport investment
- Dickerg har meet fignal
- Ungree Ubeerumance



STRATEGIC PLAN 2029

Priority: Priority: showing, evaluating evaluation tole, desousomness ay edulmwalimercozet secononary internatibert carcent properties, and ungree unnovement professionally.

ESS Mid-Year Update

Points of Interest:

- ▶ ESS has hired 140 new substitutes
- ▶ Jobs are being filled and subs are asking to work
- ▶ January 2026 fill rate: 96%
- ▶ Lowest filled day was Friday, January 16th, at 88%
- ▶ ESS Area Supervisors are visiting schools and building relationships
- ▶ First semester focus was hiring subs and filling absences
- ▶ Spring semester focus will be on recruiting and being more involved with the schools they serve

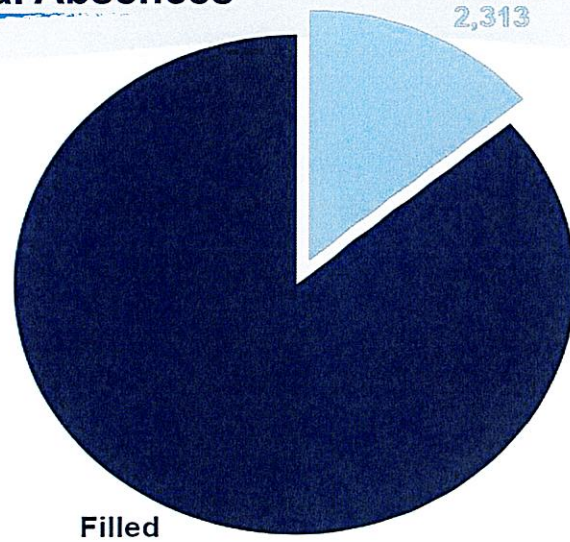
Key Measures & Results

August 2025 - December 2025	
Filled Absences	14,288
Unfilled Absences	2,313
Fill Rate %	86%

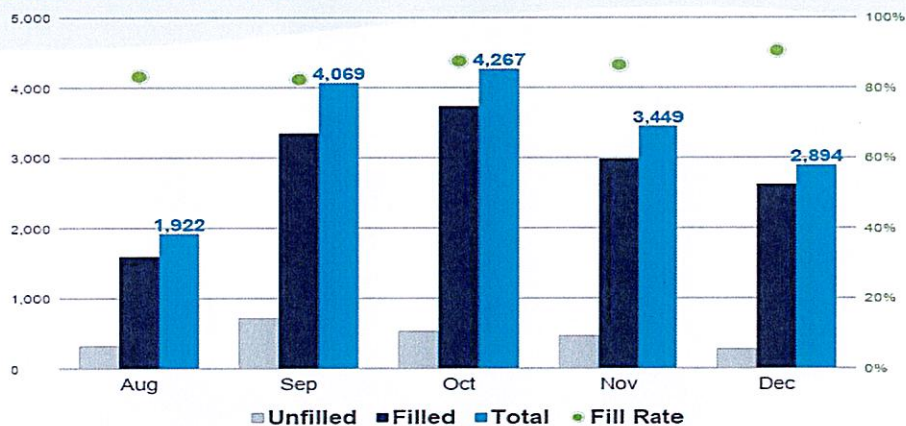
August 2024 - December 2024	
Filled Absences	14,360
Unfilled Absences	3,096
Fill Rate %	82%

All Positions – Total Absences

Total Absences 16,601
Total Filled 14,288
YTD Fill Rate 86%



All Positions – Total Absences by Month



Month	Unfilled	Filled	Total	Fill Rate
Aug	323	1,599	1,922	83%
Sep	718	3,351	4,069	82%
Oct	531	3,736	4,267	88%
Nov	466	2,983	3,449	86%
Dec	275	2,619	2,894	90%
Total	2,313	14,288	16,601	86%

Reduction in Force

Academic Year 2026-2027



Dr. Houchard and Beth Suber

Reduction in Force August 2024-Current

Gaston County Schools Board Policy

Policy Code 7820. A reduction in force may be implemented when the board determines that any of the following circumstances have resulted in the need to decrease the number of positions held by employees to whom this policy applies: System Reorganization, Declining Enrollment, Financial Emergency.



2025-2026

Beginning of the Year

- 14 Central Office Positions
- 69 School Based Positions
- Hiring Freeze implemented in December
- Spending Freeze implemented in March



2025-2026

During the Year

- 20 Central Office Positions



2026-2027

- 5 Central Office Positions
- 174 School Level Positions
(see breakdown by positions below)



Total RIF

- 39 Central Office Positions
(see breakdown of positions below)
- 243 School Level Positions

2025-2027
School Level RIF

- 13 Assistant Principals
- 75 Teachers
- 18 Media Specialists
- 41 School Counselors

- 9 Social Workers
- 4 Nurses
- 4 Custodians
- 5 Clerical

August 2024 to
Current
Central Office RIF

- Director of Secondary Curriculum
- Director of Middle School Curriculum
- Secondary Budget Analyst
- Pre-5 Director

- Pre-K Compliance Lead
- Pre-K Behavior Support
- Health and PE-SMAC
- Director of Business Partnerships

Reduction in Force: A Look at the Numbers

RIF Process



Classified Employees

- Supervisor Conversation
- No Due Process Rights for Appeal



Certified Employees

- Supervisor Conversation
- 14 days to request a Board hearing and if requested, one must be granted.



For Both Groups

District required to pay benefits for 12 months, unless they gain employment



Gaston County Schools
shaping our future

Morgan A. Houchard, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Central Administrative Office
361 Central Street
Rt. 13, Box 1311
Gaston, NC 28043
P: 704.664.6100
FAX: 704.664.6175

Department of
Continuous Education
215 West Park Avenue, Second
Floor
FAX: 704.664.6101

Director of
Employee Management
1251 East West Highway, Third
Floor
FAX: 704.664.6101

School Resource Programs
100 West Street
Second Floor
FAX: 704.664.6101

Staff Development Center
2401 Ingram Avenue
Charlotte, NC 28203
FAX: 704.664.6101

Teacher Resource Center
300 W. Gaston-Broadway
Charlotte, NC 28203
FAX: 704.664.6101

Via hand delivery

Employee Name
Address

Re: Reduction in Force
Contract Teaching Position

Dear _____:

As you are aware, Gaston County Schools ("GCS") has experienced a reduction in available funding and must reduce positions. Therefore, the Board of Education approved a reduction in staff to reduce the number of teaching positions for the 2020-2021 school year. It is with regret that I inform you that your position with Gaston County Schools is being eliminated.

My recommendation is based on subsection (D) of N.C.G.S. § 115C-323-46(d) (2) which states "The teacher shall be dismissed or demoted or employed on a part time basis except for one or more of the following:

(1) A justifiable decrease in the number of positions due to district reorganization, decreased enrollment, or decreased funding; (2) Employment deficit."

However, after the elimination of your teaching position is due to financial exigency, you may be eligible for an to resolve (12) months to health insurance coverage from OCS per state rules and regulations.

As a contract teacher, you have the right for the Board of Education to review my recommendation before it makes a final decision. If you desire that the Board review my recommendation, you must notify me in writing on later than 7 p.m., fourteen (14) days after receiving this letter. If you request such a hearing, you will be notified of the time and place of the hearing.

If I have not heard from you within fourteen days of your receipt of this letter, I will file my recommendation with the Board of Education for their action. Again, please understand that this action is related to decreased funding and you will be placed on a reserve for the employment if positions become available. Placement will be offered in order of seniority in the district.

Finally, you are not being asked to resign or retire because that is a personal choice. However, if you wish to do so, please let me know. If you wish to resign, you will still qualify for the extended health insurance after your separation from employment will be due to financial exigency.

On behalf of the Gaston County Schools and Board of Education, I want to thank you for your service to our students and wish you well in your future endeavors.

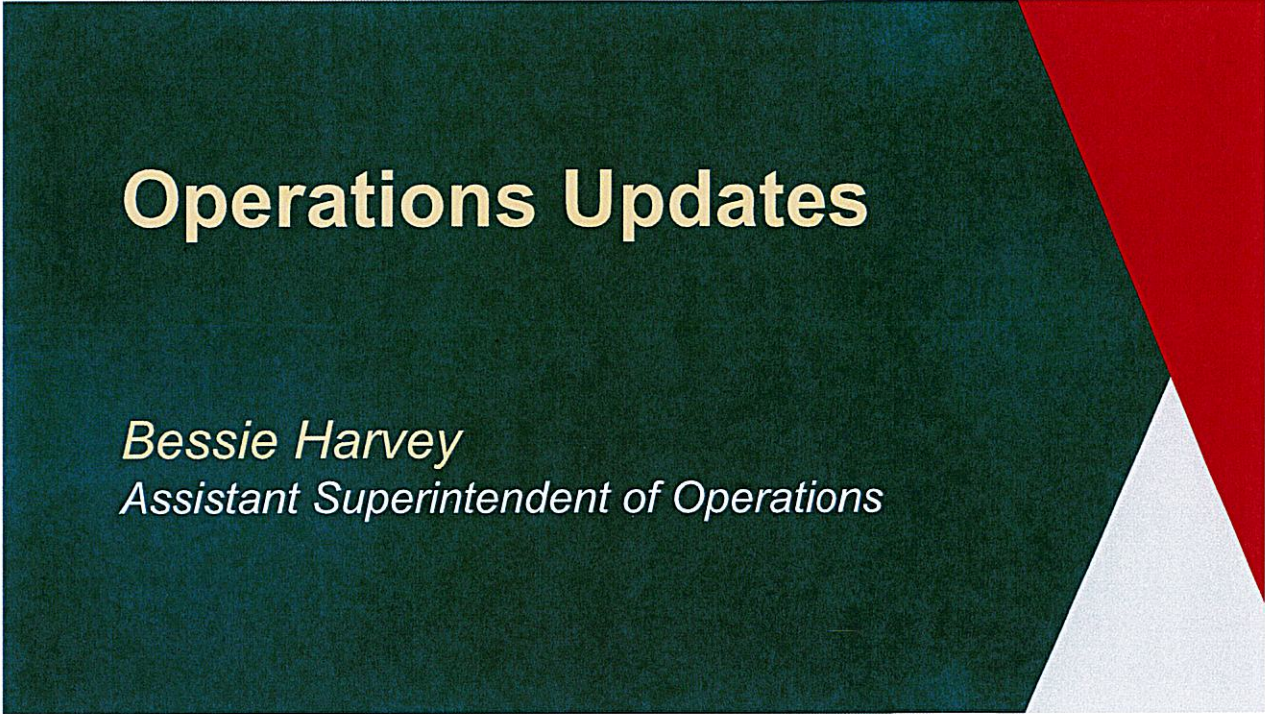
Please do not hesitate to contact Rhia Suber, Executive Director of Human Resources, if you have any questions or wish to discuss continued health coverage. If eligible.

Sincerely,

Dr. Morgan Houchard
Superintendent

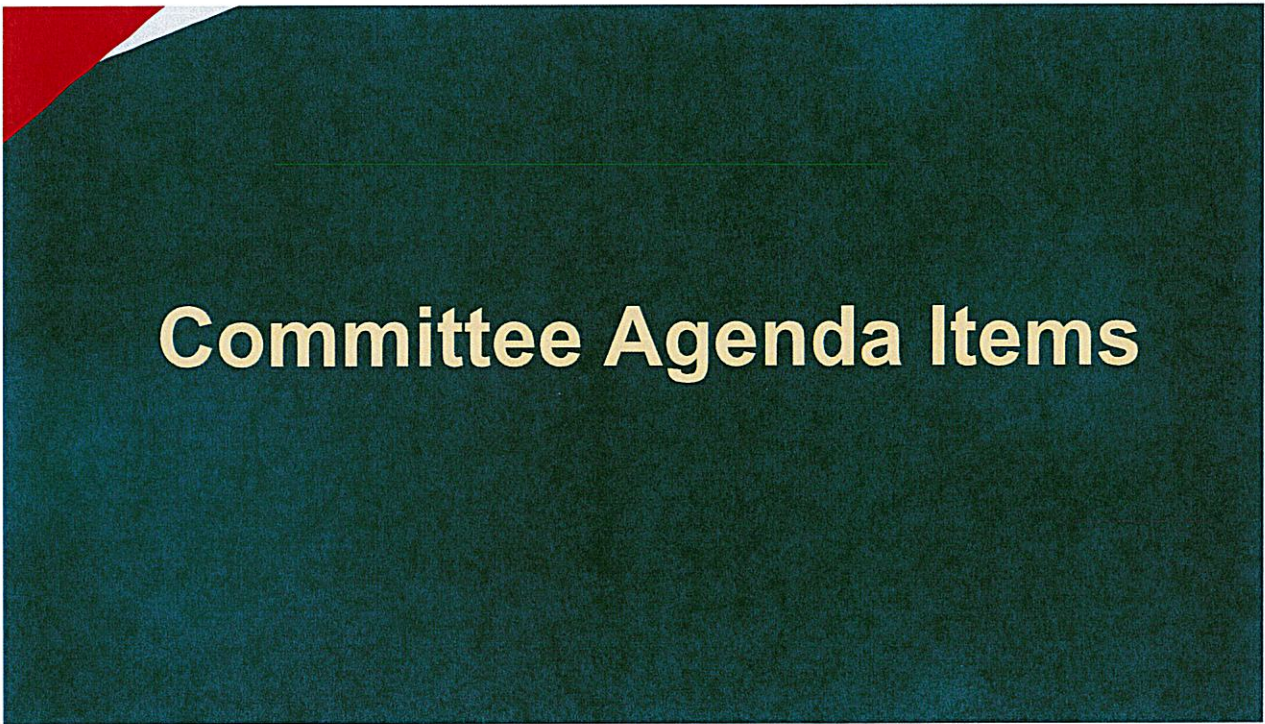
cc: Personnel File
Attachment: Order 115C, Article 22, Part 3
Board Policy 7820

Discussion



Operations Updates

Bessie Harvey
Assistant Superintendent of Operations



Committee Agenda Items

Consent Agenda Item

Cramerton MS Right of Way and Easement Acquisition from NCDOT.

- Approved by the Board on December 15th
- The District will receive \$34,800 from NCDOT for this acquisition and increase from the original proposed price of \$25,950.00

Contract Discussions

- 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

Construction Management @ Risk

Timeline:

- March 2 - April 3 - Draft Owner/Construction Manager (CM) Agreement & Pre Construction Proposal for Review and Negotiation
- April 6 - Present Pre-Construction Proposal and CM Master Agreement with Recommendation to Award on April 20
- April 20 - Contract Award (Master Agreement) to Edifice for Preconstruction Services for Belmont Central Elementary and New Hope Elementary

Discussion

Contract Recommendation

- Motion to Recommend All Contracts for Approval at the Next Regular Board of Education Meeting

Legal/Policy Updates

Sonya McGraw
Board Attorney

Other Business

- Superintendent Comments
- Next Operations Committee meeting will be on Monday, TBD at 12:30pm in the Central Office Board Room
- Motion to **Adjourn**

Adjourn