

Gaston County Schools
Curriculum & Instruction Committee Meeting
Monday, March 30, 2026

MINUTES

The Curriculum and Instruction Committee met on Monday, March 30, 2026, at 3:00 p.m. in the Central Office Board Room, 943 Osceola Street, Gastonia, NC. Those members in attendance were: Chairman Jeff Ramsey, Janna Smith, and A.M. Stephens III. Robbie Lovelace was excused. Mr. A.M. Stephens left the meeting at 4:02 p.m.

Additional attendees included: Vice Chairman Dot Cherry, Superintendent Dr. Morgen A. Houchard, Attorney Sonya McGraw, Assistant Superintendent of Student Support Services Rebekka Powers, Executive Directors Anarah Henderson, and Tyler West, Chief Communications Officer Todd Hagans, Chief Accountability Officer Kelly Cunningham, Chief of Staff Tom Nencetti, and Board Clerk Cindy Beck.

Curriculum & Instruction Committee Chairman Ramsey called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

Approval/Correction of Minutes

Motion to adopt minutes of March 2, 2026 as presented was made by Mr. A.M. Stephens III, seconded by Mrs. Janna Smith, motion carried unanimously. (3-0)

Finance Updates -Information

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

The Superintendent will meet later this week with Hurd Isenhour Lopes (HIL) LLC, a consulting group of experts in school finance, human resources and operations, 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 process for reduction in force in accordance with Policy 7820 - Reduction in Force and 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, including 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 hearings, Senior Leaders Meetings, Operations Committee Review, and Cabinet Reviews.

(View Presentation)

ATSI Schools - Federal Grant - Information

Ms. Kales presented information on the Abre data solution, funded by state resources for ATSI (Additional Targeted Support and Improvement) subgroups, which 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.

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:

Leader in Me

Motion:

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

Approve the Leader in Me Contract

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.

2025-2026 Content Pedagogy

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

Approve 2025-2026 Content Pedagogy Contract

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.

Student Assignment and Choice Programs - Information

Assistant Superintendent Rebekka Powers presented the updates from Student Support Services, including:

Schools Closed to Transfers

The list of schools closed to transfers for the 2026-2027 School Year was presented:

Belmont Central

WA Bess

Hunter Huss

BC Central

Cramerton Middle

North Gaston

New Hope

Ashbrook

South Point

Pleasant Ridge

Forestview

Additional schools may be added based on enrollment.

Choice Programs

Dr. Powers presented information that Dr. Parker is gathering information as part of a survey conducted on the CTE program. Feedback and a report will be provided on the CTE program.

A Parent Advisory Council feedback session was also conducted. Feedback is currently being gathered.

The Teacher Working Conditions survey has been completed.

Innovation Schools 2.0 - Information

Associate Superintendent Tonya Kales presented the next steps for the Innovation Schools strategy, highlighting three focus areas: Innovative Principal Initiative, Advanced Teacher Roles, and High-Quality Professional Development and Partnerships. She proposed the addition of one middle and one high Innovation School to the current ten, though the schools have not yet been determined.

Gaston County's Innovation Schools will serve as a replicable model for high-quality teaching and learning, ensuring every student has access to exemplary educators who embrace growth through coaching and data-driven instruction, preparing them for lifelong success.

(View Presentation)

Next Committee Meeting Date/Time

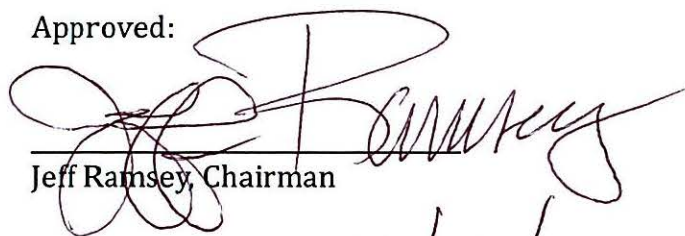
The next Curriculum & Instruction Committee Meeting is scheduled for May 4, 2026 in the Central Office Board Room, beginning at 3:00 p.m.

Adjournment

All business being conducted, Motion to adjourn was made by Mrs. Janna Smith; seconded by Mr. Jeff Ramsey motion carried unanimously. (2-0)

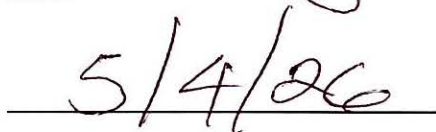
The Curriculum & Instruction Committee Meeting adjourned at 4:39 p.m.

Approved:

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

Jeff Ramsey, Chairman

Date Approved:

A handwritten date "5/4/06" in dark ink, written over a horizontal line.

Curriculum and Instruction Board Committee Meeting

March 30, 2026

Gaston County Schools
Curriculum & Instruction Committee Meeting
Monday, March 2, 2026

MINUTES

The Curriculum and Instruction Committee met on Monday, March 2, 2026, at 3:00 p.m. in the Central Office Board Room, 943 Osceola Street, Gastonia, NC. Those members in attendance were: Chairman Jeff Ramsey; Robbie Levelace (absent); Janna Smith (absent); and A.M. Stephens III.

Additional attendees included: BOE Chairman Josh Crisp, Vice Chairman Dot Cherry, Superintendent Dr. Morgan A. Houchard, Attorney Sonya McGraw, Assistant Superintendent of Student Support Services Rebekka Powers, Director of K-12 Curriculum Dr. Shannon Hullett, Executive Directors Bryan Denton, Kevin Doran, Anarah Henderson, and Tyler West, Chief Communications Officer Todd Hagans, Chief Accountability Officer Kelly Cunningham, Chief of Staff Tom Nencetti, Director of Athletics Chad Duncan, and Board Clerk Cindy Beck.

Curriculum & Instruction Committee Chairman Ramsey called the meeting to order at 3:04 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

Approval/Correction of Minutes

Motion to adopt minutes of December 1, 2025, as presented was made by Mr. A.M. Stephens III, seconded by Mr. Jeff Ramsey, motion carried unanimously. (2-0)

2026-2027 Academic Resources - Action

Dr. Shannon Hullett presented a comprehensive plan for the 2026-2027 Academic Resources, highlighting the district's Instructional Resource Goals. Contract renewals for the Elementary, Middle, and High School levels were also reviewed and discussed.

Motion

The Motion was made by Mr. A.M. Stephens III, seconded by Mr. Jeff Ramsey, that the Board Approve the 2026-2027 Academic Resources Item to be placed on the Consent Agenda for the March 16th Board Meeting.

A vote was taken and motion to approve the item as presented carried unanimously. (2-0)

(View Presentation)

Read to Achieve Summer Camp - Information

Mrs. Tyler West covered the 2026 Read to Achieve Summer Camp, including Teacher Selection, Teacher Training, Student Eligibility, locations, dates, and times.

High School Exam Schedule - Action

Dr. Denton and Mr. Doran presented the High School Spring Schedule.

Motion

The Motion was made by Mr. A.M. Stephens III, seconded by Mr. Jeff Ramsey, that the Board Approve the High School Exam Schedule to be placed on the Consent Agenda for the March 16th Board Meeting.

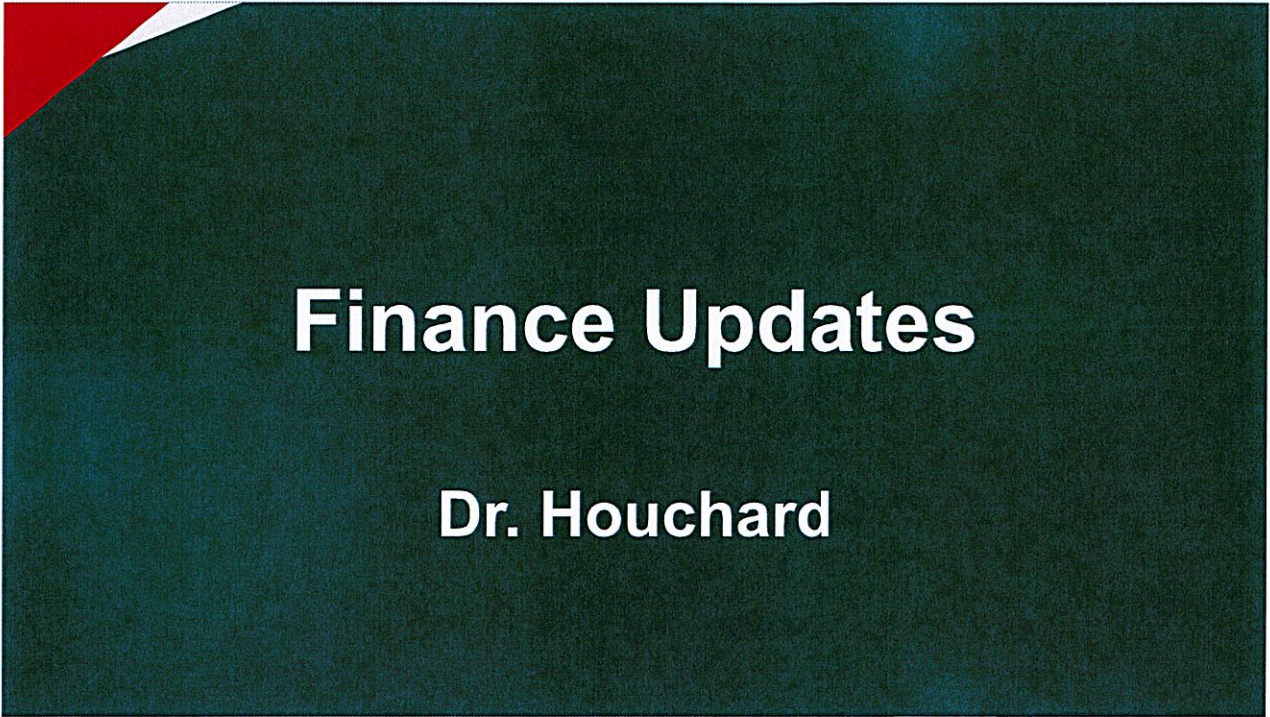
March 2, 2026

Curriculum and Instruction Committee Minutes

Recommendation

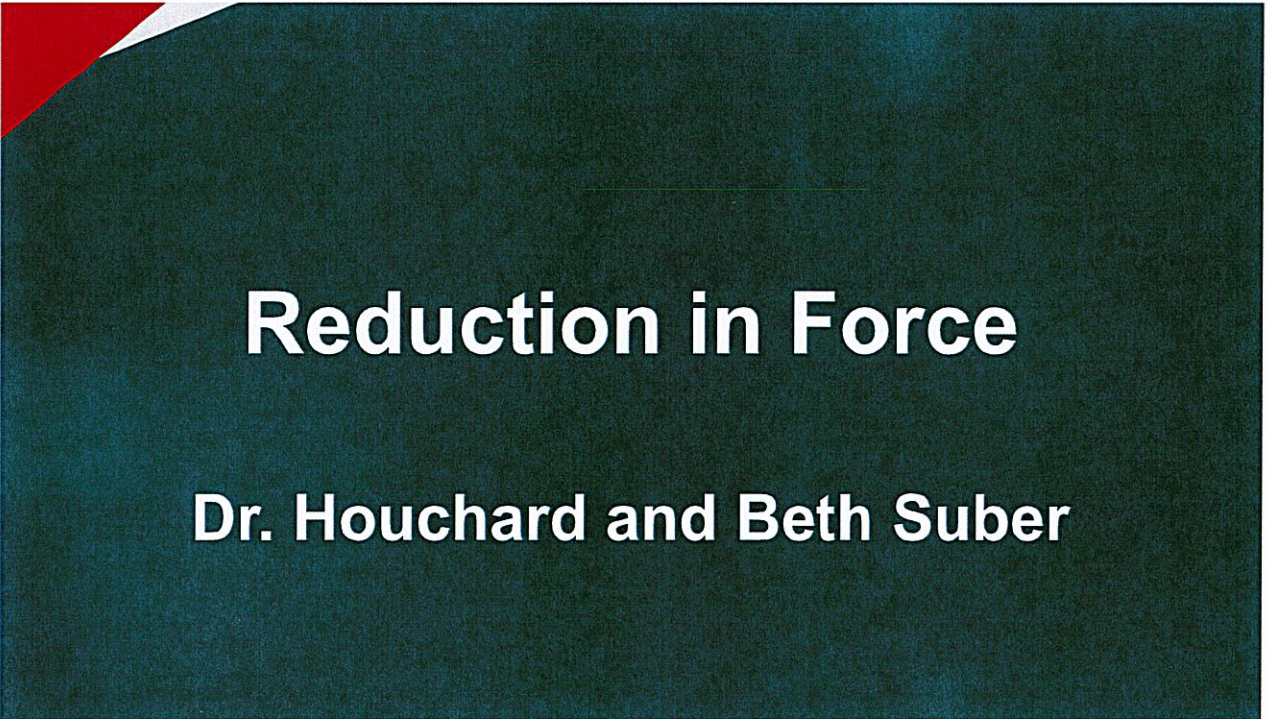
Approval of March 2, 2026

Curriculum and Instruction Committee
Minutes



Finance Updates

Dr. Houchard



Reduction in Force

Dr. Houchard and Beth Suber

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

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. Houshord, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Central Administration Office
641 County Street
A.S. Room 200
Gastonia, NC 28053
704.864.6225
FAX: 704.864.6179

Department of
Custodial Services
215 West Main Street
Gastonia, NC 28053
FAX: 704.864.6181

Director of
Resource Management
1321 Southfield Highway
Lenoir, NC 28540
252.766.1122
FAX: 252.766.4110

School Nutrition Programs
520 East Street
Gastonia, NC 28053
704.864.6162

Staff Development Center
2401 North Street
Gastonia, NC 28053
704.864.6116

Teacher Resource Center
300 W. Commerce Street
Gastonia, NC 28053
704.864.6116

By 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 force to reduce the number of teaching positions for the 2025-2027 academic year. It is with regret that I inform you that your position with the Gaston County Schools is being eliminated.

My recommendation is based on subsection (1) of N.C.G.S. § 115C-323-4(d) (2) which states "The teacher shall be dismissed or deemed 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." (emphasis added)."

However, since the elimination of your teaching position is due to financial emergency, you may be eligible for up to twelve (12) months of health insurance coverage from GCS per contract rules and regulations.

As a contract teacher, you have the right for the Board of Education to review any recommendation before it makes a final decision. If you desire that the Board review my recommendation, you must notify me in writing on or before 7 p.m., fourteen (14) days after receiving this letter. If you request such a hearing, you will be notified of the date 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 review. Again, please understand that this action is related to decreased funding and you will be placed on a reserve list for the unemployment if positions become available. Placements 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 want to do so, please let me know. If you want to resign, you will still qualify for the extended health insurance after your separation from employment will be due to financial emergency.

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 Ruth Suber, Executive Director of Human Resources, if you have any questions or wish to discuss extended health coverage. If eligible.

Sincerely,

Dr. Morgan Houshord
Superintendent

cc: Personnel File
Attachment, Chapter 115C, Article 22, Part 1
Board Policy 7820

Utilization Study

Tom Nencetti

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							

School Closing/Consolidation

Bessie Harvey

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 provides
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 provides
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

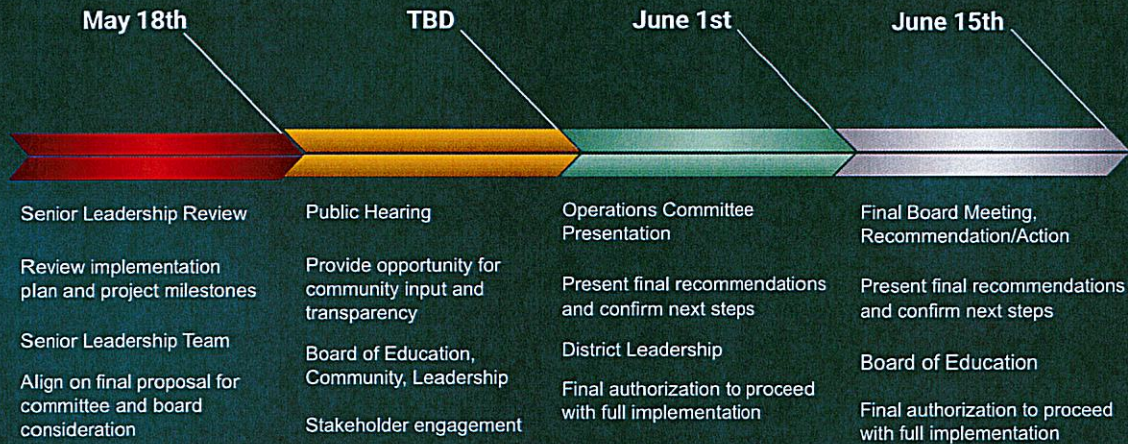
Cabinet Review

Review implementation plan
and project milestones

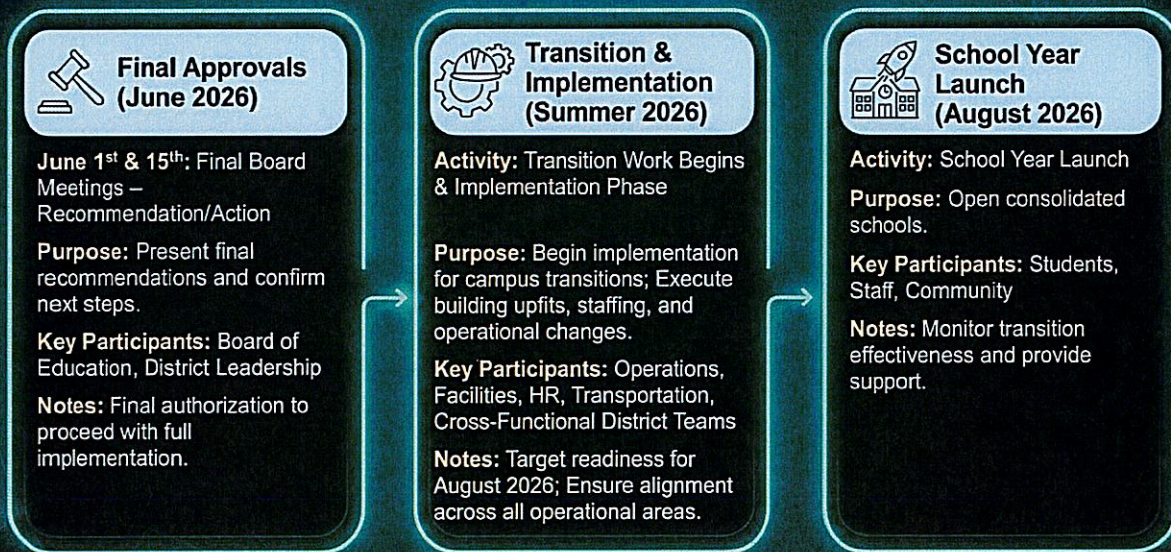
Cabinet Leadership Team

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

Student Support Services

Dr. Powers

Student Support Services: Strategic Plan Goals

Goals	By 2030, Gaston County Schools will:
S1	Increase the daily average attendance rate from 92.9% to 95% or higher.
S2	Increase the number of schools at or above the threshold for implementation of tiered social-emotional and mental health support system (MTSS) from 67% to 100%.
S3	Expand access to support services

Excellence. Integrity. Community. Innovation

Student Assignment

Recommendation

Information

Schools Closed to Transfers 2026-2027 School Year

Belmont Central	WA Bess	Hunter Huss
BC Central	Cramerton Middle	North Gaston
New Hope	Ashbrook	South Point
Pleasant Ridge	Forestview	<i>Additional schools may be added based on enrollment.</i>

Choice Programs

Recommendation

Information

Academic Services: Strategic Plan Goals

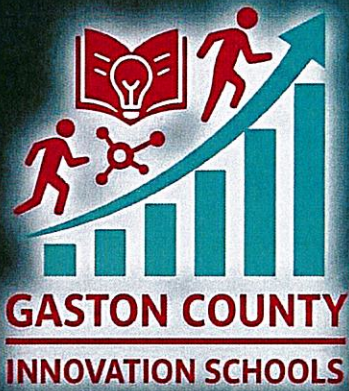
Goals	By 2030, Gaston County Schools will:
A1	Increase Grade Level Proficiency (GLP) from 48.4 to 60%
A2	Increase the percentage of schools meeting or exceeding growth from 71% to 75%
A3	Reduce the number of low performing schools from 15 to 5 or less
A4	Increase the NCDPI 4 year cohort graduation rate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

Excellence. Integrity. Community. Innovation

Innovation Schools 2.0

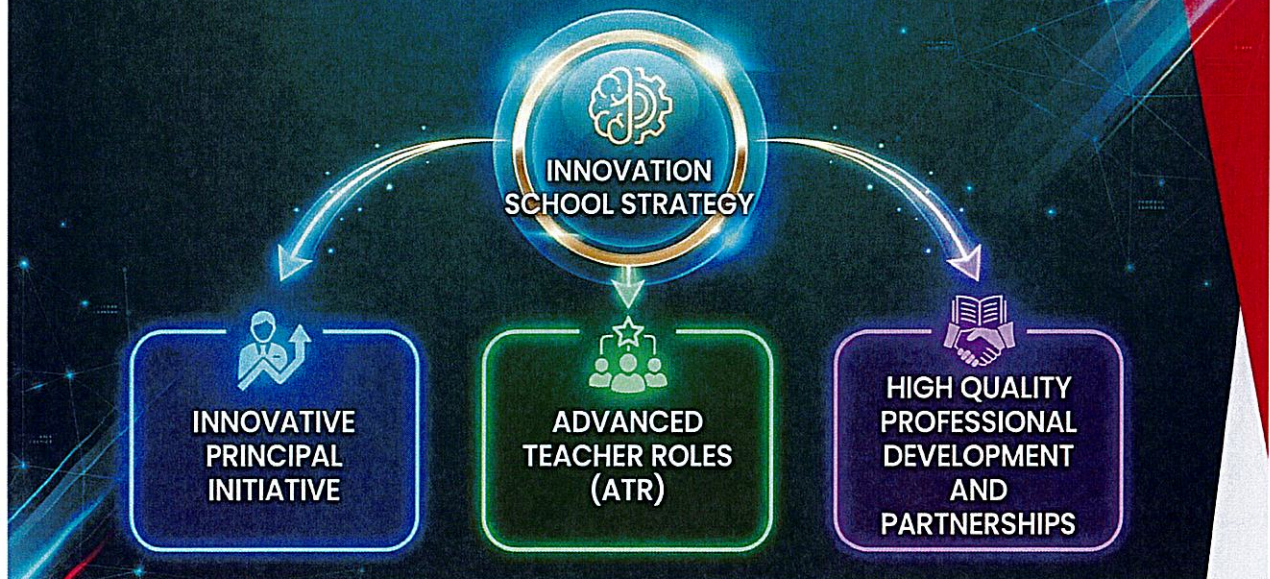
Tonya Kales

INNOVATION SCHOOLS' PURPOSE STATEMENT



Gaston County's Innovation Schools will serve as a replicable model for high quality teaching and learning, ensuring every student has access to exemplary educators who embrace growth through coaching and data-driven instruction, preparing them for lifelong success.

NOW AND FUTURE - VISION TO ACTION



2025-2028 Innovation Schools



HH Beam	Beth Crosby	Restart, Bottom 5%, LP
Bessemer City Central	Anna Miller	Restart, LP
Woodhill	Jaime Wallace	Restart, Bottom 5%, LP
Pleasant Ridge	Shawn Hubers	Restart, LP
Sherwood	Justin Beam	Restart, LP
Lingerfeldt	Jenny Cabe	Restart, Bottom 5%, LP
Southwest	Kathleen D'Avria	Restart, Bottom 5%, 1 of the 5 that moved to LP
Grier	Jessica Mellon	Restart, Bottom 5%, LP
Ashbrook	Matt Rikard	Did not meet growth, D, 1 of the 5 that moved to LP
Hunter Huss	Kelsey Elms	Restart, LP

2026-2029 Innovation Schools 2.0



Middle School	TBD
High School	TBD

Total Innovation Schools:

6 Elementary Schools

3 Middle Schools

3 High Schools

ATSI Schools - Federal Grant

Tonya Kales and Kelly Cunningham

What ATSI means

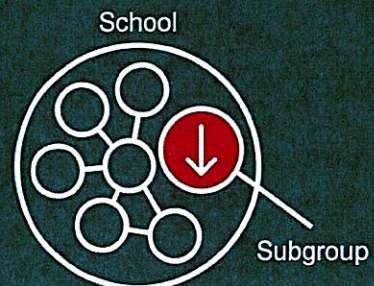
A North Carolina ATSI school is a school identified for **Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI)** under the federal **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**.

What ATSI means

An ATSI school is **not identified because the whole school is underperforming**, but because **one or more student subgroups are consistently underperforming**.

In North Carolina specifically

- » A specific subgroup of students (not the entire school) performs at a very low level
- » That subgroup performance is comparable to the lowest-performing schools in the state



Gaston County School District - ATSI Elementary Schools

- Belmont Central Elementary
- Bessemer City Central Elementary
- Bessemer City Primary
- Brookside Elementary
- Carr Elementary
- Chapel Grove Elementary
- Costner Elementary
- Gardner Park Elementary
- JB Page Primary
- Kiser Elementary School
- Lowell Elementary
- New Hope Elementary
- Pinewood Elementary
- Rankin Elementary
- Pleasant Ridge Elementary
- Sherwood Elementary
- HH Beam Elementary
- Springfield Primary
- Tryon Elementary
- WA Bess Elementary

Gaston County School District - ATSI Secondary Schools

Belmont Middle	Stanley Middle
Cramerton Middle	WC Friday
Grier Middle	York Chester
Holbrook Middle	Bessemer City High School
Chavis Middle	Forestview High School
Bessemer City Middle	North Gaston High School
Mt Holly Middle	Warlick
Southwest Middle	Webb

GCS ATSI Grant Overview

District Investment

District Wide Assessment Platform to monitor subgroup performance to ensure improved academic performance

Gaston County Schools

Strategic Plan 2030



Inspire. Learn. Succeed.

ATSI School Investment

ATSI Middle Schools High Dosage Tutoring (varied models)
Pilots: WC Friday, Holbrook, BCMS, SWMS



Abre
Where K-12 Comes Together

Abre proposal for Gaston County School
Valid through 10/30/2024

Recommendation

Review and select best option for GCS

Academic Services Contracts

Tonya Kales

Academic Services Contracts

Contract	Funding Source
Leader in Me (Carr, Costner, WC Friday and North Gaston)	2026-2027: District 069 State Funds: <i>At Risk Students, Disadvantaged Students</i> (budgeted year to year)
District Data Platform - ALL departments and ALL schools	2025-2026 ATSI Federal Grant (budgeted for the next three years)
Coach Pedagogy Professional Development: Advanced Teacher Roles and Instructional Coaches - Innovation Schools and Title I Schools	2025-2026: State Year 1 ATR Grant (budgeted for the next two years)



Other Business and Discussion



Thank you

Next Meeting: May 4 , 2026 @ 3:00 pm
in the Boardroom