

**GASTON COUNTY
BOARD OF EDUCATION
Regular Session**



943 Osceola Street, Gastonia, NC 28054

May 18, 2026

5:30 p.m.

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 5/18/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Agenda Adoption

Type of Item: ☐ Consent ☒ Action ☐ Information

Main Points:

Consideration of Formal Agenda for Monday, May 18, 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.

District Priorities:

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
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Brent Moore, Crowders Mountain Township
Janna Smith, Gastonia Township

Dr. Morgen A. Houchard, Superintendent
943 Osceola Street, Gastonia, NC 28054

Monday, May 18, 2026

5:30 p.m.

Agenda

Regular Meeting

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XVIII. Adjournment	

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 5/18/2026

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

District Priority:

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: May 2026

1. The following educators were announced during the **Gaston County Schools** Evening of Excellence ceremony as “Of the Year” winners for the 2026-2027 school year: Teacher of the Year: **Erica Baird, Forestview High School**; Principal of the Year: **Jessica Mellon, Grier Middle School**; Assistant Principal of the Year: **Heather Parrish, Cherryville High School**; New Teacher of the Year: **Connor Settlemyre, South Point High School**; Teacher Assistant of the Year: **Teresa Schiavoni, Page Primary School**; and Central Office Administrator of the Year: **Shannon Hullett, Academic Services**. Truist sponsored the ceremony with additional partnership support from Courage Kia in Gastonia and the Gaston County Education Foundation.
2. The following students are recipients of the 2026 Albert G. Myers Scholarship: **Israel Aladekoba of Hunter Huss High School**; **Daniella Alejos and Zalak Mehta of Highland School of Technology**; **Lillian Morin of Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences**; and **Helanea Killian and Alexis Odell of Gaston Early College High School**.
3. **Gaston County Schools** hosted the annual Star Teacher-Star Student Awards ceremony on March 31 at the **Gaston Early College High School**. The program celebrated the achievements of the Star Students in the Class of 2026 (one from each high school) and the Star Teachers who have influenced their lives. GSM Services sponsored the event.
4. **Gaston County Schools** was honored at the North Carolina School Public Relations Association Blue Ribbon Awards program on March 6 in Greensboro for winning three gold awards and one bronze award in the Electronic Media category. Gold awards were for the Hawks Nest STEAM Academy School Choice, School People: David Rhyne, and School People: Emma King videos. The bronze award was for a Facebook Reel highlighting the first nine weeks of school. The district also earned one silver award in the Digital Media Engagement category for Friday Night Football Pep Rally Live on Facebook and one bronze award in the Publications category for the AppleBits newsletter.
5. The following students received awards as part of the **Gaston County Schools** “Through an Artist’s Eye” art exhibit held on April 26: **Asia Cochran, Ashbrook High School**, Best in Show; **Addie Duran, Hawks Nest STEAM Academy**, first place, mixed media; **Beckham Gray, Robinson Elementary**, second place, mixed media; **Geraldine Barrera Lopez, Carr Elementary**, third place, drawing; **Aura Saucedo King, W.C. Friday Middle School**, first place, black and white drawing; **Austin Brown, W.C. Friday Middle School**, second place; black and white drawing; **Ximena Hernandez Luna, W.C. Friday Middle School**, third place, black and white drawing; **Addyson**

Keene, Cramerton Middle School, first place, ceramics; **Marina Lopes Mercabo, Cramerton Middle School**, second place, ceramics; **Lara Fortsinger, Cramerton Middle School**, third place, ceramics; **Mikayla Siravo, Stanley Middle School**, first place, color drawing; **Georgia Grace Clark, Holbrook Middle School**, second place, color drawing; **Drysten Maxcy, Holbrook Middle School**, third place, color drawing; **Chiomu Soumare, Belmont Middle School**, first place, crafts/fiber; **Emma McGinnis, Belmont Middle School**, second place, crafts/fiber; **Bryon Ewing, Southwest Middle School**, third place, crafts/fiber; **Riley Messer, Southwest Middle School**, first place, digital art; **Natalie Caudle, Holbrook Middle School**, second place, digital art; **Cameron Ensley, Belmont Middle School**, first place, illustration; **Zara Bailey, Belmont Middle School**, second place, illustration; **Bailey Vongvoraseng, Mount Holly Middle School**, third place, illustration; **Ava Hoerst, Cramerton Middle School**, first and second place, painting; **Penelope Zukus, Cramerton Middle School**, third place, painting; **Abbey Smith, Belmont Middle School**, first place, photography; **Amelia Memrick, Belmont Middle School**, second place, photography; **Garrett Stephens, Belmont Middle School**, third place, photography; **Za'Riah Currence, Grier Middle School**, first place, printmaking; **Bridgett Powers, Holbrook Middle School**, first place, sculpture; **Charlie Mathis, Chavis Middle School**, second place, sculpture; **Maddie Woodlief, Belmont Middle School**, third place, sculpture; **David Deal, Highland School of Technology**, first place, black and white drawing; **Rylan Greene, North Gaston High School**, second place, black and white drawing; **Asia Cochran, Ashbrook High School**, third place, black and white drawing; **Naia Williams, Ashbrook High School**, first place, ceramics; **Kimberly Arevalo, North Gaston High School**, second place, ceramics; **Andrea Reyes Landaverde, Ashbrook High School**, third place, ceramics; **Ezequiel Claudio-Mercado, North Gaston High School**, first place, color drawing; **Danny Zarate Castillo, North Gaston High School**, second place, color drawing; **Ava Odugba, Stuart W. Cramer High School**, third place, color drawing; **Lucy Christenbury, East Gaston High School**, first place, crafts/fiber; **Alvin Ibarra, Cherryville High School**, second place, crafts/fiber; **Andrea Reyes Landaverde and Sirem Lezama Burgos, Ashbrook High School**, third place, crafts/fiber; **Caitlin Sensabaugh, Highland School of Technology**, first place, digital art; **Aryanna Morales, Stuart W. Cramer High School**, second place, digital art; **Marcelyn Montoya, Hunter Huss High School**, third place, digital art; **Asia Cochran, Ashbrook High School**, first place, illustration; **Lanaye Tann, Ashbrook High School**, second place, illustration; **Starla Huber, Bessemer City High School**, third place, illustration; **Jace Walsh, Highland School of Technology**, first place, mixed media; **Maggie Walker, Cherryville High School**, second place, mixed media; **Baileigh Reading, Highland School of Technology**, third place, mixed media; **Sydney Falls, Highland School of Technology**, first place, painting; **Skyla Sorrentino, Stuart W. Cramer High School**, second place, painting; and **Morgan Spivey, Highland School of Technology**, third place, painting; **Chloe Owenby, East Gaston High School**, first place, photography; **Baylee Proctor, Cherryville High School**, second place, photography; **Jaden Smeal, Cherryville High School**, third place, photography; **Ezequiel Claudio-Mercado, North Gaston High School**, first place, printmaking; **Rylan Greene, North Gaston High School**, second place, printmaking; **Danny Zarate Castillo, North Gaston High School**, third place, printmaking; **Jace Walsh, Highland School of Technology**, first place, sculpture; **Isabella Lougrath, East Gaston High School**, second place, sculpture; and **Abigail Hernandez, Hunter Huss High School**, third place, sculpture.

6. **Gaston County Schools'** students received nominations for the 2026 Blumey Awards. For Best Actor/Actress, nominees include **Matthew Heilig, Forestview High School**, as Orpheus in "Hadestown Teen Edition;" **Eric Cathey, Highland School of Technology**, as Professor Callahan in "Legally Blonde: The Musical;" **Autumn Maloney, Forestview High School**, as Hermes in "Hadestown Teen Edition;" **Mari McCosh, Highland School of Technology**, as Paulette Buonafonte in "Legally Blonde: The Musical;" and **Dymond Moore, North Gaston High School**, as Anna of Cleves in "Six The Musical: Teen Edition." In the Best Supporting Actor/Actress category, nominees include **Kay McNamara, Highland School of Technology**, as Kyle B. O'Doyle in "Legally Blonde: The Musical;" **Andrea Palmeros Baez, Forestview High School**, as Fate in "Hadestown Teen Edition;" and **Graceson Phalin, North Gaston High School**, as Anne Boleyn in "Six The Musical: Teen Edition." For Best Featured Performer, nominees include **Tyler Rebaglia, Forestview High School**, as Young Hades/Ensemble in "Hadestown Teen Edition;" **Baileigh Reading, Highland School of Technology**, as Enid Hoopes in "Legally Blonde: The Musical;" and **Karitza Guzman, North Gaston High School**, as a dancer in "Six The Musical: Teen Edition."
7. The following students are recipients of the Kelly Robb Scholarship, which provides for them to attend a summer music camp or receive private music lessons: **Rin Palmer of Mount Holly Middle School**; **Nicholas Flores and Aria Peters of W.C. Friday Middle School**; and **Londyn Sanders of Cramerton Middle School**.
8. The following middle schools won championships in spring athletic events: **Cramerton Middle**, boys track and field; **Belmont Middle**, girls track and field and girls soccer; and **Stanley Middle**, baseball.
9. The "Flash a Light on Literacy" reading program sparked a love of reading across two elementary schools. Sponsored by the Gaston County Office of Emergency Management, the program saw students read more than 2,100 books. At **Bessemer City Central Elementary**, **Adryiana Logan** read the most books while **Kynzlei Robinson** led the way at **Tryon Elementary**. Both students earned a ride to school in a fire truck for their achievement, and their grade levels earned a pizza party for reading the most books.
10. The following educators received The Jennie Stultz Grant for Arts Education through the Gaston County Education Foundation: **Marjorie Bone, Hawks Nest STEAM Academy**; **Shelley Campbell, Gardner Park Elementary**; **Elizabeth Covington, East Gaston High School**; **Olivia Hedrick, Ashbrook High School**; **Elisha Mitchke-Lamanna, Cherryville High School**, and **Andrew Morgan, Forestview High School**.
11. **Bessemer City High School** held the Miss Bessemer City High School Pageant on May 2. Student **Angelyn Rivers** was crowned Miss Bessemer City High School for 2026, and **Dalana Salinas, Camila Estrada**, and **Diana Toledo** were named to the queen's court. The contestants were awarded a total of \$3,000 in scholarships.
12. **Gaston County Schools** is continuing its gardening (farm-to-school) program at the School Nutrition location in Lowell. Recently, 150 pounds of lettuce and carrots were harvested from the garden, and the central kitchen staff used the fresh produce in 1,350 side salads that were served to students in the Cherryville, Bessemer City, Belmont, Cramerton, and Lowell/McAdenville area schools.

13. **Heather Brown**, a teacher at **Rankin Elementary School**, was featured in a video produced by Classroom Central. The video was shown during Classroom Central's "Color a Brighter Future" breakfast and fundraising celebration at Bojangles Coliseum in Charlotte.
14. **Connor Settlemyre** of **South Point High School**, the Gaston County Schools New Teacher of the Year for 2026-2027, was featured on Queen City News during the "Faces of the Carolinas" segment. The story focused on his leadership of the South Point band program as a first-year teacher.
15. **Erica Baird** of **Forestview High School**, the Gaston County Schools Teacher of the Year for 2026-2027, accepted a new Kia K4 from general manager Dan Faria at Courage Kia. This is the fourth consecutive year that Courage Kia has provided a vehicle lease agreement to the district-level Teacher of the Year.
16. Following an extensive application process and review team visit, **North Gaston High School** has received certification as a Leader in Me Lighthouse School. The distinction recognizes the school's concentrated focus on integrating leadership across the school environment and promoting leadership skills and opportunities among students, teachers, and staff.
17. **Cherryville High School's Colton Robinson** finished as the first runner-up at the 2A state golf championship at Gates Four Country Club. At the 2A western regional golf championship at Grassy Creek Country Club, he took third place.
18. **Stuart W. Cramer High School** boys golf team won the 4A western regional championship at Catawba Creek Country Club. Junior **Drew Mercer** placed first overall in the regionals. The team also won the state championship for the second year in a row, and junior **Lane Crofts** took the individual state championship title.
19. **Stuart W. Cramer High School** teacher **Christine Biela** has been selected as one of nine educators awarded a Kenan Fellowship. The fellowship, funded by the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality State Energy Office, helps teachers connect students with careers in the energy industry. This summer, Biela will complete a three-week program with Siemens Energy, including job shadowing and work with industry professionals. She also will develop a capstone project focused on energy careers, workforce skills, and classroom resources tied to local job opportunities. The fellowship includes 80 hours of professional development, a \$5,000 stipend, and membership in a statewide network of more than 680 Kenan Fellows alumni.
20. **Stuart W. Cramer High School** seniors **O'Shauna Holland** and **Bentley Sly** were recognized at the Gaston County Sports Hall of Fame banquet for their athletic accomplishments.
21. **Connor Jackson** of **East Gaston High School** placed second at the SkillsUSA challenge for automotive beginners, and **Ella Wise** placed fourth for CPR.

22. **Forestview High School's Davis Spargo** placed third at the 5A western regional golf championship at Highland Creek Country Club.
23. The **Hunter Huss High School** men's state 5A championship basketball team was recognized at the Gaston County Sports Hall of Fame banquet.
24. **Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences** senior **Ameliana Broadie** earned the UNC-Greensboro Chancellor's Scholarship. In total, she has received more than \$375,000 in scholarships from colleges to which she applied.
25. **Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences** seniors **Sariah Alege** and **Pearl Nsimunde** were awarded the Gertrude Clinton Health Career Scholarship from the CaroMont Health Foundation.
26. **Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences** senior **Jamaria Brown** earned the UNC-Greensboro Blue and Gold Scholarship, which is valued at \$12,000.
27. **Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences** senior **Morgan Melton** was selected as a Tucker Finalist and Ignite Finalist for Gardner-Webb University. These competitive scholarship programs awarded her \$12,000 in academic scholarships.
28. The **Mount Holly Middle School** cafeteria staff scored a 100 percent sanitation rating.
29. **North Gaston High School** senior and marching band drum major **Ronald Tovilla Pablo** auditioned and was selected as a United States Marine Band musician.
30. The **North Gaston High School** chorus received a gold award, the highest honor, at the Heritage MPA festival.
31. The **South Point High School** boys golf team won the 5A western regional championship at Highland Falls Country Club. Junior **Will Monteith** placed first overall, sophomore **Harley Green** placed second, and junior **Aidan McGinnis** placed third.
32. **South Point High School's Rex Dover** and **Tyler Cunningham** won the 5A western regional doubles championship and were runners-up in the 5A state doubles championship.
33. **Stanley Middle School** had three teams place in the top six out of 47 teams at the state Envirothon competition. Envirothon is the nation's largest environmental competition where students compete in teams in the forestry, soil, aquatics, wildlife, and current environmental issues categories. The school's "Insane Invertebrates" team earned second place and were named the top public middle school team in the state with perfect scores in soil, wildlife, aquatics, and current environmental issues. The "Turtles of Terror" team finished fifth and earned a perfect score in soil while the "Green Team Supreme" placed sixth with a perfect score in current environmental issues.
34. "We The Change, We Want To See" founder William Brooks provided 50 dugout access tickets for students at **York Chester Middle School** to attend opening night of the Gastonia Ghost Peppers baseball game.

35. **Woodhill Elementary** student **Yatziri Cruz Espejo** was the winner of the “Art For Heart” contest through the Heart Society of Gaston County.

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 5/18/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Classroom Moment: Star Teacher/Star Student Awards

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

Main Points:

The Classroom Moment is in honor of Teacher Appreciation Week, which took place from May 4th to 8th. It will share information about the Star Teacher-Student Awards ceremony for the Class of 2026. The recognition program was presented by Gaston County Schools and sponsored by GSM Services. For the event, each high school had the opportunity to choose an outstanding senior from the Class of 2026 as the school's Star Student. During the ceremony, the Star Student honored the Star Teacher who had a significant influence on the student's educational career. This Classroom Moment will focus on several outstanding educators in Gaston County.

Recommendation:

Policy Implications:

None

District Priority:

Academics that Build Pathways to Student Success -

Submitted by: Dr. Bryan Denton
and Kevin Doran

Department: Curriculum & Instruction

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 5/18/2026

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.

District Priorities:

Effective Communication and Partnerships

Submitted by: Todd Hagans
Chief Communications Officer

Department: Communications
(Superintendent's Office)

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 5/18/2026

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.

District Priorities:

Effective Communication and Partnerships

Submitted by: Dr. Morgen A. Houchard

Department: Superintendent

Gaston County Schools
Board of Education
April 20, 2026
Regular Meeting

MINUTES

The Gaston County Board of Education met in a regular session on Monday, April 20, 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, Jeff Ramsey, Janna Smith, and A.M. Stephens III. Brent Moore was absent.

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 Justin White of Frontline Worship Center led the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance

Spencer Powers, a 6th grader from John Chavis Middle School, led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Character Trait

Kyleigh Wiggins, 5th grade, Presley Wiggins, Kindergarten, Olivia Perez, 5th grade, and Pyper Thomas, 2nd grade, Carr Elementary School, reported on the Character Trait of Perseverance.

Agenda Adoption - Action

The Board considered Agenda Adoption – Action

Chairman Crisp suggested that fifteen minutes be added to Public Expression.

Motion to adopt the Agenda and addition of the fifteen minutes for Public Expression was made by Ms. Dot Cherry; seconded by Mr. Tod Kinlaw, motion carried unanimously. (8-0)

Good News – Information

Mr. Todd Hagans presented the Good News for April.

Lincoln Smallwood of New Hope Elementary was recognized for raising more than \$2,000 by creating his own artwork to support the school's Kids Heart Challenge for the American Heart Association.

Ms. Dot Cherry presented a certificate of recognition.

Paul Sayegh of Belmont Middle School was recognized for winning the district spelling bee, his second, and for competing in the Carolina Panthers Regional Spelling Bee, also his second, where he placed fifth this year, one spot from qualifying for the Scripps National Spelling Bee.

Mr. A.M. Stephens III presented a certificate of recognition.

The Board of Education recognized Rose Pichardo of W.C. Friday Middle School and Mackenzie Hart and Cyrus Baltimore, both of East Gaston High School, for being selected to perform at the North Carolina All-State Band Clinic.

Mrs. Janna Smith presented a certificate of recognition.

Cramerton Middle School was recognized as a Paideia School for Creative Thinking, the only accredited middle school in North Carolina.

Cramerton Middle School is one of only six schools in North Carolina to earn the Paideia Seminar Nationally Certified School distinction and one of three schools to earn the Paideia Classroom certification.

Mrs. Janna Smith and Mr. Jeff Ramsey presented a commemorative plaque in recognition of their contributions.

The Gaston Arts Council was recognized for providing a \$1,600 grant to fund clinicians for the All-County Middle School Chorus and All-County Middle School Band concerts.

Chairman Josh Crisp presented a recognition plaque to the Gaston Arts Council representatives, Ms. Stephanie Newman and Dr. Rusty Parker.

Teacher Appreciation Proclamation–Action

Chairman Crisp recognized Mr. Todd Hagans, who presented the Teacher Appreciation Week Proclamation for consideration.

Motion

The Motion was made by Mr. Tod Kinlaw, seconded by Mrs. Janna Smith, that the Board
Approve Teacher Appreciation Week Proclamation

A vote was taken and a motion to approve the item as presented carried unanimously. (8-0)

Mr. Hagans recognized Richard Morris; Emma Richards, 2024-2025 Linda Rader New Teacher of the Year; Brandon Taylor, 2024-2025 Gaston County Schools Teacher of the Year; and John Ramos, 2025-2026 Teacher of the Year.

Superintendent Houchard presented the recognition plaque to the group on behalf of all teachers in recognition of Teacher Appreciation Week.

(View Proclamation)

Classroom Moment – Information

Mrs. Tyler West presented the Classroom Moment for April on America250. Schools across the district are integrating the America250 Celebration into classroom instruction, literacy events, fine arts performances, and family engagement opportunities.

(View Presentation)

Public Expression – Information

Katherine Brooke Graves
1109 Peru Court
Dallas, NC 28034

Re: Frustrations being felt across the board from teachers about the way money is allocated and how teachers are being treated in the district.

Brittany Elkin
3012 High Ridge Court
Gastonia, NC 28056

Re: School funding, specifically operation funding, planning ahead, and appropriate direction of approved funding. Also, the school board members' behavior and representation of the community.

David Chee
1942 Sparkling Stream Drive
Belmont, NC 28012
Staff cuts forecast for next year's budget.

Sean Bates
P.O. Box 550094
Gastonia, NC 28055
Re: School Board member, Tod Kinlaw

Dionna Graham
P.O. Box 550094
Gastonia, NC 28055
Re: School Board member, Tod Kinlaw

Ann Doss Helms
316 Gaither Road
Belmont, NC 28012
Re: Tod Kinlaw's anti-Islamic social media post/statement from Indivisible Gaston

Eli Christy
3007 Eaker Drive
Cherryville, NC 28021
Re: The closure of Beam Intermediate and the negative impact it would have on the students of Cherryville.

Jibril Hough
14408 Soldier Road
Charlotte, NC 28278
Re: School Board member, Tod Kinlaw's sharing a meme that demonizes Islam. Request his removal and no tolerance for his actions. They put Muslim students in danger.

Barbara Walls
218 Dogwood Drive
Mount Holly, NC 28120

Re: To ask for the resignation of Tod Kinlaw from the Board for his Facebook posting, which violates fundamental principles of the First Amendment's "Establishment Clause".

Omar Marzouk
148 Crestwood Drive
Mt Holly, NC 28120

Re: School Board Members' accountability toward all community individuals.

Dorothy Guthrie
526 Shadow View Drive
Gastonia, NC 28054

Re: Recognition of National Library Week and the important role that librarians and media specialists play in educating our children. I would like to compliment the A.S.P.I.R.E Afterschool teachers and what they do to involve children in literacy-related programs.

Dr. Tyler Beam
221 Fisher Road
Cherryville, NC 28021

Re: W.B. Beam Intermediate Possible Closure.

Meghan McGrath
4344 Timberwood Drive
Gastonia, NC 28056

Re: School funding--appropriate use of funds.

Julie Evanega
2351 Hampton Meadows Lane
Cramerton, NC 28032

Our school system is currently facing a \$1.1 million budget shortfall. That reality did not appear overnight.

Wade Stroupe
101 C South Elm Street
Cherryville, NC 28021

Re: Cherryville Schools, in particular, Beam Intermediate.

Chairman Crisp requested a brief recess at 7:00 p.m. Meeting resumed at 7:09 p.m.

Approval/Correction of Minutes – Action

Motion to adopt minutes as presented for the March 16, 2026, regular meeting,

Motion made by Mr. Jeff Ramsey; seconded by Mr. A.M. Stephens III, motion carried unanimously.
(8-0)

Operations Committee Report – Information

Brent Moore is chair of the Operations Committee, and members are Ms. Dot Cherry, Mr. Lee Dedmon, and Mr. 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 Mrs. Robbie Lovelace, Mrs. Janna Smith, and Mr. A.M. Stephens III. Mr. A.M. Stephens III 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. A.M. Stephens provided a summary report of topics considered and discussed at the most recent meeting.

(View report)

2026-2027 Gaston County Schools Budget - Action

Chairman Crisp recognized Superintendent Houchard, who presented a PowerPoint on Gaston County Schools Budget Request 2026-2027. The Superintendent had presented his budget request at the March 16, 2026, Regular Meeting. His request for consideration by the Board was for \$68.4 Million for operating funds and \$4.5 million for capital outlay. The Board adjusted his request to \$58,133,704 for Operating funds and \$4 million for capital outlay.

Motion

The Motion was made by Mrs. Janna Smith; seconded by Ms. Dot Cherry that the Board Approve the 2026-2027 Gaston County Schools Budget Request for \$58,133,704 for operating funds and \$4 million for capital outlay.

A vote was taken and a motion to approve the item as presented carried unanimously. (8-0)

(View Presentation)

School Closings/Consolidations (Process/Timeline) - Information

Chairman Crisp recognized Superintendent Houchard, who presented on the Process/Timeline for consideration of School Closings/Consolidations.

To allow for the strategic alignment of staff expertise, academic programming, and student support, ensuring consistency in curriculum delivery and academic expectations, information was given on the consolidations of both the Gaston Early Colleges and also the Gaston Virtual Academy.

By leveraging shared resources and facilities, the district can increase operational efficiency while maintaining a strong focus on student achievement, postsecondary readiness, and equitable access to high-quality educational experiences. This consolidation positions the program for long-term sustainability and growth while continuing to meet the evolving needs of students and the community.

Guided by General Statute 115C-72 and past school closings–Rhyne Elementary School in 2015, and in Forest Heights Elementary School in 2016, a feasibility study will be held and presented to the Board of Education Committees on May 4, 2026, concerning W.B. Beam Elementary. The Study will

then be made public on the Gaston County Schools webpage. An Open House at Cherryville Elementary and John Chavis Middle Schools for students and parents will then be held. A Public Hearing will be announced and held.

(View Presentation)

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. 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

Motion

Motion to adopt the Consent Agenda as presented was made by Ms. Dot Cherry; seconded by Mr. Jeff Ramsey. Motion carried unanimously. (8-0)

Superintendent's Comments

Superintendent Houchard acknowledged that last week was a tough week for Gaston County Schools as the Reduction in Force process began. Work is ongoing to offer positions as they become available through retirements and natural attrition.

The Gaston County Schools Star Teacher-Student Awards took place on March 31, 2026. The video will be placed on our Gaston County School website and Channel 21. Superintendent Houchard thanked GSM Services for sponsoring the ceremony.

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

The Evening of Excellence will take place this Thursday, April 23, at 6:30 p.m. at Stuart W. Cramer High School. During the program, outstanding educators and representatives from departments and divisions across Gaston County Schools will be honored, and the winners of the 2026–2027 awards will be announced. The event is sponsored by Truist Bank, with additional support from Courage Kia of Gastonia and the Gaston County Education Foundation.

Through An Artist's Eyes: Spring Art Show and Reception will take place on Sunday, April 26, 2026 at the former Armstrong Athletic Club building, 3372 Robinwood Road, Gastonia, from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Gaston College will host Senior Night on Thursday, April 30, 2026, from 5:00-7:00 p.m. This event is open to all high school seniors who are interested in learning more about the opportunities available at Gaston College.

Sport Physicals for the coming Fall sports season will be available for school athletes on Saturday, May 9, 2026, at no cost at the Caromont Outpatient Center from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.

SUN Bucks is a program from the U.S. Department of Agriculture that helps families buy groceries during the summer months when school is out. Eligible families will receive a one-time payment of \$120 per child on a debit-like card. The card can be used to purchase nutritious food during the summer. More information can be found on our website.

Registration for Pre-K is currently in progress, with additional information available on our website.

Best wishes were extended to North Gaston High School. The Leader in Me Lighthouse School Review Team will visit the school next week. If all goes as expected, we will be able to recognize North Gaston at the May Board Meeting for the Lighthouse School of Distinction.

Closing Remarks

Chairman Crisp expressed appreciation to the community for their participation and for taking the time to address the Board.

Chairman Crisp wished the following a "Happy Birthday":
Brent Moore April 4.

The next Board meeting will be held on Monday, May 18, 2026.

Adjournment

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

The Board Meeting adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

Approved:

Josh Crisp, Chairman
[Corporate Seal]

Morgen A. Houchard, Secretary

Date Approved: _____

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 5/18/2026

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

District Priority:

Effective Communication and Partnerships

Submitted by: Bessie Harvey,
Assistant Superintendent of Operations

Department: Operations

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 5/18/2026

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

District Priority:

Effective Communication and Partnerships

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

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 5/18/2026

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

District Priority:

Effective Communication and Partnerships

Submitted by: Policy Committee

Department: Legal

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: May 18, 2026

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

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 request was approved by the Board of Education at its April 20, 2026 Regular meeting in the adjusted amount of \$58,133,704 for operating funds and \$4 million for capital outlay. The budget was presented to the County by (prior to) May 15, 2026 as required by State Law.

At their May 12, 2026 Work Session, the Board of County Commissioners approved a budget in the amount of \$54,001,704 for operating funds and \$1,227,000 for capital outlay for Gaston County Schools. The effect of receiving less than requested will require Gaston County Schools to make additional budget decisions.

Fiscal Implications: The final budget will be reexamined to align with approved local funding.

Recommendation: Board of Education will reexamine the 2026-2027 budget in light of the lower funding allocation from our local funding source.

Policy Implications:

Section 8000 - Fiscal Management -

District Priorities:

Comprehensive Student Support -

Submitted by: Morgen A. Houchard, Superintendent

Department: Superintendent

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: May 18, 2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Feasibility Study Update

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: Information for the Board's consideration

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: 5/18/2026

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. Board Policy Updates
- E. School Nutrition Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Status
- F. Non-CEP Student Meal Pricing Increases
- G. 2026-2027 Federal Grant Application
- H. Contracts
 - Driver Education
 - Ashbrook High School Hallway Ceiling Grid and Tile Installations
 - Grier Middle School Rock Excavation
 - Mt. Holly MS Chiller Replacement
 - Sadler ES Chiller Replacement
 - Design -Concession Stand for South Point HS/Bessemer City HS
 - Zone 2 Lawn Care Amendment
 - American Alternative Transportation
 - Carolina Specialty Transport
 - Primary Care Solutions
 - Department of Exceptional Children Contract Services

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.

District Priorities:

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: 5/18/2026

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.

District Priority:

Talent and Workforce Development

Submitted by: Dr. Morgen A. Houchard

Department: Human Resources

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 5/18/2026

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

District Priority:

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 - April
Transfers Between Functions

State Public School Fund

Function	Description	Expense Increase	Expense Decrease
51000	Regular Instructional Services		100,393
65000	Operational Support Services	100,393	

100,393	100,393
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Explanation: These transfers adjust budgeted amounts per requests from fund managers/principals.

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

Local Current Expense Fund

Function	Description	Expense Increase	Expense Decrease
51000	Regular Instructional Services	30,483	
61000	Support and Development Services	3,625	
65000	Operational Support Services	20,815	
66000	Financial and Human Resource Services		46,794
68000	System-Wide Pupil Support Services		8,129

54,923	54,923
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Explanation: These transfers adjust budgeted amounts per requests from fund managers/principals.

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

Federal Grants Fund

Function	Description	Expense Increase	Expense Decrease
53000	Alternative Programs and Services		1,589
65000	Operational Support Services	1,589	
		<u>1,589</u>	<u>1,589</u>

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

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

Restricted Grants Fund

Function	Description	Expense Increase	Expense Decrease
51000	Regular Instructional Services		831
58000	School-Based Support Services		20,000
61000	Support and Development Services		6,637
66000	Financial and Human Resource Services	7,469	
81000	Payments to Other Governmental Units	20,000	
		<u>27,469</u>	<u>27,469</u>

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

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

State Public School Fund			Expense Increase (Decrease)	Revenue Increase (Decrease)
#	Function	Description		
1	31000	Revenue - State Public School Fund		58,452
	51000	Regular Instructional Services	17,261	
	52000	Special Population Services	20,052	
	58000	School-Based Support Services	4,417	
	62000	Special Population Support and Development Services	1,959	
	65000	Operational Support Services	14,763	
	This amendment budgets funds for the Non-Contributory Emp Benefits Allotment - FY26 (PRC0009)			
2	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)			
3	31000	Revenue - State Public School Fund		50,091
	65000	Operational Support Services	50,091	
	This amendment budgets funds for the Transportation of Pupils - DPI Allotment Revision # 62- FY26 (PRC0056)			
Total State Public School Fund Amendments			113,908	113,908

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

Local Current Expense Fund

#	Function	Description	Expense Increase (Decrease)	Revenue Increase (Decrease)
1	41100	Local Sources - Restricted		10,000,000
	53000	Alternative Programs and Services	3,000,000	
	58000	School-Based Support Services	3,500,000	
	81000	Payments to Other Governmental Units	3,500,000	
This amendment budgets funds for the Non-Instructional Support allotment FY26 (PRC0003)				

Total Local Current Expense Fund Account

10,000,000	10,000,000
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Gaston County Schools
Changes in Appropriations
2025-2026 Budget Resolution - April
Proposed Expenditures and Sources of Revenue

Federal Current Expense Fund

#	Function	Description	Expense Increase (Decrease)	Revenue Increase (Decrease)
1	36000	Federal Revenue		30,000
	52000	Special Population Services	28,981	
	81000	Payments to Other Governmental Units	1,019	
	This amendment budgets funds for the IDEA - Special Needs - State Improvement Grant Allotment - FY26 (PRC0082)			
2	36000	Federal Revenue		21,674
	53000	Alternative Programs and Services	(1,931)	
	63000	Alternative Programs and Services - Support and Development Services	7,024	
	65000	Operational Support Services	5,574	
	81000	Payments to Other Governmental Units	11,006	
	This amendment adjusts funds for the 21st Century Community Learning (ASPIRE) Grant Allotment - FY26 (PRC0110)			
Total State Public School Fund Amendments			51,674	51,674

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

Restricted Grants Fund			Expense Increase (Decrease)	Revenue Increase (Decrease)
#	Function	Description		
1	48000	Local Sources - Restricted		200
	69000	Policy, Leadership and Communication/Public Information Services	200	
	This amendment budgets funds for the Central Office Administration allotment - FY26 (PRC0002)			
2	43000	Local Sources - Restricted		1,600
	51000	Regular Instructional Services	1,600	
	This amendment budgets funds for the Instructional/Student Support allotment - FY26 (PRC0216)			
3	48000	Local Sources - Restricted		12,500
	58000	School-Based Support Services	12,500	
	This amendment budgets funds for the Business Partnership allotment - FY26 (PRC0539)			
4	37000	Restricted		1,299
	53000	Alternative Programs and Services	1,299	
	This amendment budgets funds for the Social Worker's Benevolence allotment - FY26 (PRC0601)			
5	48000	Local Sources - Restricted		190,571
	65000	Operational Support Services	190,571	
	This amendment budgets funds for the Ineligible Transportation Cost allotment - FY26 (PRC0706)			
Total Restricted Grants Fund Amendments			206,170	206,170

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 5/18/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Construction/Repair Change Orders

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

Main Points:

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

District Priority:

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 BOE	Contractor's Name	Project name	Description of Change	Contract Amount	Change Order Amount
5-18-26	Beam Construction Company	Grier Middle School Rock Excavation	Mass Rock excavation of the Grier Middle School Sports field. Estimated volume was achieved using the survey points given by the rover and the distances given by the surveyors wheel. Phase 2, Mass rock, @ 11,355 cubic yards (\$797,121), and Stock pile mass @ 449 cubic yards of rock (\$31,520).	\$51,691,500	\$828,641

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 05/18/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Board Policy Updates

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

Main Points: The Policy Committee reviewed several policies at its May 4 meeting and recommends revisions be approved by the full Board. The policies are:

2350 - Board Meeting Agenda

2360 - Parliamentary Procedures

3226 - Internet Safety

4010 - Equal Educational Opportunities

4315 - Alcohol and Drug Abuse Policy for Student Athletes

4316 - Eligibility for Transfer Athletes

4395 - Suspension from Participating in Extracurricular Activities

Proposed Policies (see link for Proposed Policies)

Fiscal Implications: N/A

Recommendation: Board of Education approval of proposed policy revisions.

Policy Implications: Board of Education Policies will be revised.

District Priorities:

Efficient and Responsive Operations and Technology

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 5/18/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: School Nutrition CEP Participation

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

Main Points: The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) is a federal, non-pricing meal service option available to high-poverty schools and districts participating in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. CEP allows eligible schools to provide breakfast and lunch to all students at no charge. The program eliminates the need for individual household meal applications, removes the identification of complimentary meal recipients, and helps reduce student meal debt while increasing student access to nutritious meals.

Current Status (2025–2026):

- 45 school locations participating in CEP
- 96.00% reimbursement rate at the free meal rate

Fiscal Implications: This will increase CEP participation from 45 to 47 school locations and increase the percentage of meals reimbursed at the federal free rate from 96.00% to 98.96%

Recommendation: Approve the expansion of the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) for the 2026–2027 school year to include Gaston Early College and College Early College of Medical Science. This will increase CEP participation from 45 to 47 school locations and increase the percentage of meals reimbursed at the federal free rate from 96.00% to 98.96%.

Policy Implications: Section 2000 - Board Operations

Strategic Goal Alignment: Efficient and Responsive Operations and Technology

Submitted by: Bessie Harvey, Assistant
Superintendent of Operations

Department: Auxiliary Services

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 5/18/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Non-CEP Student Meal Pricing Increases

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

Main Points: Administration is recommending an adjustment to non-CEP student meal pricing for the 2026–2027 school year. Meal prices have remained unchanged since the COVID-19 pandemic despite continued increases in food, labor, equipment, and operational costs associated with student nutrition services. In preparation for this recommendation, the district conducted a comparative review of meal pricing among surrounding school districts to ensure pricing remains competitive and aligned with regional practices.

The proposed increase will support the financial sustainability of the Child Nutrition Program while continuing to provide affordable meal options for students and families.

Fiscal Implications: Increase non-CEP student meal prices by \$0.25 effective for the 2026–2027 school year as follows:

Meal Type	Current Price	Proposed Price
Breakfast	\$1.40	\$1.65
Elementary Lunch	\$2.90	\$3.15
Middle/High Lunch	\$3.00	\$3.25

Recommendation: Approve the recommended \$0.25 increase to non-CEP student meal pricing for the 2026–2027 school year.

Policy Implications: Section 2000 - Board Operations

Strategic Goal Alignment: Efficient and Responsive Operations and Technology

Submitted by: Bessie Harvey, Assistant
Superintendent of Operations

Department: Auxiliary Services

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: May 18, 2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: 2026-2027 Federal Grants Application

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

Main Points: Gaston County Schools is submitting federal grant application to support continued academic growth, student support services, and strategic priorities aligned to the district's Academic Pathway. These federal funds provide critical resources to strengthen teaching and learning, support students with specialized needs, expand professional development opportunities, and ensure compliance with state and federal program requirements.

The federal grant applications include funding for programs such as Title I, Title II, Title III, Title IV, and other supplemental federal initiatives designed to improve student achievement and provide targeted support for schools and student groups. Funds will be used to support high-quality instruction, intervention services, instructional coaching, professional learning, academic enrichment opportunities, multilingual learner services, and programs that promote college and career readiness.

The grant application is aligned to the Gaston County Schools Strategic Plan 2030 and support the district's commitment to increasing student achievement, strengthening Tier I instruction, expanding opportunities for all students, and reducing the number of low-performing schools. Approval of the federal grant application allows the district to continue accessing critical funding resources that directly support students, staff, and schools across the district.

Fiscal Implications: Federal Grant Planning Allotments were used to generate the application for the upcoming year to ensure GCS was within budget for the upcoming year for Title I, II, III and IV.

Recommendation: Approve Federal Grants Application 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: 5/18/2026

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.

District Priorities

Sustainable Financial Stewardship

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

Department: Finance

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 5/18/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Driver Education

Type of Item:

☒ **Consent**

☒ **Action**

☐ **Information**

Main Points:

The current Driver Education contract with the North Carolina Driving School (NCDS) expires on June 30, 2026. This contract has been in place since July 1, 2023, and was only renewable for a three year period, therefore, it was time to complete the request for bid process. Through this process, the North Carolina Driving School was the only company to submit a bid, as has been the case for the last several bid cycles.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction allots funds to the Gaston County Schools Public School Unit to be used solely for Driver Education. The driver education contract is renewable one school year at a time for three school years.

The proposal for 2023-2026 from the NCDS would maintain the current total price of \$315 (\$240 for Behind-The-Wheel instruction and \$75 for classroom instruction) per student to complete Driver Education.

Some specific items addressed in the contract include NCDS operating as an independent contractor and not an employee of GCS, NCDS must provide both Classroom and Behind-The-Wheel instruction, NCDS must provide Driver Education at approved locations throughout the year and have a dedicated office within Gaston County, NCDS must provide insurance at all times, and NCDS understands this contract is contingent on funding from DPI.

Fiscal Implications:

Contingent upon State funding for driver education services, Gaston County students will continue to receive driver education.

Recommendation:

Approve the bid for driver education services in Gaston County.

Policy Implications:

Section 4000 - Students

District Priorities:

Comprehensive Student Support

Submitted by: Dr. Rebekka Powers **Department:** Student Support Services
Assistant Superintendent

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 5/18/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Ashbrook High School hallway Ceiling Grid and Tile Installation

Type of Item: ☒ Consent ☒ Action ☐ Information

Main Points: Replace ceiling grid system that is a combination of old stained and damaged ceiling tiles and grid. This project will demo the current grid system and install a new 2'x2' grid system with all new tiles on the 1st floor hallways.

Funding Source: Bond Funds

Fiscal Implications: The cost for this project is \$119,300.00.

Recommendation: Authorization to move forward with Bradshaw Flooring & Acoustical Inc. to do the installation of a new ceiling grid system and tiles in the hallways at Ashbrook High School.

Policy Implications:

Section 9000 - Facilities

District Priority:

Efficient and Responsive Operations and Technology

Submitted by: Bessie Harvey, Assistant
Superintendent of Operations

Department: Operations

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 5/18/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Grier Middle School Rock Excavation

Type of Item: ☒ Consent ☒ Action ☐ Information

Main Points: Mass Rock excavation of the Grier Middle School Sports field. Estimated volume was achieved using the survey points given by the rover and the distances given by the surveyors wheel. Phase 2, Mass rock, @ 11,355 cubic yards (**\$797,121**), and Stock pile mass @ 449 cubic yards of rock (**\$31,520**).

Funding Source: Bond Funds

Fiscal Implications: The cost for this change order is \$828,641

Recommendation: Authorization to move forward with the change order to remove mass cubic yards of rock totaling **\$828,641**.

Policy Implications:

Section 9000 - Facilities

District Priority:

Efficient and Responsive Operations and Technology

Submitted by: Bessie Harvey, Assistant
Superintendent of Operations

Department: Operations

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 5/18/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Mt Holly Middle Chiller Replacement

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

Main Points: Replace the original 110-ton HVAC chiller with a new 110-ton chiller due to its age and history of mechanical issues.

Funding Source: Repair and Renovation Funds

Fiscal Implications: Pre-bid meeting was held on March 12th with four vendors signed in. Bids were submitted on March 27th from three vendors: **Carolina Air Solutions at \$180,236.61**, Kirlin Way Mechanical at \$208,813.32, and STR Mechanical at \$237,502.60.

Recommendation: Authorization to move forward with Carolina Air Solutions for the replacement of the HVAC chiller at Mt Holly Middle.

Policy Implications:

Section 9000 - Facilities

District Priority:

Efficient and Responsive Operations and Technology

Submitted by: Bessie Harvey, Assistant
Superintendent of Operations

Department: Auxiliary Services

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 5/18/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Sadler Elementary Chiller Replacement

Type of Item: ☒ Consent ☒ Action ☐ Information

Main Points: Replace original 170-ton HVAC chiller with a new 170-ton chiller due to its age and history of mechanical issues

Fiscal Implications: Pre-bid meeting was held on March 12th with four vendors signed in. Bids were submitted on March 27th from three vendors: **Carolina Air Solutions at \$233,484.03**, Kirlin Way Mechanical at \$250,375.71, and STR Mechanical at \$291,250.00.

Funding Source: Bond Funds

Recommendation: Authorization to move forward with Carolina Air Solutions for the replacement of the HVAC chiller at Sadler Elementary. **\$233,484.03**

Policy Implications:

Section 9000 - Facilities

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Efficient and Responsive Operations and Technology

Submitted by: Bessie Harvey,
Assistant Superintendent of Operations

Department: Operations

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 5/18/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: South Point HS and Bessemer City HS 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.**

Architectural and engineering services are being procured for the replacement of the baseball stadium press box and concessions building at Bessemer City High School. The total appraisal value of this building structure is \$142,568.00 with a \$50,000 deductible responsibility. **The remaining project costs will be funded through school bond funds.**

RFQ for design services was conducted in, McMillan Pazdan Smith Architecture (MPS) was selected

Fiscal Implications:

The estimated cost for this project is \$311,000.00 to include: Architectural Design, Civil Engineering,, Structural Engineering, Mechanical, Electrical & Plumbing Engineering.

Recommendation:

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

Policy Implications:

Policy Code 9000 – Planning to Address Facility Needs

District Priority:

Efficient and Responsive Operations and Technology

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

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 5/18/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Amendment to Zone 2 Lawncare

Type of Item: ☒ Consent ☒ Action ☐ Information

Main Points: On August 21st, Home Turf Lawncare cancelled their contract for the landscaping services of Zone 7 (non-academic) facilities. Heavner's Lawn & Landscape was the only other contracted landscaper to submit a bid for this zone last summer. They agreed to finish the landscaping services in this zone for the remainder of the allocated funds.

Funding Source: Fund 2

Fiscal Implications: Original contract with Home Turf Lawn & Landscaping was awarded for \$26,250.00. Remaining allotted funds of \$5,750.00 to cover six cuts, two chemical treatments, and one tree/shrub trimming to Heavner's Lawn & Landscape

Recommendation: Original contract with Home Turf Lawn & Landscaping was awarded for \$26,250.00. Remaining allotted funds of \$5,750.00 to cover six cuts, two chemical treatments, and one tree/shrub trimming to Heavner's Lawn & Landscape.

Policy Implications:

Section 9000 - Facilities

District Priority:

Efficient and Responsive Operations and Technology

Submitted by: Bessie Harvey,
Assistant Superintendent of Operations

Department: Operations

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 5/18/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic:

American Alternative (AAT) Contract - Third Party Transportation Change Order

Type of Item: ☒ Consent ☒ Action ☐ Information

Main Points: GCS contracts with American Alternative (AAT), a private transportation company, to transport EC Students, McKinney-Vento students, Foster students, and for other miscellaneous services. The term of the contract is August 26, 2024 thru June 30, 2025, with GCS having two (2) one-year options as follows: Option 1 – July 1, 2025 thru June 30, 2026; Option 2 – July 1, 2026 thru June 30, 2027 (each a "Renewal Term").

Funded Source: State 056 Budget

Fiscal Implications: The cost to contract with American Alternative was estimated to cost \$230,000 per year. Due to increased transportation requests for out-of-county McKinney Vento/Foster students, the actual cost exceeded the contractual amount by \$42,000.

Recommendation: Approve amendment for \$42,000 to AAT which adjusts the current contract of \$230,000 to \$272,000.

Policy Implications: Policy Code:

6320 Organization of Student Transportation Services

District Priority:

Goal 5. Every student has the opportunity to learn in a safe school environment.

Submitted by: Bessie Harvey
Assistant Superintendent of Operations

Department: Operations

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 5/18/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic:

Carolina Specialty Transport (CST) Contract - Third Party Transportation Change Order

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

Main Points: GCS contracts with Carolina Specialty Transport (CST), a private transportation company, to transport EC Students, McKinney-Vento students, Foster students, and for other miscellaneous services. The term of the contract is August 26, 2024 thru June 30, 2025, with GCS having two (2) one-year options as follows: Option 1 – July 1, 2025 thru June 30, 2026; Option 2 – July 1, 2026 thru June 30, 2027 (each a “Renewal Term”).

Funding Source: State 056 Budget

Fiscal Implications: The cost to contract with Carolina Specialty Transport was estimated to cost \$500,000 per year. Due to increased transportation requests for McKinney -Vento, DEC and Foster students, the actual cost exceeded the contractual amount by \$43,000.

Recommendation: Approve amendment for \$43,000 to CST which adjusts the current contract of \$500,000 to \$543,000.

Policy Implications:

Policy Code: 6320 Organization of Student

Transportation Services

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Goal 5. Every student has the opportunity to learn in a safe school environment.

Submitted by: Bessie Harvey
Assistant Superintendent of Operations

Department: Operations

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 5/18/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic:

Primary Care Solutions (PCS) Contract - Third Party Transportation Change Order

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

Main Points: GCS contracts with Primary Care Solutions (PCS), a private transportation company, to transport EC Students, McKinney-Vento students, Foster students, and for other miscellaneous services. The term of the contract is August 26, 2024 thru June 30, 2025, with GCS having two (2) one-year options as follows: Option 1 – July 1, 2025 thru June 30, 2026; Option 2 – July 1, 2026 thru June 30, 2027 (each a "Renewal Term").

Funding Source: State 056 Budget

Fiscal Implications: The cost to contract with Primary Care Solutions was estimated to cost \$450,000 per year. Due to increased transportation requests for McKinney Vento/Foster students, the actual cost exceeded the contractual amount by \$130,000.

Recommendation: Approve amendment for \$130,000 to CST which adjusts the current contract of \$450,000 to \$580,000.

Policy Implications: Policy Code:

6320 Organization of Student Transportation Services

District Priority:

Efficient and Responsive Operations and Technology

Submitted by: Bessie Harvey,
Assistant Superintendent of Operations

Department: Operations

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: May 18, 2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Department of Exceptional Children Contract Services

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

Main Points: Agency Contracts

Due to the increasing needs of students who require higher levels of support—including nursing services, one-on-one assistance, related services, psychological services, and behavioral supports—the Department for Exceptional Children is requesting **\$10 million** to be allocated to the companies listed below.

Amerigis
AMN
Ampersand
Bayada
BrightStar
EDU
Equalize
Focal Point
Gifted Health
Invo
Maxim
MGA
Mission Medstaff
MPS
ProCare
SideKick
Stepping Stones Group
Venture Health Care

Using contracted professionals provides flexibility to address fluctuating caseload demands across the district. It allows us to allocate resources where they are most needed and to respond rapidly when schools experience sudden staffing shortages.

In summary, the continued use of contracted employees is a necessary investment to help ensure compliance with state and federal regulations, uphold best practices in special education services, and provide timely, high-quality support to students, families, and school teams across Gaston County Schools.

Fiscal Implications:

Total: \$10,000,000

Federal, state, and local funds will support instructional resources.

Recommendation:

Support Academic Services resources for the 2026 - 2027 school year.

Policy Implications:

Section 6000 - Support Services

District Priorities:

Comprehensive Student Support

Submitted by:

Chris Mills
Executive Director

Department:

Exceptional Children Department

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 5/18/2026

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

Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 5/18/2026

Agenda Item Title/Topic: Board Report/Human Resource Services

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:

N/A

Policy Implications:

Necessary and appropriate personnel will be provided to assure successful administration of schools.

Strategic Goal Alignment:

Other: Policy or Gen Statute. See above.

Submitted by: Morgen Houchard

Department: Human Resource Services

TOPIC: Adoption of Recommended Personnel**IMPLICATIONS**

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | Impact upon the organization | Adequate and appropriate personnel will be available to accommodate the needs of the pupil population in Gaston County Schools. |
| 2. | Budgetary Requirements | Necessary fund allotments from state, federal and local sources to pay salaries and benefits. |
| 3. | Necessity for additional board policies/procedures or modifications in existing ones. | N/A |
| 4. | Personnel Requirements or Changes | NONE |
| 5. | Resource Requirements other than budget and personnel | Legal responsibilities |
| 6. | Impact upon Staff Development Resources of the School System | Licensure requirements to meet renewal regulations, Initial Licensure (ILT), Professional Development and evaluation. |
| 7. | Other (specify) | NONE |

Last Name	First Name	Category	School	Position
Batiste	Taquasia	Resignation	Pleasant Ridge Elementary School	EC Teacher - General Curriculum
Borders	Shamia	Resignation	Cherryville High School	Head Coach - Volleyball - Varsity
Bradshaw	Candy	Demotion	School Nutrition	SN- Cafeteria Assistant
Carpenter	Kelly	Resignation	Pleasant Ridge Elementary School	Receptionist
Collis	Sandra	Transfer	School Nutrition	SN - Cafeteria Assistant
Conroy	Trudy	Transfer	School Nutrition	SN - Cafeteria Assistant
Crank	Shydaisia	Hire	Chapel Grove Elementary School	Financial Secretary/Data Manager
Crisp	Kristie	Transfer	School Nutrition	SN - Cafeteria Assistant
Dawkins	Sharon	Resignation	School Nutrition	SN - Roving Cafeteria Assistant
Drennan	Jerry	Retirement	Facilities	Carpenter
Franklin	Florence	Promotion	School Nutrition	SN - Cafeteria Assistant
Fuller	Shereena	Resignation	Stuart W. Cramer High School	EC Teacher Assistant
Fuller	Shereena	Resignation	Stuart W. Cramer High School	Sub Bus Driver
Grier	Demario	Resignation	Stuart W. Cramer High School	Teacher Assistant - Student Success Coordinator
Guffey	Montia	Resignation	Department for Exceptional Children	EC Teacher - Homebound
Hatten	Alexis	Demotion	School Nutrition	SN - Sub Cafeteria Assistant
Hoffleit	Suzanne	Promotion	Cramerton Middle School	Lead Custodian
Hogan	Eleanor	Promotion	School Nutrition	SN - Lead Cafeteria Assistant
Hollington	Kaelyn	Hire	Springfield Elementary School	EC Teacher - Pre K
Houze	Ashley	Resignation	Holbrook Middle School	Financial Secretary
Huffstetler	Jason	Resignation	W.C. Friday Middle School	CTE - Exploring Technology Systems Teacher
James	Veronica	Promotion	School Nutrition	SN - Cafeteria Assistant
Jenkins	Tracie	Retirement	Kiser Elementary School	EC Teacher - General Curriculum
Kuntz	Sara	Hire	Department for Exceptional Children	Occupational Therapist
Lockridge	Anthony	Retirement	Facilities	HVAC Filter Mechanic
Long	Kara	Hire	Cramerton Middle School	Sub Bus Driver
Long	Wendy	Resignation	School Nutrition	SN - Cafeteria Assistant
Lowcock	Chad	Resignation	Hunter Huss High School	CTE - Family and Consumer Science Teacher
Martinez	Juan	Rehire an Employee	Catawba Heights Elementary School	Lead Bus Driver
Melton	Amanda	Resignation	J.B. Page Primary School	Teacher Assistant
Morrison	Christopher	Hire	Warlick Academy	Bus Driver
Norwood	Kimberly	Resignation	Gaston Virtual Academy	Teacher Assistant
Owens	Carleia	Promotion	Bessemer City Middle School	Lead Bus Driver
Owens	Lynn	Retirement	McAdenville Elementary School	First Grade Teacher
Parker	Jason	Resignation	Holbrook Middle School	Assistant Coach - Football
Ray	Jackson	Resignation	Stuart W. Cramer High School	Social Studies Teacher
Redfearn	TraNae	Resignation	School Nutrition	SN - Cafeteria Assistant
Rodden	Sonja	Resignation	North Gaston High School	Business Manager
Rose	Michael	Resignation	Facilities	Energy Manager
Royston	Paige	Promotion	Holbrook Middle School	Financial Secretary
Shuler-Parker	Madison	Resignation	Department for Exceptional Children	Administrative Assistant
Vaughn	Alica	Transfer	Webb Street School	Sub Bus Monitor
Waddell	Beady	Hire	Bessemer City High School	Head Coach - Football - Varsity
Walker	Jalen	Resignation	Mount Holly Middle School	Custodian
Walker	Larry	Retirement	Facilities	Carpenter
Walls	Hubert	Resignation	Gaston Early College High School	Bus Driver
Wilson	Helen	Transfer	School Nutrition	SN - Roving Cafeteria Lead