

W.A. BESS PARENT-STUDENT REFERENCE GUIDE

<https://bit.ly/26-27bessparentguide>

<https://wabess.gaston.k12.nc.us/>



W.A.
BESS



ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL SCHEDULE

7:05 a.m.	Building Opens to Students
7:05-7:20 a.m.	Breakfast Served
7:30 a.m.	Instruction Begins/Tardy Bell
2:15 p.m.	Bus and Day Care Riders Dismissed
2:30 p.m.	Carpools and Car Riders Dismissed

ARRIVAL

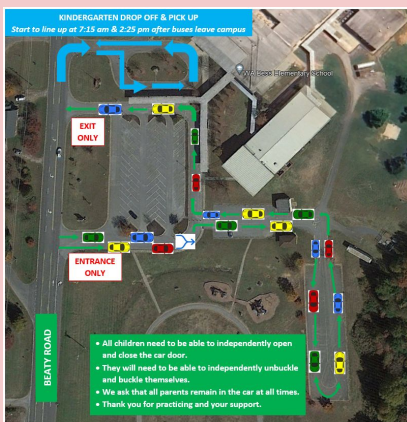
Supervision of students by W.A. Bess staff begins with the ringing of a morning bell at 7:05 a.m. Students must **not** be dropped off without parent supervision before the bell rings at 7:05 a.m. Upon arrival on the school campus, students report to their classroom or to the cafeteria for breakfast which is served between 7:05-7:20 am. Parents of Kindergarten students, carpools, and fast pass owners may use the bus circle to drop their children off in the morning. With administrative approval, cars delivering students with special needs may use the bus circle or crosswalk for morning drop-off. Car tags must be on display of the vehicles utilizing the bus circle during arrival. During morning arrival, students should be unbuckled and ready to exit the car with school supplies as soon as it comes to a complete stop and they do not need to wait for a teacher to open the door to exit the vehicle.

DISMISSAL

First load bus riders are dismissed at 2:15 p.m. followed by those students riding in daycare vans, carpools, and private cars. School staff provide supervision at the front of the building until 2:45 p.m. at which time all riders should be picked up. At the scheduled time, students will be supervised at their areas of loading. All bus, day care, carpool and Kindergarten students will be dismissed from the circular drive. This is the service driveway for school buses and is not open to general traffic. Parents transporting 3 or more students may request a carpool sign and can utilize the bus circle for their carpool. Parents/guardians picking up less than 3 students will follow the parking lot pattern and will display a card in the front windshield listing the first and last names of the child(ren) being picked up. For safety reasons, cars without a card will need to park and the parent/guardian will need to sign out their child(ren) in the office.

W.A. BESS CAR RIDER TRAFFIC PATTERN

Click the link above to view a larger image of our traffic pattern.



DEPARTURE/TRANSPORTATION CHANGES

Please refrain from checking your children out early when possible. We request there be no checkouts after 1:45. This is a very busy time when teachers are ending the day, making sure assignments are understood, etc. **ALL TRANSPORTATION CHANGES MUST BE SUBMITTED IN WRITING TO YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER. FOR SAFETY REASONS, WE ARE UNABLE TO RECEIVE THESE CHANGES OVER THE PHONE.**

CAR RIDERS

All car rider tags should be on display. Students will be directed to the car by staff. If you need a car tag or a replacement, please stop by the office.

Who Can Help You?

Principal	Laura B. Clark, lbclark@gaston.k12.nc.us
Assistant Principal	Charlotte Friday, chfriday@gaston.k12.nc.us
School Counselor	Renea Walker, rjwalker@gaston.k12.nc.us
Social Worker	Kaylee Chen, ekchen@gaston.k12.nc.us
Nurse	Holland Lawing, hwlawing@gaston.k12.nc.us
Data Manager	Amy Mistry, ammistry@gaston.k12.nc.us
Receptionist	Kelsey Palmer, kppalmer@gaston.k12.nc.us
Cafeteria Manager	Phyllis Davis, pldavis@gaston.k12.nc.us

Bess Arrival & Dismissal Traffic Reminders for Parents

Click the link above to view a larger image of these reminders.



BUS RIDERS

If you need to make a change with bus ridership, please contact our front office. Remember that riding the bus is a privilege and students can be removed from the bus for not following expectations. Riders must be outside at the assigned bus stop each morning at least 10 minutes prior to the assigned pickup time. Buses will not wait or blow the horn for students.

EARLY CHECKOUT

If a student is signed out before 10:45 a.m., the day counts as an absence. No child is permitted to leave school without parental permission. Parent(s) MUST use a photo ID with our computer system and must be on the student's approved pick-up list in Infinite Campus before a child can be dismissed. **We ask that early checkouts be done before 1:45 pm.**

TARDIES

Students are tardy after 7:30 a.m. Parents must accompany their child to the office to sign in if arriving after 7:30 am. Students will be coded as tardy and will then report to their class.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

Inclement weather days are determined by Gaston County Schools. Make-up days for inclement weather are noted on the GCS Calendar.

Bess Website

26-27 Calendar

Facebook



ABSENCES

Only 12 absences, excused and unexcused, are permitted each year in accordance to GCS Board Policy. All absences are coded unexcused until a note is brought to school. Notes are expected to be brought within three days of the child returning to school. *Excused absences include personal illness/medical appointment, death in the family, family court, doctor appointment, and religious holidays.* The school social worker will make contact with families of students demonstrating difficulty with tardies and absences and letters are sent home after students have missed 3,6, and 10 unexcused days. In compliance with the NC Attendance Law, parents can become involved with truancy court at 10 unexcused absences.

BEHAVIOR

Students are expected to follow the GCS Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct can be found on the Gaston County School website. W.A. Bess also utilizes PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention & Supports). School-wide expectations are taught to students that align to our PAWS initiative.

1. Practice Self Control
2. Accept Responsibility
3. Work Safely
4. Show Respect

We provide students with the opportunity to learn from and correct behaviors in a timely manner. All electronics and toys must be left at home and cell phones, smartwatches, and other communication devices must remain in the student's book bag and turned off while at school. Review our full parent-student handbook for more details.

We encourage parents to actively monitor social media and internet use for their student!

BIRTHDAYS

For student birthdays, we announce birthdays on the announcements and give students a special treat. Birthday invitations should be passed out at home or to ALL students in the class. We do not allow for deliveries to students of items such as flowers, balloons, or food delivery services.

CAFETERIA AND SCHOOL NUTRITION

W.A. Bess is 1 of 47 schools in GCS that qualify for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) program which offers **universal free breakfast and lunch for all students**. Families do not have to fill out an application for [free or reduced-price meals](#). This is an exciting benefit and School Nutrition is hopeful that many families will take advantage of this opportunity. If a child would like to purchase any items that are not part of the school meal, such as snacks and ice cream, they will need money in their meal account or cash in order to do so. Cash, checks, and money orders are acceptable forms of payment in school cafeterias. Parents wishing to pay by credit or debit card must set up an account on the [LINQ Connect portal](#). Click [here](#) to see what is being served each week. Adults do not receive free meals under the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) program and will pay the a la carte cost for the food items ordered.

Holiday Meal: Wednesday, November 18, 2026

All students will have the opportunity to choose the Holiday Meal as their meal on this day. However, to keep the event safe and manageable for everyone, each GCS school will invite **only one grade level of families** to attend the holiday meal each year.

W.A. Bess will invite our 5th-grade families to enjoy the Holiday Meal with their student, as this will be the last year their child will be attending our school.

Adult Holiday Meal Price: \$6.00

COMMUNICATION

We communicate with families through our Parent Link phone system, email, school website, and social media. To stay connected, please be sure that we have your proper contact information if you have any changes take place. We also must have current contact information in the event your child becomes ill or injured at school.

CUSTODY

Parents that have custody complications are asked to send a copy of all court documents so that we may comply with any judgment. **Only court documents with a judge's order determine child custody.** We can only honor what paperwork we are provided with at the school. We will only discuss a child's educational matters with those who have legal custody or those deemed permissible by the legal guardian. If issues arise related to domestic issues, local law enforcement will be called to remove parties from the school campus.

DRESS CODE

Students are expected to maintain an appearance that is neither distracting or disruptive to the learning environment.

*Athletic shoes need to be worn on PE days for safety.

*Hats, bandanas, sunglasses, hoodies, or other headgear is not permitted in the building.

*Clothing should not have indecent language or pictures

*Student clothing should cover undergarments.

MEDICATION

Written authorization from the student's doctor is required to administer **all** medication. Forms are available by contacting the school nurse.

SAFETY

As a part of our safety plan, we conduct various safety drills and random metal detection on a regular basis. The drills are practiced so that students and staff will know how to respond in the event of an emergency.

SCHOOL PICTURES

Fall Picture Day - Thursday, September 17, 2026

Fall makeup pictures - Tuesday, November 10, 2026

Holiday pictures - Tuesday, November 10, 2026

Class Group pictures - Thursday, January 28, 2027

Yearbook pre-orders will be available through March 25, 2027

Spring pictures - Wednesday, April 7, 2027

STANDARDS BASED LEARNING

Elementary schools in Gaston County implement standards-based learning and grading practices in all K-5 classrooms. Knowing where students are in their progress toward meeting the standards-based learning objectives aligned to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study is crucial for planning and delivering classroom instruction. Teachers utilize and gather multiple and consistent pieces of evidence, such as checklists, anecdotal notes, student work samples, quizzes, tests, projects, etc., from each student that are aligned with the scores of proficiency scales to determine if mastery of the standards is obtained

TECHNOLOGY

All students will be issued a Chromebook to use for educational purposes following parent review and submission of this [form](#).

VISITORS

All visitors to our school must check-in through the main office with a valid driver's license to scan into our visitor system. We ask visitors keep bags in their vehicle while visiting our school and to dress appropriately, i.e. no bed clothes, shoes required, and undergarments covered. For safety reasons pertaining to identification needs, visitors are asked to remove sunglasses, hoodies, hats and other headgear upon entering the building and until leaving campus. In addition, visitors are subject to metal detection and random bag searches. Any unauthorized visitors will be asked to leave immediately.

VOLUNTEERS

Per Policy 5010, parents wishing to assist in the classroom and/or attend field trips **MUST** complete a [Volunteer Application](#) through the district office which includes a criminal background check. Once completed, this lasts throughout your child's years at Bess and does not have to be completed annually; however, you will need to reactivate your volunteer status each school year on the [GCS website](#).

***PLEASE NOTE: Any changes in policy and procedures that may occur after this handbook has been printed will be communicated by the school.**



FULL PARENT-STUDENT HANDBOOK

MISSION, VISION, AND BELIEFS

W. A. Bess Elementary School's vision is to equip students for academic success needed for a strong foundation in becoming lifelong learners who contribute to their community. The school's mission is to create a nurturing and learning environment.

Leading the school in realizing its vision and in accomplishing its mission are beliefs that include providing equitable academic opportunities for all W.A. Bess students and in teaching and modeling positive character traits.