

Gaston County Schools
Board of Education
September 21, 2026
Regular Meeting

MINUTES

The Gaston County Board of Education met in a regular session on Monday, September 21, 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 (excused at 7:09), Tod Kinlaw, Robbie Lovelace, Jeff Ramsey, Janna Smith, and A.M. Stephens III. Brent Moore was absent and excused.

Additional attendees included: Superintendent Dr. Morgen A. Houchard, Attorney Sonya McGraw, Associate Superintendent Tonya Kales, Assistant Superintendents Bessie Harvey and Rebekka Powers, Chief Communications Officer Todd Hagans, Interim Chief Financial Officer Bryan Denton, 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 5:31 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

Invocation

Pastor Joe Bell of Eastside Church of the Nazarene, Gastonia, led the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance

Students Armani Brown-Wheeler, an 8th grader, Giovanni Clark, an 8th grader, and Jeremy Perdomo Morales, a 7th grader from York Chester Middle School, led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Character Trait

Students Jezyah Burris, a 2nd grader, Jayden Magee, a 4th grader, Skyla Hasell, a 5th grader, and Charity Hallman, a 5th grader, all from Woodhill Elementary School, reported on the Character Trait of Respect.

Agenda Adoption - Action

The Board considered Agenda Adoption – Action

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

Good News – Information

Mr. Todd Hagans presented the Good News for September:

Gaston County Schools' AIG Local Endorsement (G.A.L.E.)

In compliance with the North Carolina Academically and Intellectually Gifted state standards, 20 of our classroom teachers recently completed a year-long coursework titled "Gaston County Schools AIG Local Endorsement" or "G.A.L.E." to obtain credentials to work with our gifted students.

The G.A.L.E. coursework is designed to highlight and promote best instructional practices and provide training for educators. In addition to the coursework, the teachers had to complete 12 modules on gifted topics and conduct a case study.

Mr. Tod Kinlaw presented each of the teachers with a plaque of recognition.

Warlick Academy

Recognized as part of the “What’s the Story?” initiative, Social Studies educator Bobby Harley and students Janyla Givens and Shakii Marable produced a documentary highlighting Gastonia’s school integration and the 1974 state championship football team. Beyond honing their skills in storytelling, research, and interviewing, Mr. Harley and his students preserved vital local history and presented Gastonia’s story to a national audience.

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

City Church donation to H.H. Beam Elementary

Doug Beam, whose father, Hershel H. Beam, serves as the namesake for Gastonia’s H.H. Beam Elementary School, recently issued a challenge to City Church to match his planned \$10,000 contribution to the school.

Over the course of a single weekend, the congregation contributed more than \$30,000 alongside Beam’s gift, yielding nearly \$46,000 to fund facility enhancements and essential resources for educators and students.

Present to acknowledge the recognition of the donation were Pastor Dickie Spargo and school representatives: Principal Beth Crosby, students Denise Leon Castillo, Khloe McNabb-Towery, and Noah Tamayo.

Ms. Dot Cherry presented a recognition plaque.

Presentation of 2025-2026 State Test Results - Information

Associate Superintendent Tonya Kales and Kelly Cunningham co-presented the Presentation of the 2025-2026 State Results.

District leadership and staff were commended by Board Members for their hard work, dedication, and the successful growth demonstrated across the district.

(View Presentation)

September Classroom Moment: Innovation Schools Highlight - High-quality PLCs - Information

In the Classroom Moment presentation, Executive Director Tyler West detailed how Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) enhance instruction and learning throughout Gaston County Schools. She highlighted the collaborative efforts of educators—including teachers, principals, instructional coaches, and teacher leaders—who work together to examine standards, analyze student work, and evaluate assessment data to refine teaching strategies.

(View Presentation)

Public Expression – Information

Deana Murphy of Gaston Literacy Council
116 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way
Gastonia, NC 28052

Re: Appreciation for the Board's partnership with the Gaston Literacy Council to offer Reading Soul Mates in many elementary schools.

Dionna Graham
201 E. Franklin Blvd
Gastonia, NC

Re: School (County) Report Card

Sean Bates
201 E. Franklin Blvd
Gastonia, NC
Re: Bus usage concerns

Barbie Stokes
Belmont, NC 28012
Re: Constitution Week

Dot Guthrie
526 Shadow View Drive
Gastonia, NC

Re: To make remarks and congratulate schools, faculty, staff, and parents, and most importantly, the students for showing academic growth.

Chairman Crisp called for a short recess at 7:09 P.M. The meeting reconvened and was called back to order by the Chair at 7:16 PM. Mr. Lee Dedmon left the meeting.

Approval/Correction of Minutes – Action

Motion to adopt minutes as presented for the August 17, 2026, Regular meeting.

Motion made by Ms. Dot Cherry; seconded by Mr. A.M. Stephens III; motion carried unanimously. (7-0)

Operations and Curriculum & Instruction Joint Committee Report – Information

The Operations Committee and Curriculum & Instruction Committee met on Monday, September 14, 2026, in a Joint Committee meeting. Ms. Dot Cherry provided a summary report of topics considered and discussed at that meeting.

(View report)

Policy Committee Report - Information

The Policy Committee met on Monday, September 14, 2026. Mrs. Janna Smith provided a summary report of topics considered and discussed at that meeting.

(View report)

2026-2027 Budget Resolution -Action

Budget information was presented by Chief Financial Officer Bryan Denton on the 2026-2027 Annual Budget, noting the Guiding Principles, Revenue Sources, Expenses by Purpose, State, Local, Federal, and Factors that could impact the Budget.

Motion to approve the 2026-2027 Budget Resolution as presented was made by Ms. Dot Cherry; seconded by Mr. A.M. Stephens III; motion carried unanimously. (7-0)

(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 and 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. Board Policy Updates

E. 2026-2027 Local Testing Plan

F. Contracts

- CTE Contract - Xello
- Belmont Central Boiler Plant Replacement
- Amendment to Zone 2 Lawn Care Contract
- Amendment to Zone 3 Lawn Care Contract
- Amendment Lingerfeldt ES Lighting Contract
- Amendment to South Point HS and Bessemer City HS Baseball Stadium Press Box & Concessions Building Design
- Hawks Nest RTU Replacements
- WB Beam Multistage RTU Replacement

Motion

Motion to adopt the Consent Agenda as presented was made by Mrs. Janna Smith; seconded by Ms. Dot Cherry. Motion carried unanimously. (7-0)

Superintendent's Comments

The Superintendent reminded all employees that Open Enrollment for the 2027 State Health Plan will take place from October 12-30th, 2026. More information will be forthcoming from our Human Resources Department.

Our fall semester Parent Advisory Council meeting is Tuesday, October 6, at 6:00 p.m. at the Gaston Early College High School. This involves the parent representatives selected by each school, and the representatives coming together to hear from me as Superintendent and also provide feedback on various topics.

All-County Chorus Concert

The all-county high school chorus concert will be held Monday, October 12, at 7:00 p.m. at Stuart W. Cramer High School. The public is invited.

The concert features outstanding student vocalists from our high schools, and the concert will include two performances: one featuring ninth- and 10th-grade students and another featuring our juniors and seniors.

Countdown to College Month

We want to remind everyone that October is "Countdown to College Month," when high school counselors encourage students to complete the necessary steps to get their college applications, financial aid, and other information completed.

We want our high school students and their parents to know that this is the time to start thinking about college and taking the necessary steps to make sure applications and other items are completed.

Students and parents who have questions about the college process should contact their high school counselor, as we know that our counselors are happy to help.

Parent Conferences

Looking ahead on the calendar, Thursday, October 15, is our Parent-Teacher Conference Day. Students will be dismissed at lunchtime, and parent conferences will be held in the afternoon. Parents are encouraged to contact their child's school to schedule a conference.

Then on Friday, October 16, we have an optional teacher workday, so there will be no school for students. And report cards for the first nine weeks will be made available on Thursday, October 22.

Professional Development Day - October 28

Last Wednesday, we had our first of our Mandated Teacher Workdays for Professional Development, and we had teachers across all schools involved in training related to the Do Now and Exit Tickets strategy. The strategy is a tool that teachers can use to collect data and insight into students' understanding before and after a lesson.

Our second one is coming up on Wednesday, October 28, so please mark your calendar.

The spring semester Teacher Workdays for Professional Development on Wednesday are February 10 and April 14.

Closing Remarks

Chairman Crisp echoed the remarks of Superintendent Houchard, expressing pride in the dedication and academic progress demonstrated by district staff and students. He extended appreciation to parents for their continued support of these efforts.

Acknowledging that further work remains, Chairman Crisp noted that the district is advancing in the right direction and emphasized the commitment to maintaining momentum moving forward.

The next scheduled Board of Education Meeting will be held on October 19, 2026.

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

Motion to go into Closed Session was made by Ms. Dot Cherry; seconded by Mr. A.M. Stephens III; motion carried unanimously. (7-0)

The Board went into Closed Session at 7:49 p.m.

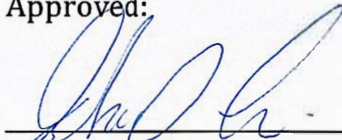
The Board returned to Open Session at 8:22 p.m.

Adjournment

All business having been conducted, a Motion to adjourn was made by Mrs. Janna Smith, seconded by Mr. A.M. Stephens III, and the motion carried unanimously. (7-0)

The Board Meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Approved:



Josh Crisp, Chairman
[Corporate Seal]



Morgen A. Houchard, Secretary

Date Approved: _____