

## BOARD AGENDA INFORMATIONAL ITEM

---

**DEPARTMENT:** Communications/Public  
Information Department

**TOPIC: GOOD NEWS**

**FOR THE MONTH OF:** April 2025

---

1. The following students were named to the North Carolina All-State Honors Band: **Alex Cornwell, Highland School of Technology; Bram Comer, Forestview High School; Zeke Tucker, East Gaston High School; Mackenzie Hart, East Gaston High School; and Iyanna Brianne Flores, W.C. Friday Middle School.**
2. Fifteen students from **Gaston County Schools** were selected to attend the 2025 session of the prestigious North Carolina Governor's School. Students attending Governor's School East at Meredith College are **Kaitlyn Baker, Forestview High School, Social Science; Saliou Diouf, Highland School of Technology, Natural Science; Ashleigh Fox, East Gaston High School, Instrumental Music, Clarinet; Zachary Hatfield, Stuart W. Cramer High School, Choral Music, Bass I; Joshua Morales, South Point High School, Natural Science; Amor Polanco, Forestview High School, Dance; James Smith, Stuart W. Cramer High School, Instrumental Music, Trumpet; Lily Sullivan, South Point High School, Mathematics; Makayla Turner, East Gaston High School, Mathematics; Chloe Villarreal, South Point High School, Natural Science.** Students attending Governor's School West are **Sofia Jimenez Beltran, Gaston Early College High School, Spanish; Mackenzie Hart, East Gaston High School, Instrumental Music, Oboe; Sarena Nguyen, Forestview High School, Natural Science; Yug Patel, Forestview High School, Natural Science; and Aiden VanderMeer, Stuart W. Cramer High School, Natural Science.**
3. **Gaston County Schools**, in collaboration with the Gaston County Museum of Art and History, is sponsoring the annual "Through An Artist's Eyes" exhibit, which features student artwork in 12 different categories: painting, photography, printmaking, sculpture, comic art, ceramics, digital art, color drawing, mixed media, fiber arts, crafts, and black-and-white drawing. The exhibit is open to the public and runs through May 10. **Stanley Middle School** student **Bayleigh Carver** earned "Best in Show" for her award-winning piece titled "Majesty." **North Gaston High School** student **Kira Green** received the Director's Choice Award for her piece titled "Brioche." The James C. Biggers Award was presented to **Nicole Cisnero Saldana of Bessemer City High School** for her color drawing, "Peonies Flourish in Cadence," and the Pinnex Prize was awarded to **Alayah LeDoux of North Gaston High School** for her black-and-white drawing, "Shadow Study."
4. **Belmont Central Elementary** was named the grand champion of the Elementary Battle of the Books competition and placed fourth at the regional competition in Statesville.

5. The Day 1 winners in the 2025 Math Masters competition were **New Hope Elementary**, first place; **Kiser Elementary**, second place; **W.A. Bess Elementary**, third place; and **Pleasant Ridge Elementary**, fourth place. The Day 2 winners were **Chapel Grove Elementary**, first place; **Sherwood Elementary**, second place; **W.B. Beam Intermediate**, third place; and **Woodhill Elementary**, fourth place.
6. The Day 1 winners in the 2025 Battle of the Books competition were **Belmont Central Elementary**, first place; **Rankin Elementary**, second place; **W.A. Bess Elementary**, third place; and **New Hope Elementary**, fourth place. The Day 2 winners were **North Belmont Elementary**, first place; **Sadler Elementary**, second place; **W.B. Beam Intermediate**, third place; and **Brookside Elementary**, fourth place.
7. The five finalists for **Gaston County Schools** Teacher of the Year 2025-2026 are **Kathryne Lavender, Pleasant Ridge Elementary School; Elizabeth Leonard, North Gaston High School; Bridget Matzke, Highland School of Technology; John Ramos, Forestview High School; and Karmen Teague, South Point High School.**
8. The five finalists for **Gaston County Schools** Principal of the Year 2025-2026 are **Josh Allen, South Point High School; Laura Clark, W.A. Bess Elementary School; Rebecca Huffstetler, East Gaston High School; Donna Kelly, Rankin Elementary School; and Jaime Wallace, Brookside Elementary School.**
9. The five finalists for **Gaston County Schools** Assistant Principal of the Year 2025-2026 are **Carmin Adams, Pinewood Elementary School; Jenny Carper, Highland School of Technology; Charlotte Friday, W.A. Bess Elementary School; Deon Kennedy, Mount Holly Middle School; and Logan McGuire, Bessemer City Middle School.**
10. The five finalists for **Gaston County Schools** New Teacher of the Year 2025-2026 are **Alyssa Eckard, Ashbrook High School; Jamie Harris, Page Primary School; Richard Morris, Forestview High School; Emily Parris, Cherryville Elementary School; and Arianna Weber, Page Primary School.**
11. The five finalists for **Gaston County Schools** Teacher Assistant of the Year 2025-2026 are **Catherine Cox, Springfield Elementary School; Melanie Dellinger, Brookside Elementary School; Christi Jolley, W.P. Grier Middle School; Lee Washington, Robinson Elementary School; and Angela Yount, Lowell Elementary School.**
12. The five finalists for **Gaston County Schools** Central Office Administrator of the Year 2025-2026 are **Karen Archer, Academic Services; Susie Bradley, Student Support Services; Scott Cassell, Technology Support Services; Sarah Rector, Academic Services; and Leigh Smith, Human Resources.**
13. **Gaston County Schools** English/language arts curriculum facilitator **Kim Lynch** received the C. Kenneth McEwin Award for outstanding dedication to middle school education at the North Carolina Association for Middle Level Education conference. The award recognizes individuals who have made a significant, long-term impact on advancing middle-level education in the state.

14. **Gaston County Schools** athletic director **Chad Duncan** was chosen as a Class of 2025 Hall of Fame inductee by the North Carolina Athletic Directors Association.
15. **Forestview High School** athletic director **Brian Horne** and **East Gaston High School** athletic director **Haley Stewart** were recognized with a North Carolina Athletic Directors Association (NCADA) Citation Award at the state athletic directors conference. The award recognizes individuals who have made a significant impact in their school, conference, or region within their first five years in athletic administration.
16. **Stephanie Gigliotti** has been named the **Gaston County Schools** School Psychologist of the Year for 2025-2026, and **Beth Heilig** has been named the **Gaston County Schools** Service Provider of the Year for 2025-2026.
17. Three schools in **Gaston County Schools** have received grants from The Truliant Foundation to support innovative educational projects. **W.C. Friday Middle School** will use its grant for the Broadcasting a Better Future project, which will establish a student broadcast team, fostering collaboration, creativity, and communication skills while teaching media production and public speaking through school news and events. **Highland School of Technology** received funding for a 3D printer to enhance the AP Computer Science Principles curriculum, allowing students to design custom parts for Sphero Bolt+ robots and strengthen their coding, creativity, and engineering skills. **Holbrook Middle School** secured a grant for the Pinewood Derby Project, integrating classroom instruction with the classic Pinewood Derby program with funds providing essential materials for students to design and build their own derby cars. These grants will help students develop hands-on skills and bring learning to life in exciting new ways.
18. The **Gaston County Schools** high school choral arts programs performed at the annual N.C. Music Performance Adjudication.
19. The **Gaston County Schools** high school choral directors from **Bessemer City**, **East Gaston**, **South Point**, and **Stuart W. Cramer** all had students selected for the 2025 All-State Choral Festival.
20. The following coaches and student-athletes were selected for the District 10 all-district team: **Darin Dellinger**, **Ashbrook High School**, was named the Boys Basketball Coach of the Year, and **Isaac Byers, Jr.** of **Ashbrook** earned First Team honors while **Jaleel Smith** of **Hunter Huss** and **Elijah Sherrill** of **Highland School of Technology** were named to the Second Team. **Jamari Smith** of **Ashbrook** was placed on the Third Team. On the girls' side, **Oshauna Holland** of **Stuart W. Cramer** was named the Player of the Year and earned First Team honors. **Tionna Pettus** of **Bessemer City** and **Brooklyn Swann** of **Hunter Huss** were named to the Second Team.
21. The **Ashbrook High School** All-Star Pageant raised \$9,503.81 for Cancer Services of Gaston County. Additionally, the school's Unified Club ran the concession stand during the pageant, adding more than \$700 to the fundraising total in support of the Special Olympics of Gaston County.

22. **Belmont Central Elementary** held its annual PTO “Adventure Run” on March 19 and raised more than \$46,000 thanks to generous parent donations and support from business partners. The funds will go toward updating the media center with new seating, adding swings and a basketball goal to the playground, supporting teacher planning days, and providing classroom grants.
23. **Belmont Central Elementary** hosted a “Walk to School” event on April 4 to promote pedestrian safety. The effort was a collaboration between the school, Belmont police and fire departments, emergency management, and the City of Belmont. More than 115 participants gathered at Davis Park that morning to enjoy a light breakfast before walking together to school.
24. The **Cherryville High School** concert band earned an excellent rating on stage and a superior in sight reading at the Music Performance Adjudication.
25. The **Stuart W. Cramer High School** Battle of the Books team won the Region 6 High School Battle of the Books competition. The team will compete in the state competition on April 28.
26. Team members include **Ellory Lamp, Kayla Matthews, Lizzy-Jane Ross, Ann Sproul, Piper Summey, Molly Sutphin, and Bhadra Vineetha**. The team is coached by **Vanessa Griffith**.
27. The **Forestview High School** girls’ soccer team won the Gaston Cup with **East Gaston High School** as this year’s runner-up. In addition, **Ariene Catindig** of **Forestview** was named the MVP, and **Emy Vicente** of **Ashbrook High School** received the Golden Gloves award.
28. **Stuart W. Cramer High School** junior **Oshauna Holland** was named to the first-team all-state girls’ basketball team.
29. **Stuart W. Cramer High School** has 13 students who were chosen for the N.C. All-State Chorus Festival: **Sadie Revels, Jade Gilliam, Kailyn Campbell, Corey Simpson, Zach Hatfield, Channing Wright, Victoria Walker, Allisan Beauregard, Maddie McDuffie, Colbie McKee, Kae’Asia Jackson, Kylie Hayslett, and Anna Warren**.
30. The **East Gaston High School** concert band (ninth grade) and the symphonic band (grades 10-12) both received superior ratings at the Music Performance Adjudication.
31. **Forestview High School** teacher **Angela Datz** was selected as a 2025 World Affairs Council Scholar through UNC-Charlotte.
32. Students from **Forestview High School** competed in the 2025 Gaston College Math Competition on April 4 and earned first place in Advanced Math, second place in Math 2 and Math 3, and finished second overall.

33. The **Forestview High School** concert choir participated in the Disney Music Festival, earning a superior rating and a gold rating for overall performance. **Ella Queen** received a superior rating as the top soloist. **Steven Austin** is the school's chorus teacher.
34. **Lilly Friday**, a senior at **Forestview High School**, was chosen as a finalist for the Anderson University Scholarship, the Morehead-Cain Scholarship at UNC-Chapel Hill, and the National Merit Scholarship. She also interviewed for the UNC-Charlotte Levine Scholarship.
35. **Gaston Early College High School** student **Bannock Scott** was elected to serve as the N4CSGA President. In this statewide Student Government Association leadership position, he will represent more than 700,000 community college students in North Carolina.
36. **Chinara Welsh** of **Gaston Early College High School** represented the Gaston County Teen Court at the annual Teen Court Summit in Greensboro. She served as a clerk during the event and earned the title of Best Clerk Overall with a perfect score of 30. She also took home the Spirit Award on behalf of the Gaston County team.
37. **Gaston Early College High School** students **Rylee Cates** and **James Hatley** are advancing to the state competition for Envirothon.
38. **Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences** junior **Lily Landstoffer** was selected to attend Teens Westward Bound this summer. In addition, sophomore **Mariam Raja** was selected for Summer Ventures at UNC-Wilmington.
39. **Highland School of Technology** students earned top placements at the state-level FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America) competition. First place went to **Khushi Patel** and **Madison Darnell** in the Spirit Event-Cheer/Chant/Slogan as well as **Noelle Martin** in Journalism. Second place was awarded to **Henry Davis**, **Zalak Mehta**, and **Karena Singh** in the Spirit Event-Web Banner category. Third place went to **Swara Patel** in Accounting 1. Fourth place finishers included **Aruzhan Suleimenova** in Computer Applications, **Abigail Anderson** in Introduction to Business Procedures, and the team of Davis, Mehta, and Singh in Public Service Announcement. Additionally, top-10 placements were earned by **James Gutierrez** in Accounting 1, **Diksha Sharma** in Introduction to Event Planning, **Iris Zhang** in Personal Finance, and the team of **Nolan Costanzo**, **Elijah Johnson**, and **Thien Vu** in Network Design. **Highland** also received the FBLA Gold Seal Chapter Award of Merit.
40. The following **Highland School of Technology** students won honors at the annual TSA (Technology Student Association) state conference in Greensboro. The Animatronics team of **Luke Falls**, **Lawson Houser**, **Ben Clements**, and **Austin Griffin** earned first place while **Luke Falls** and **Sydney Falls** placed third in Digital Video Production. Both teams have qualified to compete at the TSA national conference in Nashville in June. Several other teams and individuals placed in the top 12 at the state level, including the Architectural Design team of **Luis Jaramillo-Maya**, **Khloye Jones**, **Ayden Kisby-Jones**, **Yash Patel**, and **Diksha Sharma**; Board Game Design Team 1, consisting of **Nii Abbey**, **Leah Brooks**, **Kerrington Deese**, **Ella Hope**, **Renzo Rodrigues** and **Madison**

**Watson**; the Chapter Team of **Nii Abbey**, **Leah Brooks**, **Annette Carrillo**, **Ben Clements**, **Camille Green** and **Sydney Whitley**; the Drone Challenge Team 4 made up of **Elijah Daugherty**, **Saliou Diouf**, **Owen Honeycutt** and **Grayson Rose**; and **Jenna Washam** in Photographic Technology.

41. The **Highland School of Technology** math team competed at the Gaston College Math Competition and earned first place overall. **Katie Fangman**, **Carsyn Redmond**, **Hazel Ritter**, and **Jack Morris** placed second in the team competition. In the individual events, **Miles Davis** won first place, and **Jack Morris** placed third in Math 1. **Brady Hubers** earned first place in Math 2, **Ben Kelly** took first place in Math 3, and **Regis Lu** finished third in Advanced Math.
42. **Lowell Elementary** media specialist **Laura Pekarek** is the 2025-2026 **Gaston County Schools** Media Specialist of the Year.
43. **McAdenville Elementary School** raised more than \$20,000 during its Fun Run fundraiser.
44. The **North Gaston High School** symphonic band received superior ratings from all judges at the South Central District Music Performance Adjudication. In addition, the band traveled to Universal Studios in Orlando to compete in the WorldStrides Heritage Festival where they earned a gold rating, the Adjudicator's Award for the top-scoring concert band, the Spirit Award for best group representation, and an invitation to perform at the Festival of Gold.
45. **Page Primary School** resource officer **Pheap Kang** of the Belmont Police Department has been named the School Resource Officer of the Year.
46. First graders from **Page Primary School** enjoyed a walking field trip to Stowe Park in Belmont where they played and drew maps of their adventures.
47. **Sherwood Elementary** fifth grade teacher **Bridget Speller** was selected as a 2024-2025 Council Scholar and received a scholarship to enhance her students' learning by visiting another country.
48. **Sherwood Elementary** welcomed District Court Judge Ed Bogle, who spoke to third through fifth grade students about the judicial system. Additionally, employees from Wells Fargo met with fifth grade students to talk about money, finance, and banking.
49. **Sherwood Elementary** celebrated Read Across America Week with special guests and events for students. Officers from the Gastonia Police Department and the Gaston County Sheriff's Office visited the school, showcasing equipment and vehicles while providing students with various learning opportunities. In addition, students in **Ashbrook High School's** Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) club read to students in kindergarten through third grades.
50. Second grade teachers and students at **Sherwood Elementary** are partnering with the 4-H Cooperative Extension Service to bring their raised flower and vegetable garden to life.

51. **Ashbrook High School** band director **Josh Westbrook** along with several band members, including former **Sherwood Elementary** students, hosted a musical instrument workshop for all fifth-grade students, offering them a fun introduction to the joys of being in the band. The event was coordinated by music teacher **Tim Wilson**.
52. **Southwest Middle School** sixth grader **Derrion Byers** placed third in the middle school cybersecurity event at the North Carolina Technology Student Association (NCTSA) state competition.
53. **Springfield Elementary** will open a new playground on May 4. The playground is designed to accommodate up to 45 students at a time and expands the outdoor space available for physical activity and student collaboration during recess. Features include multiple slides, a climbing wall, a pebble climber, a fire pole, and a tic-tac-toe board.
54. **South Point High School** senior **James Dover** is a National Merit Scholarship recipient.
55. The **South Point High School** environmental club collected 110 pounds of aluminum cans and donated \$47 from recycling proceeds. The club also received a grant from Keep Gastonia Beautiful to purchase additional collection containers to support their ongoing recycling efforts.
56. **Stanley Middle School** teacher **Diana Baxter** is the recipient of the North Carolina Student Academy of Science (NCSAS) Teacher Award.
57. The **Stanley Middle School** Envirothon team competed at regionals, and three of the school's teams qualified for the state competition. One of the teams placed first overall out of 34 teams, making it the first public school to ever win first place at the regional competition.
58. The **York Chester Middle School** band was invited to perform at the Disney Imagination Campus after a successful audition. The students performed on March 13 at the Waterside Stage in Disney Springs with a variety of music for the crowd to enjoy. **Julian Wilson** is the school's band director.
59. Students from **York Chester Middle School**, **Belmont Middle School**, and **W.C. Friday Middle School** participated in the Middle School Jazz Night program on April 1. JazzArts Charlotte facilitated the after-school workshop that featured performances, demonstrations, and a jam session.