

## BOARD AGENDA INFORMATIONAL ITEM

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**DEPARTMENT:** Communications/Public  
Information Department

**TOPIC: GOOD NEWS**

**FOR THE MONTH OF:** February 2025

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1. **Maggie LeGrand** of **North Gaston High School**; **Angie Milne** of **Stanley Middle School**; **Emily Perez**, ESL lead teacher at **H.H. Beam Elementary** and **Woodhill Elementary**; **Teagan Taylor**, AIG teacher at **Hawks Nest STEAM Academy** and **Woodhill Elementary**; and **Lindsay Weathers** of **Belmont Middle School** received their National Board Certification. In addition, the following educators had their National Board Certification renewed: **Susan Brittain**, **Bessemer City Primary**; **Nicole Olsen**, **Grier Middle School**; **Marsha Michael**, **Stuart W. Cramer High School**; **Kristin Hedrick**, **Cramerton Middle School**; **Alisa Wheeler**, **W.C. Friday Middle School**; **Matthew Renegar**, **Highland School of Technology**; **Dara Presnell**, **Hawks Nest STEAM Academy**; **Chelsea Harley**, **New Hope Elementary**; **Angela Newton**, **Carr Elementary**; **Timothy Reed**, **North Gaston High School**; **Lori Collins**, **Highland School of Technology**; and **Kimberly Lynch**, **Academic Services**.
2. **Paul Sayegh** of **Belmont Middle School** won the **Gaston County Schools** Spelling Bee, which was held on January 29 at **Ashbrook High School**. He will compete in March at the **Carolina Panthers** Spelling Bee. The top four finishers in the regional bee will receive invitations to advance to the **Scripps National Spelling Bee**. **Nixon Sipe** of **Cramerton Middle School** was the runner-up.
3. **Hawks Nest STEAM Academy**, in partnership with **Carolina Chiropractic Plus**, won first place in the “Are You Smarter Than a Gaston County Fifth Grader?” competition. **Pleasant Ridge Elementary**, partnered with **GSM Services**, and **Gardner Park Elementary**, teamed up with **Tindol Subaru**, took second place. **North Belmont Elementary** and its partner, **Gastonia East Rotary Club**, secured third place. In addition to the top winners, several teams earned special recognition. Team Spirit honors went to **Belmont Central Elementary** and **Belmont Eye Associates** as well as **McLean Funeral Directors** and **Robinson Elementary**. Best Theme was awarded to **Clariant Corporation** and **Rankin Elementary**, while Most Creative Team went to **Firestone Textiles and Fibers** and **Sadler Elementary**. Hosted by the **Gaston County Education Foundation**, “Are You Smarter” is an annual event that brings together local businesses and elementary schools for a lively game show-style competition. Proceeds support the **Ron L. Ensley** grants that provide teachers with funding for innovative classroom projects and lessons.
4. The **Gaston County Schools** Human Resources Department donated 36 loaves of bread to the **Gastonia East Rotary Club** to make sandwiches for people in need in the community.

5. **Gaston County Schools** had more than 140 students participate in the all-county high school band clinic on February 5-6 at **Ashbrook High School**. Students were chosen for the band clinic through an audition process. **Tim Reed** from **North Gaston High School** conducted the symphonic band, and **Dr. Cole Hairston**, a **Hunter Huss High School** graduate who is teaching at Brevard College, conducted the wind ensemble.
6. Students from **Gaston County Schools** participated in the all-county middle school choral clinic on January 28 at **Holbrook Middle School**. **Ben McKinnon** of **Belmont Middle School** served as the clinician for the mixed honors chorus, with Monica Morgan of **Grier Middle School** as the accompanist. Award-winning composer, conductor, and music educator Sherry Blevins led the treble chorus and was accompanied by **Elisha Mitschke-Lamanna** of **John Chavis Middle School**.
7. The following students received scholarships through the Gaston Music Education Foundation: **Erica Scharber** of **Stuart W. Cramer High School**, Honda Honigman College Scholarship valued at \$4,000; **Charlie Ann Sanabia** of **Forestview High School**, Edith Kersh College Scholarship valued at \$3,000; **Cyrus Baltimore** of **East Gaston High School**, Margaret Alexander McArver Scholarship to attend UNC-Greensboro Music Camp; **Corey Simpson** of **Stuart W. Cramer High School**, Gaston Music Education Foundation Scholarship; and **Nicolas Martinez** of **Stuart W. Cramer High School**, Marie Lattimore Torrence Scholarship to attend the Cannon Music Camp.
8. WSGE 91.7, the radio station at Gaston College, and Music and Arts in Gastonia donated reeds, oils, and music books to **Gaston County Schools'** middle school band programs.
9. **Andi Ballard** of **Ashbrook High School**, **Abi Canipe** and **Bailey Owens** of **Cherryville High School**, and **Emma Bumgarner**, **Emma Myers**, and **Alexis Ford** of **East Gaston High School** were selected for the North Carolina All-Region Cheer Team. Chosen from more than 140 applicants, the students will have the opportunity to try out for the all-state cheerleading team.
10. **W.A. Bess Elementary** donated 464 pounds of food to Crisis Assistance Ministry during the school's community service project.
11. The **Cherryville High School** cheerleading team earned semifinalist honors at the National High School Cheerleading Championship in Orlando, Florida. The team is led by coach **Wendy Holt**.
12. **Cherryville High School** junior **Steven Wyatt** placed second in the boys 500-yard freestyle at the 1A/2A state swimming championship.
13. **Cramerton Middle School** achieved the next level of certification from the National Paideia Center and now has the Paideia Classroom certification.
14. **John-Edward Brooks** of **Cramerton Middle School** earned an honorable mention award in the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards for his ceramics piece titled "No Ducks Given." **Keira McHugh** also received an honorable mention in the same category for her piece titled "The Royal Emu." **Brenda Bradley** is the school's art teacher.

15. The **Cramerton Middle School** Quiz Bowl team won first place at the North Carolina Beta Club Convention.
16. **Ann Margaret Sproul** of **Stuart W. Cramer High School** received a Silver Key award for her short story titled “Petrichor” and an honorable mention for her portfolio titled “Stories of Home” in the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards.
17. **Stuart W. Cramer High School** senior **Austin Major** placed fourth in the boys 50-yard freestyle at the Class 3A state swimming championship.
18. Senior **Pressley Rankin** and sophomore **Katelyn Smith** represented the **East Gaston High School** chorus program at Wingate University in the annual All-Carolina Select Honor Choir. They were selected to participate from students across North and South Carolina. Rankin also serves as president of the East Gaston Choral Leadership Committee, and Smith is one of the representatives for the Treble Choir.
19. American Woodmark Corporation presented **East Gaston High School** band teacher **Brandon Taylor** with a check for \$5,000 to aid in the purchase of new band uniforms.
20. The **East Gaston High School** cheerleaders took first place at the Winter Blast cheerleading competition, which was held in Boiling Springs.
21. The **East Gaston High School** varsity competition squad, coached by **April Sadler**, earned first place in the America Cheer Cup National Competition in two categories: Game Day and Advanced Small All-Girl Traditional. The cheerleaders on the squad are **Addison Oxendine, Addyson Brown, Adriana Allison, Alexa Cloninger, Alexis Ford, Breanna Pleasant, Ella Anderson, Emma Bumgarner, Emma Myers, Gracie Hullett, Hannah Payne, Kyleigh McDonald, Laney Clark, Lily King, Lyla Rodeheaver, Morgan Waugh, Payton Baker, Rylee Heafner, and Savannah Price.**
22. **East Gaston High School** alumnus **Jason Pelusio** is serving as the company manager for the national tour of the Broadway musical, “Hamilton.” During a recent performance of the show, **East Gaston’s** Tri-M Honor Society students discovered this exciting connection through the playbill. In a moment of spontaneity, **East Gaston High School** band director **Brandon Taylor** reached out to him via social media during the performance. Not only did Mr. Pelusio take time to meet with the students and their parents after the show, he also visited the school to offer an inspiring master class for band and chorus students.
23. Several **East Gaston High School** students competed in the SkillsUSA Western Regional Rally. First place winners included **Ramon De La Oz** in Job Interview, **Hailey Haney** in Adobe Design, **Payton Lenox** in Poster, **Abram Padilla** in Photography, and **Ridge Pearson** in Automotive Service. Other top finishers were **Samuel Cadle**, who earned third place in Construction Tool ID, **Ella Wise**, who took third place in First Aid CPR and second place in Poster, **Hunter Digh**, who finished fifth in Automotive Service, and **Ryland Martinez-Caulder**, who placed fourth in Automotive Service. **Cooper Bailey** and **Tommy Price** also participated in Automotive Service.

24. **Carter Johnson** of **East Gaston High School** placed second in the boys 200-yard freestyle and third in the 100-yard breaststroke at the 1A/2A state swimming championship. Additionally, **Wyatt Smith** and **Destry Ballard** finished fourth and fifth, respectively, in the Class 1A/2A state diving championship.
25. **Forestview High School** senior **Lilly Friday** is a finalist for the UNC-Chapel Hill Morehead-Cain Scholarship and is being considered for a full-ride Presidential Scholarship at Anderson University.
26. **Forestview High School's** relay team – **William Peyton, Andrew Taylor, Graham Kines** and **Beckett Tabor** – won its second consecutive state swimming championship in the boys 200-yard medley. In addition, Tabor placed third in the 100-yard freestyle. **Forestview** placed fifth overall in the Class 3A state championship.
27. **Autumn Queen**, a senior at **Gaston Early College High School of Medical Sciences**, has been accepted to the honors colleges at both UNC-Chapel Hill and North Carolina State University. She is a finalist for the prestigious Morehead-Cain Scholarship at UNC and the Park Scholarship at N.C. State. Additionally, **Sadie Morton** was named a semifinalist for both the UNC Morehead-Cain Scholarship and the N.C. State Park Scholarship.
28. The **Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences** National Honor Society made more than 200 valentines for residents at the Greens and Peak nursing homes.
29. The **Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences** Kindness Club is leading activities for “No One Eats Alone Week.” This campaign focuses on reducing social isolation and creating student support networks.
30. **Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences** freshman **Vienne Hoffard Cosky** was selected to participate in UNC-Asheville’s pre-college summer program. She will spend two weeks at UNC-Asheville, living on campus and participating in pre-medicine activities.
31. **Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences** junior **Morgan Melton** was selected as a district winner for the VFW Voice of Democracy essay contest for her essay titled, “Religion, Patriotism, and Government.” The essay theme was “Is America Today our Forefathers’ Vision?”
32. Several **Highland School of Technology** Beta Club students received recognition at the 83rd Annual Senior Beta Convention in their respective competitions. **Sydney Falls** earned first place in Visual Arts Painting, Division I; **Aruzhan Suleimenova** placed third in Visual Arts Hand Drawn Anime, Division II; **Sophia Dorantes** took fourth place in Psychology for 12th grade; **Noelle Martin** secured fourth place in Spelling for 12th grade; and **Skylar Oplinger** received fifth place in Visual Arts Mixed Media.
33. **North Gaston High School** sophomore **Logan McKnight** earned first chair in the Western Region Jazz Band.

34. **Pinewood Elementary** received a \$1,200 grant from A+ Schools of North Carolina and plans to use the funds to bring Number Drummer creator Troy Kryzalka to the school. This unique, interactive experience combines math and music, turning the entire audience into a percussion ensemble to create a dynamic, rhythm-filled performance.
35. The Laurel East Community Watch presented **Sherwood Elementary School** with a check for \$1,000.
36. **Sherwood Elementary** held its fourth annual “Sherwood STEM Night” at the Schiele Museum on January 30. This event was free to all students and their families, who were able to participate in STEM activities, view the planetarium, and explore the exhibits and outback farm area.
37. Fifth-grade students at **Sherwood Elementary** were treated to a live performance on February 11 by musician Christopher Dixon, who specializes in bass, violin, and cello. The program was arranged by music teacher **Timothy Wilson**.
38. **South Point High School’s** relay team of **Miles Ferguson, Daniel Lane, Noah Legnosky** and **Grant Hunnicutt** won the Class 3A state swimming championship in the boys 200-yard freestyle relay. Additionally, sophomore **Ila Turner** earned second place in both the girls 50-yard freestyle and 100-yard freestyle at the 3A state championship.