

**Gaston County Schools  
Board of Education  
Monday, February 8, 2021  
Special Meeting  
5:30 p.m.**

**MINUTES**

The Gaston County Board of Education met in a special meeting for the purpose of discussing the latest guidance for K-5 Plan A Implementation in the Board Room, 943 Osceola Street, Gastonia, NC. The Board of Education meeting was held virtually and conducted in accordance with social distancing requirements related to the coronavirus pandemic. The meeting was live on Spectrum Cable Channel 21 and the Gaston County Board of Education YouTube page. Those Board Members in attendance were: Chairman Jeff K. Ramsey, Vice Chairman Dot Cherry, Kevin Collier, Justin Davis, Lee Dedmon, Dot Guthrie (virtual), Steve Hall, Robbie Lovelace and Brent Moore.

Additional attendees include: Superintendent Dr. W. Jeffrey Booker, Attorney Sonya McGraw, Associate Superintendents Melissa Balknight (virtual) and Gary Hoskins (virtual), Chief Communications Officer Todd Hagans (virtual), Administrative Assistant Andrea Stephens and Board Clerk Dana Luoto.

Chairman Ramsey called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

Chairman Ramsey recognized Superintendent Booker who introduced Mr. Steve Eaton, Public Health Director Gaston County Department of Health & Human Services. Mr. Eaton presented a PowerPoint on COVID-19 Update. Superintendent Booker presented a PowerPoint on K-5 Plan A Implementation. Discussion followed.

(View PowerPoints)

**Motion**

The motion was made by Mr. Kevin Collier; seconded by Mr. Justin Davis that the Board  
**Implement Plan A four days per week with Wednesday off for K-5 students  
beginning March 1, 2021**

**Amended Motion**

Mr. Lee Dedmon made a Motion to amend the First Motion; seconded by Mr. Kevin Collier that the Board

**Implement Plan A four days per week with Wednesday off for K-5 students  
beginning February 22, 2021**

A vote was taken and motion to amend the original item as presented failed. (3-6)  
Mr. Kevin Collier, Mr. Justin Davis and Mr. Lee Dedmon – voted for the amendment.

Ms. Dot Cherry, Mrs. Dot Guthrie, Mr. Steve Hall, Mrs. Robbie Lovelace, Mr. Brent Moore and Mr. Jeff Ramsey – voted against the amendment.

### **Original Motion**

The original motion was made by Mr. Kevin Collier; seconded by Mr. Justin Davis that the Board

**Implement Plan A four days per week with Wednesday off for K-5 students beginning March 1, 2021**

A vote was taken and motion to approve the item as presented carried. (7-2)

Ms. Dot Cherry, Mr. Kevin Collier, Mr. Justin Davis, Mr. Lee Dedmon, Mr. Steve Hall, Mr. Brent Moore and Mr. Jeff Ramsey – voted for original motion

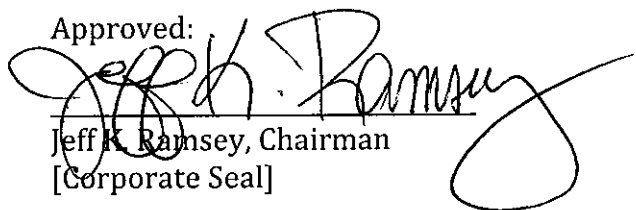
Ms. Dot Guthrie and Mrs. Robbie Lovelace – voted against original motion.

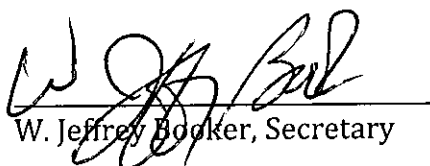
### **Adjournment**

All business having been conducted, Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Lee Dedmon; seconded by Ms. Dot Cherry; motion carried unanimously. (9-0)

The Board Meeting adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

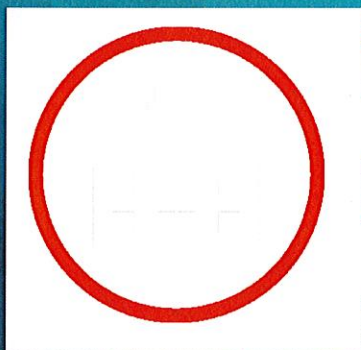
Approved:

  
Jeff K. Ramsey, Chairman  
[Corporate Seal]

  
W. Jeffrey Booker, Secretary

Date Approved:

3/15/2021

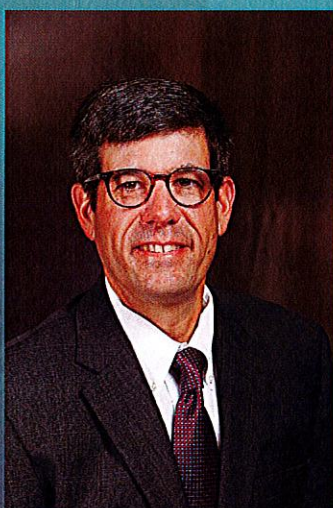


*Gaston County Schools*

# COVID-19 UPDATE

Presentation to the Board of Education

February 8, 2021



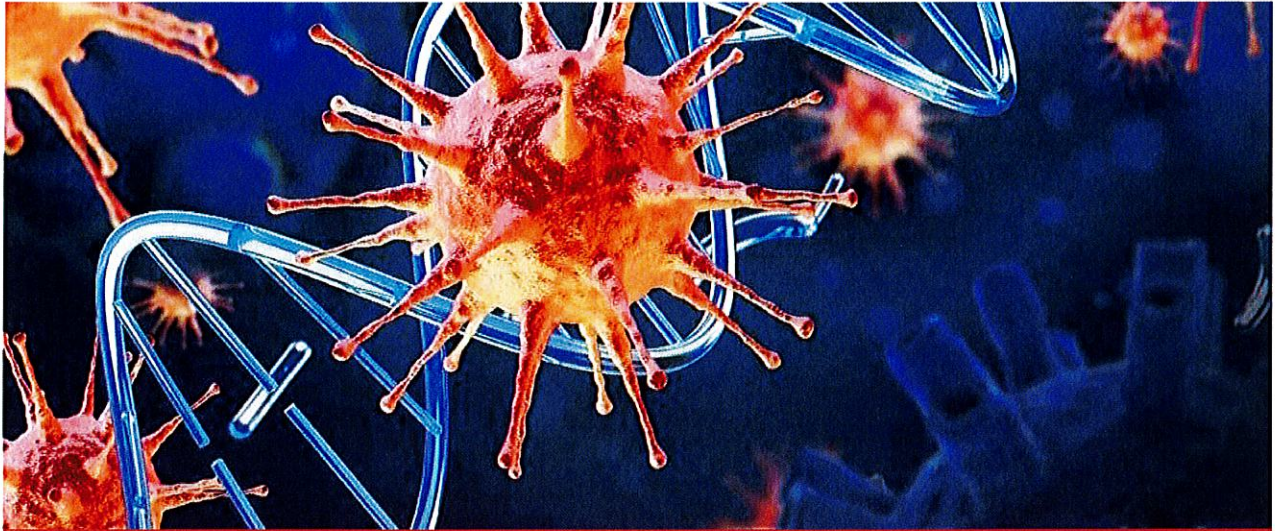
## **Steve Eaton, MPH**

Public Health Director  
Gaston County Department of Health  
and Human Services

- Partners with GCS leadership.
- Maintains regular communication with GCS leadership.

**Gaston County Schools**





## KEY METRICS - COVID-19

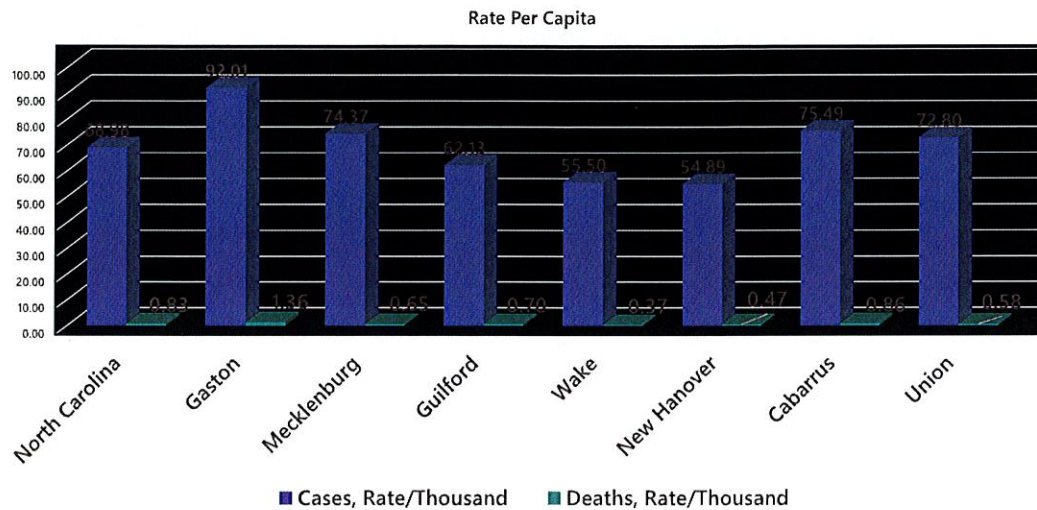
GASTON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION  
FEBRUARY 8, 2021

## Introduction & Overview

- Gaston County Data and Metrics
- Gaston County School Age Data
- Questions

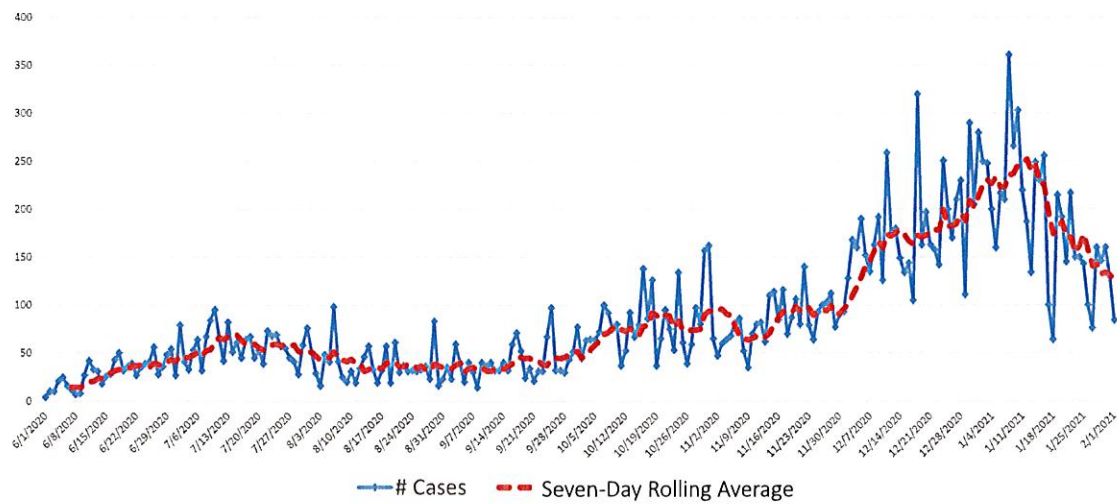


# COUNTY COMPARISON



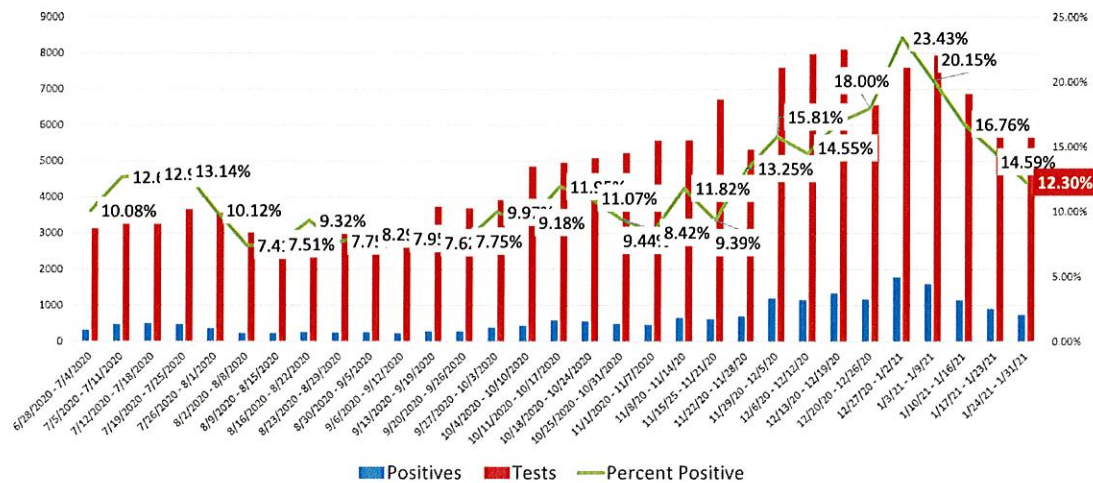
Sources: US Census Quick Facts Population Estimate, 2018; NC DHHS, January 26, 2021 Published Data

## GASTON COUNTY COVID-19 CASES BY DATE REPORTED



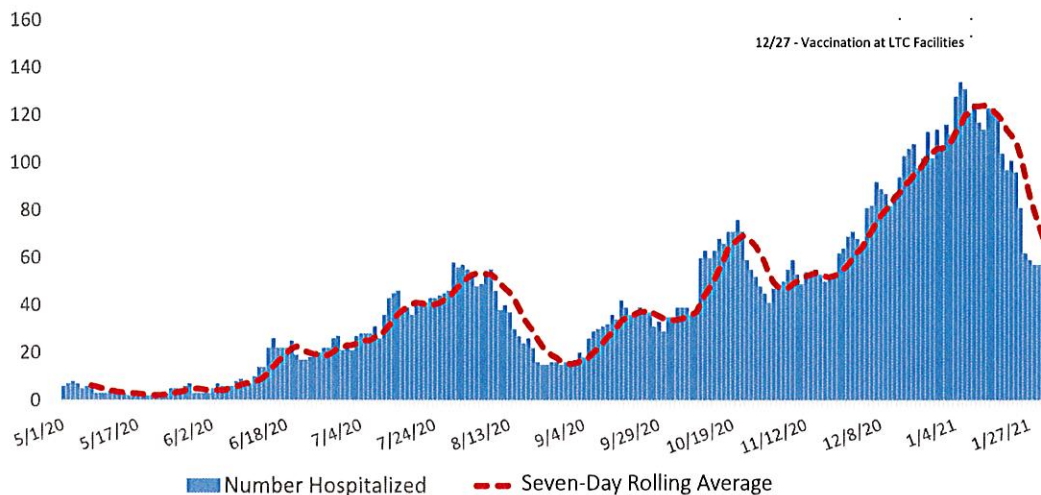
Source: NC EDSS

## PERCENT OF POSITIVE TESTS, BASED ON COLLECTION DATE



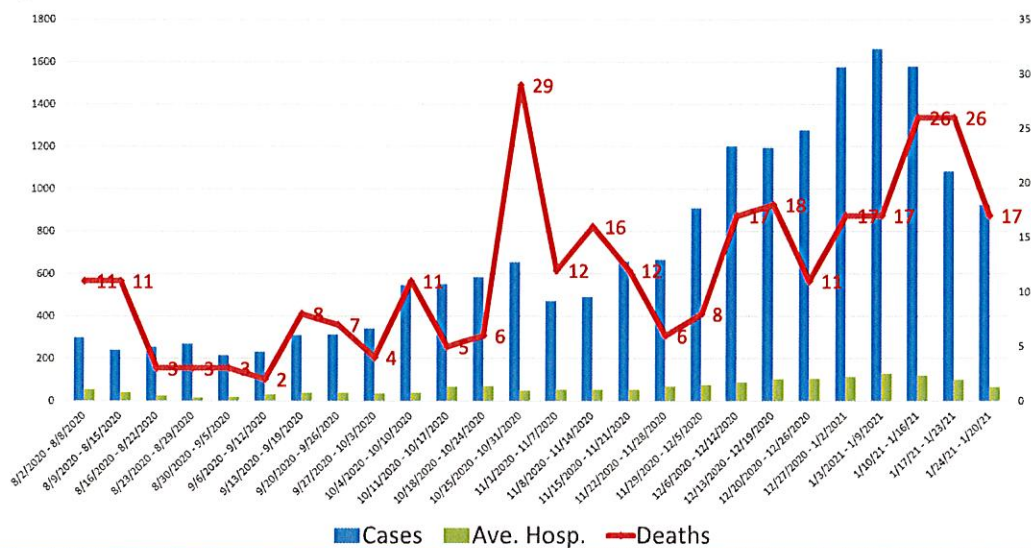
Source: NC EDSS; Updated each Monday. Some tests from the most recent week may be missing, previous weeks will be updated as information is received.

## GASTON COUNTY COVID-19 HOSPITALIZATIONS



Source: Gaston County DHHS

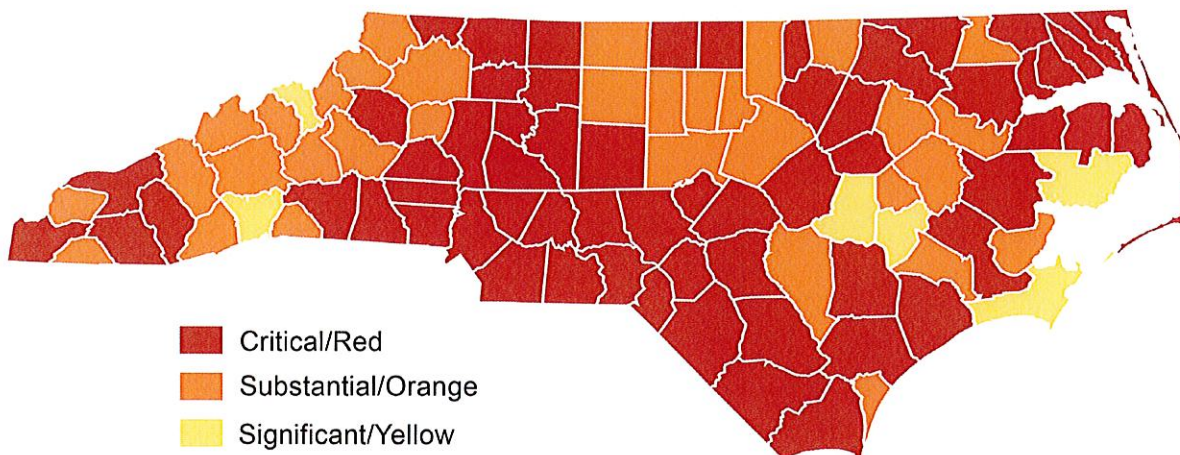
## CASES, HOSPITALIZATIONS AND DEATHS



Source: Gaston County DHHS

9

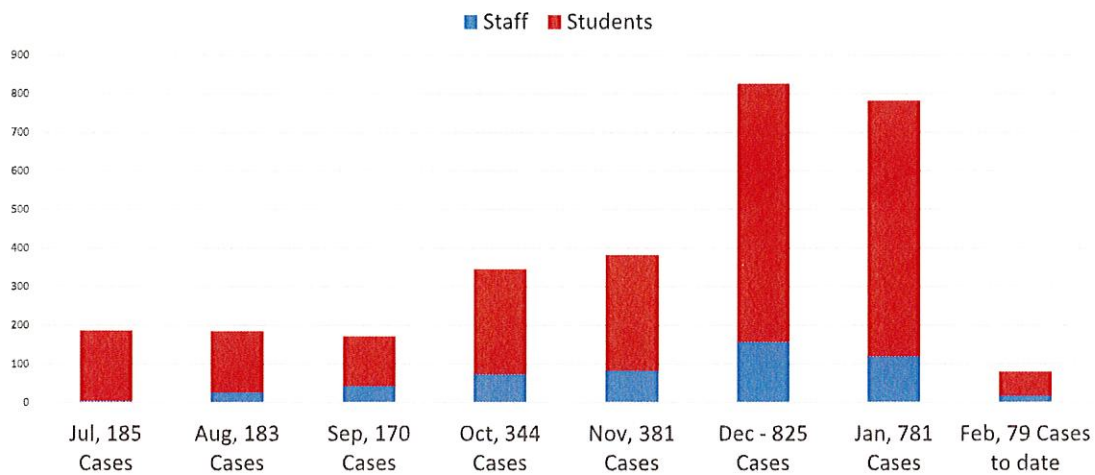
## NC Counties by Tier: Data from January 17 through January 30, 2021





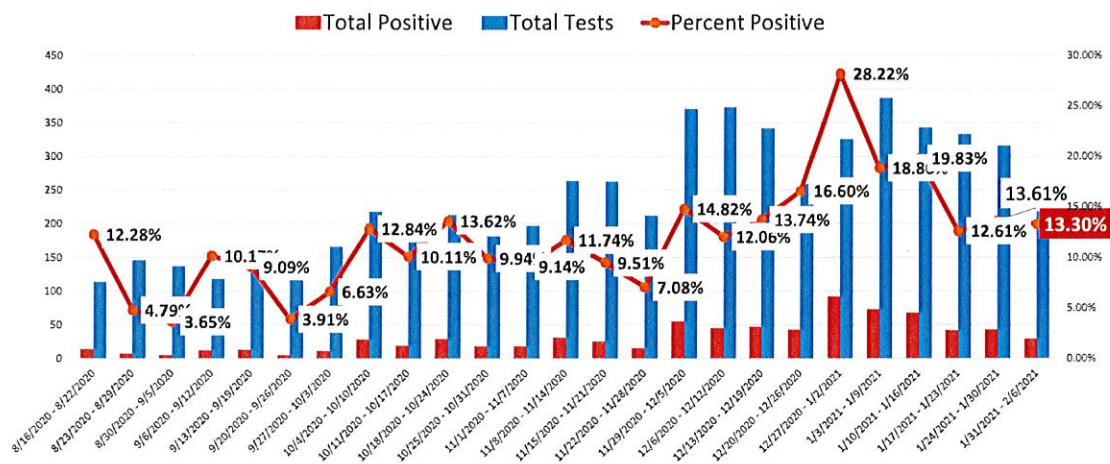
## Gaston County School Age Data (Public, Private, and Charter)

### ALL CASES AND CONTACTS, FACULTY STAFF AND STUDENTS



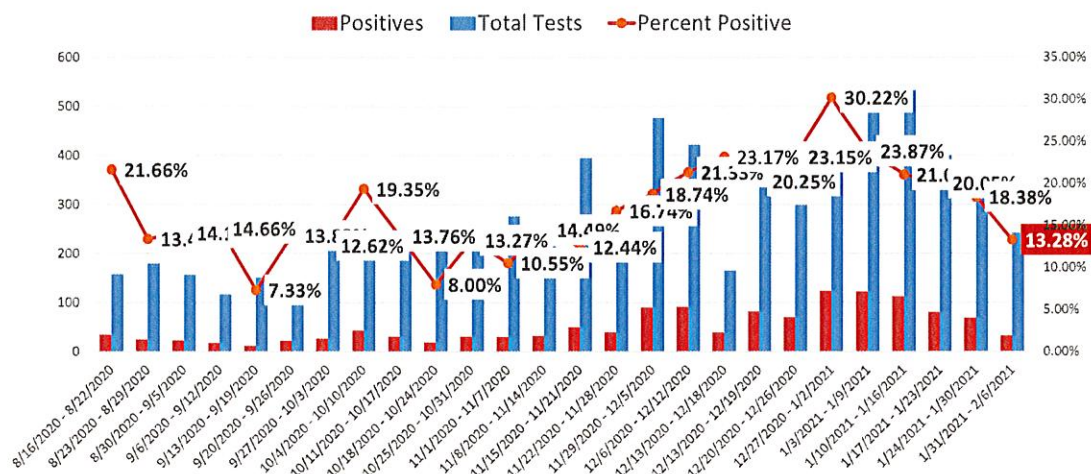
Source: Gaston DHHS, NC EDSS Ages 4-18. Data current as of 2/7/21; Cases indicate an individual who tested positive for COVID-19,

## PERCENT POSITIVE — AGES 4 - 11



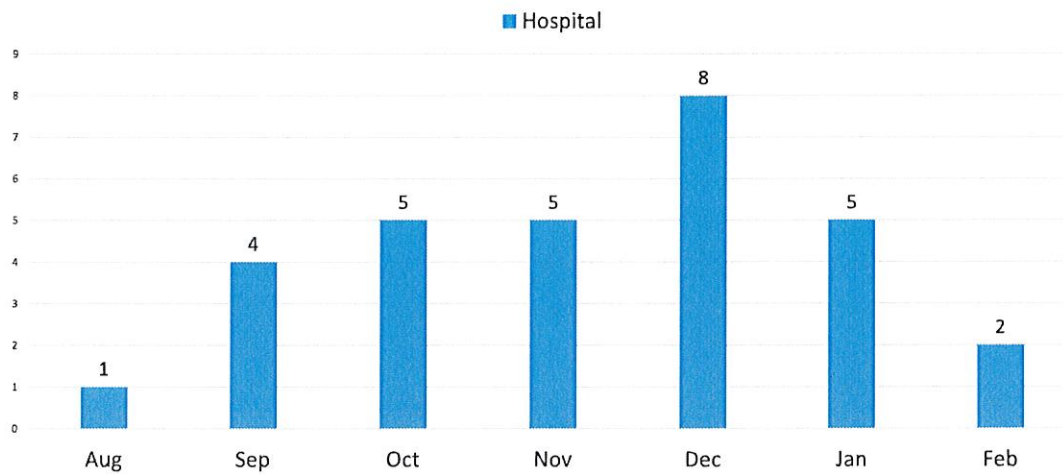
Source: NC EDSS, based upon date of specimen collection. May include Gaston County students enrolled in other counties. Not all cases from the most recent weeks will be included due to a lag in reporting time.

## PERCENT POSITIVE — AGES 12 - 18



Source: NC EDSS, based upon date of test result. May include Gaston County students enrolled in other counties. Not all cases from the most recent weeks will be included due to delays in reporting.

## FACULTY AND STAFF – HOSPITALIZATIONS



Source: Gaston County DHHS. Based upon the date local tracking began. Totals as of 2/7/21,

### Questions?

Steve Eaton, MPH  
Public Health Director  
[steve.eaton@gastongov.com](mailto:steve.eaton@gastongov.com)  
704-853-5271



# K-5 Plan A Implementation

Gaston County Schools

## Overview

The N.C. Department of Public Instruction, the State Board of Education, the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, and the Governor's Office have provided information and guidance for school districts as they plan to reopen our public schools.

- [Lighting Our Way Forward: North Carolina's Guidance in Reopening K-12 Public Schools](#)
- [Strong Schools NC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#)

**StrongSchoolsNC**  
**Public Health Toolkit (K-12)**

















INTERIM GUIDANCE  
Published June 30, 2020 • Updated February 2, 2021

Gaston County Schools

## All Grade Levels Three Student Groups

(Blended Model - AA/BB)

Gaston County Schools

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Student Group A			Remote Learning Staff Planning/ Professional Development		
Student Group B			Deep Cleaning of Buildings		
Student Group C					
	Face-to-Face Instruction		Remote Instruction		Virtual Instruction - All 5 Days

Gaston County Schools

## Options for students

We made two options available for students/families:

- Hybrid Learning (Plan B) – 73.5% percent of students  
*A blend of in-person instruction at school and remote learning at home*
- Virtual Learning (Plan C) – 26.5% of students  
*All virtual at home through the Gaston County Virtual Academy*

One of only two of the largest districts in the state to open under Plan B

Gaston County Schools



## Health and safety protocols

The following practices have been in place since August:

- Daily temperature checks and health questionnaire
- Requiring masks by students and staff
- Social distancing in classrooms and on buses
- “Deep cleaning” practices
- Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) – face coverings, gloves, etc.
- Raising awareness about COVID-19

**Gaston County Schools**

The N.C. Department of Public Instruction, the State Board of Education, the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, and the Governor’s Office have provided information and guidance for school districts as they plan to reopen our public schools.

- [Lighting Our Way Forward: North Carolina’s Guidance in Reopening K-12 Public Schools](#)
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**StrongSchoolsNC**  
**Public Health Toolkit (K-12)**

INTERIM GUIDANCE  
Published June 30, 2020 • Updated February 2, 2021

**Gaston County Schools**



## Strong Schools NC Public Health Toolkit (K-12)

Requirements	Plan A Currently Grades K-5	Plan B Currently Grades 6-12
<b>In-Person Instruction Available in Both Plan A and B</b> Provided 5-days/week to the fullest extent possible while still meeting StrongSchoolsNC public health protocols		
<b>Six Feet Social Distancing Protocols</b> – Maintaining six feet of physical distance between people especially when stationary or congregating for increased layer of protection	✗	✓

StrongSchoolsNC: Public Health Toolkit (K-12) Interim Guidance • Published June 8, 2020; Updated February 2, 2021

### What's the Plan?

COMPARISON OF REQUIREMENTS For Plan A, B and C

Requirements	Plan A Currently Grades K-5	Plan B Currently Grades 6-12
<b>In-Person Instruction Available in Both Plan A and B</b> Provided 5-days/week to the fullest extent possible while still meeting StrongSchoolsNC public health protocols		
<b>Physical Distancing Protocols in Instructional Settings</b> – Keeping physical space between and among students and staff	✓	✓
<b>Vertical Social Distancing Protocols</b> – Maintaining six feet of physical distance between people especially when stationary or congregating for increased layer of protection	✗	✓
<b>Clean and Disinfect</b> – All school environments must be kept clean and disinfected	✓	✓
<b>Protective Barriers in Instructional Settings</b> – People with certain conditions are at higher risk of severe illness if exposed to COVID-19	✓	✓
<b>Closure and Isolation</b> – Schools can play an important role in helping children and staff cope with isolation and anxiety caused by the effects of the pandemic	✓	✓
<b>Education and Outreach</b> – Working with families will assist for 24 hours or more, but from 10:00 PM to 10:00 AM	✓	✓
<b>Attendance Monitoring</b> – Conducting regular morning and morning roll, monitoring for symptoms such as fever, cough or difficulty breathing, and other signs of illness	✓	✓
<b>Supportive Services</b> – Provision of emotional, social and COVID-19 – Being open to work to address subject's needs, provide support and address needs of COVID-19 related to learning needs of COVID-19 and needs of staff	✓	✓
<b>Communication and Coordination of Information</b> – Both schools and families must engage in regular communication to provide information that protect the spread of COVID-19	✓	✓
<b>Wells and Isolation Barriers</b> – Take steps to ensure that all other students and staff are safe from the spread of COVID-19 and other diseases	✓	✓
<b>Sanitization</b> – School environments must take steps to ensure that all other students and staff are safe from the spread of COVID-19 and other diseases	✓	✓
<b>Remote Learning Option Available</b> For higher risk students and teachers, and for families opting for remote learning for their children		

StrongSchoolsNC: Public Health Toolkit (K-12) Interim Guidance • Published June 8, 2020; Updated February 2, 2021

3

## Gaston County Schools

## K-5 Plan A: Auxiliary Services Update

DAILY OPERATION  
OF SCHOOLS

HEALTH and  
SAFETY  
PROCEDURES

BUS  
TRANSPORTATION

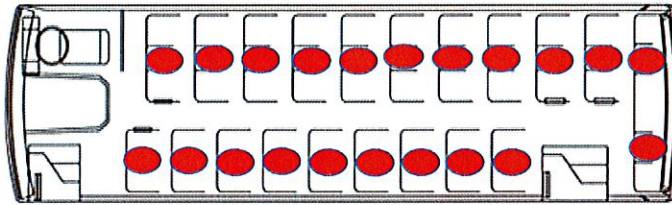
SCHOOL  
NUTRITION

## Gaston County Schools



## Transportation

### Social distance on BUS



● 1 Student per seat

PLAN VIEW

Under Plan B only, schools are required to adhere to all requirements already outlined, AND:

- ☐ No more than one passenger may be seated per school bus bench seat, with the exception that members of the same household may share a seat.
- ☐ No more than two students may be seated in a non-bus vehicle unless all students in the vehicle are members of the same household.

Gaston County Schools

## Plan B: Transportation

### DISINFECTING and CLEANING

Buses are disinfected after each load.

Drivers are allotted time, after each load, to wipe down touch points and use an electrostatic sprayer.

Provide each school a handheld electrostatic sprayers.

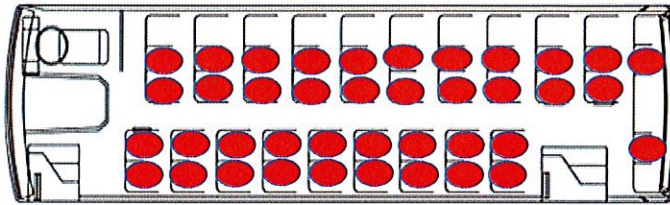
Cleaning products provided for each bus.

Gaston County Schools



## Transportation

### Social distance on BUS



PLAN VIEW

● 2 Students per seat

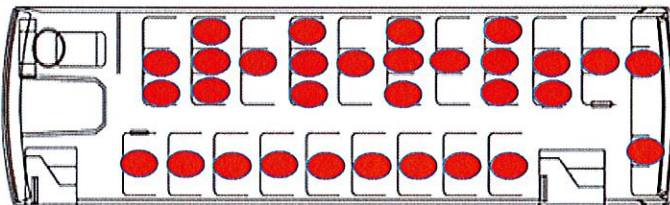
It is recommended that all schools in Plan A and Plan B and Local Education Agencies:

- Identify at least one adult to accompany the driver to assist with screening and/or supervision of students during screening of on-boarding passengers, and to monitor children during transport.
- Allow for 6 feet of social distancing between students, and between students and the driver, while seated on vehicles if feasible (e.g., by utilizing larger vehicles with more seats, by increasing frequency of routes to reduce occupancy, one rider per seat in every other row).

Gaston County Schools

## Transportation

### Social distance on BUS



PLAN VIEW

● 2 or 3 Students per seat

It is recommended that all schools in Plan A and Plan B and Local Education Agencies:

- Identify at least one adult to accompany the driver to assist with screening and/or supervision of students during screening of on-boarding passengers, and to monitor children during transport.
- Allow for 6 feet of social distancing between students, and between students and the driver, while seated on vehicles if feasible (e.g., by utilizing larger vehicles with more seats, by increasing frequency of routes to reduce occupancy, one rider per seat in every other row).

Gaston County Schools



## Plan A: Transportation

### SEATING, DISINFECTING, and CLEANING

StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit (K-12)  
Frequently Asked Questions

LAST UPDATED October 12, 2020

Buses will be disinfected after each load. Cleaning products provided.

Drivers are allotted time, after each load, to wipe down touch points and use an electrostatic sprayer.

Additionally, as of October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020, schools may choose to operate in Plan A for all kindergarten – 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. However, if schools operate under Plan A, they are strongly encouraged to operate school transportation under Plan B health and safety requirements. Given that school transportation vehicles are more confined spaces than classrooms, and that at maximum capacity a school bus could hold up to 70 children, Plan B ensures density reduction on school transportation to allow for additional social distancing in those settings to reduce the potential risk of viral exposure.

All Plan B schools utilizing transportation are required to adhere to Plan B requirements for transportation:

- No more than one passenger may be seated per school bus bench seat with the exception that members of the same household may share a seat.
- No more than two students may be seated in a non-bus vehicle unless all students in the vehicle are members of the same household.

Gaston County Schools

## SCHOOL NUTRITION

Gaston County Schools



## **School Nutrition**

To provide breakfast and lunch meals for students,

- **school nutrition staff will need to consider a variety of logistics.**
- **meals may need to be served in classrooms or other spaces to ensure social distancing.**

**Gaston County Schools**

## **School Nutrition**

To provide breakfast and lunch meals for students,

- **meals will need to be prepackaged and distributed by staff to eliminate the use of a service line.**

**Gaston County Schools**



## Facilities and Maintenance

- Guidance for all custodians with cleaning procedures.
- Provide hand soap, towels, and hand sanitizer to facilities regularly.
- Train custodial staff on cleaning product usage.

Gaston County Schools



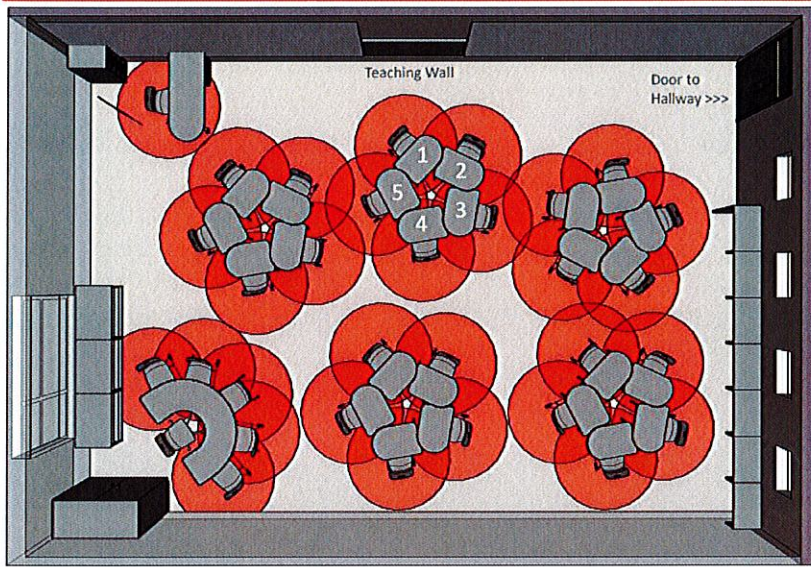
## Stop the Spread of Germs

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.

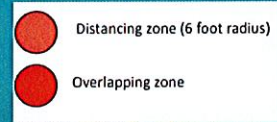


Gaston County Schools

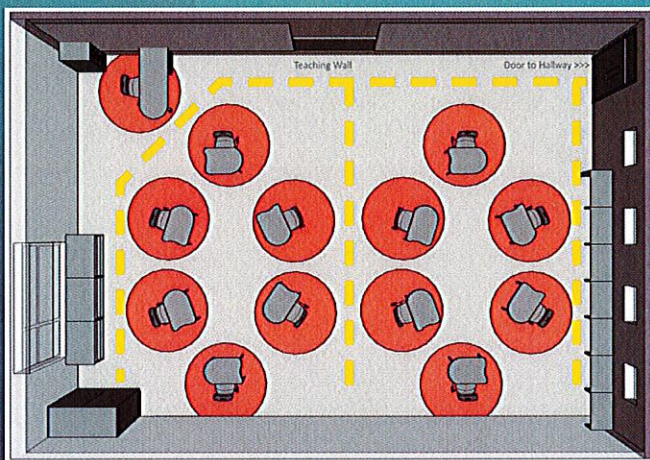




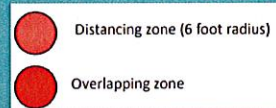
Pre-COVID 19 Classroom Layout



Gaston County Schools

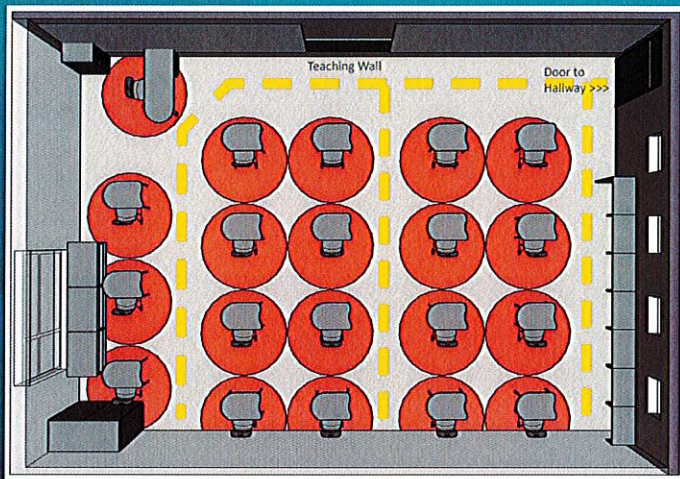


COVID 19 Classroom Layout

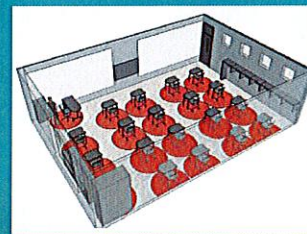




Gaston County Schools



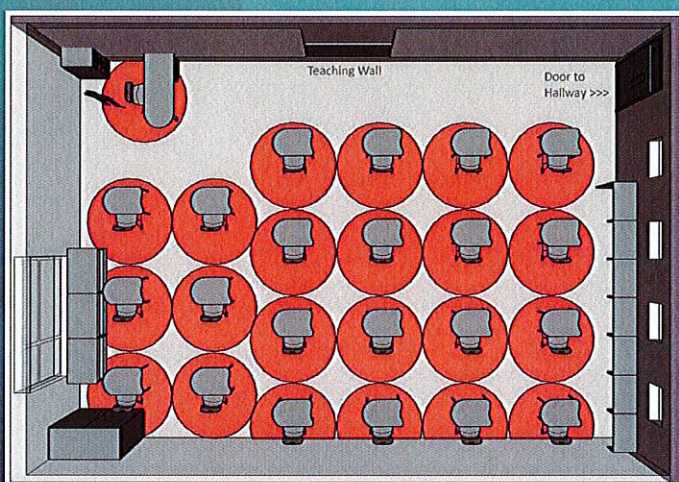


COVID 19 Classroom Layout

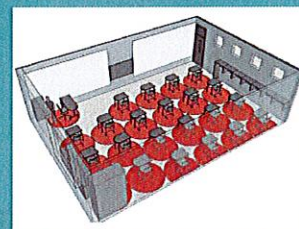




-  Distancing zone (6 foot radius)
-  Overlapping zone

Gaston County Schools



COVID 19 Classroom Layout  
Plan A combined cohort



-  Distancing zone (6 foot radius)
-  Overlapping zone

Gaston County Schools





**Classroom Setup**  
**Tryon Elementary School**

**Gaston County Schools**



**Classroom Setup**  
**Tryon Elementary School**

**Gaston County Schools**





**19 Seats: 3 Feet**



**32 Seats: 2 Feet**

**Classroom Setup: WA Bess Elementary School**

**Gaston County Schools**

## **Building Considerations**

### **Traffic Flow Parking Lots**

- Student Drop Off / Pick Up
- Traffic Cones will be provided

### **Building Entrances**

- Student Drop Off
- Bus Drop Off

### **Security at Entrances**

### **Movement of Students**

- Hallways
- Bathrooms



**Gaston County Schools**



## Health and safety protocols

The following practices have been in place since August:

- Daily temperature checks and health questionnaire
- Requiring masks by students and staff
- Minimal social distancing in classrooms and on buses \*\*\*
- “Deep cleaning” practices
- Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) – face coverings, gloves, etc.
- Raising awareness about COVID-19

Gaston County Schools

## Looking ahead

To transition from K-5 operating in Plan B to operating in Plan A:

- Facilities would continue to be closed to the public.
- Deep cleaning of facilities on Wednesday is beneficial.
- Gaston Virtual Academy (GVA) families would maintain their commitment of enrollment for the second semester.

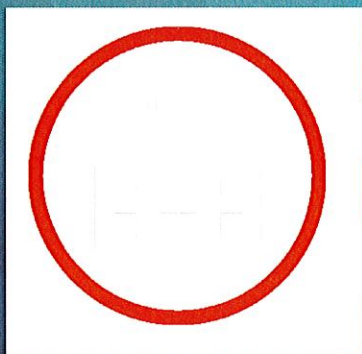
Gaston County Schools

## Looking ahead

To transition from K-5 operating in Plan B to operating in Plan A:

- We, under current state directives, are allowed to operate in Plan A for K-5 and Plan B for grades 6 – 12.
- We have been operating in Plan B since school started on August 17 for all students.
- Schools and community would benefit from a 2-week transition to allow for schedule adjustments, operational shifts, and communication with families.

**Gaston County Schools**



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**COVID-19  
UPDATE**

**Presentation to the Board of Education**

**February 8, 2021**