

Gaston County Schools  
Board of Education  
Joint Board of Education/Board of Commissioner Meeting  
Tuesday, April 1, 2025  
10:00 a.m.

**Minutes**

The Gaston County Board of Education met in a special meeting on Tuesday, April 1, 2025 at the Gaston County Administrative Building, Conference Room 3A, Gastonia, NC. Board Members in attendance were: Chairman Josh Crisp, Vice Chairman Dot Cherry, Lee Dedmon, Tod Kinlaw, Robbie Lovelace, Brent Moore, Jeff Ramsey (absent), Janna Smith and A.M. Stephens III.

Additional attendees from Gaston County Board of Education include: Superintendent Dr. Morgen A. Houchard, Attorney Sonya McGraw, Associate Superintendents Gary Hoskins and Tonya Kales, Chief Communications Officer Todd Hagans, Assistant Superintendent of Student Support Services Rebekka Powers, Assistant Superintendent of Operations Bessie Harvey and Board Clerk Dana Luoto.

Attendees from Gaston County Board of Commissioners: Chairman Chad Brown, Vice Chairman Cathy Cloninger, Jim Bailey, Allen Fraley, Bob Hovis, Tom Keigher, and Scott Shehan.

Additional attendees from Gaston County Board of Commissioners: County Manager Matt Rhoten, Assistant County Managers Steve Eaton and Brian Sciba, Budget Coordinator Elizabeth McGee, Executive Directors Ray Maxwell and Justin Amos, Financial and Management Services Director Scott Attaway, County Attorney David Goldberg, Executive Legal Counsel Martha Thompson, Communications Director Adam Gaub and Clerk to the Board Donna Buff.

Chairman Chad Brown called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Superintendent Houchard thanked the Commissioners for past support of Gaston County Schools and an on-going relationship between staff and Board Members. Superintendent Houchard presented a PowerPoint presentation of the 2025-2026 Gaston County Schools Budget.

(View PowerPoint)


Discussion occurred.

Chairman Brown and Chairman Crisp thanked everyone for coming.

The meeting adjourned at 11:32 a.m.

Approved:

  
Josh Crisp, Chairman  
[Corporate Seal]

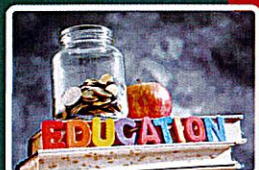
  
Morgen A. Houchard, Secretary

Date Approved: 5/14/2025



# Gaston County Board of Commissioners and Board of Education Joint Meeting

*April 1, 2025*



## District Focus Areas

- High Quality Teaching and Learning
- Positive School and Workplace Culture
- Strong Communication Habits
- Teacher and Student Retention and Recruitment
- Focused Support for School and District Leadership

## Listen and Learn

### Walk and Talk

- ☐ School Board Members
- ☐ State and Local Leaders
- ☐ Law Enforcement
- ☐ Faith Leaders
- ☐ School Faculty Meetings



## Continue to build relationships with our stakeholders

- State Legislators
- County Commissioners
- County/City Managers
- EDC
- Gaston College
- Belmont Abbey College



## District Initiatives

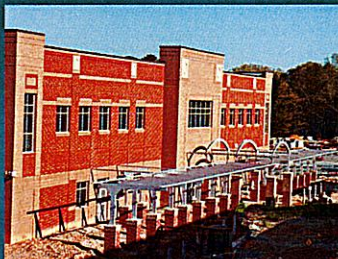
Advanced Teacher Roles

Innovative Principal Initiative

High Quality Professional Development

Teacher Cadet Program

## Capital Projects



- ☐ Grier Middle School
- ☐ School Safety
- ☐ HVAC, Roofing, Parking Lots, Building Additions

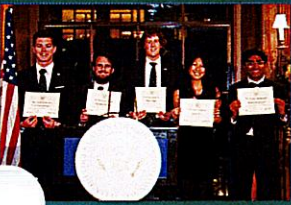


## Our Responsibility

- ❑ Continue building relationships and trust with our stakeholders
- ❑ Continue efforts to be efficient and effective with the funding we are provided
- ❑ Advocate for the importance of educating our children

*What makes us proud  
in Gaston County Schools*

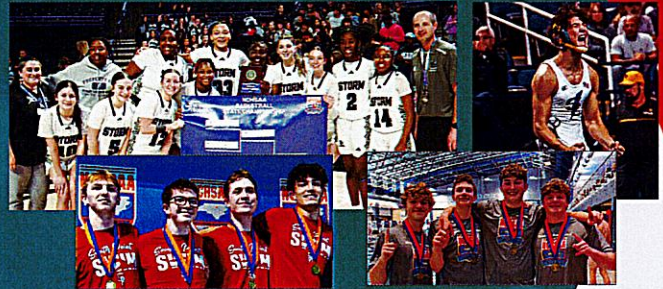
*What makes us proud  
in Gaston County Schools*



### Calvin Coolidge Scholar

Student one of five in the nation to earn the honor

*What makes us proud  
in Gaston County Schools*



*What makes us proud  
in Gaston County Schools*



### High school researchers

AP Capstone prepares students for rigor of college

*What makes us proud  
in Gaston County Schools*



### Community impact

'Nickels for Neighbors' collects more than \$35,000



*What makes us proud  
in Gaston County Schools*



### **Building for the future**

Grand opening ahead for W.P. Grier Middle School

*What makes us proud  
in Gaston County Schools*



### **Preparing for the future**

Strategic planning and school system accreditation

*What makes us proud  
in Gaston County Schools*



### **Focusing for the future**

Implementing Advanced Teaching Roles program

*What makes us proud  
in Gaston County Schools*



### **Focusing for the future**

Implementing salary initiative for principals

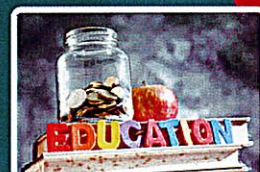
*What makes us proud  
in Gaston County Schools*



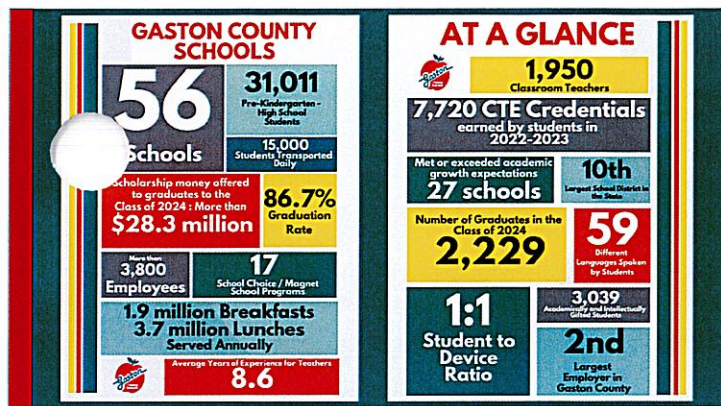
### **Focusing for the future**

Implementing Partnership for Leaders in Education

## **Gaston County Schools Budget Request 2025-2026**








## County Funding

### Types of County Funding for GCS


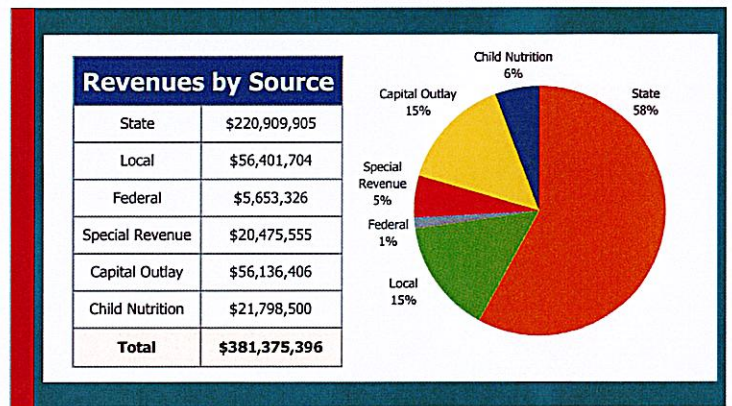
- Operating Funds
- Capital Maintenance Funds
- School Bond Proceeds and Payments
- County School Resource Officers
- Commissioners' School



## County Funding

### Types of County Funding for GCS

- Operating Funds
- Capital Maintenance Funds

### Local Per Pupil Expenditure Ranking\*

School District	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Brunswick County	19	13	20	16	20
Iredell-Statesville	70	54	55	41	29
Union County	30	37	32	36	37
Onslow County	42	34	68	67	39
Johnston County	74	85	82	68	44
Cabarrus County	39	30	33	46	48
Cleveland County	68	46	53	52	76
Lincoln County	83	80	92	87	79
Catawba County	66	71	81	86	80
<b>Gaston County</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>85</b>
Alamance County	57	55	62	55	89

Source: DPI Table 25 - Per Pupil Expenditure Ranking (Child Nutrition Excluded)  
 \*Out of 115 School Districts in the State of North Carolina

### Peer Group Local Funding Comparison

County	Per Capita Income <sup>1</sup>	K-12 Funding <sup>2</sup>	Property Tax Levy <sup>2</sup>	K-12 Funding/Property Tax Levy
<b>Gaston</b>	<b>\$49,674</b>	<b>\$53,000,000</b>	<b>\$202,400,000</b>	<b>26.2%</b>
<b>Peer Group</b>				
Alamance	\$48,980	\$48,800,000	\$109,100,000	44.7%
Brunswick	\$58,281	\$54,400,000	\$172,100,000	31.6%
Cabarrus	\$54,754	\$97,500,000	\$239,700,000	40.7%
Catawba	\$55,223	\$44,000,000	\$121,600,000	36.2%
Cleveland	\$45,126	\$28,397,362	\$77,200,000	36.8%
Iredell	\$64,437	\$72,000,000	\$204,200,000	35.3%
Johnston	\$49,672	\$88,500,000	\$189,600,000	46.7%
Lincoln	\$58,227	\$26,800,000	\$94,700,000	28.3%
Onslow	\$51,585	\$73,997,000	\$137,200,000	53.9%
Union	\$67,641	\$122,700,000	\$235,600,000	52.1%
<b>Average Peer Group</b>	<b>\$55,393</b>	<b>\$65,709,436</b>	<b>\$158,103,900</b>	<b>41.6%</b>

Source: NCACC County Map Book, 2024  
<sup>1</sup>Per Capita Income is for 2022  
<sup>2</sup>K-12 Funding and Property Tax Levy is for 2023-2024



## Peer Group Local Funding Comparison

County	Per Capita Income <sup>1</sup>	K-12 Funding <sup>2</sup>	Property Tax Levy <sup>2</sup>	K-12 Funding/Property Tax Levy
Gaston	\$49,674	\$53,000,000	\$187,130,714	28.3%
Peer Group				
Alamance	\$48,980	\$48,800,000	\$108,617,789	44.9%
Asheville	\$58,281	\$54,400,000	\$166,709,460	32.6%
Cabarrus	\$54,754	\$83,100,000	\$236,516,760	35.1%
Catawba	\$55,223	\$31,200,000	\$118,069,000	26.4%
Cleveland	\$45,126	\$28,400,000	\$76,171,624	37.3%
Iredell	\$64,437	\$52,400,000	\$203,227,660	25.8%
Johnston	\$49,672	\$88,500,000	\$191,821,000	46.1%
Lincoln	\$58,227	\$26,800,000	\$91,168,700	29.4%
Onslow	\$51,585	\$74,000,000	\$137,238,653	53.9%
Union	\$67,641	\$110,000,000	\$230,407,828	47.7%
Average Peer Group	\$55,393	\$59,760,000	\$155,994,847	38.3%

Source: NCDPI Statistical Profile - Table 30, and County Budget Ordinances

<sup>1</sup>Per Capita Income is for 2022

<sup>2</sup>K-12 Funding and Property Tax Levy is for 2023-2024

## Use of County Funds

- Salary supplements - Teachers, Principals, and Assistant Principals
- Maintenance and custodial personnel
- Supplies and materials
- Student technology
- Utilities and insurance
- School Resource Officers
- Athletics and arts programs
- Charter school payments



## Gaston County Schools FY 2025-2026 Local Funding Expansion Request

### Gaston County Schools Funding Request

Recommendation Item	Expenditures		
	Ongoing	New	Total
<b>Ongoing Expenditures</b>			
Inflation Supplies and Contracted Services	\$ 315,000	-	\$ 315,000
State Increase in Employee Compensation	540,000	-	540,000
<b>New Expenditures</b>			
Teacher Salary Supplement Increase	\$ -	\$ 3,600,000	\$ 3,600,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 855,000</b>	<b>\$ 3,600,000</b>	<b>\$ 4,455,000</b>

## Operating Request

**\$315,000**

### Inflation Supplies and Contracted Services

- 2024 core inflation rate of 2.5%
- 2025 projected core inflation rate of 2.0%
- 2025 projected supplies and contracted services of **\$15.7M**

## Operating Request

**\$540,000**

### State Increase in Employee Compensation

- There is no State budget for 2025-26
- The State increased employee compensation by 3% for FY 2024-25
- We are budgeting a 3% increase for 2025-26
- Local payroll is projected to be \$17.9M

## Operating Request

**\$3,600,000**

### Teacher Salary Supplement Increase

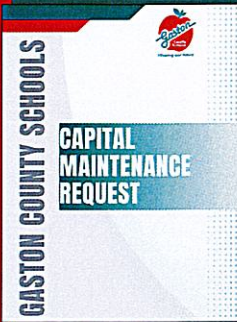
- Increases have averaged \$500,000 per year
- The average teacher supplement is \$3,860
- An increase of \$3.6M will align GCS with the teacher supplements of our peer group school districts
- Essential for teacher recruitment and retention



### Peer Group Teacher Supplement Funding Comparison

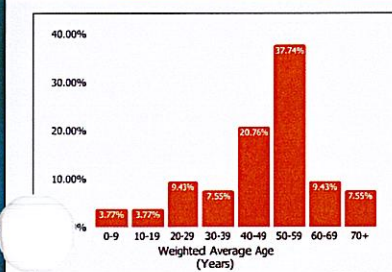
School District	Per Capita Income	Average Teacher Salary Supplement	School District Rank (out of 115)
Gaston County	\$49,674	\$3,860	68
<b>Peer Group</b>			
Alamance-Burlington	\$48,980	\$5,568	20
Brunswick County	\$58,281	\$6,839	18
Cabarrus County	\$54,754	\$6,481	23
Catawba County	\$55,223	\$4,668	62
Cleveland County	\$45,126	\$6,017	31
Iredell-Statesville	\$64,437	\$4,384	69
Johnston County	\$49,672	\$6,507	22
Lincoln County	\$58,227	\$5,909	35
Onslow County	\$51,585	\$5,610	42
Union County	\$67,641	\$5,242	50
<b>Average Peer Group</b>	<b>\$55,393</b>	<b>\$5,740</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>GC Less Average Peer Group</b>	<b>-\$5,719</b>	<b>-\$1,880</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Additional Teacher Funding Needed</b>		<b>\$3,652,192</b>	

### Capital Maintenance Request



- 5.1M sq. feet of school/office space
- Current funding \$0.44 per sq. foot or **\$2.2M**
- Peer group median funding \$1.35 per sq. foot or **\$6.9M**
- 75% 40+ years old

### Age of School Buildings



Weighted Average Age (Years)	Number of Schools
0-9	2
10-19	2
20-29	5
30-39	4
40-49	11
50-59	20
60-69	5
70+	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>

### Capital Maintenance Request

**\$2,227,000**

#### Capital Maintenance and Repairs

- Capital maintenance funding has been \$2.2M each year for the last four years
- Targeted funding of \$6.9M by 2027-28
- Begin at \$2.2M in 2025-26, then \$4.5M in 2026-27 and \$6.9M in 2027-28

### Request Summary

Operating Funds	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	Funding Request 2025-2026
<b>Sources of Revenue:</b>						
Gaston County Appropriation	\$ 49,811,704	\$ 51,501,704	\$ 52,501,704	\$ 53,001,704	\$ 53,501,704	\$ 60,056,704
Student Chromebooks (1)	-	-	-	-	2,100,000	-
Fines and Forfeitures	700,000	700,000	700,000	700,000	700,000	700,000
Interest	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	100,000	100,000
Fund Balance Appropriated	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>\$50,561,704</b>	<b>\$52,251,704</b>	<b>\$53,251,704</b>	<b>\$53,751,704</b>	<b>\$56,401,704</b>	<b>\$60,856,704</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>\$50,561,704</b>	<b>\$52,251,704</b>	<b>\$53,251,704</b>	<b>\$53,751,704</b>	<b>\$56,401,704</b>	<b>\$60,856,704</b>
<b>Capital Maintenance Funds</b>						
<b>Sources of Revenue:</b>						
County Capital Outlay (1)	\$ 1,227,000	\$ 2,227,000	\$ 2,227,000	\$ 2,227,000	\$ 2,227,000	\$ 2,227,000
State Funds	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>\$1,227,000</b>	<b>\$2,227,000</b>	<b>\$2,227,000</b>	<b>\$2,227,000</b>	<b>\$2,227,000</b>	<b>\$2,227,000</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>\$1,227,000</b>	<b>\$2,227,000</b>	<b>\$2,227,000</b>	<b>\$2,227,000</b>	<b>\$2,227,000</b>	<b>\$2,227,000</b>

(1) Student Chromebook purchases were provided to GCS as County Capital Outlay in FY 2024-2025. It is being reported here as Gaston County Appropriation since it is not a capital asset.

### Request Summary

Operating Request: **\$60.1 million**  
- Current Budget \$55.6 million

Capital Maintenance Request: **\$2.2 million**  
- Maintaining 2024-25 level

Total increase: **\$4.5 million**

