

Gaston County Schools
Board of Education Retreat
Thursday, January 30, 2025
Immediately Following the Board of Education Meeting

MINUTES

The Gaston County Board of Education held its annual retreat on Thursday, January 30, 2025 immediately following the Board of Education Meeting at Gaston College, Robinson Building - Room 126, Dallas, NC. Those Board Members in attendance were: Chairman Josh Crisp, Vice Chairman Dot Cherry, Lee Dedmon (absent), Tod Kinlaw (absent), Robbie Lovelace (absent), Brent Moore, Jeff Ramsey, Janna Smith and A.M. Stephens III.

Additional attendees include: Superintendent Dr. Morgen A. Houchard, Attorney Sonya McGraw, Associate Superintendents Gary Hoskins and Tonya Kales, Chief Communications Officer Todd Hagans, Chief Technology Officer Curtis Poplin and Board Clerk Dana Luoto.

Welcome

Chairman Crisp welcomed everyone to the Retreat.

State of the Schools Address

Chairman Crisp recognized Superintendent Houchard who presented a PowerPoint on the State of the Schools.

(View PowerPoint Below)

Board discussion occurred.

Bond and Capital Work – Present/Future

Chairman Crisp recognized Assistant Superintendent Bessie Harvey who presented a PowerPoint on Bond and Capital Work – Present/Future.

(View PowerPoint Below)

Board discussion occurred.

Kick Off Budget Process 2025-2026

Chairman Crisp recognized Associate Superintendent Gary Hoskins who presented a PowerPoint on the Kick Off Budget Process 2025-2026.

(View PowerPoint Below)

Board discussion occurred.

Accreditation Process

Chairman Crisp recognized Chief Accountability Officer Kelly Cunningham who presented a PowerPoint on the Accreditation Process.

(View PowerPoint Below)

Board discussion occurred.

Choice Programs

Chairman Crisp recognized Assistant Superintendent Rebekka Powers who presented a PowerPoint on Choice Programs.

(View PowerPoint Below)

Board discussion occurred.

Demographic Study and Utilization Report

Chairman Crisp recognized Matthew Cropper, President – Cropper GIS Consulting, LLC who shared information on Gaston County Schools Demographic Study and Utilization Report.

Board discussion occurred.

Board Responsibilities and Roles

Chairman Crisp recognized Chris Campbell, Attorney with the law firm Campbell Shatley, PLLC who shared information on Board responsibilities and roles.

Board discussion occurred.

Closing Remarks

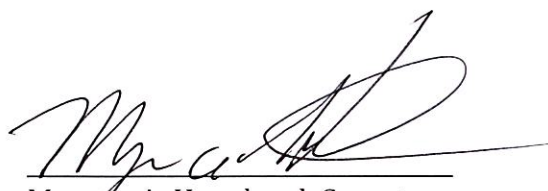
Chairman Crisp thanked everyone for attending the Retreat.

The Board Meeting adjourned at 3:21 p.m.

Approved:



Josh Crisp, Chairman
[Corporate Seal]



Morgen A. Houchard, Secretary

Date Approved:

2/17/2025

Welcome

Chairman, Josh Crisp

State of the Schools

Superintendent, Morgen Houchard

From Vision to Action

Superintendent's Yearly Report to the Board

January 30, 2025

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**

Gaston
County
Schools

Listen and Learn

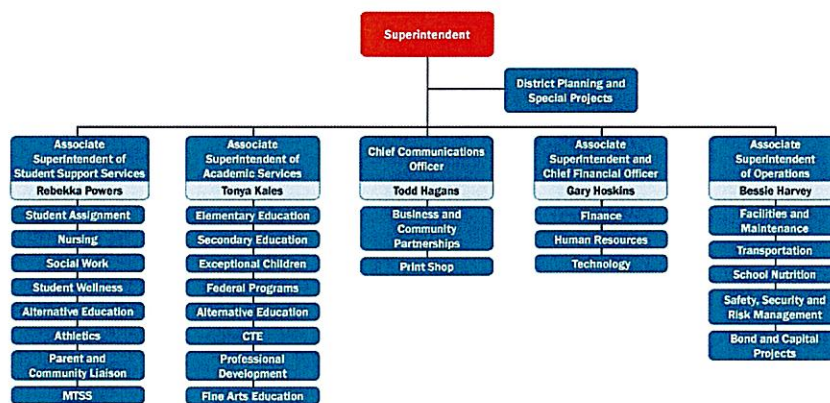
Walk and Talk

- ❑ School Board members
- ❑ State and Local leaders
- ❑ Law Enforcement
- ❑ Faith Leaders
- ❑ School Faculty Meetings



- ❑ Modified the organizational structure to make it more manageable and efficient

Gaston County Schools - Organizational Chart 2024-2025



From Vision to Action

Our new leadership team - July 1, 2024

- **Associate Superintendent of Academics**
- **Assistant Superintendent of Operations**
- **Assistant Superintendent of Student Services**

Executive Directors of Instruction

Executive Director of Human Resources

Director of Facilities

Director of Student Assignment

Director of District Planning and Special Projects

Fall 2024
Vision to Action

Fall 2024 - Vision to Action

- ☐ **Redesigned Senior Leadership Meetings**
- ☐ **Redesign Principal and Assistant Principal Meetings**
- ☐ **Classroom observations by leadership teams**
- ☐ **Over 300 school visits by Executive Directors**

Fall 2024 - Vision to Action

Increased Professional Development across the district

- **Teacher Workdays**
- **District Leadership**
- **Principals and Assistant Principals**
- **UVA partnership**

Fall 2024 - Vision to Action

Good morning, Principal Wallace,

I just finished reviewing your School Improvement Plan in NCStar, and I couldn't help but reach out to express how truly impressed I am—it is absolutely **impeccable** and an *exemplar* for others to see! WOW!

Thank you for your dedication and the thoughtful effort you've put into documenting your School Improvement Journey in NCStar. As a former principal of 16 years, I fully appreciate the level of commitment it takes to produce such an exceptional plan. Your hard work is a testament to your leadership, and your students are incredibly fortunate to have you at the helm. So...*please know...that I See You! I recognize your diligence and hard work!*

Please be sure to give your Process Manager, Allison, a huge shout-out for her outstanding work—what an incredible contribution! You and your team have completely made my weekend!

Thank you again for your commitment to excellence!

My warmest regards,
Suzanne

Fall 2024 - Vision to Action

- ☐ Received Teacher Pathway Grant
- ☐ Innovative Principals Initiative
- ☐ Renewed focus on our
Department of Exceptional Children

Fall 2024 - Vision to Action

Improved relations with local and state leaders

State Legislators

County Commissioners

County/City Managers

EDC

Gaston College

Belmont Abbey



Fall 2024 - Vision to Action

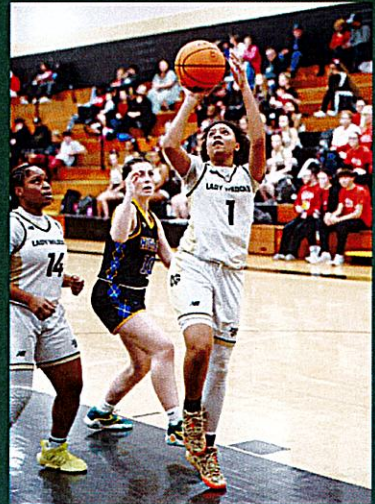
❑ Career and Technical Education



Fall 2024 - Vision to Action

Student Support Services

Mental Health/Physical Health
Athletic Realignment
Student Assignment
Transfer Policy
Partnerships



Fall 2024 - Vision to Action

Operations

- ☐ Capital Projects
 - ☐ Grier Middle School
 - ☐ School Safety
 - ☐ School Nutrition
- Farm-to-School Table*



Fall 2024 - Vision to Action

Human Resources

- ☐ Current Vacancies
- ☐ Job Fairs



Now and Future *Vision to Action*

Now and Future - Vision to Action

Innovation School strategy

- **Teacher Pathway Grants**
- **Innovative Principal Initiative**
- **UVA - Partnership for Leaders in Education (PLE)**

Now and Future - Vision to Action

- **Mentoring beginning teachers**
- **Teacher Cadet program**
- **EPI teachers**
- **Improved leadership recruitment and interview process**

Now and Future - Vision to Action

District wide data platform

- To the day status report
- Deeper data dive across time
- Accountability to all stakeholders

Vision to Action - Now and Future

Demographic and Utilization Report

- Building our roadmap for the next ten years

Departmental Needs Assessments

- Supporting and guiding our district departments

Our Responsibility

- ☐ Continue building relationships with our state and local leaders
- ☐ Advocate for increased funding
- ☐ Be a leading advocate for public education



Bond and Capital Work – Present/Future

Assistant Superintendent, Bessie Harvey

Bond Presentation

January 30, 2025

District Building Age Overview

Mt. Holly MS - F Building
York Chester MS - Main Building

Lingerfelt - Building C

1939

1957

Robinson - Cafeteria
Page ES - Main Building

1973

2021

Belmont Middle School



70 + = Kiser ES, McAdenville ES, Warlick Academy, and York Chester MS

District Building Age Overview

25-50 Years

The average life expectancy of a roof is 25–50 years, but it depends on the type of material, its quality, and how well it's maintained.

Average Lifespan of a
Roof

15-20 Years

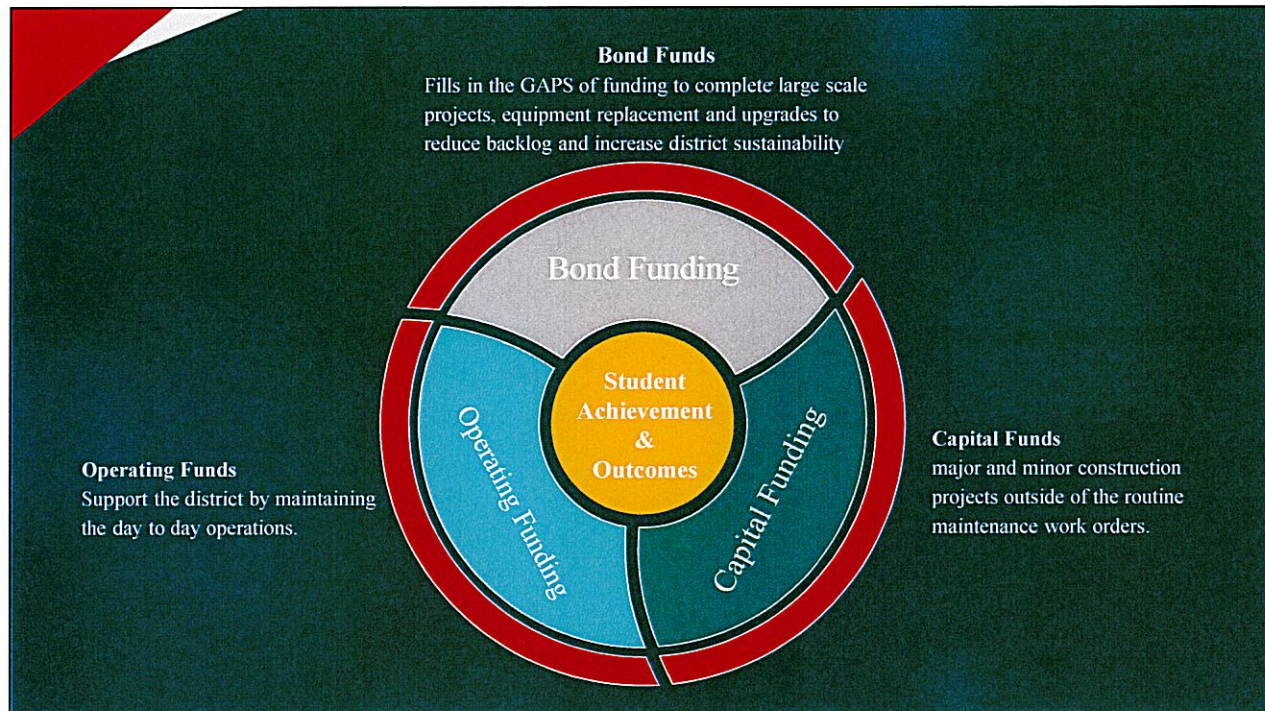
The average life expectancy of an HVAC rooftop unit is typically between 15 and 20 years, depending on factors like maintenance and environmental conditions.

Average Lifespan of a
HVAC Rooftop Unit
(RTU)

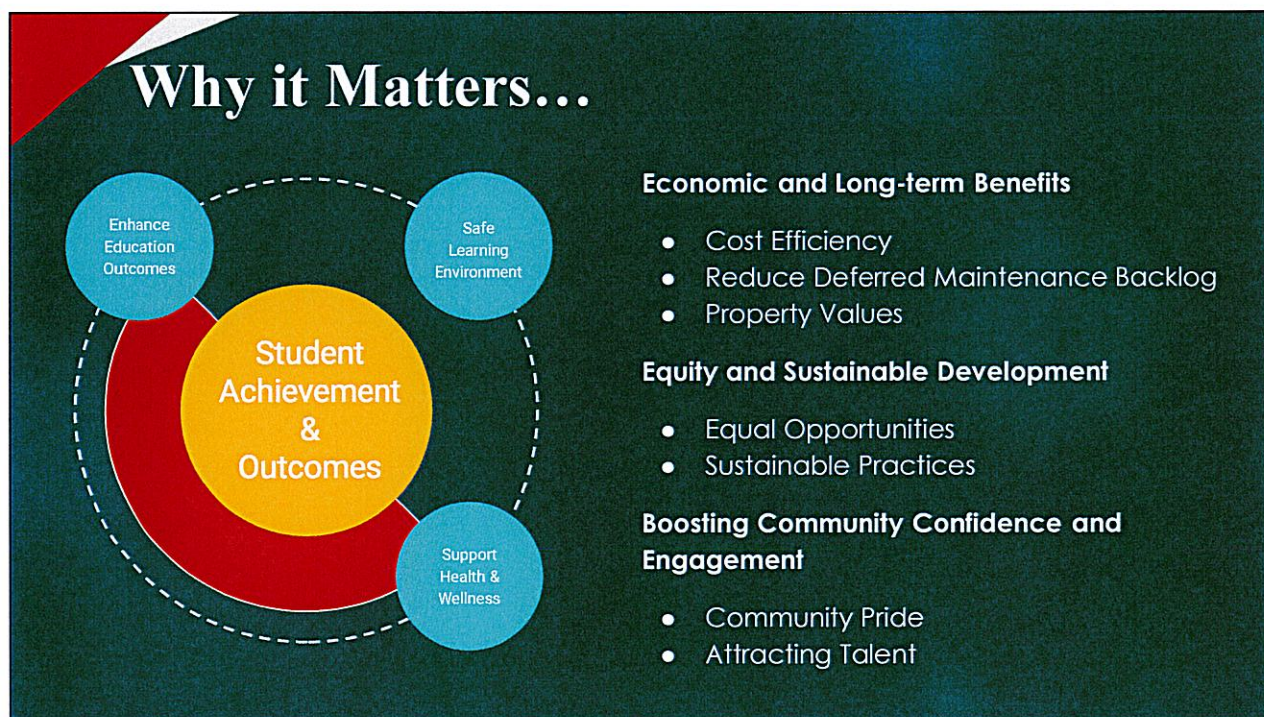
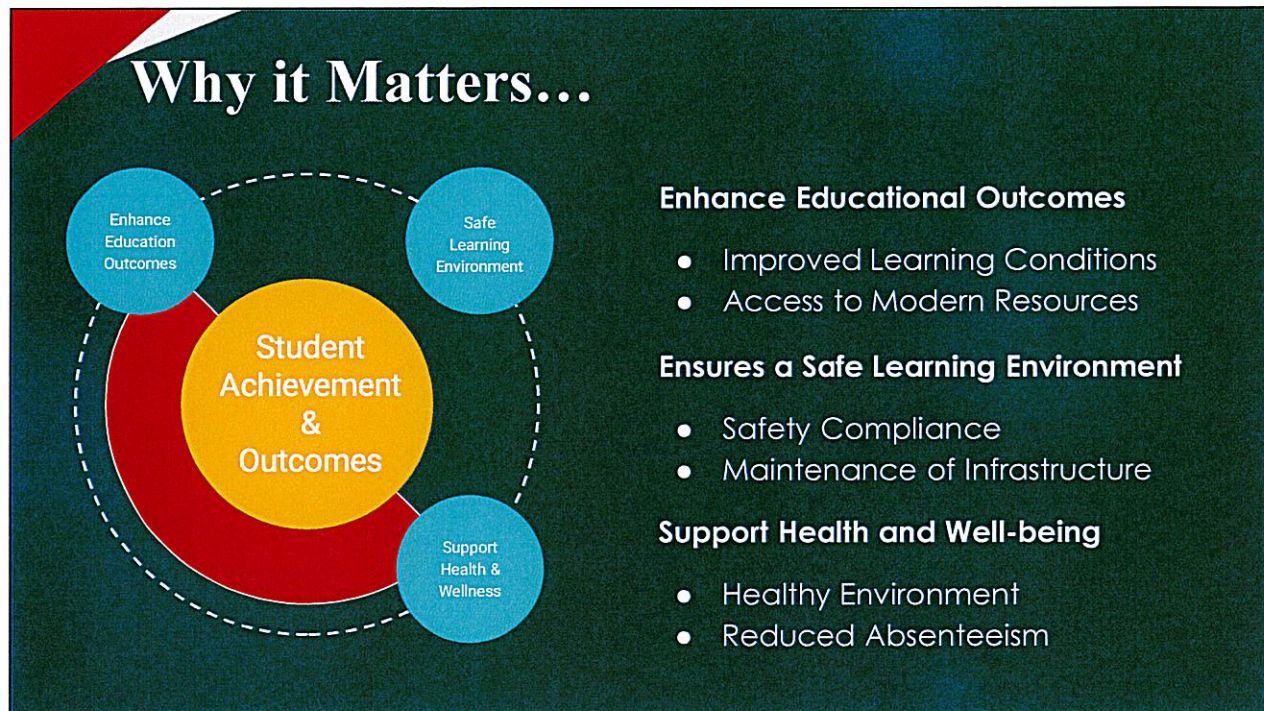
Up to 30 Years

The average life expectancy of an air-cooled chiller is 15-20 and 20-30 years for a water-cooled chiller which can last longer depending how well it's maintained.

Average Lifespan of a
HVAC Boiler or Chiller

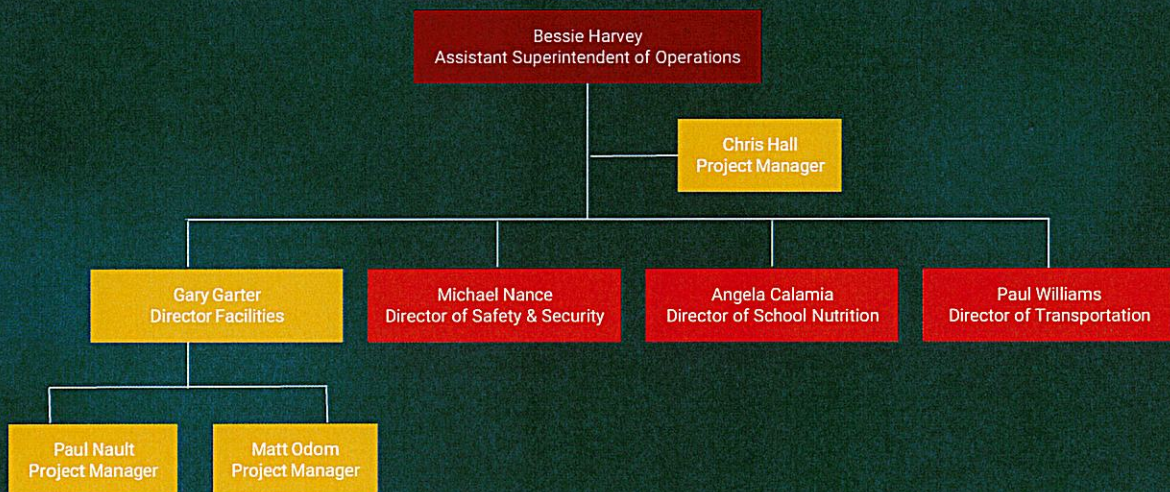


Why it Matters?



Bond Projects

Department Organization Overview



New Construction/Replacement Schools



Belmont Middle School



Stanley Middle School

New Construction/Replacement Schools



Grier Middle School

School Facade Upfits



South Point HS

East Gaston HS



Ashbrook HS



School Facade & Security Vestibule Upfits



North Gaston HS

Lighting Upfits



York Chester



Mt. Holly MS



Cherryville HS

Roofing Projects



Bessemer City HS - Roof section L -Chemistry Classrooms

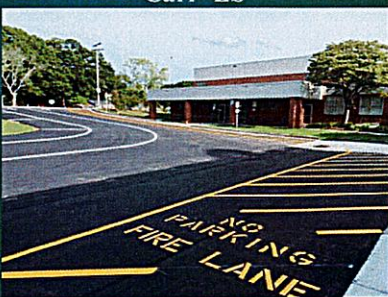


Hunter Huss HS - Roof sections B11, B12



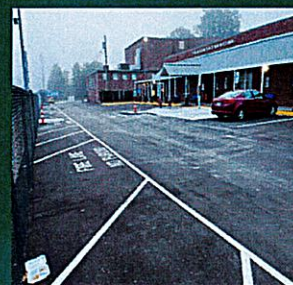
Paving Projects

Carr ES



Mt. Holly MS

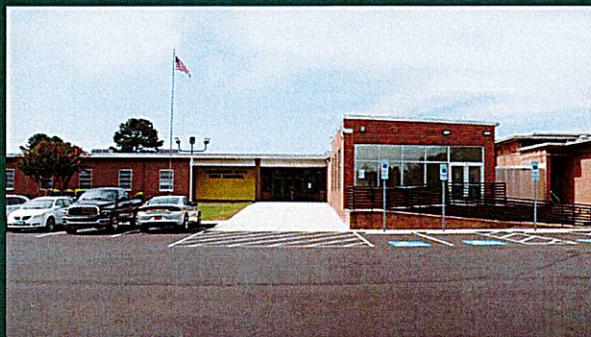
W.B Beam ES



Paving Projects



Bessemer City MS

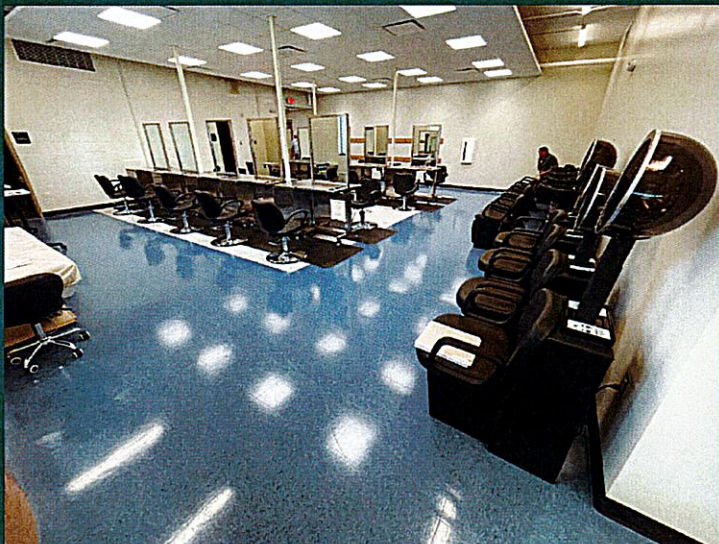


Bessemer City HS

School Campus Upfit - HH Beam



Hunter Huss Cosmetology Lab



Future Bond Projects

- ◆ **Belmont Central Expansion:** 10 classrooms/cafetorium addition.
- ◆ **Armstrong Building Purchase:** Enables the opportunity to expand our Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.
- ◆ **Highland School of Technology Renovations:** Renovate outdated science classrooms at Highland School of Technology.
- ◆ **HVAC Equipment Replacement and Upfit:** Replace various aged HVAC equipment, which has extended beyond its useful life.

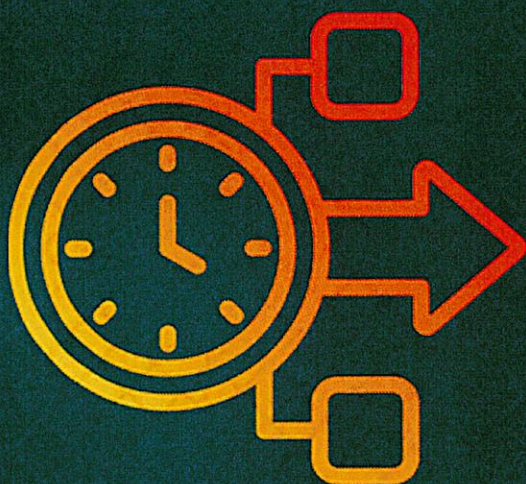
Future Bond Projects

- ◆ **Security Vestibule Upgrades:** Continue to upgrade our security vestibules, increasing safety and security for our students and staff.
- ◆ **Freezer/Cooler Replacements:** The replacement of freezers and coolers in five schools is necessary due to their age and increasing maintenance costs.
- ◆ **Lighting Upgrades:** Continuing our phase work on lighting upgrades, we will focus on elementary schools, as many high schools and middle schools have already been completed.
- ◆ **Webb Street Sewer Line Project:** Project will address the sewer line needs at one of our most high-needs schools.

Future Bond Projects

- ◆ **School Nutrition Facility Generator:** Installing a generator at our School Nutrition facility providing backup power for our smaller coolers; ensuring food safety during power outages.
- ◆ **Emergency Radio Project:** Enhancing communication for emergency management response improving our ability to coordinate and respond effectively during emergencies.
- ◆ **Miscellaneous Projects:** If funding allows, we will also undertake additional projects such as, ADA site work, and various sewer, water, and drainage repairs.

Plan Ahead...



Make data driven decisions:

- Renovations and Replacement
- New School Construction

Continue to maintain a high priority on automation of equipment, upgrading life safety systems while addressing maintenance deficiencies to reduce backlog.



Kick Off Budget Process 2025-2026

Associate Superintendent, Gary Hoskins

Budget Discussion

- Budget Process
- Local Operating Expenses
- Fund Balance
- Capital Maintenance
- Discussion



Budget Process



Five Focus Areas

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

Budget Calendar

- **January 30** – Board of Education (BOE) Retreat
- **January and February** – Gather information from Directors and Department Supervisors
- **March 17** - Present Superintendent's Budget Request to BOE
- **April 1** – Joint Meeting with County Commissioners to Discuss Budget Request



3

Budget Calendar

- **April 21** – Approve GCS Budget Request
- **April** – Deliver GCS Budget Request to County
- **May** – County approves local budget
- **June** – BOE approves balanced interim budget
- **June to September** – BOE approves final budget resolution after State Budget is approved

4

Budget Process

Some of the questions that need to be asked

- What **new** initiatives and/or expansions should be funded
- Which existing programs should be **modified** and/or eliminated
- How do we best realize **cost savings**
- How do we **prioritize** facility needs



5

Types of Local Funding

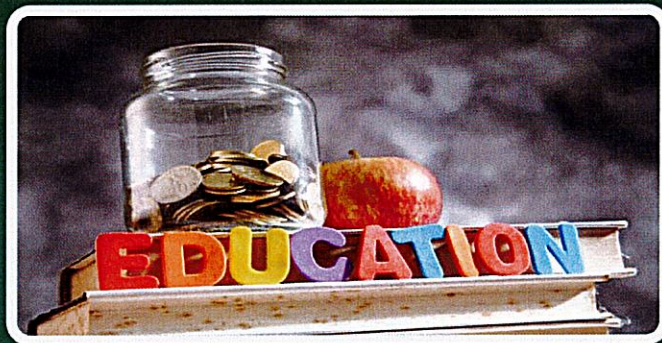
FY 2024-2025

K-12 Operating Funds:		\$ 53,501,704
Gaston County Schools	\$ 47,101,704	
Charter Schools	\$ 6,400,000	
GCS Capital Outlay:		\$ 4,327,000
Capital Maintenance	\$ 2,227,000	
Student Devices	\$ 2,100,000	
SRO Salaries/Benefits		\$ 2,539,888
Commissioners' School		\$ 65,000
TOTAL LOCAL FUNDING		\$ 60,433,592

Does include bond payments

41

Local Operating Expenses



Operating Expenses

What is included in local operating expenses?

- Teacher/Instructional employee supplements
- Utilities
- Insurance
- Instructional supplies
- Technology - hardware, software, wireless, etc.
- Facilities salaries/benefits/contracted services
- Charter school payments

41

County Funding Request

- Our County budget operating request for 2024-25 was **\$60.0 million**
- The County funded **\$53.5 million (89%)** of our 2024-2025 operating request
- **Almost 12%** of our County funds are remitted to charter schools based on their current enrollment of Gaston County students

28

Budget Survey

Please check the box next to the initiatives listed below that you believe best supports the educational goals of the District. Please only select your **top five** choices (all are important):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Teacher Supplement | <input type="checkbox"/> More Teacher Assistants |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Incr. Principal/AP Supplement | <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Student Support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Classified Salaries | <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Instructional Support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expand CTE Program Offerings | <input type="checkbox"/> More School Office Support Staff |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Offer More Instructional Programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Provide More Technology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expand AIG Program | <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Number of Library Books |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Increase the Number of AP Classes | <input type="checkbox"/> Expand Classroom Libraries |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Offer More ESL Classes | <input type="checkbox"/> Upgrade School Safety Systems |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Funding for the Arts | <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Training for Teachers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Provide More Choice Options | <input type="checkbox"/> Improve Exterior Appearance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Funding for EC Students | <input type="checkbox"/> Upgrade Interior of Schools |

9

Stakeholders

- School Leadership
- Teachers
- Students
- Parents
- GCS Employees
- Community Members

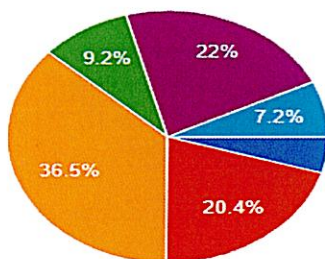


7

Budget Survey Responses

Which best describes you?

895 responses

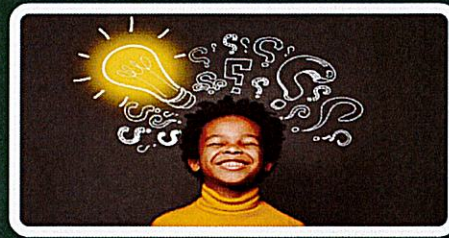


GCS Student	42	4.7%
GCS Parent	183	20.4%
GCS Teacher	327	36.5%
GCS School Leadership	82	9.2%
Other GCS Employee	197	22.0%
GC Community Member	64	7.2%
TOTAL	895	100.0%

1

Budget Survey Results

What Do You Think?



10

Budget Survey Results

Increase Teacher Supplements

#1 Funding Request Eleven Years in a row!



11

Budget Survey Results

Funding Priorities	% in Top Five Priorities					Change
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2021-25
Increase Teacher Supplement	75%	79%	78%	85%	77%	2%
Increase Classified Salaries	51%	65%	67%	60%	52%	1%
More Teacher Assistants	25%	41%	34%	40%	40%	15%
Increase Student Support	51%	40%	43%	33%	40%	-11%
Increase Funding for EC Students	15%	18%	27%	25%	32%	14%
Upgrade School Safety Systems	24%	26%	33%	28%	23%	-1%
Increase Funding for the Arts	14%	20%	15%	17%	23%	9%
Upgrade Interior of Schools	21%	26%	15%	18%	22%	-4%
Offer More ESL classes	7%	7%	12%	18%	18%	11%
Increase Instructional Support	18%	13%	14%	16%	16%	-2%
Provide More Computing Devices	35%	19%	11%	11%	16%	-19%

1

Budget Survey Results

Funding Priorities	% in Top Five Priorities					Change
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2021-25
Increase Principal/AP Supplement	18%	21%	29%	24%	14%	-4%
Expand CTE Program Offerings	16%	14%	11%	19%	14%	-2%
Expand Instructional Programs	18%	10%	12%	10%	12%	-6%
Increase Training for Teachers	11%	8%	11%	14%	9%	-2%
Increase Number of AP Classes	14%	10%	10%	9%	9%	-5%
Provide More Choice Options	8%	13%	10%	8%	8%	0%
Improve Exterior Appearance	16%	10%	12%	7%	8%	-2%
Expand Classroom Libraries	8%	6%	5%	4%	8%	0%
Expand AIG Program	12%	12%	5%	5%	7%	-5%
Increase Number of Library Books	10%	4%	3%	4%	7%	-3%
More School Support Staff	5%	8%	8%	5%	6%	1%

1

Top 5 Budget Survey Results

Top Funding Priorities	2025-26	Funding Source
Increase Teacher Supplement	77%	County Expansion Request
Increase Classified Salaries	52%	County Expansion Request
More Teacher Assistants	40%	State Funded
Increase Student Support	40%	State Funded
Increase Funding for EC Students	32%	State Funded

15

Teacher Supplements

- Over the past ten years, the County has increased teacher supplements by **\$5.1 million**
- A **\$1,000,000** increase in teacher supplements would improve average annual supplements by about \$375 per teacher
- There was **no increase in teacher supplements** for 2020-2021 due to the impact of the pandemic on local sales tax revenues

16

Budget Survey Results

Why are Increasing Teacher Supplements Still Our #1 Funding Priority?



18

Local Teacher Supplements

Similar Size Districts (ADM)	Average Supplement
New Hanover County (24,881)	\$ 9,272
Durham County (30,901)	8,361
Buncombe County (22,045)	7,107
Johnston County (36,879)	6,507
State Average	6,502
Cabarrus County (34,877)	6,481
Onslow County (27,378)	5,610
Union County (41,386)	5,242
Gaston County (29,937)	3,860

Source: DPI FY 2024 Table 20 for Peer Group Average Supplement and
DPI FY 2024 Table 10 for ADM

19

Local Teacher Supplements

Neighboring Districts (ADM)	Average Supplement
Charlotte-Mecklenburg (140,836)	\$ 9,797
State Average	6,502
Cabarrus County (34,877)	6,481
Cleveland County (14,017)	6,017
Lincoln County (11,402)	5,909
Union County (41,386)	5,242
Catawba County (15,629)	4,668
Iredell-Statesville (20,499)	4,384
Gaston County (29,937)	3,860
Rowan-Salisbury (17,897)	3,216

Source: DPI FY 2024 Table 20 for Peer Group Average Supplement and
DPI FY 2024 Table 10 for ADM

20

Local Teacher Supplements

Neighboring Districts (ADM)	Average Supplement		
	2023-24	2014-15	Change
Cleveland County (14,017)	6,017	1,632	4,385
Cabarrus County (34,877)	6,481	3,029	3,452
Charlotte-Mecklenburg (140,836)	\$ 9,797	\$ 6,632	\$ 3,165
Lincoln County (11,402)	5,909	2,975	2,934
State Average	6,502	3,689	2,813
Iredell-Statesville (20,499)	4,384	2,255	2,129
Union County (41,386)	5,242	3,516	1,726
Gaston County (29,937)	3,860	2,229	1,631
Catawba County (15,629)	4,668	3,544	1,124
Rowan-Salisbury (17,897)	3,216	2,297	919

Source: DPI FY 2024 and FY 2015 Table 20 for Peer Group Average Supplement
and DPI FY 2024 Table 10 for ADM

21

Other Funding Priorities

Increase Classified Salaries

WHY - Inflation has increased significantly over the past several years and has negatively impacted employee purchasing power

- Minimum hourly pay rate increased to \$13.00 in 2021 and \$15.00 in 2022
- GCS is implementing experience steps for hourly employees

22

Other Funding Priorities

More Teacher Assistants

WHY – Increased workload and stress in our schools can be reduced with additional qualified personnel

- Implemented experience steps in 2020
- Increased from a 200-day calendar to a 215-day calendar in 2020
- Increased minimum hourly rate from \$14.00 in 2021 to \$16.00 in 2022

23

Other Funding Priorities

Increase Student Support

WHY - Mental health concerns are increasing and are prevalent throughout our society

- State is increasing allotments and pay for student support personnel (social workers, school counselors, etc.)
- We have added student support positions at our schools – employees and contracted positions

24

Other Funding Priorities

Increase Funding for EC Students

WHY – The number of EC students has increased since COVID. Also, the needs of our EC students continues to increase.

- The State is considering a tiered level of funding for EC students so that students with high needs receive a higher level of funding.
- GCS paid a signing bonus for new EC teachers at schools with high levels of EC needs in 2024.

25

Per Pupil Funding

County	Per Pupil Funding	
	Amount	Rank
Durham	\$ 4,903	3
Buncombe	\$ 3,908	4
Mecklenburg	\$ 3,652	9
New Hanover	\$ 3,567	10
Union	\$ 2,694	22
Iredell	\$ 2,314	32
Cabarrus	\$ 2,307	33
Rowan	\$ 2,236	37
Johnston	\$ 2,211	38
Catawba	\$ 2,015	48
Lincoln	\$ 1,920	51
Gaston	\$ 1,551	68
Cleveland	\$ 681	90

Ranking is based on 100 counties.

Source: NCACC County Map Book 2024

Funding Options

- Request additional funding from the **Gaston County Commissioners**
- Apply to receive **grant funding**
- Implement additional **cost saving measures** and use savings for new initiatives
- **Move funding** from one initiative to another
- Use a portion of the **unassigned fund balance**

27

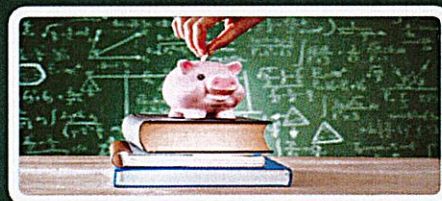
Fund Balance



Fund Balance

How much is our Unassigned Fund Balance?

\$6,177,019



Fund Balance

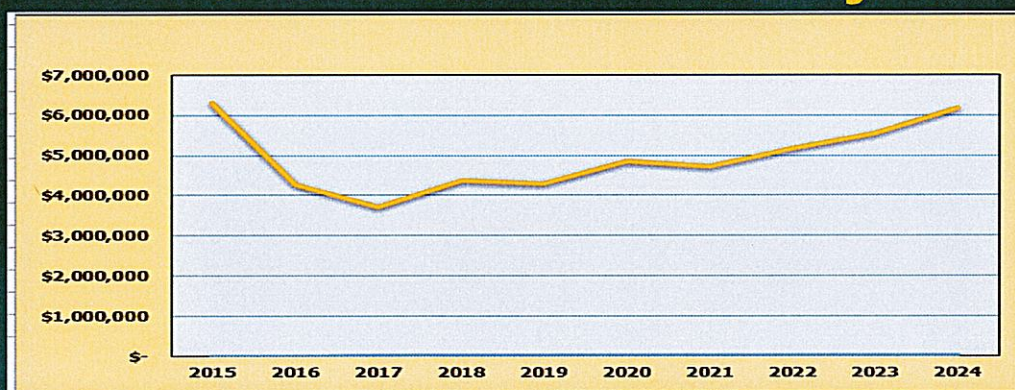
Why is a sufficient fund balance important?

Fund balance can be used to protect educational opportunities for our children in the event of some type of financial disruption. It also provides money for unanticipated repairs, fluctuations in spending or catastrophic events.

There are risks associated with funding ongoing costs with fund balance or holding too much money in fund balance.

49

Fund Balance History

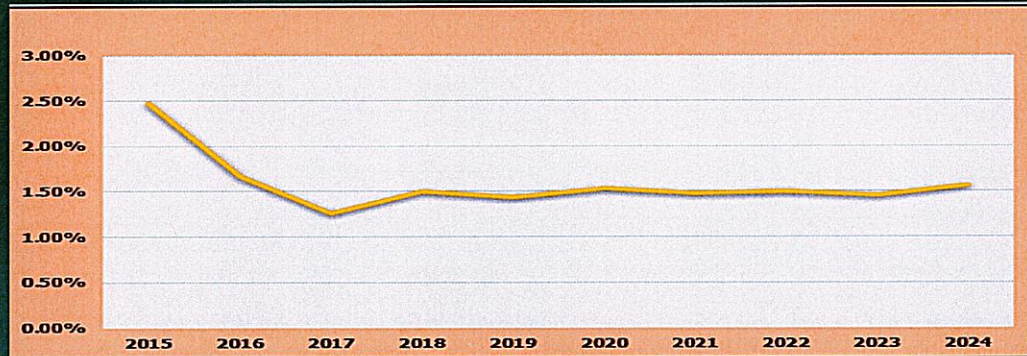


	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Unassigned Fund Balance	6,299,324	4,267,131	3,713,330	4,371,959	4,277,089
Change in Fund Balance	(2,122,111)	(2,032,193)	(553,801)	658,629	(94,870)

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Unassigned Fund Balance	4,851,995	4,722,972	5,164,021	5,544,293	6,177,019
Change in Fund Balance	574,906	(129,023)	441,049	380,272	632,726

51

Fund Balance / Revenues



	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Unassigned Fund Balance	6,299,324	4,267,131	3,713,330	4,371,959	4,277,089
Fund Balance / Revenues	2.47%	1.66%	1.26%	1.49%	1.43%
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Unassigned Fund Balance	4,851,995	4,722,972	5,164,021	5,544,293	6,177,019
Change in Fund Balance	1.53%	1.48%	1.50%	1.46%	1.56%

52

Fund Balance / Revenues

LEA Name	ADM	Unassigned Fund Balance	Total Revenues	Fund Balance / Revenues
Johnston County Schools	36,879	5,834,787	503,554,137	1.16%
Iredell-Statesville Schools	20,499	7,364,848	262,756,485	2.80%
Onslow County Schools	27,378	9,527,432	381,963,021	2.49%
Cleveland County Schools	14,017	7,223,242	215,084,815	3.36%
Catawba County Schools	15,629	5,470,917	186,486,822	2.93%
Rowan-Salisbury County Schools	17,897	6,451,407	262,873,528	2.45%
Union County Schools	41,386	6,399,672	479,850,465	1.33%
PEER GROUP AVERAGE	33,741	7,990,463	484,039,371	1.65%
Buncombe County Schools	22,045	13,389,818	359,635,384	3.72%
New Hanover County Schools	24,881	1,288,963	362,075,658	0.36%
Durham County Schools	30,901	9,597,020	565,542,749	1.70%
Gaston County Schools	29,937	6,177,019	394,896,806	1.56%
Lincoln County Schools	11,402	1,917,578	135,392,271	1.42%
Charlotte-Mecklenberg County Schools	140,836	21,352,000	2,139,077,000	1.00%
Cabarrus County Schools	34,877	8,058,339	438,219,494	1.84%

Sources: LEA's most recent Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (exhibits 3 and 4) and DPI website (Table 10 – 2024 ADM)

53

Capital Maintenance



Capital Maintenance Request

- Last year we **requested \$6.7 million** for capital maintenance. This amounted to \$1.31 per square foot (5.1 million square feet)
- Last year we **received \$2.2 million** for capital maintenance, or about \$0.43 per square foot
- We also **received \$2.1 million** of capital funds to replace about 7,200 end-of-life student mobile devices

35

Capital Maintenance

These funds are used to maintain, upgrade or repair capital assets such as the following:

- Roofing
- HVAC
- Vehicles
- Plumbing
- Site improvements
- Electrical systems
- Technology
- Furniture
- Life safety equipment
- Other capital assets

31

Capital Maintenance

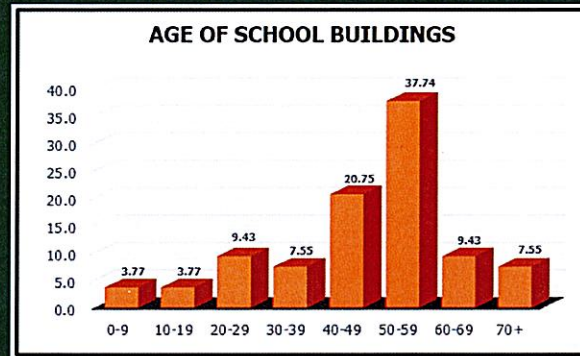
Capital maintenance costs are affected by:

- Age and usage of the capital assets
- Quality and experience of custodial staff
- Timely inspections/monitoring of major systems
- Deferred maintenance backlog

32

Age of Buildings

Wtd Avg 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
Total	53

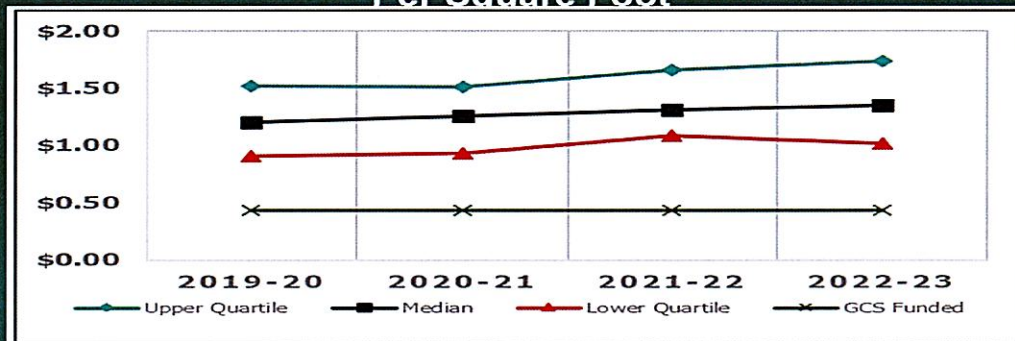


75% of our school buildings have a weighted average age of 40 years or older

33

Capital Maintenance Cost

Per Square Foot



	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Upper Quartile	\$ 1.52	\$ 1.51	\$ 1.66	\$ 1.74
Median	1.20	1.26	1.31	1.35
Lower Quartile	0.91	0.93	1.09	1.02
GCS Funded	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.43

Source: Managing for Results in America's Great City Schools
– 2024 (results from fiscal year 2022-2023)



Discussion

Accreditation Process

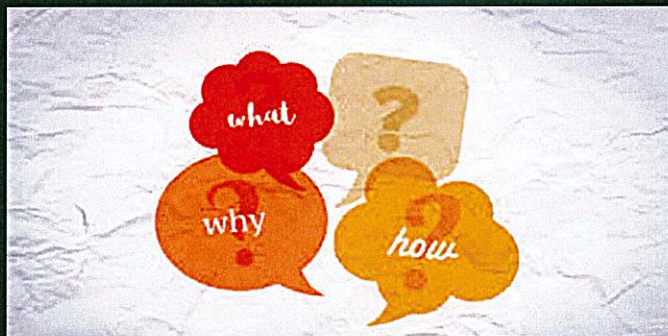
Chief Accountability Officer, Kelly Cunningham

Cognia Accreditation Engagement Review

Kelly Cunningham, Chief Accountability Officer

Learning Targets

- To provide participants with an understanding of the engagement review and its:
 - Purpose
 - Components
 - Process
- Share Next Steps



The Why

A Launchpad for District & School Improvement:

- **Comprehensive Evaluation:** Accreditation assesses the institution holistically, examining policies, learning conditions, and cultural context to ensure all parts work together effectively.
- **Reflection and Growth:** Provides an opportunity to identify areas of excellence, improvement, and challenges, fostering continuous school improvement.
- **Quality Assurance:** Demonstrates adherence to nationally recognized standards, offering assurance to parents, aiding student transferability, and unlocking access to programs and scholarships.

The What: Requirements

- ▶ Executive Summary
- ▶ Self-Assessment on Key Characteristics
 - ▶ Narrative with Evidence and Analysis
- ▶ Data Analysis
 - ▶ Student Performance
 - ▶ Stakeholder Feedback
 - ▶ Learning Engagement Observations
- ▶ Accreditation Portfolio

The What & How: Executive Summary

- Brief description of the institution's history, community, governance, mission, enrollment trends, philosophy, curriculum, instruction, personnel management, student performance, and improvement initiatives.
- All members of Senior Leadership participated in completing the Executive Summary.

History

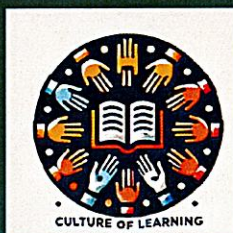
Gaston County Schools (GCS) has a rich history rooted in the community's transformation from a textile manufacturing hub to a diversified economic and civic leader in the Charlotte metropolitan region. Over the past decade, the area has experienced a 12% population increase—outpacing the state average—reflecting a successful transition and sustained growth. This historical evolution has shaped the district's mission, values, and priorities, creating a foundation for educational excellence.

Community

Serving approximately 31,000 students across 56 neighborhood schools, GCS reflects the diverse character of Gaston County. With a mix of suburban and rural areas, the district plays a vital role in a community of 230,000 citizens. Its strategic position as a "bedroom community" for Charlotte fosters strong educational partnerships while addressing the needs of a growing population. The student body is 44.1% Caucasian, 25.3% African American, 22.2% Hispanic, and 8.4% Asian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, American Indian, or multiracial, highlighting the district's commitment to serving a diverse population.

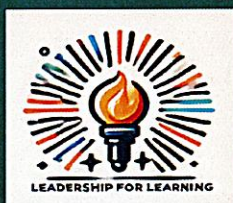
Over 60% of students qualify for free or reduced-price meals, with 45 schools participating in the Community Eligibility Provision program. Title I funding supports 28 schools, providing enhanced resources for at-risk students. GCS serves 3,800 multilingual learners from 44 language families, with 48 ESL teachers offering specialized instruction.

The What: Self- Assessment



Culture of Learning

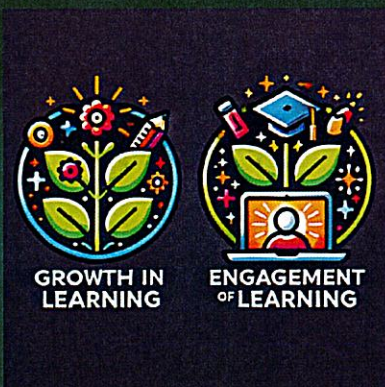
A good institution fosters a connected and purpose-driven environment where learners, parents, and educators align with shared values and visibly support the mission.



Leadership for Learning

Effective leaders model continuous learning, support others' growth, and clearly communicate high expectations embedded in the institution's culture.

The What: Self- Assessment



Growth in Learning

Learners show measurable progress, preparing confidently for transitions and achieving knowledge and skill benchmarks.

Engagement of Learning

Engaged learners actively participate with confidence, demonstrating agency and benefiting from inclusive policies and practices.

The How: Self- Assessment

The first dimension is Culture of Learning.

A good institution nurtures and sustains a healthy culture of learning. In a healthy culture, learners, parents, and educators feel connected to the purpose and work of the institution as well as behave in alignment with the stated values and norms. The institution also demonstrates evidence that reflects the mission, beliefs, and expectations of the institution (e.g., student work, physical appearance of the institution, participation in institution activities, parents' attendance at institution functions).

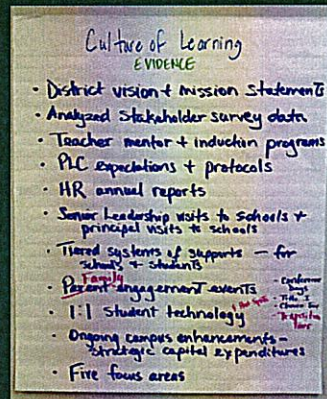
Interaction Standard 1 Rating: Leaders cultivate and sustain a culture that demonstrates respect, fairness, equity, and inclusion and is free from bias.

4 Leaders consistently model the attributes and implement practices that shape and sustain the desired institution culture, clearly setting expectations for all staff members. Leaders and professional staff members consistently implement ongoing practices, processes, and decision making that embody the values of respect, fairness, equity, and inclusion and are free from bias.

3 Leaders regularly model the attributes and implement practices that shape and sustain the desired institution culture, clearly setting expectations for all staff members. Leaders and professional staff members routinely implement ongoing practices, processes, and decision making that embody the values of respect, fairness, equity, and inclusion and are free from bias.

2 Leaders occasionally model the attributes and implement practices that shape and sustain the desired institution culture, clearly setting expectations for all staff members. Leaders and professional staff members sometimes implement ongoing practices, processes, and decision making that embody the values of respect, fairness, equity, and inclusion and are free from bias.

1 Leaders rarely model the attributes and implement practices that shape and sustain the desired institution culture, clearly setting expectations for all staff members. Leaders and professional staff members seldom implement ongoing practices, processes, and decision making that embody the values of respect, fairness, equity, and inclusion and are free from bias.




Individual Ratings & Feedback: The Academic Services Team provided individual ratings, followed by participation in an in-person facilitated feedback session.


Cross-Referenced Insights: Data was compared with input from key stakeholders through surveys and focus groups.

The What: Data Analysis

- Institutions must complete analyses on student performance, stakeholder feedback, and learning environment observations.
- Steps for data analysis: Understand purpose, identify data sources, clean data, analyze, synthesize, and interpret findings.

- 


North Carolina Department of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION


District 


Subject & Grade


Year

Students

 Gaston County Schools


 Composite all subjects and grades

 2023-24









 All

District Proficiency

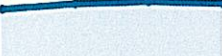
End-of-Grade and End-of-Course Reading, Mathematics, and Science Assessments



Subject & Grade
Percentage of students GLP proficient in 2024

Compos.	All Grades	49
EOG G6-12	51	
EOG G3-8	48	
EOG G3	47	
EOG G4	46	
EOG G5	49	
EOG G6	46	
EOG G7	45	
EOG G8	51	


Trend
Percentage GLP by year...



Year	Percentage GLP
21	44
22	46
23	50
24	49

[illegible]

The How: Stakeholder Feedback

- 
- Gaston County Schools (NC)**
- Family Survey
Fall 2024

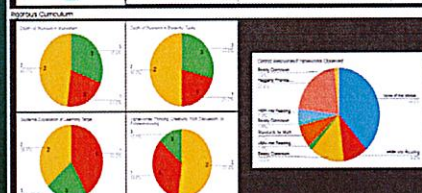
run on 01/16/2025

 surveys

-
- A black and white photograph showing a group of students in a classroom. In the foreground, a student with long dreadlocks is seen from behind, wearing a light-colored jacket and dark pants. To their left, another student with long hair is also seen from behind, wearing a dark jacket and jeans. Further left, a student in a light-colored tracksuit is looking at a display board on the wall. In the background, several other students are visible, some looking at the display board and others looking towards the camera. The room has a drop ceiling with a fluorescent light fixture and a square air vent. The display board on the wall contains various items, including what appears to be a map or a collage of photos.

The How: Learning Environment

-
- Figure 1 consists of four donut charts, each representing a different demographic variable. The data for each chart is as follows:
- Grade Level:**
 - Grade 10: 33.3%
 - Grade 11: 22.2%
 - Grade 12: 22.2%
 - Grade 9: 22.2%
 - Subject:**
 - Math: 33.3%
 - Science: 22.2%
 - History: 22.2%
 - English: 22.2%
 - Academic Pathway:**
 - College Prep: 33.3%
 - College Prep + Honors: 22.2%
 - College Prep + AP: 22.2%
 - College Prep + IB: 22.2%
 - Learning Assignment:**
 - Individual work: 33.3%
 - Group work: 22.2%
 - Partner work: 22.2%
 - Self-paced: 22.2%

[illegible]

Next Steps

- Gaston County Schools:
 - ▶ By end of February 2025- Complete submission of final documents in February 2025.
 - ▶ March 2025- Share "Leadership Overview" including a reflection on Engagement Review findings with Cognia during a virtual meeting.
- Cognia:
 - ▶ Determine accreditation status
 - ▶ Provide comprehensive feedback report with identified improvement priorities and professional learning recommendations



Choice Programs

Assistant Superintendent, Rebekka Powers

Gaston County Schools

f
t
i
n

OUR SCHOOLS <

Home
Calendar
Search

About Us
Board of Education
Superintendent
Academics
How to Enroll
For Parents
Jobs

Gaston County Schools
Apply Now!

WATCH VIDEO

← SCHOOL CHOICE →

Magnet schools and academies

Gaston County Schools

Gaston County Schools
Apply now to one of our 17 school choice programs.
More →

Good News from Our Schools

Gaston County Schools was featured as the N.C. School Boards Association's "Public School Win of the Week" for raising over \$35,000 for Mitchell County Schools through the "Nickels for Neighbors" campaign.

Anna Claire Whitesides of North Gaston High School was awarded the N.C. Teaching Fellows Scholarship.

Gaston County Police organized a Christmas drive to provide gifts for 40 students at Chapel Grove Elementary.

Announcements

Apply Now for School Choice; Deadline Is March 21

Now is the time for parents to plan for the next school year and explore the variety of school choice options in Gaston County Schools. The district offers magnet schools and academies focused on careers, college prep, healthcare, leadership, performing arts, STEAM, and online learning for grades K-12. To explore our School Choice programs, please visit <https://www.gaston.k12.nc.us/schoolchoice>.

More Announcements →

CHOICE PROGRAM TIMELINE

- **January 15, 2025 – Choice Applications Open**
- **March 21, 2025 – Choice Applications Close**
- **April 17, 2025 – Lotteries Held**
- **April 17, 2025 (5:00 PM) – Lottery Results Sent**
- **May 16, 2025 – Parent Decision Deadline**

1300+

APPLICATION TOTALS BY PROGRAM

<u>ELEMENTARY</u>	<u>MIDDLE</u>	<u>HIGH</u>
Hawks Nest (288)	Cramerton (51)	Highland (320)
Pleasant Ridge (92)	Stanley (32)	Early College (71)
Pinewood (57)	Grier (21)	East Gaston (56)
Costner (52)	WC Friday (11)	Early College Medical (47)
	<u>OTHER</u>	Ashbrook (39)
	Gaston Virtual (122)	Forestview (31)
		North Gaston (18)
		Hunter Huss (15)

