

Gaston County Schools  
Board of Education  
Monday, May 19 2025  
Meeting 5:30 p.m.  
Regular Meeting

MINUTES

The Gaston County Board of Education met in a regular session on Monday, May 19, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. in the Board Room, 943 Osceola Street, Gastonia, NC. 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 Josh Crisp, Vice Chairman Dot Cherry, Lee Dedmon, Tod Kinlaw, Robbie Lovelace, Brent Moore (absent), Jeff Ramsey, Janna Smith and A.M. Stephens III (absent).

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.

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

**Invocation**

Pastor Tripp Hord from First United Methodist Church of Bessemer City led the invocation.

**Character Trait**

Britney Briceno Velez, Lowell Elementary School, reported on the Character Trait of Self Discipline.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

Lilianna Johnson, Declan Lewis and Zayanna Crawford, Bessemer City Middle School led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Agenda Adoption - Action**

The Board considered Agenda Adoption – Action

Chairman Josh Crisp requested that the Driver Education item be pulled from the Consent Agenda and placed on the Regular Agenda for further discussion. This will now become item XIII on the agenda.

Mrs. Robbie Lovelace requested that the Substitute Staff Placement Services – ESS Southeast, LLC item be pulled from the Consent Agenda and placed on the Regular Agenda for further discussion. This will now become item XIV on the agenda.

Motion to adopt the Agenda as amended was made by Mr. Lee Dedmon; seconded by Ms. Dot Cherry; motion carried unanimously. (7-0)

**Good News – Information**

Mr. Todd Hagans recognized Roy Powers from Cherryville High School. Roy has received a prestigious appointment to attend the United States Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, New York. Roy is one of approximately 280 appointees selected from a pool of about 1,700 applicants. An appointment to the Academy is equivalent of a \$300,000 scholarship over a four-year period.



Mrs. Robbie Lovelace presented Roy with a Certificate of Recognition.

Mr. Todd Hagans recognized students who were nominated for Best Actor and Best Actress in the Blumey Awards. The Blumeys is a program that recognizes excellence in high school theater arts in the greater Charlotte area.

### **Ashbrook High School**

Jahlani Young who played Patrick Star in *The SpongeBob Musical*

Andrea Velazquez who played SpongeBob SquarePants in *The SpongeBob Musical*

### **Highland School of Technology**

Jayce Walsh who played Leaf Conebear in *The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*

Lynn Mercado who portrayed Mitch Mahoney and Dan Schwarz in *The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*

### **North Gaston High School**

Trenton Taylor-Bolen who played Damian Hubbard in *Means Girls: High School Version*

Bailey Griggs who took on the role of Regina George in *Means Girls: High School Version*

Mrs. Janna Smith presented a Certificate of Recognition to each student.

Mr. Todd Hagans recognized Officer Jamie Burr School Resource Officer at Forestview High School who was named the Officer of the Quarter by the Gaston County Police Department. Officer Burr goes above and beyond to support the students and staff at Forestview, both during the school day and after hours. He has earned the respect of administrators, staff, and students by building strong relationships and working hard to keep the campus safe.

Dot Cherry presented a Recognition Plaque to Officer Burr.

Mr. Todd Hagans recognized Christelle Corpin from Stuart Cramer High School. Ms. Corpin has been named the EPI (Educational Partners International) Teacher of the Year for North Carolina and she was also honored with the Chick-Fil-A Leader Academy Scholar Award for her outstanding leadership and service to the Stuart W. Cramer High School community.

Ms. Dot Cherry presented a Recognition Plaque to Ms. Corpin.

Mr. Todd Hagans recognized the Stuart W. Cramer High School Battle of the Books team — Ellory Lamp, Kayla Matthews, Lizzy-Jane Ross, Ann Sproul, Piper Summey, Molly Sutphin, Bhadra Vineetha and their coach and school library media coordinator, Vanessa Griffith. Team members are encouraged, but not required, to read all 16 selected books, which include both fiction and nonfiction and total more than 5,225 pages. These students won the local Battle of the Books competition, went on to win the regional contest, and finished third in the state competition.

Mr. Jeff Ramsey presented a Certificate of Recognition to each student.

Mr. Todd Hagans recognized the Stuart W. Cramer High School boys' first ever state championship golf team — Lane Crotts, Aiden Vargosko, Britton Steede, Drew Mercer, Ian Irish, Trip Stacey,



Luke Stephens, head coach Ben McMillan and assistant coach Matthew Jackson. Last week, at Gates Four Golf and Country Club in Fayetteville, Stuart W. Cramer captured its first North Carolina High School Athletic Association Boys' Golf Championship — and the school's first team title — by defeating two-time defending champion Terry Sanford.

Mr. Jeff Ramsey presented a Certificate of Recognition to each student.

Mr. Todd Hagans recognized James Dover and Rex Dover from South Point High School. On Saturday, May 10, the Dover brothers made school history by winning the 3A boys' doubles tennis state championship. They defeated the doubles team from East Lincoln High School with a final score of 6-3, 6-2.

Mr. Tod Kinlaw presented a Certificate of Recognition to each student.

Mr. Todd Hagans recognized the South Point High School boys' tennis team — James Dover, Rex Dover, Brandon Cunningham, Tyler Cunningham, Caleb Dellinger, Asher Dover, Spencer Hollifield, Austin Kellogg, Justin Koehler, Andrew Langley, Samuel Morgan, Shiv Patel, Shin Roh, and Griffin Williams. South Point High School has repeated as the 3A Dual Team State Champions in boys' tennis. The championship came down to the final doubles match at the N.C. High School Athletic Association 3A Boys Dual Team Tennis State Championship, held at the Burlington Tennis Center.

Mr. Tod Kinlaw presented a Certificate of Recognition to each student.

Mr. Todd Hagans recognized our school athletic directors and Chad Duncan our County Athletic Director. These are the people working behind the scenes to make our athletic programs successful. Athletic directors are the heart of school sports. They run the entire athletic program, hire coaches, build game schedules, and make sure every sport follows the rules. They also manage budgets, care for athletic facilities, and help build school spirit through sports.

Chairman Crisp presented a Recognition Plaque to the group.

### **Classroom Moment – Information**

Chairman Crisp recognized Dr. Bryan Denton and Kevin Doran, Executive Directors who presented a PowerPoint on Graduation Celebrations.

(View PowerPoint)

### **Public Expression – Information**

Martha Stowe

3132 Channel View

Belmont, NC 28012

RE: Theater Programs and Funding

### **Approval/Correction of Minutes – Action**

Motion to adopt minutes of April 1, 2025 (Joint BOE/BOC Meeting) and April 14, 2025 (Regular Meeting) as presented was made by Mrs. Janna Smith; seconded by Mr. Lee Dedmon; motion carried unanimously. (7-0)



### **Operations Committee Report – Information**

Brent Moore is chair of the committee and members are Dot Cherry, Lee Dedmon and Tod Kinlaw. Chairman Crisp recognized Ms. Dot Cherry who provided a summary of topics considered and discussed at the most recent meeting.

(View Report)

### **Curriculum & Instruction Committee Report – Information**

Jeff Ramsey is chair of the committee and members are Robbie Lovelace, Janna Smith and A.M. Stephens III. Chairman Crisp recognized Mrs. Janna Smith who provided a summary of topics considered and discussed at the most recent meeting.

(View Report)

### **School Nutrition Annual Report – Information**

Chairman Crisp recognized Mrs. Angela Calamia, School Nutrition Director, who presented a PowerPoint on the School Nutrition Annual Report.

(View PowerPoint)

### **School Nutrition Formal Bids 2025-2026 – Action**

Chairman Crisp recognized Mrs. Angela Calamia who asked the Board to consider approval of the 2025-2026 formal bids for the period beginning August 1, 2025 – July 31 2026.

#### **Motion**

The Motion was made by Mr. Jeff Ramsey; seconded by Mrs. Janna Smith that the Board  
**Approve the 2025-2026 School Nutrition Formal Bids**

A vote was taken and motion to approve the item as presented carried unanimously. (7-0)

### **Driver Education (Removed from Consent Agenda for discussion) – Action**

Discussion occurred concerning the North Carolina Driving School.

#### **Motion**

The Motion was made by Ms. Dot Cherry; seconded by Mr. Jeff Ramsey that the Board  
**Approve the Driver Education Contract**

A vote was taken and motion to approve the item as presented carried unanimously. (6-1)  
Chairman Crisp voted against.

### **Substitute Staff Placement Services — ESS Southeast, LLC – (Removed from Consent Agenda for discussion) – Action**

Discussion occurred concerning the Substitute Staff Placement Services.

#### **Motion**

The Motion was made by Mr. Ramsey; seconded by Mr. Lee Dedmon that the Board  
**Approve the Substitute Placement Services — ESS Southeast, LLC Contract**



A vote was taken and motion to approve the item as presented carried unanimously. (5-2)  
Chairman Crisp, Ms. Dot Cherry, Mr. Lee Dedmon, Mr. Jeff Ramsey and Mrs. Janna Smith voted for.  
Mr. Tod Kinlaw and Mrs. Robbie Lovelace voted against.

### **Consent Agenda – Action**

The Board considered the Consent Agenda:

- A. Recommended Personnel
- B. Budget Amendments & Budget Transfers
- C. Construction/Repair Change Orders
- D. Armstrong Property Purchase
- E. Contracts
  - Replacement of AX JACE Controllers
  - Grier Middle School Graphics
  - Educator’s Handbook (K-12)
  - Federal Programs Proposed Budget for 2025-2026
  - Annual Engagement Letter with Independent Auditors

Motion to adopt the Consent Agenda as presented was made by Mrs. Janna Smith; seconded by Mr. Lee Dedmon motion carried unanimously. (7-0)

### **Superintendent’s Comments**

Superintendent Houchard announced that the end of the 2024-2025 school year is almost here. Wednesday, May 21, is the last day of school for students. We want to thank everyone in the Gaston County Schools family for giving us a productive and successful year, and we hope everyone enjoys their summer break. Wednesday, August 13 – the first day of school for students – will be here before we know it.

Superintendent Houchard announced that our graduation season for the Class of 2025 begins tomorrow. We have two ceremonies on Tuesday in the Myers Center at Gaston College. The Gaston Early College High School graduation ceremony is at 3:00 p.m., followed by Gaston Early College High School of Medical Sciences ceremony at 6:00 p.m. We have three graduations on Wednesday — Gaston Virtual Academy at 9:00 a.m., Webb Street School at 11:00 a.m. and Warlick Academy at 2:00 p.m. On Friday evening, May 23, at 6:00 p.m., we will celebrate the Class of 2025 from ten of our traditional high schools with graduation ceremonies.

Superintendent Houchard announced that earlier this month we held our Evening of Excellence Ceremony to recognize outstanding educators and announced our “Of the Year” winners for 2025-2026.

Superintendent Houchard reminded everyone that Memorial Day is Monday, May 26, and our schools and central office buildings will be closed as it is a holiday for all employees.

Superintendent Houchard announced that we will implement our summer work schedule beginning Monday, June 2. Our schools and central department offices will be open Monday through Thursday from 7:00 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. and closed on Friday. The summer schedule will continue through Friday, August 1.



### **Closed Session**

Chairman Crisp asked the Board to consider going into Closed Session under, N.C.G.S. §143-318.11(a)(3) Consultation with Attorney, N.C.G.S. §143-318.11(a)(5) Real Property and N.C.G.S. §143-318.11(a)(6) Personnel.

Motion to go into Closed Session was made by Ms. Dot Cherry; seconded by Mrs. Janna Smith; motion carried unanimously. (7-0)

The Board went into Closed Session at 7:10 p.m.

The Board returned to Open Session at 7:39 p.m.

### **Motion**

The Motion was made by Ms. Dot Cherry; seconded by Mrs. Janna Smith that the Board  
**Award a two-year Assistant Principal contracts for the following:**

- Holly Adams
- Elizabeth Akins
- Whitney Hill
- Sydney McDaniel
- Leah Somers
- Monica Sherer

A vote was taken and motion to approve the item as presented carried unanimously. (7-0)

The Motion was made by Ms. Dot Cherry; seconded by Mr. Lee Dedmon that the Board  
**Award a two-year Principal contracts for the following:**

- Kathleen D'Avria
- Jennifer Lancaster
- Tonya Morris
- Lauren Stefaniak

A vote was taken and motion to approve the item as presented carried unanimously. (7-0)

Superintendent Houchard announced the following Principal placements:

- Kathleen D'Avria –Assigned to Southwest Middle School.
- Jennifer Lancaster –Assigned to Kiser Elementary School.
- Tonya Morris – Assigned to Robinson Elementary.
- William Winston – Assigned to Holbrook Middle School.
- Lauren Stefaniak – Assigned to Carr Elementary.




## Adjournment

All business having been conducted, Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Lee Dedmon; seconded by Mr. Jeff Ramsey motion carried unanimously. (7-0)

The Board Meeting adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

Approved:

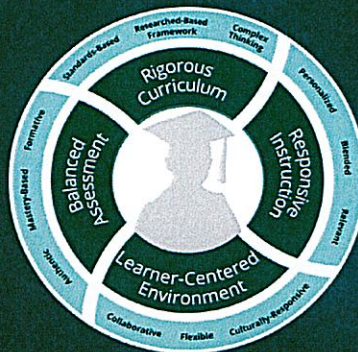
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Josh Crisp, Chairman  
[Corporate Seal]

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Morgen A. Houchard, Secretary

Date Approved: 10/16/2025



# Classroom Moment



Graduation Celebrations  
Class of 2025

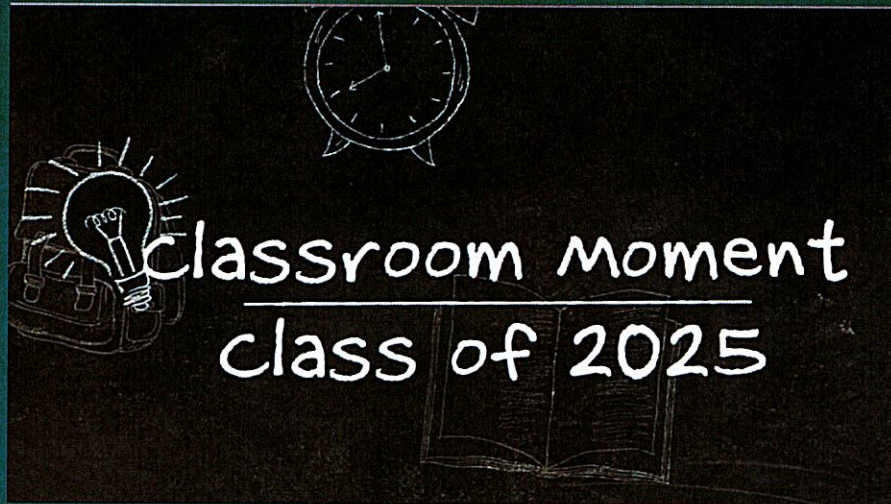


Class of 2025





## Graduation Celebration Video



## Class of 2025

- ▶ More than 2,000 students will graduate this week.
- ▶ After graduation, the Class of 2025 will
  - ▶ Attend colleges across the country
  - ▶ Enlist in all branches of the military
  - ▶ Join the workforce



## Class of 2025

- ▶ These pathways are available due to
  - ▶ Outstanding educators our students had along the way
  - ▶ Millions of dollars in scholarship awards
  - ▶ Strong GCS partnerships with business, industry, and the military
  - ▶ Families and friends who supported our students

## From August 2012...

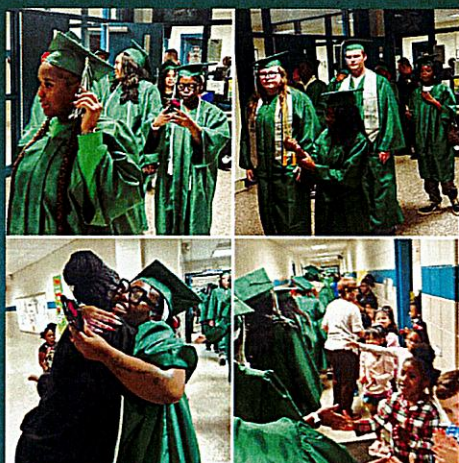




From August 2012...

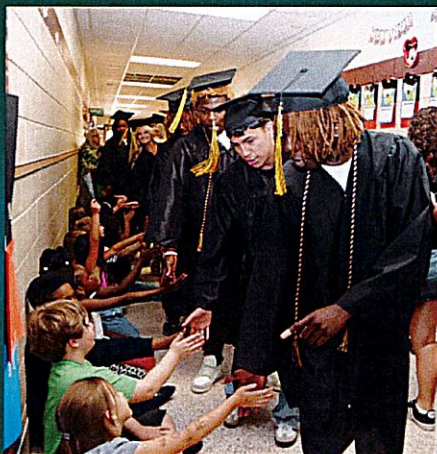


...To May 2025





...To May 2025



...To May 2025







**Congratulations &  
Best Wishes  
*Class of 2025***



## **Gaston County Schools**

### **Operations Committee Report – May 5, 2025**

The Operations Committee met at the Central Office Board Room on Monday, May 5, 2025 at 8:30 a.m. The committee consists of Chairman Brent Moore, Dot Cherry, Lee Dedmon and Tod Kinlaw.

Our agenda discussions included the following:

#### **•Budget Update**

—The total increase in our local budget request from the County for FY 2025-2026 is \$4.5 million. The County will hold a work session meeting on May 13, 2025 and a budget presentation will be presented by the County Manager. The County's regular meeting is scheduled for May 27 when the Commissioners will vote on their budget.

At this time, the State budget has not been finalized for next year.

#### **•Infinite Campus**

—We are continuing to transition from PowerSchool to Infinite Campus for our student information system. This transition is a State driven mandate. Meetings are almost completed with all departments who use PowerSchool to prepare for the conversion to Infinite Campus with DPI's support. Data Managers monthly support meetings are scheduled for May 7-9.

#### **•Media Center Update**

—Highlights were presented about our school media centers.

—A community member presented a picture book to every elementary school.

—The carpet is in place at the new Grier Middle School and the space is incredible. Books have been ordered for the library.

—Warlick Academy now has a library and books for grades 6-12 are on the shelves.

#### **•Grier Middle School Allowances**

—Due to a higher than anticipated increase in costs associated with rock excavation and the emergency responder system, we are recommending an additional \$500,000 of allowances for Phase 2. These funds will come from the bond proceeds. This is on the Consent Agenda included in the Change Orders.



- Armstrong Property Purchase

—Due diligence is complete and no disqualifying issues were found. We recommend approval to purchase this property for \$1.5 Million pending approval of the purchase price by the County Commissioners. The funding will come from the bond proceeds. This item is on the Consent Agenda.

- School Bond Update

—On April 22, 2025, the County Commissioners appropriated \$110 million in school bonds. This is the final installment of the \$250 million bond offering. The County also appropriated \$4.2 million in interest from the \$80 million bonds.

In addition, the following items were discussed by the Committee and recommended for approval on the Consent Agenda:

- Replacement of AX JACE Controllers – Facility Systems Services
- Grier Middle School Graphics – Nu-Idea
- Substitute Staff Placement Services – ESS Southeast, LLC
- Annual Engagement Letter with Independent Auditors – Forvis Mazars, LLP

These contracts are on the Consent Agenda and come as recommendation from the Committee for approval.

Other Business and Discussion

—An update was given on student transfers. Students requesting a transfer into a school that is already at capacity will go on a wait list.

The next Operations Committee Meeting will be held on Monday, June 2 beginning at 8:30 a.m. in the Central Office Board Room.



## **Gaston County Schools Curriculum & Instruction Committee Report – May 5, 2025**

The Curriculum & Instruction Committee met at the Central Office Board Room on Monday, May 5, 2025 at 11:30 a.m. The Committee consists of Chairman Jeff Ramsey, Robbie Lovelace (absent), Janna Smith and A.M. Stephens III.

Our agenda discussions included the following:

- Driver Education**

- Due to a significant rise in operational costs, North Carolina Driving School is requesting an increase in their pricing structure to ensure the continued delivery of past standards of education safety for the 2025-2026 school year.

- \*\*\*Post Meeting Note – Staff was able to negotiate a \$10 per student increase for this year which the District will absorb. The price will remain the same for students. This matter is on the Consent Agenda and is recommended for approval by the Committee.

- Student Transfers**

- Students requesting a transfer into a school that is closed to transfers due to capacity constraints, will be placed on a wait list.

- Substitute Staff Placement Services – ESS Southeast, LLC**

- ESS Southeast, LLC. is a third party group that will find and place substitute teachers in schools. Substitutes will be contracted employees for this provider and be eligible for benefits. This will take a tremendous burden off of building Administrators and teachers and allow them to focus on teaching and learning in the classroom. The initial commitment is for one year to see if this proves successful. This item is on the Consent Agenda for approval.

- Advanced Teacher Roles and Instructional Coach Positions - Updates**

- Mrs. Jonnecia Alford-Simmons is the new Advanced Teacher and Instructional Coach Director. This position is included in the State Grant. Candidates are being interviewed with a goal of having positions filled by the end of May.

- 2025-2026 Career and College Promise (CCP) Books and Fees Plan**

- Beginning fall 2025, students will be eligible for reimbursement for books when they successfully complete a course with a final grade of C or higher. College fees will continue to be paid for. There will be a process in place for students who need financial assistance with purchasing books. A Parent notification letter is being developed.

- The Committee reviewed the Federal Programs proposed budget for Title I, II, III and IV.

The Federal Grant Application is on the Consent Agenda and comes by recommendation of the Committee.



- Data Pathway Deep Dive.

- Information was presented on K-12 Pathways with a focus on Grades 3-5 Math

The following items are on the Consent Agenda for approval:

- Educator's Handbook
- Federal Grant Application

The next Curriculum & Instruction Committee Meeting will be held on Monday, June 2 beginning at 11:30 a.m. in the Central Office Board Room.



# School Nutrition Report

Angela Calamia, MS, RD, LDN, SNS  
School Nutrition Director

Board of Education  
May 19, 2025



## School Nutrition Programs & Participation



- National School Breakfast and Lunch Program
- After School Snack Program
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Supper Program
- Summer Feeding Programs
- Daily Breakfast 10,500 served
- Daily Lunches 20,500 served



## **Community Eligibility Provision Status**

45 schools participating

- No Application needed for families to be eligible for free meals at Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) schools
- All students eat free
- Reduces the amount of student debt that the district must pay to School Nutrition
- Eliminates the need for complimentary meals at these schools

## **Summer Feeding**

**9 School Sites**  
**Operating June 2- 26 2025**  
**Hot Breakfast and Lunch**



## **Summer Feeding**

**Six Community Sites  
Cherryville, Dallas and Lowell**

**Meal Bundles containing 7 days of  
Breakfast and Lunch to take home**

## **Summer Feeding**

**50-60 Camp Sites  
Bagged Breakfast and Lunches  
Daily**



## 2024-2025 Highlights

- ✓ Maintained a positive fund balance
- ✓ Maintained Staffing levels adequate
- ✓ Continue to expand our Farm

## What is the School Nutrition Farm



**NC STATE**

**EXTENSION**



The school nutrition farm is a grassroots collaboration between Gaston County Schools and Gaston County Cooperative Extension, operated by Deep Roots CPS Farm.

**The School Nutrition Center is the only Central Kitchen Facility operated by a public school system in the state.**



## Fresh strawberries served mid-April thru May 220 lbs per week



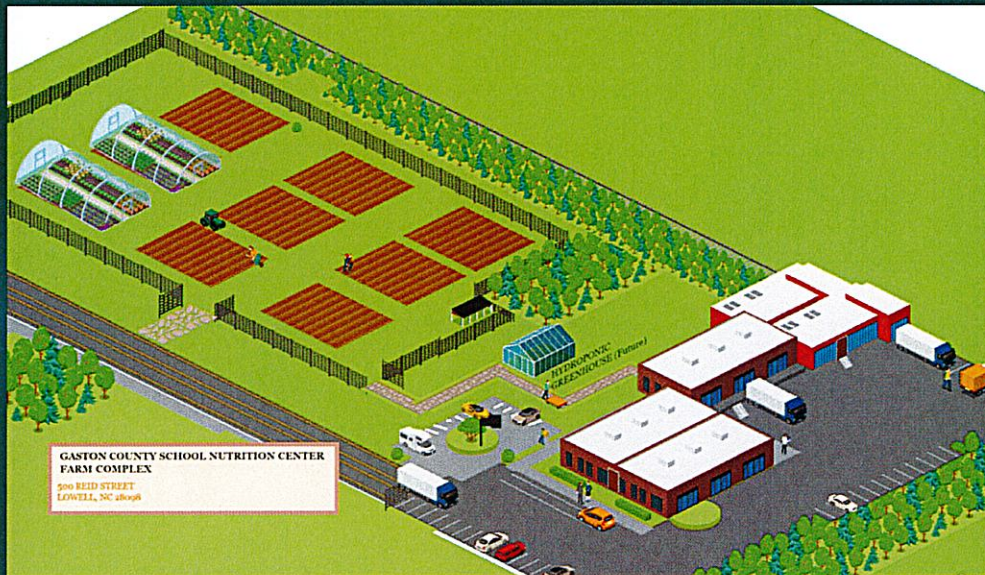
## School Nutrition Farm Expansion



- Has provided a variety of produce used in our cafeterias
- Pilot crops that worked well
  - Lettuce (155 pounds), Tomatoes (175 pounds), Cucumbers (150 pounds), Collards (100 pounds) and Strawberries (250 pounds)
- We are anticipating the exciting addition of a Hydroponic Greenhouse for year round lettuce cultivation!



## Future School Nutrition Farm



## School Nutrition Community Outreach

**ASPIRE** Supper Program at school sites:

H.H. Beam, Pleasant Ridge, Lingerfeldt, and Woodhill

Provide daily meals for Gaston County Head Start Pre-K Program

- 300 breakfasts
- 260 lunches
- 260 snacks

Community Partnerships

- Dairy Alliance
- No Kid Hungry
- YMCA



## **2025-2026 School Year**

- School Meals will continue to be funded through the National School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs
- Non CEP School Families will need to apply for Free or Reduced meals
- Applications available after July 1, 2025

## **Action Items**

**Approval of SN Bids  
for  
2025-2026**



