

Gaston County Schools
Board of Education
Monday, February 17, 2025
Meeting 5:30 p.m.
Regular Meeting

MINUTES

The Gaston County Board of Education met in a regular session on Monday, February 17, 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, 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.

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

Invocation

Deacon Bill Melton of St. Michael Catholic Church led the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance

Jasmine Greene, Mount Holly Middle School, led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Character Trait

Addyson Powers, Catawba Heights Elementary School, reported on the Character Trait of Good Judgment.

Agenda Adoption - Action

The Board considered Agenda Adoption – Action

Motion to adopt the Agenda as presented was made by Mr. Brent Moore; seconded by Mrs. Janna Smith; motion carried unanimously. (9-0)

Good News – Information

Mr. Todd Hagans recognized the spelling bee winner and the runner-up. Our spelling bee champion, Paul Sayegh of Belmont Middle School emerged from a field of 38 students to win the district champion. Nixon Sipe from Cramerton Middle School was the runner-up in the district-wide spelling bee. The top four finishers in the regional competition will receive an invitation to advance to the Scripps National Spelling Bee.

Mrs. Janna Smith presented a Certificate of Recognition to Paul and Nixon.

Todd Hagans recognized the overall elementary, middle and high school students who were the overall winners at the Gaston Regional Science and Engineering Fair which was held in December at the Schiele Museum.

- Jax Jenkins and Connor Pursley of North Belmont Elementary School took overall honors with their project titled “Galactic Sugar Crystals”.
- Matthew Wilcox of Kiser Elementary School earned overall honors with his project titled “Blade Angle”.
- Kelvin Aguilar Gonzalez and Sabastian Caro from Grier Middle School who were the overall winners in the middle school division with their project titled “The Impact of Air Pollution on Plant Health and Photosynthesis”
- Sofia Jimenez Beltran, Inari Joseph and Hayden Trinh from Gaston Early College High School were the overall high school winners with their project titled “Testing Impurities in Feminine Products”.

Mrs. Janna Smith presented a Certificate of Recognition to all students.

Todd Hagans recognized back-to-back state champions from Forestview High School – William Peyton, Andrew Taylor, Graham Kines and Beckett Tabor. These students capped off their senior season by winning their second consecutive state swimming championship in the 200-yard medley relay. In addition, Beckett placed third in the men’s 100-yard freestyle at the 3A state championship.

Mr. Tod Kinlaw presented a Certificate of Recognition to all students.

Todd Hagans recognized the South Point High School 200-yard freestyle relay team – Miles Ferguson, Daniel Lane, Noah Legnosky and Grant Hinnicutt claimed their first-ever state championship.

Mr. Tod Kinlaw presented a Certificate of Recognition to all students.

Todd Hagans recognized state swimming medalists in individual events.

- Ila Turner of South Point High School, earned second place in both the women’s 50-yard freestyle and 100-yard freestyle events at the 3A state championship
- Carter Johnson of East Gaston High School placed second in the men’s 200-yard freestyle and third in the men’s 100-yard breaststroke at the 1A/2A state championship
- Steven Wyatt of Cherryville High School earned second place in the men’s 500-yard freestyle at the 1A/2A state championship
- Wyatt Smith of East Gaston High School placed fourth in the 1A/2A state diving championship
- Austin Major of Stuart W. Cramer High School placed fourth in the men’s 50-yard freestyle at the 3A state championship.

Mr. Tod Kinlaw presented a Certificate of Recognition to all students.

February is Career and Technical Education (CTE) Month and Todd Hagans recognized Dr. Rusty Parker, Beth Williams, Chastity Stamey and Diane Gibson CTE Department. CTE helps students learn important academic, technical and job skills to prepare them, for their future careers. Students in our CTE programs take part in real-world, hands-on experiences that make learning more meaningful and exciting.

Chairman Josh Crisp presented a Recognition Plaque to the CTE staff.

To recognize National School Counseling Week Todd Hagans recognized our lead counselors:
 Tim Hardin, Sadler Elementary
 Mark Reep, W.B. Beam Intermediate

Lindsay Weathers, Belmont Middle School
Jordan Johnson, East Gaston High School
Jennifer MacDonald, Stuart W. Cramer High School
Mathieu Chapman, Highland School of Technology
Shenice Bailey, Director of Counseling

Mr. A.M. Stephens III presented a Recognition Plaque to the counselors.

Todd Hagans recognized the ten schools that led the way in our 2024-2025 fundraising campaign for the United Way of Gaston County. This year we reached an all-time high with a total contribution to our local United Way of \$131,861.92. We want to express our appreciation to everyone who gave a contribution and participated in our fundraising efforts. Below are the top ten fundraising schools:

Southwest Middle School

Principal Melissa Knick and Judith Ayala (Principal Fellow) contributed \$10,002.48.

Ms. Dot Cherry presented a Recognition Plaque to Southwest Middle School.

North Gaston High School

Principal Page Willis and Assistant Principal Waheeba McCray contributed \$6,015.

Ms. Dot Cherry presented a Recognition Plaque to North Gaston High School.

Holbrook Middle School

Principal Torben Ross and coordinators Tamika Houston and Teara Nixon contributed \$5,913.

Ms. Dot Cherry presented a Recognition Plaque to Holbrook Middle School

Cramerton Middle School

Assistant Principal Michael Hewitt contributed \$5,900.

Ms. Dot Cherry presented a Recognition Plaque to Cramerton Middle School.

Belmont Middle School

Principal Dr. Josh Bromley and coordinator Samantha Wallace contributed \$4,891.

Ms. Dot Cherry presented a Recognition Plaque to Belmont Middle School.

Woodhill Elementary School

Principal Andrea Meyer contributed \$4,050.

Ms. Dot Cherry presented a Recognition Plaque to Woodhill Elementary School.

Carr Elementary School

Principal Rebekka Duncan contributed \$3,816.

Ms. Dot Cherry presented a Recognition Plaque to Carr Elementary School.

Mount Holly Middle School

Principal Curtis Mitcham and Assistant Principal Deon Kennedy contributed 3,340.15.

Ms. Dot Cherry presented a Recognition Plaque to Mount Holly Middle School

Highland School of Technology

Principal Susan Redmond and Assistant Principal Jenny Carper contributed \$3,302.

Ms. Dot Cherry presented a Recognition Plaque to Highland School of Technology

Rankin Elementary School

Principal Donna Kelly and Assistant Principal Emily Morton contributed \$3,063.40

Ms. Dot Cherry presented a Recognition Plaque to Highland School of Technology

Mr. Hagans expressed appreciation to the central office level departments for their contributions and thanked Valerie Yatko, who served again as our districtwide coordinator.

Andrea Stephens, President of United Way of Gaston County, briefly shared how the contributions from Gaston County Schools impact the United Way.

School Board Recognition Month – Information

Mr. Todd Hagans expressed appreciation to School Board Members in recognition of School Board Recognition Month. Each year, we take pride in recognizing and honoring the citizens who serve on the Gaston County Board of Education. This year to help us recognize and pay tribute to our Board of Education Members and Superintendent Houchard, we chose an elementary school for each Board Member and our Superintendent and had a class at the school “adopt” each Board Member. Representatives from the schools are here to present a framed picture of the class to each Board Member and our Superintendent along with a special “thank-you” card.

To recognize Chairman **Josh Crisp**, who represents the Dallas Township, is Jeremiah Freeman who is a student in Kelly O’Reilly’s fourth grade class at Carr Elementary School. With them is their principal Rebekka Duncan and teacher Kelly O’Reilly.

To recognize Vice Chairman **Dot Cherry**, who is an At-Large Member of the Board of Education, is Bentley Harris and Dominic Coffey who are students in Brooke Bolin’s first grade class at New Hope Elementary School. With them is their principal Kelli Glisan and teacher Brooke Bolin.

To recognize **Lee Dedmon**, who represents the Gastonia Township, is Estella Silva who is a student in Sherena Boone’s second grade class at Lingerfeldt Elementary School. With them is their assistant principal Angie Molla, content teacher Katrina Ashleman, and teacher Sherena Boone.

To recognize **Tod Kinlaw**, who represents the South Point Township, is Jax Jenkins and Connor Pursley who are students in Sonya Helton’s fifth grade class at North Belmont Elementary School. With them is their principal Justin Beam, principal intern Ana Cease and teacher Sonya Helton.

To recognize **Robbie Lovelace**, who represents the Cherryville Township, is principal Caroline Black and teacher Anna Kiser from Cherryville Elementary.

To recognize **Brent Moore**, who represents Crowders Mountain Township, is Colt Clampett who is a student in Shannon William's first grade class at Bessemer City Primary School. With them is principal Todd Goff, teacher Shannon Williams and content teacher Sarah Crisp.

To recognize Chairman **Jeff Ramsey**, who is an At-Large Member of the Board of Education, is CJ Lowry who is a student in Hanna Sider's kindergarten class at McAdenville Elementary School. With them is their principal Dawn Lavinder.

To recognize **Janna Smith**, who represents the Gastonia Township, are her twin boys, Knox and E.Z. Smith who are students in Lisa Grubbs' fifth grade class at W.A. Bess Elementary School. With them is their principal Laura Clark and teacher Lisa Grubbs.

To recognize **A.M. Stephens III**, who represents the Riverbend Township, is Skyler Alley and Brentley Miller who are students in Melissa McGinnis' first grade class at Catawba Heights Elementary School. With them is their principal Staci Bradley and teacher Melissa McGinnis.

To recognize **Superintendent Houchard**, is Hayden and Mason Robinson who are students in Matthew Jennings' kindergarten class at Lowell Elementary School. With them is their principal Dr. April Conley and teacher Matthew Jennings.

Classroom Moment – Information

Chairman Crisp recognized Tammy Mims, Principal Forestview High School, and Genevieve Comer, Academy Coordinator who highlighted the Collegiate Preparatory Academy.

(View PowerPoint below)

Public Expression – Information

No one signed up for Public Expression.

Approval/Correction of Minutes – Action

Motion to adopt minutes of January 30, 2025 (Regular Meeting) and January 30, 2025 (Board Retreat) as presented was made by Ms. Dot Cherry; seconded by Mr. A.M. Stephens III; motion carried unanimously. (9-0)

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 Below)

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 Below)

Consent Agenda – Action

The Board considered the Consent Agenda:

- A. Recommended Personnel
- B. Budget Amendments & Budget Transfers
- C. Construction/Repair Change Orders
- D. Reduction in Force (RIF) – Strategic Planning
- E. Contracts
 - None

Motion to adopt the Consent Agenda as presented was made by Mr. Jeff Ramsey; seconded by Mr. A.M. Stephens III motion carried unanimously. (9-0)

Superintendent’s Comments

Superintendent Houchard thanked the Gaston County Education Foundation for sponsoring “Are You Smarter Than a Gaston County Fifth Grader?” competition on February 6. Hawks Nest STEAM Academy and its business partner, Carolina Chiropractic Plus were the winners in the competition proving they are the smartest in Gaston County. Proceeds from the “Are You Smarter” competition are used by the Education Foundation to support the Ron L. Ensley grants for teachers.

Superintendent Houchard announced the deadline to submit an application for our magnet schools and academies is Friday, March 21 at 5:00 p.m.

Superintendent Houchard reminded everyone that our annual “RoboGASTON” robotics competition will be held on Saturday, March 8 at Forestview High School beginning at 9:30 a.m.

Superintendent Houchard reminded everyone that Thursday, March 13 is Parent Teacher-Conference Day and early dismissal. Friday, March 14 is an Optional Teacher Workday and no school for students.

Chairman Crisp wished Janna Smith a “Happy Birthday”.

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 Ms. Janna Smith; motion carried unanimously. (9-0)

The Board went into Closed Session at 7:04 p.m.


The Board returned to Open Session at 7:49 p.m.

Adjournment

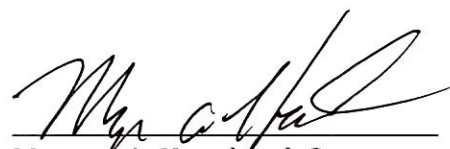
All business having been conducted, Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Lee Dedmon; seconded by Mr. Tod Kinlaw motion carried unanimously. (9-0)

The Board Meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Approved:



Josh Crisp, Chairman
[Corporate Seal]



Morgen A. Houchard, Secretary

Date Approved: 3/17/2025

Classroom Moment

*Principal Tammy Mims
Forestview High School*

AP Research Showcase

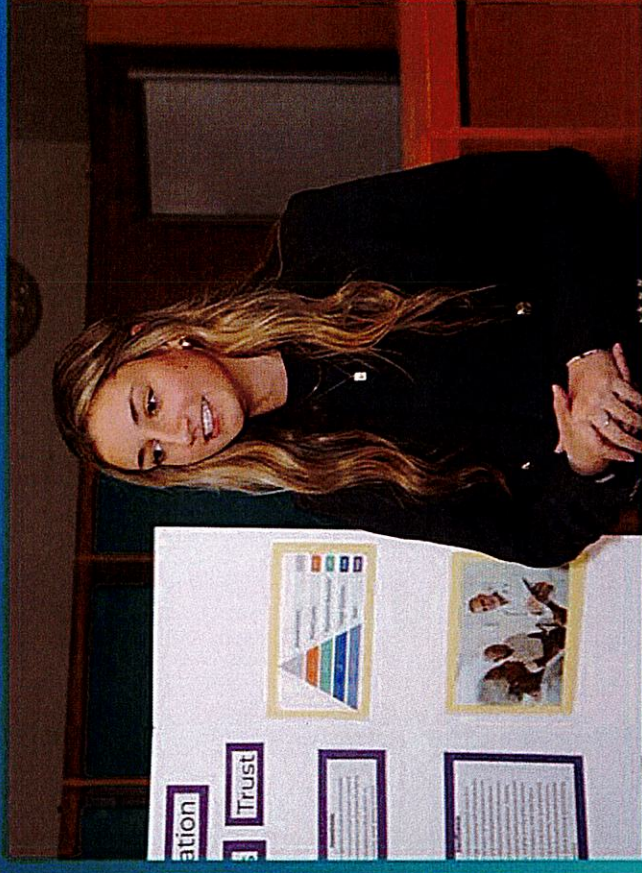
Advanced Placement (AP) students at Forestview High School present Capstone Projects



GASTON COUNTY SCHOOLS

AP Research Showcase

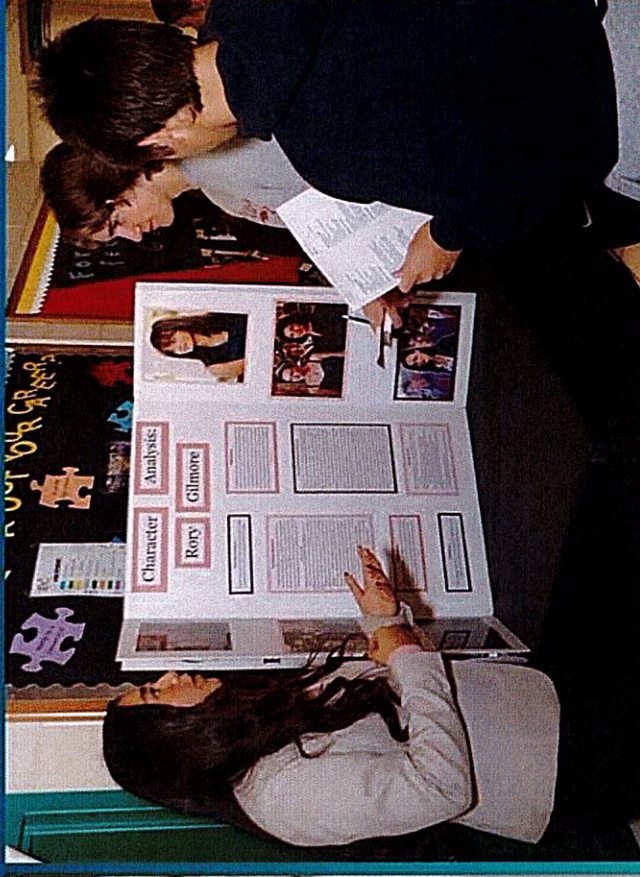
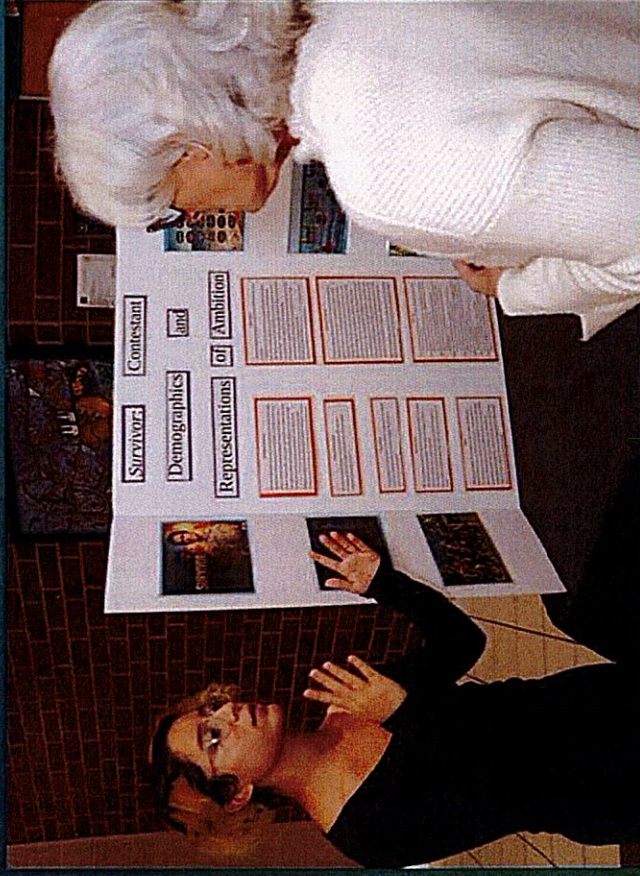
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GASTON COUNTY SCHOOLS

Operations Committee Report

The Operations Committee meets regularly to discuss matters involving the management of school facilities, transportation, budgeting and safety protocols to ensure efficient and effective operations within the district. Brent Moore is chair of the committee and members are Dot Cherry, Lee Dedmon and Tod Kinlaw. The Operations Committee did not meet in February due to the Board Retreat being held in late January. The next committee meeting will be held on Monday, March 3, 2025 in the Board Room beginning at 8:30 a.m.

Curriculum and Instruction Committee Report

The Curriculum and Instruction Committee meets regularly to discuss matters overseeing the development, evaluation and implementation of educational programs, ensuring that curriculum standards align with academic goals, and recommending improvements to enhance teaching and learning outcomes. Jeff Ramsey is chair of the committee and members are Robbie Lovelace, Janna Smith and A.M. Stephens III. The Curriculum and Instruction Committee did not meet in February due to the Board Retreat being held in late January. The next committee meeting will be held on Monday, March 3, 2025 in the Board Room beginning at 11:30 a.m.