

Gaston County Schools  
Operations Committee  
Monday, May 5, 2025

MINUTES

The Operations Committee met on Monday, May 5, 2025 at 8:30 a.m. in the Central Office Board Room, 943 Osceola Street, Gastonia, NC. Those Board Members in attendance were: Chairman Brent Moore, Dot Cherry, Lee Dedmon, and Tod Kinlaw

Additional attendees included: BOE Chairman Josh Crisp, Board Member Jeff Ramsey, Superintendent Dr. Morgen A. Houchard, Attorney Sonya McGraw, Associate Superintendents Gary Hoskins and Tonya Kales, Executive Director Beth Suber, Assistant Superintendent Bessie Harvey and Rebekka Powers, Chief Communications Officer Todd Hagans, Chief Technology Officer Curtis Poplin, Director Kyle Wood, Director Tom Nencetti, Lead Media Coordinator Laura Long and Board Clerk Dana Luoto.

Chairman Moore called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m. and welcomed everyone.

**Approval/Correction of Minutes**

Motion to adopt minutes of March 31, 2025 as presented was made by Ms. Dot Cherry; seconded by Mr. Lee Dedmon; motion carried unanimously. (4-0)

**Audit Fee Proposal**

Associate Superintendent Gary Hoskins presented a PowerPoint on the Audit Fee Proposal.

(View PowerPoint)

**Motion**

The Motion was made by Mr. Lee Dedmon; seconded by Ms. Dot Cherry that the Board

**Approve the contract and engagement letter with Forvis to perform audit services for the fiscal year 2024-2025.**

A vote was taken and motion to approve the item as presented carried unanimously.

**Budget Update**

Gary Hoskins presented a PowerPoint on the Budget Request for 2025-2026.

(View PowerPoint)

**Infinite Campus Update**

Chief Technology Officer Curtis Poplin and Director Kyle Wood presented a PowerPoint on Infinite Campus Conversion.

(View PowerPoint)

**Media Center Update**

Lead Media Coordinator Laura Long presented a PowerPoint on Media Services.

(View PowerPoint)

**Substitute Staff Placement Services**

Executive Director Beth Suber presented a PowerPoint on Substitute Staff Placement Services.

(View PowerPoint)

**Grier Middle School Allowances**

Assistant Superintendent Bessie Harvey reported that 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.

**Grier Middle School Graphics**

Bessie Harvey reported that the new Grier Middle School will open for students in August 2025. Nu-Idea has been recommended to purchase and install graphics and signage in the new building. This includes graphics and signs throughout the entire building including the lobby, hallways, offices, gymnasium, cafeteria, media center, etc.

**Armstrong Property Purchase**

Bessie Harvey reported that 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.

**School Bond Update**

Bessie Harvey reported that 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.

**Contract Approvals**

The following contracts were reviewed and recommended for approval:

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

**Motion**

The Motion was made by Ms. Dot Cherry; seconded by Mr. Lee Dedmon that the Board

**Approve Contracts to be placed on the Consent Agenda for the May 19, 2025 Board Meeting**

A vote was taken and motion to approve the item as presented carried unanimously. (4-0)

\*NOTE – Mr. Kinlaw voted no for Substitute Staff Placement Services contract.

**Meeting Schedule**

The next Operations Committee Meeting is scheduled for June 2, 2025 in the Central Office Board Room beginning at 8:30 a.m.

**Other Business and Discussion**

Dr. Rebekka Powers gave an update on school transfers. Below are schools that are closed to transfers due to capacity. Students requesting a transfer into a closed school will be placed on a wait list:

Page Primary  
Belmont Central Elementary  
Brookside Elementary  
New Hope Elementary  
Pleasant Ridge Elementary  
W.A. Bess Elementary  
Woodhill Elementary

Cramerton Middle  
Southwest Middle

Ashbrook High  
Forestview High  
Hunter Huss High  
South Point High

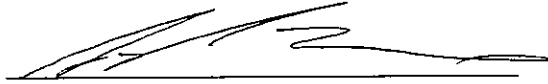
Superintendent Houchard reviewed several handouts which included graduation ceremony assignments, four-day week guidelines, FY 2025-2026 Planning Allotment and salary comparisons.

**Adjournment**

All business being conducted, Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Lee Dedmon; seconded by Ms. Dot Cherry motion carried unanimously. (4-0)

The Operations Committee Meeting adjourned at 10:17 a.m.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brent Moore', written over a horizontal line.

Brent Moore, Chairman

Date Approved: 6-2-25



## **Audit Fee Proposal**

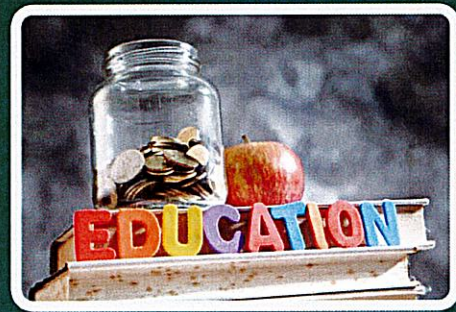
### **Forvis Mazars, LLP**

- Conducted GCS independent audit and required reviews for **FY 23-24**
- FY 23-24 base proposal of **\$55,000** - actual was **\$81,300** due to additional time
- FY 24-25 base proposal of **\$65,000**



## Budget Update

- County Funding
- State Funding
- Federal Funding



## Gaston County Schools Budget Request 2025-2026

Presented to the  
County Commissioners  
on April 1st





## County Request Summary

**Operating Request: \$60.1 million**

*- Current Budget \$55.6 million*

**Capital Maintenance Request: \$2.2 million**

*- Maintaining current level*

**Total increase for FY 2025-26: \$4.5 million**

## County Meeting Schedule

### **May 13**

- Work Session
- Budget Presentation

### **May 27**

- Regular Meeting
- Budget Public Hearing



## State Funding

### Biennial Budget 2025-2027

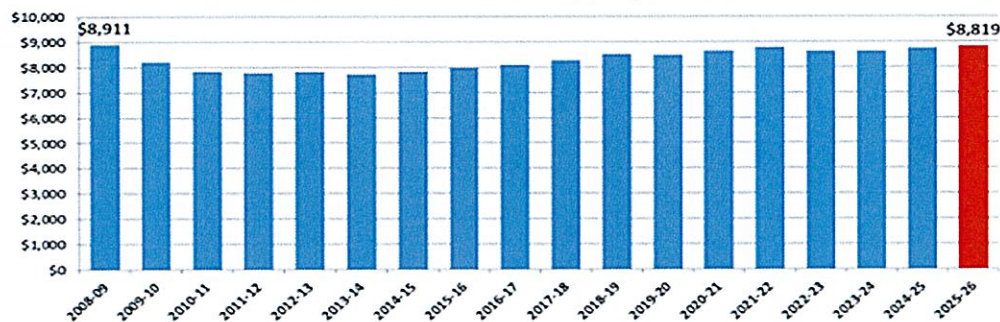
- Governor Stein budget proposal made on March 19th
- NC Senate budget proposal (SB 257) was made on April 14th
- NC House currently working on their budget proposal

## State Funding

NORTH CAROLINA  
LARGE DISTRICT  
CONSORTIUM



Real Per-Student State Appropriations





# State Funding

## Teacher Pay Plan Comparison

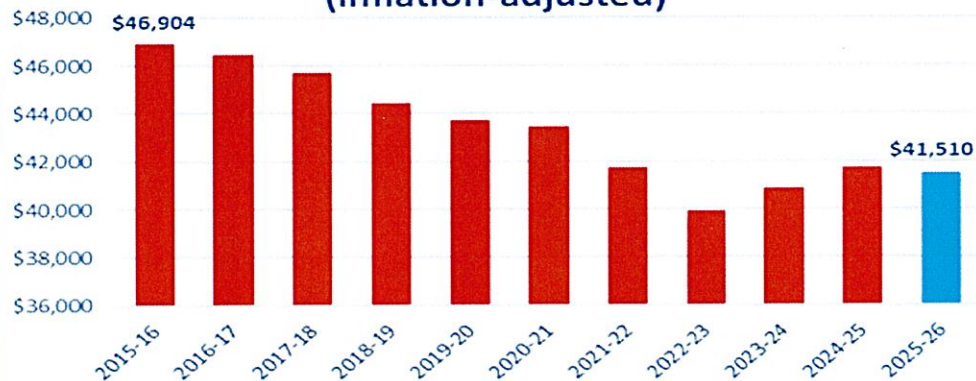
FY 25-26  
(raises over 24-25)

FY 26-27  
(raises over 24-25)

	Governor	Senate		Governor	Senate
Minimum	3.6%	1.2%	Minimum	5.8%	1.2%
Average	5.9%	2.1%	Average	10.7%	3.0%
Maximum	10.5%	5.1%	Maximum	26.8%	5.5%

# State Funding

## NC Beginning Teacher Salaries (inflation-adjusted)





## State Funding

### Employer Paid Benefits:

		Governor		Senate	
		24-25	25-26	25-26	26-27
Retirement	24.04%	24.86%	24.55%	24.67%	25.40%
Hospitalization	\$8,095	\$8,419	\$8,756	\$8,500	\$8,905

## State Planning Allotment

- Increases in teacher positions (34), program enhancement teacher positions (3) and school administration months (7)
- Increases in CTE (\$156K), DSSF (\$746K), At-Risk Services (\$500K), EC (\$891K) and LEP (\$708K)



# State Planning Allotment

- Significant decrease in Low Wealth Supplemental Funding (-\$7.3M)
- Decrease was caused by significant increases in property values with minimal increase in local K-12 financial support

# State Planning Allotment

State Initial (Base) Allotments			
Description	2020 Gaston County		
	25-26 Planning	24-25 Initial	Change from Prior Year
PRC 0001 Classroom Teacher (Dollar)	105,280,681.00	102,025,329.00	3,255,352.00
PRC 0001 Classroom Teacher (Positions)	1,379.00	1,345.00	34.00
PRC 0002 Central Office (Dollar)	1,635,875.00	1,595,214.00	40,661.00
PRC 0002 Non-Instructional Support (Dollar)	10,193,877.00	9,934,673.00	259,204.00
PRC 0004 Program Enhancement Teacher (Dollar)	5,508,819.00	5,032,196.00	476,623.00
PRC 0004 Program Enhancement Teacher (Positions)	71.00	69.00	2.00
PRC 0005 School Building Administration (Dollar)	10,196,809.00	9,767,312.00	429,497.00
PRC 0005 School Building Administration (Positions & Months)	983.00	978.00	5.00
PRC 0006 School Health Personnel (Dollar)	6,083,706.00	5,904,019.00	179,686.00
PRC 0007 Instructional Support (Dollar)	71.00	72.00	-1.00
PRC 0007 Instructional Support (Positions)	5,564,562.00	5,867,362.00	-302,799.00
PRC 0013 Career & Technical Education (CTE) (Dollar)	72.00	72.00	0.00
PRC 0013 Career & Technical Education (CTE) (Months)	10,921,800.00	10,765,218.00	156,581.00
PRC 0014 CTE Program Support (Dollar)	1,410.00	1,403.00	7.00
PRC 0019 Small County (Dollar)	495,305.00	495,491.00	-186.00
PRC 0019 Small County (Positions)	9.00	9.00	0.00
PRC 0024 Disadvantaged Student Supplemental Funding (DISST) (Dollar)	2,164,487.00	1,418,217.00	746,270.00
PRC 0027 Teacher Assistants (Dollar)	9,768,996.00	9,729,244.00	39,752.00
PRC 0027 Teacher Assistants (Positions)	893,515.00	879,361.00	14,154.00
PRC 0031 Low Wealth Supplemental Funding (Dollar)	1,829,156.00	1,799,718.00	29,438.00
PRC 0034 Academically & Intellectually Gifted (AIG) (Dollar)	8,718,636.00	8,575,805.00	142,831.00
PRC 0034 Academically & Intellectually Gifted (AIG) (Positions)	262,513.00	261,125.00	1,388.00
PRC 0039 AS/RA Student Services (Dollar)	6,007,734.00	7,501,257.00	-1,493,523.00
PRC 0071 Supplemental Teacher Compensation Funds (Dollar)	3,945,490.00	3,495,834.00	449,656.00
PRC 0131 Textbooks (Dollar)	1,136,263.00	1,110,808.00	25,455.00
<b>State Initial Allotment Total (Does not include categorical allotments)</b>	<b>193,289,510.00</b>	<b>190,611,651.00</b>	<b>2,677,859.00</b>
Description	2020 Gaston County		
	25-26 Planning	24-25 Initial	Change from Prior Year
ADM (Actual) (LEA Allotment)	30,676.00	29,529.00	1,147.00
Outlay Per ADM (Adjusted State)	6,313.35	6,369.01	-55.66
PRC 0009 Dollars Per ADM (Unadjusted State)	113.97	91.59	22.38
<b>Total State Funds per ADM (LEA &amp; CS)</b>	<b>6,427.32</b>	<b>6,460.60</b>	<b>-33.28</b>
Categorical Allotments			
Description	2020 Gaston County		
	25-26 Planning	24-25 Initial	Change from Prior Year
PRC 0012 Drivers Training (Dollar)	721,945.00	702,375.00	19,570.00
PRC 0015 School Technology (Dollar)	360,649.00	354,131.00	6,518.00
PRC 0032 Children with Disabilities (CWD) (Dollar)	23,638,898.00	22,747,745.00	891,153.00
PRC 0054 Limited English Proficiency (LEP) (Dollar)	3,334,912.00	2,326,965.00	1,007,947.00
Position Summary			
Description	2020 Gaston County		
	25-26 Planning	24-25 Initial	Change from Prior Year
State Public Total (Positions)	1,594.00	1,556.00	38.00
State Public Total (Months)	2,293.00	2,379.00	-86.00
<b>Grand Total State Allotments</b>	<b>221,043,914.00</b>	<b>220,238,501.00</b>	<b>805,413.00</b>



## Federal Funding

DPI has advised that we should currently plan to have comparable federal funding for next year. However, that could change quickly. The primary uses of federal funds are below:

- \$11.8M - ESEA Funds (Title I, II, III and IV)
- \$ 8.5M - IDEA Funding (EC)
- \$21.8M - School Nutrition

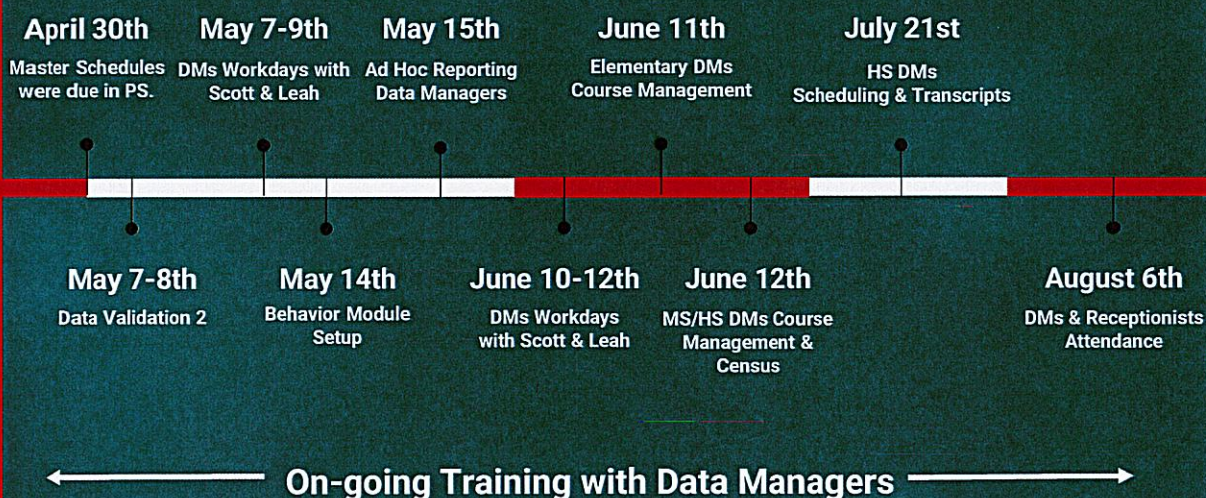


## Infinite Campus Conversion

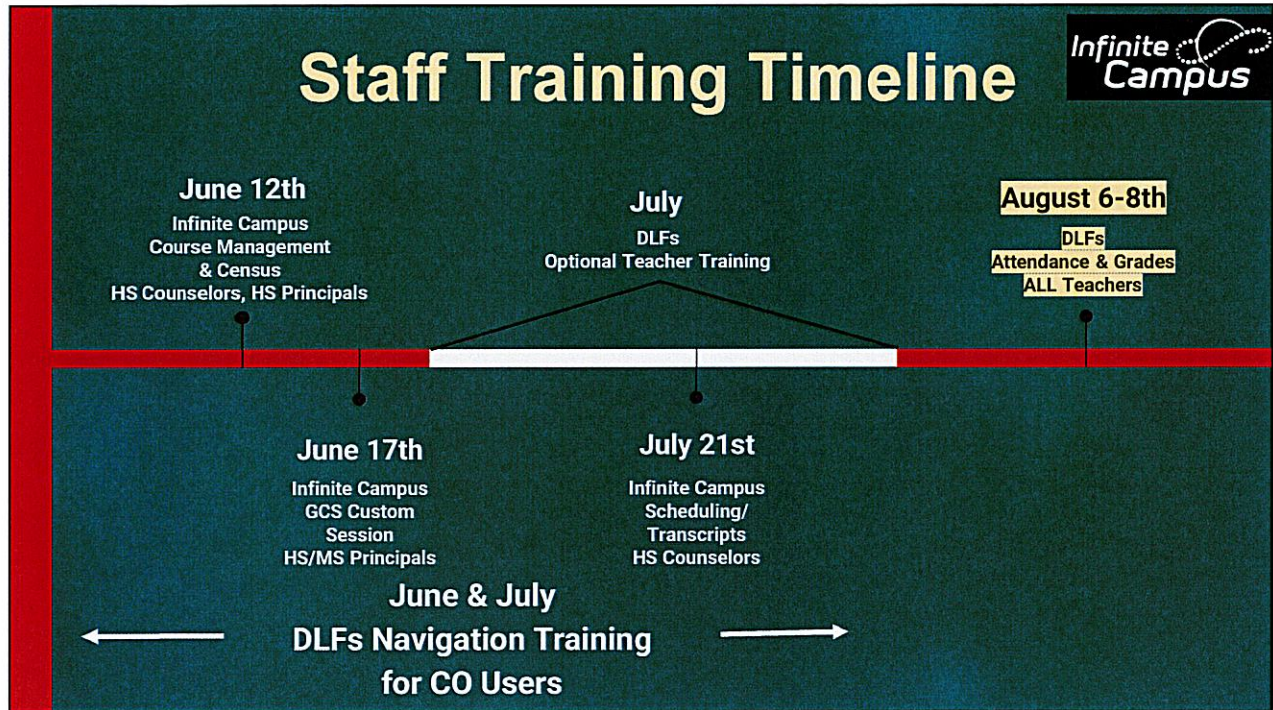
- We continue to correct errors as we near our second data validation.
- Data Manager [monthly support meetings](#) are May 7th-9th.
- Teacher representatives from each campus have been trained.
- We have nearly completed our meetings with central office departments concerning their access.
- [Infinite Campus Webpage](#)



## DM Support Timeline









# GCS Media Services

*Laura Long*

*GCS Lead Media Coordinator*

## Highlights



**SLMC of the Year  
Laura Pekarek  
Lowell Elementary**

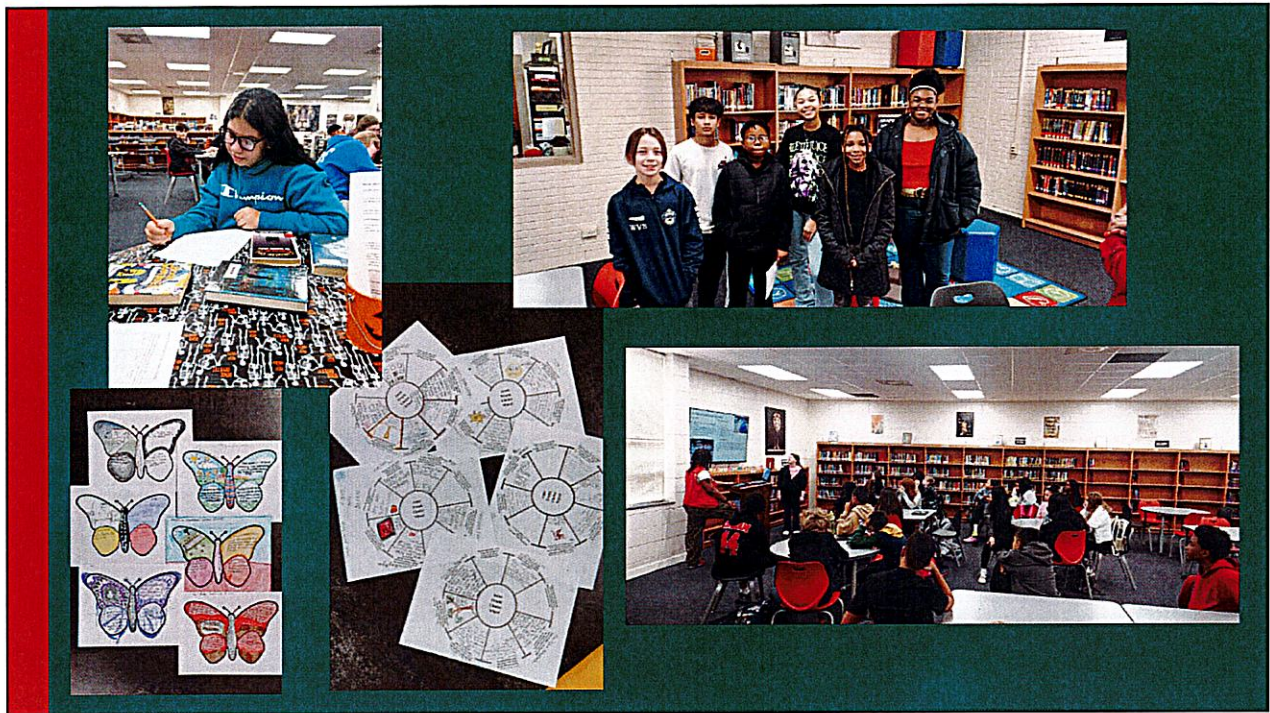


**Stuart W. Cramer High School  
Battle of the Books Team  
Third Place - NC State Competition**

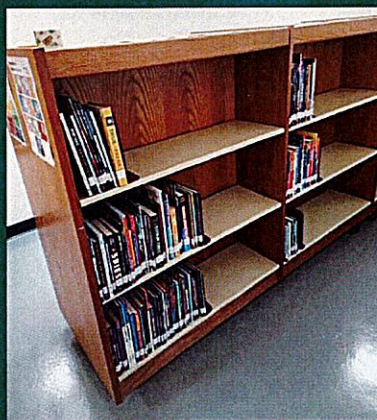
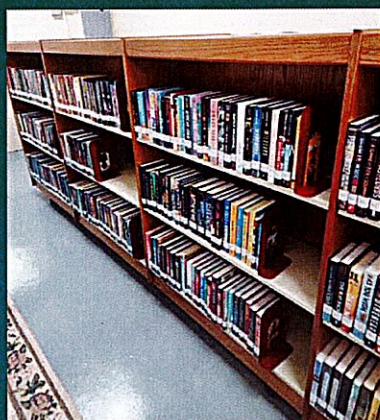








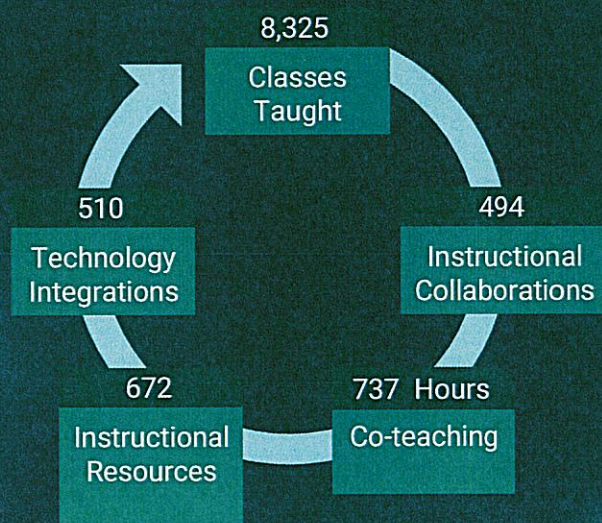




## Warlick Academy

New 6-12 Library

## Media Coordinators: Instructional Partners





# Health of Our Collection

Average Age: 2009

Average Items per Student:

Elementary: 17.8

Middle: 11.3

High: 9.5

Examples:

- > [Bessemer City High School](#)
- > [Belmont Middle School](#)
- > [Lowell Elementary School](#)

## NCDPI Impact Standards

- > Minimum 10 books/student
- > 15-20 books/student is exemplary

# 5-Year Collection Development Plans

School \_\_\_\_\_  
Collection Development Plan  
Aligned to K-5 North Carolina Standard Course of Study  
2025-2030

#Students: \_\_\_\_\_ Collection Size (Bks. BD): \_\_\_\_\_ Books Per Child (BD): \_\_\_\_\_ Average Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Budget: \_\_\_\_\_

	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	5-Year Totals
Targeted Areas for Resource Development in the Media Center						
Minimum Needed for Replacement of Discards ONLY (\$25.00 Book*) Amount does not include filling any curriculum gaps.						
Recommended Book Budget (\$10.00 Student)						
Current Recommended Local Media Budget (\$4.00 Student)						
Minimum Budget for Building Exemplary** Media Collection						
Anticipated Additional Funding (e.g. Book Fair Revenue, PTO/PTSO, Title I funding, other fundraising)						

\*Formula (NCD only):  $40\% \times \$61.16 = \$24.47$  per pupil,  $12 \text{ students} \times \$24.47 = \$293.64$   
 \*\*Average book prices - <https://www.alj.com/story/aj-average-book-prices-2022>

Exemplary = 15-20 bks. per child  
 \$1000 = 40 books (\$25 per book)  
 BD = Before discarding

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 Revised by Leslie Black & Laura Long



## Looking Forward to 2025-26

- Collection Development w/5-year Plans as Guides
  - New Impact Guidelines
  - High School Library Collections
  - Funding
- Principal Support
  - Evaluation Instrument Assistance
  - Further Developing the Library Culture in the School
- As a PLC: Instructional Support in our Schools
  - Designing standards-aligned library programs
  - Creating standards-aligned library lessons

## 2025-26 Goals Continued

- Literacy Support
  - Supporting School-wide Reading Initiatives such as One Book, One School, Book Clubs
  - Family Reading Events/Literacy Events
  - Targets Support w/students as needed
- Continued Support of New Librarians through training, mentoring and 1:1 assistance



## Questions?

Laura Long

GCS Lead Media Coordinator

[lalong@gaston.k12.nc.us](mailto:lalong@gaston.k12.nc.us)

[GCS Media Services Website](#)

[GCS Media Services Newsletter/Updates](#)

# Substitute Staff Placement Services



**Gaston County Schools**  
shaping our future

**ESS**  
Every day counts.

**Substitute Staffing & Management Services**  
Robbie Nelson, Vice President of Business Development

February 27, 2025

## The Importance of Substitute Teachers



According to research by the National Council on Teacher Quality, during the course of a 13-year education – kindergarten through 12th grade – **an average student spends 143 days with a substitute teacher**, just shy of a full school year.





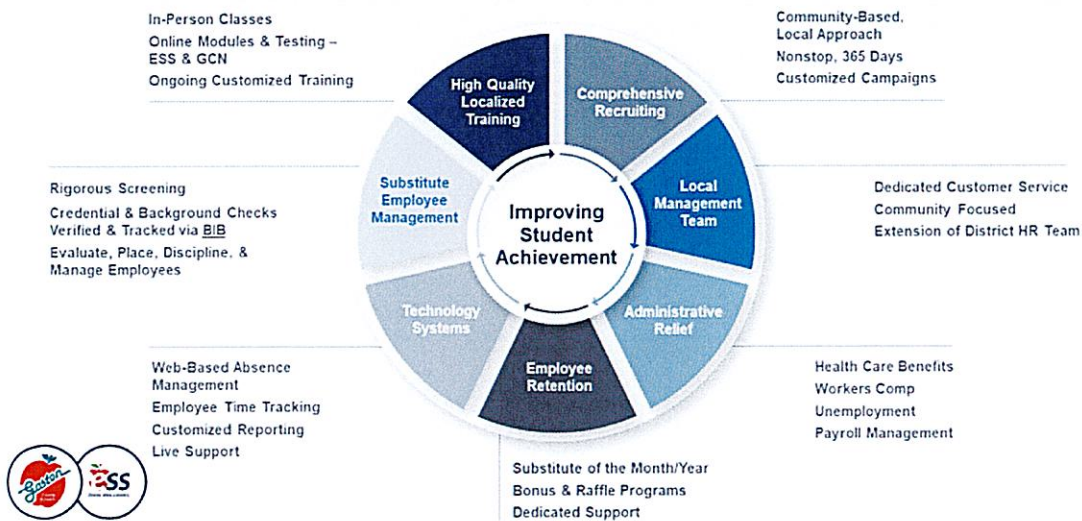
## Who We Are



- Exclusive focus on PreK-12 education - customized solution for each district partner
- 900+ Districts, 5 million students served over 35 states by 90,000+ substitute & permanent employees
- Experienced & stable regional leadership team - strong community involvement
- Significant investments in people, processes & technology
- Efficient, accountable, automated systems
- Virtual learning options
- High client satisfaction and retention - 98%+ Nationwide.

3

## Comprehensive Staffing & Management Solutions



4

## Recruiting – Connecting with the Community

**Digital Outreach:** Indeed, ZipRecruiter, Glassdoor, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook

**Traditional:** Local Papers, Flyers, Lawn Signs, Outdoor Banners

**Referral Program:** \$100 per Referral – District Employees and Substitutes

**District Activities:** Football games, PTO Meetings, Booster Club Meetings

**Community Programs:** Churches, Nonprofits, Chambers of Commerce, Community Events,



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## Training – Focusing on Student Achievement

- Live, In-person, five-hour training for new substitutes
- Substitutes must pass training to be hired
- Training curriculum customized to District's needs
- Trainers are retired educators from your community
- 150 Online training modules offered for further professional development
- **Topics covered:**
  - Professional Teaching Behavior
  - Classroom Management
  - Student and Staff Safety
  - Creative Instructional Strategies
  - District and School Policies
  - Digital Platforms for Virtual Learning



6



## Substitute Engagement – Targeted Incentives



### Weekly Pay

- Direct Deposit every Friday, District Sets Pay Rates

### Benefits

- Health, Vision, Dental, Life Insurance, 401(k)

### Targeted Incentives

- Gift Cards, Monthly Raffle, Employee of the Month, Impact Award

### Referral Program

- \$100 per Qualified Referral

### Career Kickstart Incentive

- Up to \$125 Reimbursement for Background Checks

### ESS Marketplace Program

- Employee Discount Program

### Live Support, Newsletters, and Outreach

7

## Once We Begin ... These Burdens Go Away

- ✓ Bookkeepers Admin. Calling subs
- ✓ Advertising for Positions
- ✓ Recruiting, Background checks, and onboarding
- ✓ Employee Training and Development
- ✓ Employee Discipline
- ✓ Paying for Absence Management Technology and maintaining it.
- ✓ Employee Payroll

- ✓ Payroll Taxes, SUTA, FUTA, etc.
- ✓ General Liability Insurance
- ✓ Unemployment Claims
- ✓ Workers Compensation Claims
- ✓ Equity Issues in some Schools
- ✓ Substitute Re-Training
- ✓ Handling Negative Incidents
- ✓ Running Reports



10

Gaston County Substitute Program Costs	Current Program	ESS Partnership
<b>Projected Sub Payroll - 24-25 School Year</b>	<b>\$ 2,900,000</b>	<b>\$ 2,900,000</b>
Payroll Taxes (.0765%)	\$ 221,850	
General Liability Insurance	\$ 29,000	
Workers Compensation Insurance and Associated Costs	\$ 87,000	
SUTA	\$ 30,450	
FUTA	\$ 25,000	
AESOP Software	\$ 50,000	
Soft Costs - Marketing, Training, Onboarding, Management, etc	\$ 125,000	
ESS Markup (29.9%)		\$ 867,100
<b>Total Substitute Program Cost</b>	<b>\$ 3,468,300</b>	<b>\$ 3,767,100</b>
<b>Cost Differential</b>		<b>\$ 298,800</b>
<b>Cost Differential %</b>		<b>8.6%</b>