

GCS Information Ambassador Newsletter



July 19, 2023

Board Votes to Close Two Schools

The Middle College at Bennett and Peeler Open Elementary have officially closed. At Tuesday's meeting, the Board of Education voted to close both schools effective immediately following public hearings at the June 22 meeting. The closing of the Middle College at Bennett, an all-girls high school, has the support of both Guilford County Schools and Bennett College. After discussing the plan at the June 13 Board of Education meeting, Superintendent Dr. Whitney Oakley released the following [statement](#):

"One of the benefits of a middle college education is to be immersed in the college environment. After much discussion with Bennett College leadership regarding changes to their on-campus learning experience, we are in agreement that an alternate location is what's best for the future of our middle college students. We are thankful to our colleagues at Bennett College for their investment in our students over the years and for their continued support of Guilford County Schools."

Peeler Open Elementary has not been used since being destroyed by a tornado in 2018, along with Erwin Montessori and Hampton Elementary. Peeler students were relocated to Bluford Elementary and have since matriculated to middle school. Moreover, the New Visual and Performing Arts School is part of the school bond program and will be built on the former Peeler Open site.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction recommends that schools with no enrollment be officially closed in the Educational Directory and Demographical Information Exchange system (EDDIE). Failure to close a school means it is reported as open in EDDIE and changes the total count of schools in the district, which can impact state and federal designations.

Additional Cameras and Screeners Among Latest GCS Safety Updates

New cameras in schools and buses and security screeners in middle schools are among the latest items deployed through the district's comprehensive security plan. Forty-one schools converted to a new video management system that will make it easier to view recordings. More than 1,800 cameras were upgraded through that process, and more than 7,500 new cameras will be added next year. On school buses, 589 cameras were upgraded.

Following the successful implementation of [Evolv security screeners](#) at all traditional district high schools, scanners will be added this year at all GCS middle schools. "These are useful tools to help prevent violence and protect our children," says Mike Richey, assistant superintendent for school safety. "Still, we know that the most important tool we can use to protect our students and staff is to build relationships that create safer environments as a whole."

Other updates include:

- Installing a new emergency responder radio communication system at 68

- schools, with 21 complete so far;
- Deploying a CrisisGo anonymous reporting platform for students;
- Implementing a clear bag policy at athletics and other major events;
- Meeting regularly with law enforcement agencies, as well as meeting weekly to enhance collaborations between school, safety and communications teams;
- Planning for an active assailant exercise this fall.

Strengthening health, wellness and safety in schools is one of four focus areas in the district's [Strategic Direction](#).

District Expands Investment in Mental Health Services for Students and Staff

Continuing programs launched during the 2022-23 school year, Guilford County Schools extended contracts to four mental health service providers for the 2023-24 school year to expand services provided to students and staff.

On Tuesday, the school board approved [new contracts](#) for four vendors – Daybreak, Peculiar Counseling, Stepping Stone Group and E-Therapy LLC. These providers will be used for in-person and virtual therapy, funded by a \$14.8 million [School-Based Mental Health Grant](#) and federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding. Each vendor has a different approach to service, and clients will be matched to the resource that best fits their individual needs.

“Strengthening mental Health is a top priority in the district’s new strategic direction. We know students learn best when they feel safe, seen and supported,” says Superintendent Dr. Whitney Oakley. “Our district, like other districts across the country, is seeing an increase in student mental health needs. We must do more to improve mental health supports for our students so we are making a concerted effort for significant and timely investments to address the impact the pandemic had on student and staff mental health by building on the success of our previously established programs started with federal pandemic relief funds and continuing our commitment to this ongoing work.”

On-demand therapy for students and staff launched in winter of the 2022-23 school year. Since that time, 1,538 students received 8,250 sessions of therapy, and 294 staff received 2,214 sessions. At Tuesday’s meeting, the board also approved the hiring of four new mental health clinicians as part of the School-Based Mental Health Services grant.

Board Appoints Three Principals to District Leadership Team

Principals have been named at three Guilford County schools.

Keith Barnett will return to Guilford County Schools (GCS) as the principal of Western High. Barnett has been a principal in Rockingham County Schools since 2020, currently at Reidsville Middle and previously at Booker T. Washington Learning Center. Under his leadership at Reidsville Middle, the school exceeded growth. Prior to becoming a principal, Barnett served as an assistant principal at Smith High for five years and also worked in the GCS central office as an induction support coach for four years. Barnett has a bachelor’s degree in secondary education and a master’s degree in school administration, both from Appalachian State University.

Elizabeth Callicutt will become principal at Allen Jay Elementary, following the retirement of principal Carla Flores-Ballesteros on Sept. 1. Since 2019, Callicutt has served as principal of Charles England Elementary in Lexington City Schools, where she was principal of the year in 2022. In Lexington City Schools, she also served as an assistant principal, elementary instructional coach and classroom teacher. She holds a bachelor’s degree in elementary education from Appalachian State University, a master’s degree in elementary education from Catawba College, and a post-master’s degree certificate in school administration from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Johnathan Moore will become principal at Southern Elementary following the retirement of principal Carol Hilbert on Sept. 1. Moore most recently served as interim principal at Irving Park Elementary from January to June 2023, and before that was assistant principal at Northern Middle since 2020. He also worked as a curriculum facilitator at the Academy at Smith and as a principal intern at Southwest Elementary and STEM Early College at N.C. A&T. He holds a bachelor's degree in public health from the University of South Carolina and a master's degree in school administration from North Carolina A&T State University.

GCS Summer Meal Distribution



GUILFORD
County Schools
BETTER TOGETHER

Summer Meals

for any child under the age of 18
June 20 to August 17, 2023
Monday-Thursday

Breakfast	Lunch
8:00 AM-9:00 AM	11:00 AM-12:00 PM

*Meals must be consumed on site.
No meals will be served the week of July 3*

Sites Serving Meals

- Archer Elementary
- Brightwood Elementary
- Eastern High
- High Point Central High
- Hunter Elementary
- Irving Park Elementary
- Jamestown Elementary
- Jones Elementary
- Kirkman Park Elementary
- Northeast High
- Oak Hill Elementary
- Pilot Elementary
- Shadybrook Elementary
- Simkins Elementary
- Smith High
- Southwest Elementary
- Summerfield Elementary
- Washington Elementary

Guilford County Schools | 712 North Eugene Street | Greensboro, NC 27401 | 336-370-8100 | www.gcsnc.com

Guilford County Schools (GCS) will also serve meals to students involved in summer academic programs and to community locations for families unable to get to school sites. An interactive map located on the district's [data dashboard](#) allows families to input their zip code and find school and community meal sites closest to them. Young people visiting meal sites must stay at the facility and eat their meals.



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