

GCS Information Ambassador Newsletter



October 12, 2022

Guilford County Schools Recognizes Attendance Awareness Month

As the district continues efforts to mitigate learning loss, it is now campaigning to reduce the number of students that are not in school every day.

Guilford County Schools (GCS) is recognizing October as Attendance Awareness Month. Research shows that the pandemic has set [academic progress back decades](#). It is more important than ever that students are in the classroom every day, making up for the lost time.

Unfortunately, GCS and districts across the country are seeing chronic absenteeism. This is defined as missing 10% of the school year or around two days per month during a school year. The [U.S. Department of Education](#) has connected chronic absenteeism to dropout rates. Every student in school every day is an essential first step for students to learn, grow and succeed. It is our mission that by having students in class every day, they will have access to the necessary building blocks for a successful educational journey.

“Every day a student is in school is an opportunity to learn and build relationships with their teachers, principals, and peers and make academic progress. Attendance matters and we learn better together,” Chief Student Services Officer Dominick Robinson said.

Throughout the month, schools will participate in different exercises and activities and review messages designed to raise awareness about attendance and get students involved in taking an active role in their education.

Review our Student Attendance report [here](#).

GCS Superintendent Announces Transition Team



Superintendent Whitney Oakley has named nearly 100 individuals to her transition team, comprised of a diverse cross-section of leaders and stakeholders who have unparalleled knowledge of the issues impacting the community and reflect the lived experiences of the broader community.

The transition team will be co-chaired by:

- Dr. Harold L. Martin, Sr., Chancellor, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
- Deborah Hooper, Chief Operating Officer, Greensboro Chamber of Commerce
- J. Carlvena Foster, Vice Chair, Guilford County Board of County Commissioners
- Elaine Utin, Co-Founder and Executive Director, Latinx Ed

The transition team will hold its first meeting, Oct. 12, at 8:30 a.m. at the Blue Heron Event Center in High Point.

“Guilford County has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to strengthen our schools and propel students toward a brighter future. To fully capture that opportunity, though, we must come together as one community,” said Oakley. “I am so thankful to the dozens of leaders, stakeholders, advocates and community members who have answered the call to help support this transition. I know that by working together, we can make our school district and our community the best place to learn, work and grow.”

In the months ahead, the transition team will work with Oakley to examine where the district has been and evaluate the challenges and opportunities in public education today as it works collaboratively to determine a strategic direction for the district for years to come.

The announcement comes nine days after Oakley launched [Better Together](#), a series of community conversations to gather community input on hopes and dreams for the graduates of Guilford County Schools (GCS). Oakley has already met with more than 200 people, and GCS has received nearly 300 responses online from students, teachers, parents and community members. The community is invited to share their hopes and dreams at gcsnc.com/bettertogether.

The next community conversations to be held are as follows:

- **Parent Town Halls on Thursday, Oct. 13, at 5:30 p.m. at Andrews High and on Thursday, Nov. 10, at 5:30 p.m. at Page High**
- **Faith Leaders Town Hall on Tuesday, Oct. 25, at 5:30 p.m. (Invitation only)**
- **Teacher and Staff Town Halls on Tuesday, Oct. 25, at 5:30 p.m. at Blue Heron Event Center, and Wednesday, Nov. 2, at 5:30 p.m. (Location TBD).**

For more information, visit gcsnc.com/bettertogether.

Two GCS Staff Members Appointed to New Roles



Tara Trexler can officially drop the “interim” designation from her title. She was approved as Guilford County Schools’ new chief financial officer at Tuesday’s Board of Education meeting. In addition, Wanda Edwards has been promoted to Executive Director of Communications and Community Engagement.

Trexler has served as interim chief financial officer since July, overseeing all finance functions including budget, payroll, purchasing, accounts payable, accounts receivable, fixed assets, school and district accounting. In that role she’s been responsible for creating and maintaining the district’s \$1 billion budget, which includes personnel costs for nearly 10,000 employees as well as capital outlay, grants acquisition, child nutrition and afterschool services.

Trexler served as senior executive director of financial systems support from August 2021 to July 2022, where she led the district's school business systems modernization effort. She has also served as senior finance officer and executive director of financial services since joining GCS in 2017. Trexler is a certified public accountant and holds a master's degree in accounting and bachelor's degree in business administration from Appalachian State University.

Also Tuesday, Wanda Edwards was promoted to executive director of communications and community engagement. Edwards has served as director of communications since 2015 and leads a team that supports the district's internal and external communications, social media outreach, television production, volunteers, community outreach, special events and media relations.

Edwards has more than 30 years of experience in communications and public relations, including more than 20 years in various roles at Bennett College. She is a board member for the North Carolina School Public Relations Association and holds a bachelor's degree in mass communications from Bennett College.



Policy Committee Moves Revised Mask-Optional Policy Forward

The Guilford County Schools Board of Education Policy Committee voted to send a revised mask policy out for a 30-day public comment period.

[Policy 4231/5021/7263](#) formally eliminates the monthly vote on masks previously required by [state law](#) and officially makes wearing a face covering optional for students and staff while inside a school building or in other school-related settings.

After comments for 30 days, the Board will then consider the policy at their November 15 board meeting.

