

GCS Information Ambassador Newsletter



February 16, 2023

Middle School Learning Hubs Will Strengthen Academic Recovery

Thanks to funding secured by Congresswoman Kathy Manning (NC-06), GCS middle school students will have access to learning hubs to support their academic recovery.

On Tuesday, Superintendent Dr. Whitney Oakley thanked Manning for [securing \\$2.2 million](#) to expand learning hubs into district middle schools. The grant will fund comprehensive services, including access to academic recovery programs, mental health supports, materials and meals. The funding will also support access to academic recovery programs, meetings for students and families to learn about college planning, test-taking strategies, high school success, college-ready course selection and opportunities to participate in choice and Career and Technical Education (CTE) specialized learning pathways. The grant comes at a time when more families have asked for stronger supports as students transition from middle school to high school.

Chase Arrington, Western Middle principal, said, "Having learning hubs in middle schools will be a game-changer for our students. We are excited and grateful to Congresswoman Manning for prioritizing Guilford County Schools and helping us to accelerate learning recovery."

GCS has seen encouraging results from the learning hubs at its 15 comprehensive high schools. In 2022, GCS students who attended high school learning hubs had a graduation rate that was six percentage points higher than those who did not. In addition, students who attended the learning hubs more frequently had better overall attendance at school.

"I'm proud to announce \$2.2 million for the Middle School Learning Hub Expansion Project which will expand learning loss intervention to Guilford County middle schools," said Manning. "The program's expansion will help more students recover from time spent away from the classroom during the pandemic."

In March 2022, [Manning secured \\$2 million](#) in federal funds to support the district's high-dosage tutoring efforts. GCS has increased its tutoring efforts, with 100,000 more tutoring sessions provided this year than compared to the same period last year. More than 7,500 students have spent more than 63,000 hours in tutoring sessions so far this year.

Also Tuesday, Manning joined Oakley in calling for greater mental health resources for schools. Manning announced that she will reintroduce a bill to bring a stronger focus on mental health promotion in public education.

"In Guilford County Schools, we have prioritized expanding our mental health support for students and staff as we strengthen our learning recovery efforts," says Oakley. "I'm grateful to Representative Manning for her advocacy on behalf of our nearly 70,000 students and 10,000 staff."

Guilford County Schools recently received a [\\$14.8 million federal grant](#) to increase on-demand mental health resources for students at 61 schools. The funding will also help pay for 16 additional mental health clinicians over the next five years.

"As we continue to recover from the impacts of the pandemic, I will keep advocating for federal funding to bolster student support and success," says Manning. "I'm glad to celebrate the \$14.8 million grant from the Department of Education that will fund mental health resources in schools, and I'm proud to reintroduce the bipartisan Improving Mental Health Wellness and Schools Act to integrate mental health education and promotion into existing school wellness policies."

The School-Based Mental Health Services grant requires federal and district project investments. The federal government will provide 75 percent of project funding, and the district will provide a 25 percent match. The Department of Education will provide \$14,835,019 over five years, and GCS will provide \$3,708,755, bringing the total investment in school-based mental health services for students to \$18,543,774.



Guilford County Schools Earns More Than Two Dozen Communications Awards

The Guilford County Schools (GCS) communications team was recognized Friday with 26 awards for excellence in school public relations. The North Carolina School Public Relations Association (NCSPRA) held the Blue Ribbon Awards ceremony in High Point.



The district also earned a Best of the Best award, which recognizes the top entries in each of the eight categories the organization awards. GCS received a Best of the Best award in the “Digital Media Engagement” category for its 2022 Bond Initiative.

“I could not be prouder to be a part of this amazing team,” said Wanda Edwards, executive director of communications and community engagement for Guilford County Schools. “These awards are a testament to the commitment and dedication this department has to ensure GCS students and staff are celebrated and the community is informed. Our work to serve, support and inform continues, always with our motto, Better Together, in mind. We thank NCSPRA for this recognition, and Superintendent Oakley and her leadership team for their support.”

The GCS team took home awards in the following categories:

Electronic Media

- [Unicycle Rider at Grimsley High School – Silver Award](#)
- [Davis Cahill Wins International Music Teacher Award – Silver Award](#)
- [The A&T Four Middle College at N.C. A&T University Unveils New Name and Logo – Silver Award](#)
- [GCS Principal of the Year Paul Travers – Bronze Award](#)

Publications

- [GCS Student Handbook – Gold Award](#)
- [UNCF 28 Days of Giving Calendar – Gold Award](#)
- [My GCS Newsletter – Silver Award](#)
- [Information Ambassador Newsletter – Silver Award](#)

Special Events/Programs

- [GCS Celebration of Excellence – Silver Award](#)
- [Retirement Reception – Silver Award](#)
- [GCS National Volunteer Week – Silver Award](#)
- [Choice Showcase – Bronze Award](#)

Marketing

- GCS Bond – Gold Award
- Attendance Awareness – Gold Award
- Immunizations Campaign – Gold Award

Digital Media Engagement

- 2022 Bond Initiative – Best of the Best Award and Gold Award
- School Groundbreakings – Gold Award
- Celebration of Excellence – Silver Award
- Operations Hiring Fair – Bronze
- Attendance Awareness – Bronze Award

Excellence in Writing

- A&T Four Renaming – Silver Award
- Humphrey Award – Silver Award
- GCS Recognized for use of American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds – Silver Award
- Announcement of Dr. Oakey being Named Superintendent – Silver Award
- Back-to-School Media Briefing – Bronze Award
- Lang Lang Teacher of the Year Award – Bronze Award

“Blue Ribbon Awards are the highest honor in our state for school public relations professionals, and this team is well-deserving for their hard work and often behind-the-scenes dedication to the students and staff of GCS,” said Chief Communications Officer Dr. Tracey Lewis. “This team works tirelessly to support transparent and timely communication that promotes and supports the work in our schools and community.” NCSPPRA’s mission is to build support for public education through well-planned and responsible public relations.

GCS Approves Traditional Calendars for Next Three Years

The Guilford County Board of Education has approved traditional academic calendars for the 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26 school years.

The approved GCS calendars can be viewed using the links below:

- [2023-24 Traditional Academic Calendar](#), which was Option 1
- [2024-25 Traditional Academic Calendar](#), which was Option 1
- [2025-26 Traditional Academic Calendar](#), which was Option 1

The calendars exceed the state requirement of 1,025 instructional hours and meet other state requirements. These requirements include but are not limited to:

- Start date no earlier than the Monday closest to Aug. 26 and end date no later than the Friday closest to Jun. 11 (not inclusive of inclement weather days);
- 185 days or 1,025 hours of instruction covering at least nine months;
- 215 contractual days per school year for teachers;
- 10 annual vacation leave days for teachers and school personnel, 11 state holidays (including Veterans Day) and at least two optional workdays on which teachers may choose to take annual leave; and,
- No school on Sunday.

The administration plans to maximize the use of the five remote learning days allowed for emergency purposes in state law and to waive any additional make-up days for students if the state’s minimum hourly requirement for instructional hours is met. The calendars were open for public comment from Jan. 10 to Jan. 31, and the district received [194 comments](#) during that time. The district will develop non-traditional calendars for restart schools, extended-year schools, early and middle colleges and academies based on the approved traditional calendars and in alignment with collegiate calendars when necessary.

Board of Education Approves Policies as Policy Committee Moves Revised Policies Forward

The Guilford County Schools Board of Education voted at Tuesday’s meeting to approve a revised student attendance policy and a federal grant administration policy after a 30-day public comment period.

The revised Student Attendance [Policy 4400](#) includes updated language to reflect attendance requirements for virtual learning. The policy also contains updates for late arrivals, early departures, absences and make-up work.

The revised Federal Grant Administration [Policy 8305](#) outlines how the board intends to administer federal grant awards efficiently, effectively and in compliance with all requirements imposed by law, the awarding agency and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

Additionally, the Board of Education’s Policy Committee voted to send the following policies out for a 30-day public comment period:

- The revised Educational Program [Policy 3104](#) relating to magnet or option schools and programs would update the language for these programs, referring to them now as “Choice” schools and programs. The policy also outlines how students can be assigned or admitted into choice programs.
- The revised School Assignment [Policy 4150](#) includes a proposed update that would authorize the Board of Education to define certain geographical areas as choice zones. A “Choice zone,” as outlined in the facilities master plan, would be described as an area with several choice schools. To promote diversity and equity, students living in that zone would be given priority when applying to any of the schools in that area.
- The revised School Admission [Policy 4120](#) would update the language regarding requirements for admission into and matriculation through the school district to reflect state law.
- The Revised Student Transportation [Policy 6300](#) would replace the previous transportation policy. It outlines eligibility, expectations of students and protocols for transportation services.
- The revised Energy and Natural Resource Conservation and Management [Policy 6530](#) would establish objectives for the district’s sustainability and conservation efforts.

The public can mail comments to the GCS (Guilford County Schools) Central Office at 712 N. Eugene Street or email them to boardclerk@gcsnc.com. After comments for 30 days, the Board will then consider the policy at their February board meeting.

Board of Education Approves Schedule for 2023-24

The Guilford County Board of Education has approved its schedule for the 2023-24 school year.

Board meetings typically will be held on the third Tuesday of the month and will begin at 6 p.m., though summer meetings will begin at 5 p.m.

Saturday work sessions, called retreats, will be held beginning at 9 a.m. on Sept. 30, 2023, and Feb. 10, 2024.

Weeknight work sessions will be held on Thursday, Nov. 2, 2023, Tuesday, May 7, 2024, and Tuesday, June 11, 2024.

[Click here to see the schedule](#)

GCSTV Story: February One March To Remember A&T Four

