MINUTES

REGULAR SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

GADSDEN COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
MAX D. WALKER ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
35 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BLVD.
QUINCY, FLORIDA

August 26, 2025

6:00 P.M.

The meeting was open to the public and electronically recorded.

The following Board members were present: Mr. Leroy McMillan, Chairman; Ms. Cathy S. Johnson; Ms. Stacey S. Hannigon; and Mr. Steve Scott. Also present were Mr. Elijah Key, Superintendent and Secretary to the Board; Mrs. Deborah Minnis, Attorney for the Board; and others. Mr. Charlie D. Frost was absent.

1. CALL TO ORDER

   The meeting was called to order by the Chairman, Mr. Leroy McMillan, at 6:04 p.m.

2. OPENING PRAYER

   The opening prayer was led by Reverend LaDarius Gammage of Centennial Missionary Baptist Church in Thomasville, Georgia.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

   Recited in unison.

4. RECOGNITIONS

   Mr. Key requested the Board convene in an executive session following the meeting to discuss some collective bargaining issues.

   Ms. Hannigon stated that she wanted to pat Gadsden County on the back because we have been dealing with a lot lately. She thanked the Board members, Superintendent, administration, everyone that make up Gadsden County, and specifically to our football players, our football coaches, parents of our players. She stated that it has been a difficult road for us, but while the spotlight is shining on us, let us shine. She expressed kudos to everyone and encouraged them to keep their head up. She stated that she appreciate the things that she saw on social media, that is encouraging to us. She stated that while many people are rallying around us as a school district, let us not forget protocols, and let us not forget rules and regulations so we do not find ourselves in any other situation. She stated let us be reminded that access to our school grounds and the things that we do on our school campuses are subject to certain protocols. She thanked everyone associated with the district for just pushing through the difficulties and thanked the community for supporting us.

5. CITIZEN COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

   Ms. Judith Mandela, President of GCCTA, addressed the Board regarding a couple of questions. She stated that she looked at the board packet and saw that there were teachers who have been transferred. She stated that she was concern because the contract speaks to transfers and the Florida Statue speaks to transfers, and she just wanted to address it so that we can be clear on what part or what should happen. She stated that the contract says involuntary transfer may occur due to staff reduction in the department and on grade level with the school or closing of existing facility. The Board shall notify the union within 10 days after the determination that an involuntary transfer must occur. She stated that to dates, he has not received any information. She stated that those teachers were involuntarily transferred. She stated that the statute says the district school Superintendent must consider nominations received from school principals of the respective schools before transferring the teacher who holds a professional teaching certificate from one school to another. Consult with the principal of the receiving school and allow the principal to review the teacher's records, including student performance demonstrated under statute and interview the teachers. She stated that to date the teachers have not had a conversation about their transfer with the Superintendent. She stated that this was a problem because it's an involuntary transfer, meaning they thought they were going to be at one school, and when they got their assignment, they were somewhere else. She stated that there should have been a conversation between the Superintendent and the teacher, and that did not happen. She stated that these are some of the things that impact teacher morale. She stated that they felt like professional courtesy should have happened, even if they had to move. She stated that not only professional courtesy, but also it is the law and a part of our contract. She stated that we need to fix this not just, because it is the law but because some teachers feel like it could have been a conversation that you may have to move. She stated that to her knowledge that did not happen for several teachers. She stated that the second concern about the teacher supply money. She wanted to know the update on when teachers will receive their supply money. She stated that the date was August 1st and teachers, including myself, are waiting for their money to use in the classroom. She wanted to know if she was the only one perplexed or amazed that there might be $12 million of FEMA money that has been sitting for a long time. She stated that our schools are in the conditions that they are in and we could not figure out how to get an employee to get $12 million, depended on a consultant.

Mr. Key stated that when it comes to teachers and involuntary being transfers because of VAM scores. He stated that anytime a school grade is a D or F, there is a high percentage of unsatisfactory or ineffective teachers on that campus, those teachers have to be moved. He stated that if any teacher stated they did not have a conversation with Dr. Sonya Jackson, or if they did not have a conversation with their principal, that was not true. He stated that having a conversation with Dr. Sonya Jackson is having a conversation with me.

Ms. Hannigon stated that having worked previously with the unions, she wanted to put this out there for the teachers, and the members of the union. She stated that she is a person who believes in empowering our employees, whomever that employee is, and the association of their organization. She stated that she could appreciate our union representative approaching the Board, to share her concerns. She stated that she want to encourage our teachers to be empowered enough to have the conversations that should be had outside of this boardroom. She stated that she was bothered that it takes coming to a Board meeting to address something that we have to reference statute, we have to reference the union contract, this, that and the other. She stated that if we have all the references that can be made regarding what is expected, then she believe those individuals should be empowered enough to have these conversations outside of this boardroom.

ITEMS FOR CONSENT

Mr. McMillan entertained a motion to approve the remaining consent agenda. The motion was made by Mr. Steve Scott to approve the remaining consent agenda along with the new language for agenda item #8h, seconded by Ms. Cathy S. Johnson and carried unanimously.

6. REVIEW OF MINUTES

a. July 14, 2025, 5:00 p.m. – School Board Workshop

b. July 22, 2025, 4:30 p.m. – School Board Financial Workshop

c. July 22, 2025, 6:00 p.m. - Regular School Board Meeting

Ms. Stacey S. Hannigon made a motion to accept the Superintendent's recommendation to approve agenda item #'s 6a, 6b and 6c. The motion was seconded by Ms. Cathy S. Johnson and carried unanimously.

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

8. AGREEMENTS/CONTRACT/PROJECT APPLICATIONS

a. Food Service Contracts

Fund Source: Food Service Funds
Amount: $50,305 ($15,750 recurring)

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

b. Memorandum of Understanding between Healing Hearts Music Therapy and the School Board of Gadsden County

Fund Source: IDEA Grant
Amount: $20,000 (not to exceed)

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

c. Contractual Agreement for Inter-County Transfer of Exceptional Students and the School Board of Gadsden County

Fund Source: N/A
Amount: N/A

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

d. Memorandum of Understanding between Panhandle Therapy Center (PTC) of Florida, Inc. and the School Board of Gadsden County

Fund Source: N/A
Amount: N/A

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

e. Contracted Services with Aubrey's Heart Therapy Services and the School Board of Gadsden County

Fund Source: FEFP Dollars
Amount: $60.00 per hour (for actual hours worked) Speech Language Pathologist
$40.00 per hour (for actual hours worked) Speech Language Pathologist Assistant

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

f. Agreement between The Stepping Stones Group and the Gadsden County School Board

Fund Source: FEFP Dollars
Amount: $60.00 per hour

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

g. Memorandum of Understanding between PanCare of Florida, Inc. and the School Board of Gadsden County

Fund Source: N/A
Amount: N/A

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

h. Gadsden Mental Health Application; Mental Health Assistance Allocation Plan

Fund Source: N/A
Amount: N/A.

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

i. East Coast Technical Assistance Center (ECTAC) Agreement

Fund Source: Title II, Part A
Amount: $4,840.00

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

k. TOP-1 GCSD

Fund Source: N/A
Amount: N/A

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

l. Head Start 2025 – 2026 Non-Competitive Grant Application

Fund Source: Head Start
Amount: $2,674,819.00

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

9. SCHOOL FACILITY/PROPERTY

a. Purchase Order Request for Portable AC Units

Fund Source: General / Insurance
Amount: $32,944.48

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

10. EDUCATIONAL ITEMS

a. 2025 – 2026 SY Uniform Assessment Schedule

Fund Source: N/A
Amount: N/A

ACTION REQUETED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

b. District Comprehensive Evidence-Based Reading Plan

Fund Source: N/A
Amount: N/A

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

<u>ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION</u>

Items preceded by an asterisk (*) were removed from the consent agenda at the beginning of the meeting and acted upon during the discussion portion of the agenda.

*7. PERSONNEL MATTERS (resignations, retirements, recommendations, leaves of absence, terminations of services, volunteers, and job descriptions)

a. Personnel 2024– 2025

Ms. Hannigon stated for the record that normally she and the Superintendent will have an opportunity meet, but did not have the opportunity this week. She stated that she requested some information from HR regarding the teacher vacancies. She stated that her greater interest was in the vacancies and based on the information that was provided to me by HR, as of today's date, we have 23 vacancies across the district. She wanted to know what is the district's our approach specifically for teachers and our students having teachers in the classroom, what's our approach to addressing teacher vacancies district wide, and our approach to recruiting. Dr. Sonya Jackson stated that we are doing multiple things here at the district such as making sure the staffing is concurrent with everything that we have in place. She stated that if not, we make sure we assist administrators and try to deal with the positions thru job fairs and social media. She stated that we take all of the information from the portal that we have for all of the people who have been applying for positions. She stated that currently, we are helping administrators fill vacant positions. She stated that everything is done when they report to us or give us the vital information for these positions to be filled. Ms. Hannigon asked what has the trend been like regarding the first day of school in these positions? Dr. Jackson stated similar to what it is now. Ms. Hannigon asked what our response is especially if we do not have substitute teachers. Dr. Jackson stated that this time it is a little bit different with substitute teachers. She stated that there are different training courses throughout the summertime for substitute, especially dealing with safety concerns for them to be prepared and to know these things. Ms. Hannigon stated that there have been concerns that some classrooms have been without teachers for a long period. She stated that is one of her biggest concerns. She stated that this really impacts the students and their learning without having a certified teacher in the classroom. Dr. Sonya Jackson stated that we are focusing more so on our instructional staff. She stated that we have people who we're waiting on background checks and correct credentials to come back. She stated that our numbers are filling up with certified teachers being in front of the class. Ms. Hannigon asked if it was normal practice for a classroom to be managed by a substitute when a teacher goes on leave for an extended period. Dr. Sonya Jackson stated no, but if the principal has not been able to come up with a teacher to come in, then the answer will be yes. Ms. Hannigon stated she made a request last month to include+ in our personnel matters a breakdown of the vacancies so that we can see a full picture of what the district is looking like staff wise She stated that she noticed that from last month to this month we went from a total of 663 to now 687. She stated that last year we had 257 instructional certified teachers compared to 280. She stated that yes, we are bringing in teachers. She stated that she was concerned about ensuring first year teachers have the support that they need within the school district. She wanted to know what type of support was provided for first year teachers. Dr. Jackson stated that first year teachers are provided with mentors and are provided with additional training for support. Ms. Hannigon asked if every single teacher had a mentor. Dr. Jackson stated that we do have teachers in the district with the exception of two or three that do not have that experience. Ms. Hannigon wanted to know if the district has a formal onboarding process for teachers and principals. Dr. Jackson stated yes, with Mr. Ball being our newest principal for Gadsden County High School, he can attest to that. She stated that we are always available to assist our administrators and district staff. Ms. Hannigon wanted to know about the schools listed on page #5 of personnel, Trinity Catholic and Capital Preparatory Academy. Mr. Key stated that the district is responsible for our teachers assigned to the private schools.

Ms. Stacey S. Hannigon made a motion to accept the Superintendent’s recommendation to approve agenda item #’s 7a & b. The motion was seconded by Ms. Cathy S. Johnson and carried unanimously.

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

b. Personnel 2025 – 2026

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

*8. AGREEMENTS/CONTRACT/PROJECT APPLICATIONS

j. Unified School Improvement Grant (UniSig) 2025 – 2026

Fund Source: UniSig
Amount: $344,450.00

Ms. Hannigon stated that her reason for pulling this item and item #10c was that both are encompassing. She stated that even if we have Board members fully understand what we're doing, she think we do owe something to the general public and those who are watching and listening that they too understand what we're doing and the decisions that we're making. She requested a brief synopsis of both items for the Board as well as the public. Mr. Key asked Ms. Lisa Robinson and Mrs. Jeanette Thomas to address the Board.

Ms. Joanette Thomas, Director of Federal Programs, stated that Unisig is funding from the government for our D & F schools only who are implementing comprehensive support and improvement activities. She stated that the two schools eligible are Chattahoochee Elementary School and Carter Parramore Academy. She stated that the district is waiting on information for West Gadsden Middle School. She stated that the budget is $344,450; Chattahoochee Elementary School will receive $219,450.00 and Carter Parramore Academy will receive $125,000.00. She stated that the money is used based upon what they have included in the grant. She stated that for example, the money could be used for an assistant principal or additional math and reading coaches. She stated that they are also using it to pay for additional resources, instructional resources and as well as retired educators to provide support. Ms. Hannigon stated for the community, what is the end goal in making these changes that we are making, providing the support that we are providing?

Ms. Lisa Robinson, Assistant Superintendent for Academic Services, stated that it provide resources to those particular groups. She stated that with Unisig you only have one year to make improvements. Ms. Hannigon stated for the public, what if those improvements are not made. What happens next? Mr. Key stated that you would have to choose at that point in time, an outside agency to help lead the turn-around, or you have to choose other options of closing the school or charter. He stated that doesn't apply to Carter Parramore Academy, it applies only to Chattahoochee Elementary School, and it will apply to West Gadsden Middle School if needed. He stated that Carter Parramore Academy does not receive an improvement rating. Ms. Robinson stated that we have district staff that have been assigned to schools to help monitor the school progress. She stated that this is based on the principal to decide how they want this funding to be used. She stated that in the progression plan, the items that you see in red are the only difference in addition to this year according to Florida Statutes. She stated that the schools must inform parents within the first 45 days of school in writing if there is a problem. She stated if that child scores are below the 10th percentile or if they are unable to complete that assessment, then we have to provide an individualized progress monitoring plan. She stated that we must be very detailed in what we are doing for our boys and girls. She stated that every assessment must be done from the beginning, the middle and at the end of the year. Ms. Hannigon thanked Ms. Robinson and Mrs. Thomas for their responses.

Ms. Hannigon made a motion to accept the Superintendent's recommendation to approve agenda item #8j and 10c. The motion was seconded by Ms. Cathy S. Johnson and carried unanimously.

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval

*10. EDUCATIONAL ITEMS

b. 2025 – 2026 Student Progression Plan

Fund Source: N/A
Amount: N/A

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

11. EDUCATIONAL ITEMS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

Mr. Key thanked everyone for continuing to do what they are doing for the students in Gadsden County. He stated that he know we have a lot of issues and concerns that need to be addressed. He stated that he appreciate the work that you all continue to do. He stated that there is a section in the teacher's contract that has not been signed off since 2022 nor brought to the Board since 2022. He stated that the last contract that was approved is the one we go by. He stated that it is between the instructural bargaining unit member and the Superintendent and or his or her designee to discuss the reasoning or the reason for recommending a transfer. He stated that we have been dealing with the football team. He stated that on Saturday, (August 30) our football coach officially resigned. He stated that he met with the players on yesterday and they are hurt. He stated that he met with the coaches prior to that meeting and we have many young men who have been disappointed. He stated that he made a commitment to be there for the players. He stated that he would not be there for the final budget hearing because he will be attending his daughter's graduation from the army basic training, but will try to join in via zoom. He stated that at this point and time it is about mending those young men hearts because once again, they have been broken. He stated that he was going to make it his job along with others to help get these young men to where they need to be. He stated that he did talk to Florida High School Athletic Association and told them that we are coming back with all these new developments, and to ask them to reinstate the playoffs for our young men, because the young men that are currently on this field right now have nothing to do with the issues that the adults created. He stated that the FHSAA board meeting will be in Gainesville, and he will be there to support our young men being reinstated for the playoffs. He stated that we should put our arms around the football players.

12. SCHOOL BOARD REQUESTS AND CONCERNS

Ms. Johnson stated that she has been in communications with Neighborhood Medical Center in Havana in regards to providing dental care for our children at Havana Magnet School. She stated that she has also been in contact with Ms. Hickman, the principal there, so that we can get this going with Neighborhood Medical Center.

Ms. Hannigon stated that the National Hook-Up of Black Women are hosting their Literacy event on September 20th beginning at 10:00 am. at the Quincy Recreation Center. She stated that they asked her to encourage our elementary school parents and students to come out and be a part of the event. She stated that she would share the flyer with Mr. Key to help push this initiative. She stated that she did make a request during the budget meeting to have a workshop with Capital Health Plan and Pat Thomas Insurance to discuss the trending of our health insurance rates. She welcomed Mr. McMillan back. She stated that the Board did not talk about the Chattahoochee property or the Quincy High School property in the chair's absence. She stated that the goal was for us to discuss that last month, but certainly understand. She wanted to know if the Board would have the final budget before the final budget hearing on September 4th. She also requested a workshop with Rostan to discuss the FEMA projects.

Mr. McMillan asked the Superintendent to start the process for the one-half cent sales tax. Mr. Key stated that the first proposal would be presented at the next Board meeting. Mr. McMillan stated that we really need to work on that because I do not think we did any justice last time. He stated that we need to be diligent about what we need to do to get the sales tax referendum approved. He stated that he received a phone call from the Florida Cattlemen's Association, about purchasing the old Quincy High School on King Street. He wanted to know if the Board was willing to sell the property. He stated that if so, they are going to come back and talk to me about it and whatever information he gets from them, he will share with the Board, or have them come and address the Board. He stated that he contacted the Future Farmers of America and they said that the FFA belong to the high school. He stated that he responded that there is only one high school and that Greensboro High School does not exist. He stated that it belongs to the district. He stated that he would share the contact information with Ms. Minnis to speak with them because the county agent wants to sell the 20 acres. He stated that he also spoke with the property appraiser and he stated that we could quit claim deed the property. He asked Mr. Ball to come and address the Board to talk about the high school.

Mr. Marlon Ball, Gadsden County High School Principal, stated that he felt very confident about this year and how things are going. He stated that we have put things in place, and there have been some drastic changes. He stated that the outcome has been impressive to me. He stated that it is going better than he thought it would. He stated that he was proud. He stated that at this point, the things that he need are very simple. He stated that he need another lunch line. He stated that he need more cafeteria workers so that he can have more than one lunch line because the students only have 25 minutes to eat. He stated that it is hard to get them all through one lunch line. He stated that even volunteers, part-time or temporary workers would help make the lunch process run a lot smoother.

Mr. McMillan stated that the Board hear Mr. Ball's concern and we are going to help to do something about it. He stated that we know that it is hard to get teachers so it is just not us but we are going to have to just start doing things outside the box. He stated that instead of just waiting for somebody to decide that they want to teach, maybe we can start virtual classrooms at the high school. He thanked Mr. Ball for sharing his comments.

Mr. Key stated that he would share with the Board the findings from the Florida High School Athletic Association. He stated that there were some changes made to section six of the student code of conduct, the changes are highlighted in yellow. He stated that he would like to have those things added because those are the issues that caused the football team to be in this situation.

13. The meeting adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

The Board convened in an executive session at 7:27 p.m. to discuss collective bargaining issues; and adjourned at 7:40 p.m.