

REGULAR SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

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

April 28, 2026

6:00 P.M.

This meeting was open to the public and electronically recorded.

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman, Mr. Leroy McMillan, at 6:00 p.m.

2. OPENING PRAYER

The opening prayer was led by Pastor Daniel Wells of New Hope Primitive Baptist Church.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Recited in unison.

4. RECOGNITIONS

The Gadsden County Retired Educators Association (GCREA), Mrs. Phyllis Simmons and Mr. Lamar Kirkland presented the following 5th Grade Essay Contest Participants: Carrington Robinson – One Person Made the Difference – Gadsden Elementary Magnet School; Valencia Thomas -A Happy Memory – Stewart Street Elementary School; Zayda Lopez – My Favorite Memory with Grandma - West Gadsden Middle School; Ray’Naya Richardson – The Lasting Influence of My Grandmother – Chattahoochee Elementary School; Peace Addison - My Inspiration My Grandma – James A. Shanks Middle School; and Nia’London Brooke Reese – A Happy New Year – Havana Magnet School. Each of the participants received a certificate of participation. 3rd Place Winner – Ray’Naya Richardson - \$50; 2nd Place Winner – Peace Addison - \$75; and 1st Place & State Winner – Nia’London Brook Reese - \$100. Each of the teachers who students participated in the writing contest received a \$25 gift certificate.

Major Willie Jackson stated that the Secondary CTE programs received more than \$134,000 for instructors and program award incentives. He stated that an additional \$222,000 was awarded for the Academic Acceleration Option Supplement (Industry Certification). He stated that this year there would be 30 students between Crossroad Academy Charter School and Gadsden County High School that will receive their Dual Enrollment Certificate. He stated that 150 students would receive a form of industrial certification. He presented the CTE Award recipients: Mr. Cornelius Pace – James A. Shanks Middle School; Ms. Annette Vickers – West Gadsden Middle School; Mr. James Bradwell – Gadsden County High School; Mr. Willie Brown - Gadsden County High School, and Mr. Eric Toussaint - Gadsden County High School. Major Jackson stated that this year there are two fully funded scholarships that the Board can award one and the Superintendent can award one for a student at Gadsden County High School to attend Nursing or the Pharmacy Tech Program.

Mr. Cornelius Pace presented special personalized gifts to the Superintendent and School Board from the production engineer students.

Mr. Key stated that a Celebration of Life was held for Mr. Ricky Sherman on Saturday, May 2nd. He stated that he wanted to let his wife and daughter know that they will continue to be in the prayers of the Gadsden County School District. He stated that we appreciate his family, his wife and his daughter for lending him to this county for all those years.

Mr. Frost recognized Major Jackson for the work and dedication he has put into Gadsden Technical College. He also recognized Mr. Isaac Simmons, former School Board Member, for attending the meeting.

Ms. Hannigon recognized Major Jackson and wanted him to share with the Board and update on the tiny house. She stated that the tiny house is featured in the Big Bend 2026 Parade of Homes Magazine. Major Jackson stated that the tiny house is 576 square feet altogether. He stated that open house would be May 9th and 10th. He stated that the tiny house would go up for sale shortly.

ITEMS FOR CONSENT

Mr. Key stated that there was a change needed for agenda item #6a – Personnel - employee Charmel Humphrey be changed from termination to resignation. He requested agenda item #8b – Student Expulsion – Case #043-2526-0051 be pulled because the parent requested a hearing.

Mr. McMillan entertained a motion to approve the remaining consent agenda. The motion was made by Mr. Charlie D. Frost, seconded by Mr. Steve Scott and carried unanimously.

5. REVIEW OF MINUTES

- a. March 10, 2026, 3:00 p.m. – School Board Workshop
- b. March 24, 2026, 4:30 p.m. – School Board Financial Workshop
- c. March 24, 2026, 6:00 p.m. - Regular School Board Meeting

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

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

- b. Approval of an Extension of Disciplinary Suspension Without Pay (EIN-020171245)

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

- c. Approval of an Extension of Disciplinary Suspension Without Pay (EIN-202500063)

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

- d. Approval of an Extension of Disciplinary Suspension Without Pay (EIN-202600096)

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

7. AGREEMENTS/CONTRACT/PROJECT APPLICATIONS

- a. Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC) Through Its Fiscal Agent, The Washington County School Board

Fund Source: General Fund

Amount: \$100,000.00

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

- b. K-2 Florida LLC (“K12”) Contract Agreement

Fund Source: FEFP

Amount: Undetermined – Based Upon Enrollment

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

8. STUDENT MATTERS

- a. Student Expulsion – See back-up material

Case #038-2526-0051

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

- c. Student Expulsion – See back-up material

Case #046-2526-0051

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

9. EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

a. West Gadsden Middle School Out-of-State Field Trip Request

Fund Source: N/A

Amount: N/A

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

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.

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

a. Personnel 2025 – 2026

Following discussion, Mr. Steve Scott made a motion to accept the Superintendent's recommendation on agenda item #6a with the correction to change employee Charmel Humphrey from termination to resignation. The motion was seconded by Mr. Charlie D. Frost and carried unanimously.

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

*8. STUDENT MATTERS

b. Student Expulsion – See back-up material

Case #043-2526-0051

Following discussion, Mr. Charlie D. Frost made a motion to defer action on agenda item #8b until a hearing was held. The motion was seconded by Mr. Steve Scott and carried unanimously.

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

*10. EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

b. Advocacy Committee Representative and Advocacy Committee Alternate

Following discussion, Mr. Charlie D. Frost made a motion for Ms. Cathy S. Johnson to serve as the Advocacy Committee Representative, and himself to serve as the Alternate. The motion was seconded by Mr. Steve Scott and carried unanimously.

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

c. Student's Placement for 2026 – 2027 School Year With the Closure of James A. Shanks Middle School

Mr. Key stated that the most logical and economical thing to do would be to put the students at Carter Parramore Academy. He stated that however, the issue with Carter Parramore is that the AC is not properly working. He stated that he was waiting on the AC person to give an estimate for repair. He stated that he could not make a recommendation to place students and staff at a school where he know the AC is not working. He stated that would have been the easiest thing to do but the AC is an issue. He stated that the discussion changed at the meeting at George W. Munroe Elementary School. He stated that from a logistical standpoint, it is going to be almost impossible to only move Shanks students. He stated that if you move students that live for example in Dogtown, and you only move the 6 to 8 grades, you're trying to put elementary somewhere else or put them at George Munroe Elementary School and send 5 through 8 grades to Havana Magnet School. He stated that that would create a major issue with transportation. He stated that there is no way to transport one group of kids from the same community to West Gadsden Middle School and then drop them off at George Munroe Elementary School. He stated that the bus getting from West Gadsden Middle School back to pick up the kids or pick up the kids from George Munroe Elementary School back to West Gadsden Middle School without there being a 30-to-40-minute delay in pickup after school, and it very well could also create an issue before school even started that there will be delays because of trying to drop off kids at different places. He stated that one of the things that we started looking at is really the split. He stated that in the last meeting, the kids are splitting between Havana Magnet School and West Gadsden Middle School based on the mileage where they are closest. He stated that in talking about that as well, the problem once again was you just could not do 6 to 8 moving the kids from the St. Hebron Dogtown area to Havana Magnet School. He stated that he could not

send a group of students to George W. Munroe Elementary School on a bus, then turn around, send that same bus back to Havana or Havana, then turn around, and send that bus back to George W. Monroe. He stated that because of that, the impact really changed from 6 to 8 to K through 8. He stated that we are really talking about a split for some of these kids based on where they live, a split of K through 8 instead of 5 through 8 based on where these kids live. He stated that this is one of the major changes, to talk about this among ourselves, administration and with transportation, which is the most logical solution. He stated that if we are going to do a split, you cannot just do 6 through 8, it is really going to be K through 8. He stated that currently we are looking at the numbers and mileage. He stated that the reason he cannot make a recommendation today is that he need to know the estimate on the AC at Carter Parramore Academy. He stated that he could bring that information, along with the number of students we are talking about splitting to the Board at the next meeting.

Mr. Frost stated that going into the next school term; we must realize and understand that at the most it will be about a year and a half that the students will be moved to these other schools. He stated that we are looking to have our new school open August 22, 2027. He stated that he appreciates the Superintendent for his work because he does not want any parent to call him about their student being at Carter Parramore Academy with no air conditioning. Ms. Hannigon stated that for several months in the midst of her talking about budget development. She was echoing the fact that we need to start having the conversation about moving our students because wherever they went, one of our campuses was going to be impacted. She stated that at that time, the top of the list was CPA, and we all know about the condition at CPA. She stated that she wished we had had that conversation several months ago so that we would be in a better position now. She stated that she gets it, variables change. She stated that the pressure is on now. She stated that on top of all of the internal logistics that we have to deal with, as the Superintendent has said, and she was sure the chair at some point or another, we do want the input from the community. She stated that while that will not be the final decision maker, we do want to hear from the community, we want to hear from parents. She stated that in addition to students and parents, our staff would also be impacted by the changes that we are making. She stated that she was hopeful that we would arrive at a final decision sooner than later. She wanted to know when we expect to revisit this item. Mr. Key stated that there would be a Special Board Meeting scheduled between now and May 12. Mr. McMillan stated that one of his concerns was if we go with sending half of the students to Havana Magnet School and the other half to West Gadsden Middle School, what are we going to do with the staff? Mr. Key stated that the staff would follow students. He stated that employees that are being recommended back would follow wherever students are going and the administrators as well. Mr. McMillan stated that he had a 7th grader on Sunday say to him, please don't send Shanks students to West Gadsden, and I said well why not? He stated that there are going to be fights. He stated that should not be a determining factor on the decision that we make. He stated that hopefully we will have people in place to handle those kinds of things, but it is something that we have to think about, the different groups of people in different places. He stated to Mrs. Bruner that he did not need to know what we have in the Hurricane account; he just wants to make sure we have money. Mrs. Bruner stated that we have to take into account the projects that the Board was already looking at for the FEMA repairs. She stated that some of the other things that have been on recent Board agendas that have already been approved could come off the list. She stated that we do have to do a full accounting and reconciliation to see where the balance is now. Mr. McMillan stated let us keep in mind it is not going to be a long time. He stated that it is only going to be about a year and a half or so. He stated that we are going to do what is best for the district and the children.

Ms. Rutha Black (district employee) stated that she understands that this is a big decision. She stated that it was one that needs to be expedited as soon as possible. She stated that we have to place the children in the right places to be scheduled. She stated that if we continue to wait, we cannot get them (students) scheduled. She stated that we could not tell the Department of Education what allocation is needed for staff. She stated that she knows that it is a hard decision, but somebody is going to have to really make some tough calls. She stated that the good thing is, we are not in it forever. She stated that we had to do the same thing when St. John closed. She stated that it is going to be a positive thing.

11. CITIZEN COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Ms. Beatrice Hopkins addressed the Board regarding her sister's two great grandchildren she adopted. She stated that the children attend Greensboro Elementary School. She stated that the children are dealing with many problems. She stated that she is their first parent and will not give up on them. She stated that the school could not raise our children. She stated that her heart has always been with Gadsden County Schools. She stated that she was not the one to go out and belittle the School Board or the schools. She stated that the teachers could not

do it all. She stated that one student is doing better at Greensboro Elementary School. She stated that the student that attend West Gadsden Middle School is the reason she came to the meeting. She stated that she need help with her student. She stated that 4th grade needs to go back over to Greensboro Elementary School because it just work better. She stated that she was not complaining about West Gadsden Middle School, but they need help. She stated that groups of parents were supposed to come to the meeting tonight, but she is not sure why they did not. She thanked the Chair for the opportunity to address the Board.

Mr. McMillan stated that Ms. Hopkins was requesting the Superintendent and Board make the decision to keep 4th grade at Greensboro Elementary School. Ms. Hopkins stated that if she send her student to West Gadsden Middle School it is going to be like putting him on a Delta airplane saying go to Miami when they are telling me it is not enough gas. Mr. McMillan thanked Ms. Hopkins for sharing her concerns.

Ms. Judith Mandela, President of the Gadsden County Classroom Teachers Association, addressed the Board regarding some of the comments made at the last School Board Meeting. She stated that she wanted to set the record straight because she thinks that sometimes if people see it in print; they believe that it is true. She stated that one of the comments made was that the union needs to get together and look out for all teachers, not just a handful of the teachers. She stated that the comment made after saying that was, I do not apologize for saying that. She stated to be clear, we are not seeking for an apology, but we would like for these type of comments to stop being said because they are divisive. She stated that the union has never advocated or negotiated for only union members. She stated that the beauty of the union is that we advocate for all teachers. She stated that we are not enemies of the district, but we are stakeholders in all of this. She stated that we advocate for what is best for our teachers and what is best for our students, and what is best for our communities. She stated that those kind of comments bring division where there needs to be unity. She stated that the other comment that was said was that there is just a very few teachers who are involved in the union and there are very few teachers who are making decisions for all the teachers. She stated that is the truth, but that is how democracy works because right now there are six people who make decisions. She stated that it is a small group of people who make decisions for our entire district. She stated that the fact is that the teacher's union or the bargaining unit makes decisions for all the teachers is the way that it works. She stated that one could be assured that information is sent out requesting how teachers feel and what teachers want before we get to the table. She stated that another comment that was made was that in reference to the amount of money that was given, and went on to say that if you divide \$504.00 into ten months you would end up with a little bit of money. She stated that the \$504.00 was just the money that was sent through TSIA. She stated that last year there was \$0.00 added to teachers' salaries from the district. She stated that the only money that teachers received was TSIA funds that came from the State. She stated that this year, teachers with more than two years of experience received \$0.00 from the district. Other than the teachers, who had less than two years of experience, the district did not add any funding to that. She stated that the fact that we are waiting until we receive all the financial information to be able to distribute funding to the teachers is not necessarily the truth. She stated that the union, if you recall the comments, was made at a financial workshop where you all were trying to find clarity about what funds were available. She stated that if you recall, you did not receive your annual financial report until sometime in October or November to bargain in good faith, which means that we are using the best financial information that comes from the district; otherwise, we are doing a disservice to our teachers. She stated that these comments are very divisive. She stated that specifically the comment made by the chairman when it appeared that you were interested in making sure that the teachers got the money as early as possible. She stated that there is a pot of money that you can control to make sure that the teachers get their money in July or August, that is the school supply funds. She stated that for the last couple of years, teachers have not received their supply money on time. She stated that if we are interested in working together, let us decide to work together.

12. EDUCATIONAL ITEMS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

Mr. Key stated that he wanted to clear one thing up, that it is not the Board's decision to get the teacher's supply money out to them. He stated that the decision is made by the district under the direction of the Superintendent. He stated that he was going to address the article. He stated that a statement was made in the newspaper that the Board, the district could find money in the budget by cutting positions and closing schools. He stated that so you are saying to the people you representing to close schools and cut back on positions. He stated that 85% of the budget is paid salaries. He stated that in order to save money, you have to start cutting people from the district. He stated that we are really going to have review staffing. He stated that when you talk about finding room in the budget, you are talking about people. He stated that in 2020 the teacher salaries were \$38,000, which cost the district \$1,000,000. He stated that rolled to the next year, then the following year when he became Superintendent

Teacher salaries moved from 38 to 45, which cost the district over \$2,000,000. He stated that more money was paid the following year. He stated that it is not just a one-time payment that it rolled in 21, 22 and every year. He stated that every time the district gives something it rolls every year. He stated that we have to come together on all sides.

Mr. Key stated that the Board was given support services newsletter as well as the academic services newsletter. He stated that we are closing out the school year. He stated that the academic services newsletter included the calendar of upcoming events. He stated that google calendar tied to your e-mail, you should have all the things that are being listed in that e-mail account as well. He stated that in your google calendar you could keep up with what is going on and the following weeks as well in the upcoming year. He stated that we are looking to close out this year strong. He stated that we are getting into testing season next week. He stated that teacher appreciation week is next week throughout the county, so please make your rounds to visit staff and let the teachers know how much you appreciate them. He stated that promotion ceremonies and graduations are going on throughout the schools at the elementary and middle school. He stated that high school graduation would be held May 22nd. He thanked the Board for all they are doing as board members for the teachers and staff in giving raises. He stated that he greatly appreciates the things that you all have done to help try to move this district forward and ensure that our teachers, and staff members do not take another job because they feel like they are getting paid a little of nothing. He stated that he appreciates the ones that understand that the district is limited in what they can do.

13. SCHOOL BOARD REQUESTS AND CONCERNS

Mr. Scott stated that some things have changed. He stated to Mr. Key that he was a social studies teacher and wanted to know if he remembered what his starting salary was. Mr. Key stated that if he was not mistaken, it was in the low 20s. Mr. Scott stated that he started teaching in 1981 for \$8,000 a year and \$300 coaching supplement. He stated that he was at that salary for a long time.

Ms. Hannigon thanked staff for the google calendar. She stated that she could keep up with what is going on at all of the schools and make herself available. She thanked the students for the beautiful gifts and for the work that they are doing. She stated that when the meeting is scheduled to discuss the relocation of students, she thinks that part of the conversation needs to be the impact that our decision will have on the following school term. She stated that can be from an academic standpoint, staffing, school grades, just for us to really get a full picture of the impact on the decision that we are about to make. She thanked Ms. Hopkins for what she shared with the Board. She stated that she was very hopeful that the Superintendent responds as needed. She stated that one of the conversations she has had with him from a place of concern is the demand currently at West Gadsden Middle School on staff and leadership and what we are going to do, how we are going to address the issue. She stated that she was hopeful that before she exits her seat that we will see where personalities could get along a little bit better. She stated that she and her buddy (Mr. Frost) to my left have our moments, but at the end of the day she is so very hopeful that we can all be on one accord. She stated that we are not going to always agree with each other, but when we do disagree, we can get to a place where our personalities do not take over and we can just be professional about what we do, and somehow find some common ground.

14. The meeting adjourned at 7:43 p.m.