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PARTNERSHIPS

Gardner-Webb and Gaston County Partner on Program to Develop Next Generation of School Leaders

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON OCTOBER 6, 2021



Fourteen Teachers Chosen for New Program to Obtain Master's Degree in School Administration

Written by Gaston County Schools

Fourteen teachers have been chosen for [Gaston County Schools](https://www.gaston.k12.nc.us/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=25&ModuleInstanceID=66&ViewID=6446EE88-D30C-497E-9316-3F8874B3E108&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=26229&PageID=43)

([https://www.gaston.k12.nc.us/site/default.aspx?](https://www.gaston.k12.nc.us/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=25&ModuleInstanceID=66&ViewID=6446EE88-D30C-497E-9316-3F8874B3E108&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=26229&PageID=43)

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[3F8874B3E108&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=26229&PageID=43](https://www.gaston.k12.nc.us/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=25&ModuleInstanceID=66&ViewID=6446EE88-D30C-497E-9316-3F8874B3E108&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=26229&PageID=43)), new partnership with Gardner-Webb

University that will help develop the next generation of school leaders.

The teachers will be involved in a 20-month program of study, completing 36 credit hours and obtaining a [master's degree](https://gardner-webb.edu/programs/executive-leadership-studies-ma/) (<https://gardner-webb.edu/programs/executive-leadership-studies-ma/>) in school administration. They will progress through the coursework together as a cohort with a blend of online classes and in-person meetings. The classes focus on topics such as executive leadership, resource management, curriculum development, and research and assessment.



▲ Gaston County
Superintendent
of Schools W. Jeffrey
Booker

With the degree in hand, the teachers will be candidates to take on administrative positions in Gaston County Schools such as assistant principal, dean of students, curriculum/academic facilitator, and lead/content teacher. According to Superintendent of Schools W. Jeffrey Booker, the school district is taking steps now to prepare promising educators for leadership roles.

Dr. Booker said, “We estimate that more than two thirds of the school administrators in Gaston County Schools already have 20 or more years of service, which means they can retire sometime in the next 10 years. This is why we must act now to identify, train, and develop school administrators. We have to invest in our workforce today so our schools will have leaders tomorrow.”

The opportunity for teachers to earn a master’s degree from Gardner-Webb is offered through the Superintendent’s Leadership Academy. Tuition is free for the teachers who are chosen for the program; participants have to pay for books, which will be about \$200 a semester. Through the partnership, Gardner-Webb and the school district will split the cost to pay for the participants’ tuition, which is estimated at \$20,000 per teacher.

“Sometimes, teachers have an interest in becoming a school administrator and show promise of being an excellent one, but they do not have the financial resources to pay for a master’s degree,” explained Dr. Booker. “This partnership takes the financial burden out of the equation so teachers can work toward fulfilling their educational career goals.”



▲ GWU President Dr. William Downs

Dr. Booker concluded, “We are extremely grateful for Gardner-Webb University’s commitment to helping us train and develop future school leaders. This new program is a win-win for Gaston County Schools and Gardner-Webb University, and we look forward to seeing how it benefits our teachers, our schools, and our community.”

“I fully agree with Dr. Booker that this is a win-win for all involved,” added Gardner-Webb University President Dr. William Downs. “If you’re looking to create a positive, lasting legacy for the people of our region, invest in education. With this joint GWU-Gaston County investment in school leaders, we are improving the chances of success for students and their families in the communities that surround us. We couldn’t be prouder of this partnership!”

More than 50 teachers applied for the opportunity. The following teachers were chosen:

- Savanna Abernathy, Bessemer City Central Elementary School.
- Laura Benson, Grier Middle School.
- Woodrow Boyles, Highland School of Technology.
- Daphne Jordan, Carr Elementary School.
- Shylane Laing Jordan, Grier Middle School.
- Angie Molla, Catawba Heights Elementary School.
- Emily Morton, Lowell Elementary School.
- Wanda Reid, Warlick Academy.
- Monica Sherer, Costner Elementary School.
- Meghann Sneed, John Chavis Middle School.
- Paris Suttentfield, Lowell Elementary School.

- Jordan Wallace, Holbrook Middle School.
- Heather Ulep Waters, South Point High School.
- Marcia White, Robinson Elementary School.

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