

# 2023 Gaston School District Integrated Application

## Needs Assessment Summary (500 words or less)

Please offer a description of the comprehensive needs assessment process you engaged in and the high level results of that needs assessment. Include a description of the data sources you used and how that data informs equity-based decision making, including strategic planning and resource allocation.

Our integrated guidance work began in September, 2022. A community engagement team was developed consisting of parents, certified and classified employees, building administrators, superintendent and school board representation. The team's goal was to get input from as many sources as possible including: students, parents, community members, business partners, and employees through surveys and community conversations. After completing surveys and obtaining information from community conversations, the team determined that we did not have a high enough participation from underserved focal groups including economically disadvantaged, special education, ELL, BIPOC, and LBGTQSI+ families. Therefore, the district reached out to individual families through empathy interviews. Information gained from the community engagement process guided the data analysis process during the needs assessment process.

Themes that emerged from community engagement included:

- Increased opportunities in art, music, drama and CTE
- More varied curriculum with a focus on career and college readiness
- Increased teacher training in classroom engagement and varied learning styles
- Focus on improved student behaviors
- Focus on gender, racial, and special education inclusion
- Increased support for students falling behind
- Focus on small class size
- Increased communication with families

GSD reviewed data sources with a focus on focal groups for the previous five years including:

- Overall district enrollment and demographics
- SBAC results
- Regular Attenders K-12
- Graduation rates (4 & 5-year cohorts)
- 9th grade on track
- Behavior data
- CTE programming and cohort participation rates
- Previous CIP
- Previous use of SIA, HSS, and EIS resources

The data was reviewed, looking for both strengths and weaknesses, improvements and declines for all demographics as well as being disaggregated to highlight potential disparities for our focal groups. In examining the data and applying our equity lens, it became apparent that many of the goals outlined in our previous CIP, SIA, HSS, and EIS work were still needed. It is clear that the work was greatly hindered by remote learning during the pandemic. The data analysis helped determine needed adjustments to further support student growth and achievement.

Needs that emerged from the data included:

- Improve 3rd grade reading and literacy for all student groups. Demographic data indicates a need for decreasing the gap in percent proficiency between economically disadvantaged students and the aggregate.
- Improve math growth and achievement for all student groups K-12. With implementation of new math curricula, the district will analyze and disaggregate data to support focal student groups.
- Increase on time graduation rates. Post pandemic, rates have steadily improved pointing to the need for continued resource allocation in this area. The new outcome includes ninth grade on track, and increased learning opportunities for an overall well rounded educational experience.
- Improve student well-being. Maintain and increase support for counseling services, SEL, and mental health supports. Improvement in inclusion for all student focal groups through SEL and positive behavior supports. These were of increased importance due to traumas experienced during the pandemic and specifically highlighted in the community engagement data.

### Plan Summary (500 words or less)

Your plan summary will help reviewers get quick context for your plan and the work ahead. In the coming months, you may also use this process to quickly explain to the community, local legislators, media, and other partners how you are braiding and blending these investments. Please share the exact needs or issues the investments will address as outlined in your four year plan and as it relates to the purposes stated in law for all applicable programs, and what processes you'll put in place to monitor progress toward addressing those needs.

Through targeted universalism, the Gaston School District sets rigorous goals in this four-year plan, with a focus on closing the achievement and access gap for focal student groups. We prioritize this work through investments in our students and staff using funds from the Student Investment Account (SIA), High School Success (HSS), Career and Technical Education (CTE), Every Day Matters (EDM), and Early Indicator Intervention Systems (EIS).

We have braided and blended funding to provide strategies and activities that target four primary outcomes.

1. With SIA and EIS funding we will improve 3rd grade reading and literacy for all student groups. We will sustain and strengthen RTI and PLCs using data collection to improve student outcomes. We will continue to provide high quality professional development and training in both core ELA curriculum and interventions.
2. We will improve math growth and achievement for all student groups K-12. SIA funds will provide professional learning, training, coaching and team-planning time for math instruction. Specifically, the district will continue to employ a full-time instructional coach/math specialist to support this work. Through EIS funds the district will use data collection to lead the work of MTSS and PLCs to improve student outcomes.
3. SIS and HSS funds will support an increase in on time graduation rates. We will maintain and strengthen our 9th grade on-track systems, sustain and strengthen special education and intervention support, and provide staff learning opportunities in addressing varied learning

styles and classroom engagement. Additionally we will expand learning opportunities through CTE, dual credit options, and college-career readiness support to provide well rounded options for students, especially those in our student focal groups. We are part of a Career and Technical Education consortium, so those funds are determined through the consortium in which we partner and participate to further support this outcome.

4. We will improve well-being for all students, K-12. This outcome is supported by SIA funding to maintain current counseling, socio-emotional learning, and mental health supports. We will sustain and strengthen our PBIS systems to improve student inclusion and accountability. Additionally, we will provide more student opportunities for tutoring and for enrichment in areas such as art, music, drama, technology, and other high-interest areas.

Over the next 4 years, we will monitor our progress through quarterly reports to the school board on each of our prioritized outcomes. Data will be gathered and disaggregated to ensure the strategies are meeting the needs of our students, especially our focal student groups. These processes allow us to make timely adjustments to our work. Ultimately, we will measure our success by using the state's growth targets. These are Regular Attenders data, 3rd Grade English Language Arts state assessment data, 9th Grade On Track data, 4 Year Graduation rates, and 5 Year completion rates.

### **Equity Advanced (250 words or less per question)**

What strengths do you see in your district or school in terms of equity and access?

As a small school, we can assure that all students are receiving rigorous instruction. MTSS teams and progress monitoring ensure appropriate interventions and extensions are provided to students. At the JSHS level, students are encouraged to pursue a variety of subjects/electives. After school programs, district-wide, provide enrichment for all students.

In Gaston, we regularly use our equity lens when making decisions. This practice helps us make more equitable decisions and improves access for all students. When we review our outcome data we identify areas where opportunity gaps lead to outcome gaps and quickly address disparities with intentionality.

What needs were identified in your district or school in terms of equity and access?

In the community survey, several parents identified a need for a more supportive and inclusive environment for LBGTQQSIA+ students. Currently, only 0.19% of students identify in our student information system as non-binary; however, we are aware of many students who are gender expansive within our district. It is imperative to continue building supportive systems and inclusive programs for these students. District data also indicates the need for greater growth for students with special needs. It is important for the district to be continually mindful of opportunities for students with special needs so they are assured the same access to rigorous, grade-level instruction. In regards to reading proficiency at the 3rd grade level, a disparity exists between the district average and students experiencing poverty, both currently and historically. A disparity also exists historically between the district average and students experiencing poverty in their progress towards graduation measured in 9th grade on-track numbers.

Upload the equity lens or tool you used to inform and/or clarify your plan & budget. Describe how you used this tool in your planning.

The [ODE Equity Lens](#) clearly articulates Gaston School Districts' shared goals, international policies, and investments in ensuring all students have equitable educational opportunities and outcomes.

The number of racially and ethnically diverse students is small in GSD which means much of our data with the state is suppressed. Nonetheless, this data is still analyzed at the district level to address opportunity and achievement gaps within targeted focal groups.

We used the tool when holding meetings or making decisions in relation to the Integrated Guidance work. It helped keep equity at the center of our planning.

Describe the potential academic impact for all students AND focal student groups based on your use of funds in your plan.

The importance of this plan and use of resources (budget) cannot be understated for the Gaston School District. We have truly braided and blended these funds together to create offerings for all students, their learning, and resulting outcomes in profound ways. This is especially true for our focal student groups as much of our effort is focused on their support through targeted universalism.

In this plan we have targeted our collective resources in key areas. None are more important than our focus on 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading. If students cannot read by the end of third grade, success in their academic career is nearly unachievable. We (our budget) will target improved reading outcomes, especially for our focal student groups. Another similar effort will take place as part of our plan in mathematics, but with a K-12 focus. A combination of professional development and improvement in our MTSS processes are the keys to this improvement. Student outcomes in mathematics, especially for our focal student groups, will improve.

The graduation rates in Gaston are strong, but not strong enough if any one student does not graduate. Constant vigilance and improvement are needed with an emphasis on historically underserved students. We will improve our graduation outcomes by strengthening our 9<sup>th</sup> grade on track efforts, improving our intervention program, and providing additional CTE programming along with more dual credit (college) offerings. Clearly, this is truly a place where we blend our funding streams.

Finally, we are targeting improved well-being for all of our students. Mental health is currently a challenge for children across our nation and in our district. We plan on maintaining our excellent counseling, SEL, and mental health supports. Our MTSS/PBIS systems will be strengthened with a particular focus on student inclusion. In addition, a well rounded education offers enrichment and tutoring where needed. This plan will offer students who need this support these important opportunities.

What barriers, risks or choices are being made that could impact the potential for focal students to meet the Longitudinal Performance Growth Targets you've drafted, or otherwise experience the support or changes you hope your plan causes?

Hiring and retaining high quality staff is a constant challenge in the current landscape of education. It is particularly difficult to hire diverse candidates who connect with our focal student groups in a way that improves their learning outcomes. This is something we work on, but in a small rural district we face significant headwinds. This could impact our opportunity to meet all of our LPGTs.

The current cost of living increases impacting all of our nation provides a challenge too. Resources just don't stretch as far as they once did. The challenges of school budgeting in Oregon exacerbate the financial issues we face. If the legislature does not provide a true roll up budget for the next biennium, this additional funding gets eaten up not as an extra, but just as a part of normal business.

Finally, we have chosen to broadly focus across all grades in an effort to improve our outcomes in Math. Sometimes an effort like this can be too broad, and it does not allow for targeted work. We think we can pull this off however and have a good plan in place. It does come with a risk of being too broad and creates a challenge in meeting LPGT's for all students including focal students.

What policies and procedures do you implement to ensure activities carried out by the district do not isolate or stigmatize children and youth navigating homelessness?

By both Policy and Procedure our district works to ensure children and youth navigating homelessness are not stigmatized. Policies around admission, transportation, programs, and services are in place to support students experiencing homelessness. The superintendent oversees the McKinney-Vento program with the assistance of the district McKinney-Vento liaison. All interactions with families are extremely confidential and designed to provide the support necessary for students to successfully access their education. The liaison provides contact information for outside support agencies and assists families in accessing aid. Teachers and counselors are aware that resources are available to families and can make referrals to district representatives; however, individual circumstances are coordinated through the liaison to ensure privacy.

### **CTE Focus (250 words or less per question)**

What strengths do you see in your CTE Programs of Study in terms of equity and access?

GSD currently offers construction, manufacturing, engineering, and welding in our CTE programs. Students who take 2 CTE courses have higher academic and attendance rates. Programs are inclusive and encouraged for all students, regardless of previous knowledge, academic levels, and/or disability. There is an equal representation of genders in our CTE programs. We use survey data to ensure diverse offerings of programs. This year a welding program was added based on this information. We are also very proud of our Construction Geometry class that provides both math and a CTE credit to participating students. Students build and sell sheds which provides real-world application through design, construction, sales, marketing, and customer service.

What needs were identified in your CTE Programs of Study in terms of equity and access?

GSD is continually working to provide more CTE opportunities for students, specifically those providing dual high school and college credit. Courses that offer math and elective credit are also

beneficial to students who struggle with the traditional classroom setting. More courses in this area could increase equity and access; however, in a small school there are limitations due to staffing and funding. Data indicates a need to improve access to CTE classes for students experiencing disabilities.

What is your recruitment strategy, and how does it ensure equitable access and participation in CTE Programs of Study?

As previously stated, hiring and retaining high quality staff is a constant challenge in Gaston. It is incredibly difficult to hire diverse candidates in CTE who directly connect with our focal student groups and female students. We work on this through reasonable compensation, strong CTE program support and facilities, and equitable and creative scheduling. As openings materialize we are committed to the effort.

Some strategies for increasing female enrollment and focal students in CTE programs involve targeted recruitment, inclusive communication, teacher training, and reduced barriers created by prerequisites. We are working on all of these efforts in order to diversify CTE participation. Through the IG process we have also learned the valuable lesson to include affected groups in determining how to change the status quo. Surveying, interviewing, and specific decision making opportunities all help us learn how to offer what our female and focal student groups want. We have done this work and will continue the practice in an effort to broaden/diversify our CTE participation.

How will you ensure equal access and participation in your CTE Programs of Study among focal student groups? How will you ensure there is no discrimination for focal student groups?

As a small school, scheduling classes can be challenging. We are working diligently with our schedule to remove barriers, enabling student participation in CTE courses. Administrators, CTE staff, counselors and teachers work collaboratively through forecasting and scheduling to optimize opportunities for students. We have moved away from prerequisites in most CTE courses to improve accessibility for all students. Counselors and teachers actively promote and recruit students from our focal groups as well as female students. In the spring students and staff participate in an elective showcase to promote CTE classes within the school and community. This showcase provides students an opportunity to see available opportunities and increase excitement and participation in CTE courses.

### **Well-Rounded Education (250 words or less per question)**

Describe your approach to providing students a well rounded education. What instructional practices, course topics, curriculum design, and student skills development are part of this approach? Describe the approaches by grade band (elementary, middle, and high).

Gaston is a system-wide PBIS/MTSS/RTI/Character Strong district that believes in providing a well-rounded education for all students. We team around student learning and behavior data to

inform our practice. We are a small school district, but we are able to provide our students with a robust experience.

Our elementary programs (preschool through grade 6) concentrate on school routines as well as a keen focus on literacy. Teaching students to read by third grade is a crucial objective. PLCs focus on tracking data in both literacy and math to target interventions, provide enrichment, strengthen instructional practices, and improve learning. Elementary students have weekly specials in PE, Library, and STEAM.

Students in grades 7 & 8 are on a block schedule with four periods each day minimizing disruptions and supporting a positive classroom climate. Teachers focus on a high degree of student engagement where students participate in discussions, group work and hands-on activities. Students have the opportunity to participate in elective classes including, art, global inquiry, and construction. SEL curriculum is taught four days a week during an advisory class with the goal of creating a school that is focused on connection, well-being and belonging. Students also receive instruction in organization and study skills to support their transition into high school.

The high school is also arranged in a block schedule allowing for longer periods for teachers to focus on hands-on projects and labs. There are a wide array of classes that meet students' academic and post secondary goals. We offer four AP classes and five dual college-credit classes. We also offer six CTE classes that are hands-on and prepare students for high paying post secondary opportunities. Students receive SEL instruction to support mental health, well-being, and belonging. Staff strive to support all students individually in obtaining the skills needed for a successful transition from high school to post-secondary goals.

Which disciplines (theater, visual arts, music, dance, media arts) of the arts are provided, either through an integration of content or as a separate class?

In Gaston, we strive to ensure whole child instruction through the breadth of well-rounded opportunities we offer and deliver at each level.

At the elementary level, individual classrooms provide opportunities for music, theater, art, and other disciplines throughout the school year. The last Friday of each month is set aside as a "Flexible Friday" in which teachers can deviate from normal programs and curriculum to teach longer form projects such as art, theater, science experiments, etc. Students receive some music instruction in their STEAM class through the use of a music production website. Students learn rhythm patterns and melody to create works of music. Most of these disciplines are integrated further into the daily classroom instruction, for example: reader's theater in reading class and geometry art during math class.

At the JSHS level, after school theater, choir and art clubs are offered. Art classes are also offered to students in grades 7-12. High school students have access to an Engineering Concepts class which provides instruction in the skills of digital art, graphic design, 3D printing and vinyl printing. Classroom teachers integrate art, drama, and music into their core curriculum to increase student interest and engagement.

How do you ensure students have access to strong library programs?



The district has a media specialist on staff who provides twice-weekly library activities to students K-6. The library is open to students 7-12 on a daily as needed basis. The library is utilized through ELA classes at the JSHS level. Teachers collaborate with the media specialist to provide materials and instruction that supports the core curriculum.

How do you ensure students have adequate time to eat, coupled with adequate time for movement and play?

Elementary students have 20 minutes to eat, which has been determined to be the best amount of time for kids to eat before they get bored and want to go outside for recess. Instructional assistants are on duty in the cafeteria and are instructed to provide prompts to students to continue eating when they get distracted. Students receive two 15 minute recess breaks per day, as well as a 30 minute PE lesson each day.

Students at the JSHS have 35 minutes with the option to eat in the cafeteria coupled with the opportunity to access the gym for physical exercise.

Currently GSD meets Division 22 standards for instructional minutes in PE at all levels.

Describe how you incorporate STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) instructional practices, including project-based learning, critical thinking, inquiry, and cross-disciplinary content.

Each elementary student goes to STEAM class for 30 minutes, 2-3 times per week. The school holds yearly STEAM assemblies in which students participate. Additionally, students have daily instruction in science and one day per month to participate in longer form STEAM activities. This series of opportunities provide students with inquiry, critical thinking, and project based learning.

At the JSHS there are dedicated courses centered around STEAM. We offer a broad selection of CTE, science and math courses. We ensure teachers have the resources and budget to allow for project-based, hands-on learning. Teachers provide instruction with a focus on inquiry and critical thinking. Integration of STEAM activities is encouraged in all courses through cross-disciplinary content. Our Geometry in Construction class is a premiere example of this concept, providing instruction in math, construction, science, sales, and marketing, resulting in dual credit for students taking the course.

Describe your process for ensuring the adopted curriculum (basal and supplemental) consists of a clearly stated scope and sequence of K-12 learning objectives and is aligned to all state and national standards.

The district follows the curriculum adoption plan/rotation outlined by the state. The district reviews programs that are vetted and recommended by ODE to ensure the materials meet the state and national standards. Adoption of district curriculum requires a review process involving staff, administrators, and the school board. Policy IIA-AR is followed, providing the instructional materials adoption committee with a rubric to evaluate curriculum. During this process, the scope and



sequence of learning objectives for the subject is reviewed and set to deliver a coherent learning progression. Recommendations are made to the school board regarding curriculum adoption who has the final vote in the adoption process.

Describe your process for ensuring classroom instruction is intentional, engaging, and challenging for all students.

The teacher evaluation process provides a rubric of standards that includes a focus on intentional and engaging instruction through the domains of planning and preparation, classroom environment, and instruction. Administrative walk-throughs and 1:1 meetings provide feedback to improve teacher practice. GSD employs an instructional coach to provide staff with non evaluative feedback and support to improve instructional practices through a prescriptive coaching cycle. PLCs and MTSS provide a process for collaborative discussion and observations of data centered on student engagement and high-quality instruction that is differentiated to meet the needs of all learners. Professional development is provided to ensure instruction is explicit, rigorous, structured, inclusive, and intentional.

How will you support, coordinate, and integrate early childhood education programs?

Currently GSD maintains a preschool within our elementary building. The teacher and instructional assistant are part of all elementary professional development and they are a part of PLC teams. The special education team has historically and will continue to hold transition meetings to discuss needed supports for students eligible for Early Childhood Special Education as they transition to Kindergarten.

What strategies do you employ to help facilitate effective transitions from middle grades to high school and from high school to postsecondary education?

As a small district, on one campus, we have the ability to easily share information between buildings. At the end of each year, the 6th grade teachers meet with our JH staff to give background on students for the coming academic year. Interventions, behavior plans, and best-practice strategies are shared to provide a smooth transition. Students moving from 8th to 9th grade are provided a summer bridge program. This introduces them to one another, staff, and programs. It teaches them strategies to be successful in high school and prepares them for what to expect. The counseling department provides students with the ability to visit and investigate a wide array of colleges and trade schools for postsecondary planning. The counseling department assists with applications (for college, trade school and/or work force), FAFSA forms, scholarships, and overall postsecondary planning. The district partners with College Possible, a program that empowers students from underserved backgrounds to become college graduates. The district also provides career education and exploration at all grade levels, PK-12.

How do you identify and support the academic needs of students who are not meeting or exceeding state and national standards, particularly for focal student groups?

The elementary school follows an RTI framework for identifying students who are not meeting or exceeding state and national standards, and we make sure to do this with all students, but especially our focal student groups. If students are found to be struggling, we implement intervention changes to better support their needs. These could include changes to their instructor, program, or learning environment. Changes are implemented, monitored for fidelity, and then data is kept to see if the change is effective. If changes to intervention do not help the student meet or exceed state and national standards, the teacher may refer the student to our academic advanced tiers team, who closely reviews data pertaining to behavior, academics, and attendance to find the right support for this student.

All students in grades 7 and 8 have one period of intervention where they are provided support at their level. With approximately 80 students we are able to identify and provide support to every student individually, especially our focal student groups. Teachers meet twice a month in grade level teams to identify students who are struggling and to determine appropriate interventions and support.

All 9th grade students have a freshman success class where they receive a targeted universalism approach to reach all students. They are provided instruction on academic and organizational skills necessary for success. 96% of current freshmen are on track to graduate and two students are just shy of being on track. All high school students are supported through grade level teams and MTSS. Teachers and teams meet twice a month to identify students who are not meeting standards and to determine interventions and support.

What systems are in place for supporting the academic needs of students, including for focal student groups, who have exceeded state and national standards?

Teachers provide differentiated instruction to students, including strategies designed to engage their learning at a higher depth of knowledge level. The Gaston School District uses a professional learning community approach to consistently review student work samples and discuss ways to enhance and enrich student academics. Through the district's Talented And Gifted procedures, course or whole grade level advancement are considered as options to better meet the rate and level of students who meet or exceed state and national standards. These efforts are consistent for all of our students, including our focal student groups.

### **CTE Focus (250 words or less per question)**

How do you provide career exploration opportunities, including career information and employment opportunities, and career guidance and academic counseling before and during CTE Program of Study enrollment?

The Gaston School District has quite a robust CTE program. Every year, our counseling team provides a variety of post secondary activities for students, including visits to worksites, college visitations, military visits, and other informational sessions. In fact, just this year, the counseling team has provided 43 such post secondary activities. We start our career exploration and STEAM opportunities early, and they progress as students advance through our system. In K-2, students receive career exploration through our use of the Paws in Jobland program. At the Elementary level, all K-6 students receive careers education in our STEAM class. Our 3-6 students work in a program called FutureQuest Island. At the high school level, all students receive detailed information about classes and programs – especially CTE Programs of Study – during the forecasting process. For example, the construction program of study added a welding program this year. Students have learned about career details through our partnerships with industry professionals and local business. By implementing such a thorough program, students are assured of career guidance and academic counseling both before and during CTE Programs of Study enrollment.

How will students from focal groups and their families learn about CTE course offerings and Programs of Study that are available?

Students and families in the Gaston School District learn about CTE programs through academic planning with our counseling department, newsletters, social media posts, and our spring electives showcase. Many 7th and 8th grade students have an elective rotation in the CTE department exposing them future opportunities. The JSHS strives to assure CTE opportunities for students from focal groups and has been successful in obtaining strong representation from Hispanic/Latinx, economically disadvantaged, and special education students.

How are you providing equitable work-based learning experiences for students?

In Gaston, we review outcome data to inform all of our work and programs for students. This includes our CTE programs and student participation and success in these programs. Because we have a robust CTE program, all of our students, especially students in our focal student populations receive work-based learning experiences as described in the previous question. In addition, we utilize data to ensure we stay aware of participation rates by our focal student groups, and especially our female students in historically male dominated job fields. When we find discrepant participation or outcomes, we make adjustments to improve our delivery. All Gaston students are allowed to earn credit from their off-campus work experiences through documentation of hours and reflection on their experience. Additionally, students from the CTE classes have completed internships with local welding and machine shops. Those internships have provided employment in high-demand, high-earning careers for graduates.

Describe how students' academic and technical skills will be improved through integrated, coherent, rigorous, challenging and relevant learning in subjects that constitute a well-rounded education, including opportunities to earn postsecondary credit while in high school.

Gaston is dedicated to providing students with a well-rounded education that supports post-secondary goals of entering the workforce, pursuing apprenticeships/internships, or attending college. Students learn technical skills throughout district programs in core classes, electives,

co-curricular opportunities, and CTE programs. Our CTE department partners with local businesses to provide work-based learning opportunities and internships. The high school offers a work-release program to allow students the opportunity to gain credit while gaining skills in the workforce. Multiple AP courses are offered at the high school level, preparing students for the rigors of college courses. Through expanded options partnerships, Gaston students can earn college credit from PCC and/or PSU. Students can also access college courses through Willamette Promise. Career awareness is developed and encouraged through job fairs, career-based field trips, college visits, and guest speakers from diverse industries.

What activities will you offer to students that will lead to self-sufficiency in identified careers?

Career exploration is offered district wide, K-12 and students develop the soft skills of work ethic, integrity, time management, teamwork, and conflict resolution throughout their education. These skills are explicitly taught through our CTE courses in construction, engineering, and manufacturing. The JSHS currently utilizes Xello, a college and career software program, which provides students the opportunity to explore post-secondary options and learn real-world skills building greater self-sufficiency to prepare students for successful college and career experiences.

How will you prepare CTE participants for nontraditional fields?

Gaston does a great job of encouraging nontraditional fields for our students. Of students participating in CTE courses, nearly 48% are female. Our CTE courses focus on high-demand, high-earning careers and all students are encouraged to pursue nontraditional and technical fields. Guest speakers in nontraditional fields share their experiences to encourage students to pursue a wide array of careers. CTE courses in construction, manufacturing, and welding provide real-world, hands-on opportunities for students to learn trade skills while incorporating sales, marketing, and customer service.

Describe any new CTE Programs of Study to be developed.

Our welding program is new this year. It was developed with the help of a local welding business. The partnership with industry professionals has led to rich experiences for students. Beyond that, we are not currently planning on developing additional CTE Programs of Study.

### **Engaged Community (250 words or less per question)**

If the goal is meaningful, authentic and ongoing community engagement, where are you in that process? What barriers, if any, were experienced and how might you anticipate and resolve those issues in future engagement efforts?

As an engagement team we selected to use the community engagement survey provided by NWRESA. It was advertised to stakeholders via newsletters, alert calls/emails, district website, and social media. We also did a flier campaign during pick up and drop off in the parking lot as well as

posting at the local market. All communication was in both Spanish and English. We conducted five opportunities for community conversations (similar to story circles): three were open to the public, one was with the elementary PTO, and one was at the Knights of Pythias hall. There was limited participation for the community conversations, but valuable information was shared from those who were present. Community conversations is something the superintendent will continue to offer once a month that will be open to anyone in the public. In reviewing the engagement process, the team noted there was not a strong representation of some student focal groups (specifically families in which English is not their home language, black/African American, LGBTQQSI+, economically disadvantaged, and special needs students). The district reached out to the families within the focal groups through empathy interviews and encouraged them to complete the community engagement survey. We will continue these "focal group" efforts in the future. The JSBS is going through the accreditation process, so additional student/parent/teacher surveys have been conducted through Cognia. Students at the JSBS level completed an Inflexion survey on connection, belonging, and engagement. At the student level, the elementary school conducted a survey regarding school engagement in PK-6th grade.

What relationships and/or partnerships will you cultivate to improve future engagement?

GSD will continue to work closely with and seek input from our community based organizations including the elementary PTO, JSBS Boosters Club, law enforcement, the fire department, the Knights of Pythias, and the Pythian Sisters. Additionally, we will continue to cultivate relationships with our local businesses.

What resources would enhance your engagement efforts? How can ODE support your continuous improvement process?

In the continuous improvement process of engaging with our community, the district needs to be proactive in providing opportunities for input within events and operations that are already taking place. Patrons attend events in which they are already interested; they are less likely to come to an engagement event. It is important for ODE to recognize that small districts have different engagement opportunities than large districts. We communicate on a regular basis with patrons in two-way conversations, individual meetings, and emails, throughout the year. Many times our engagement efforts do not involve a large production, but rather, they are embedded with events that are already taking place and are less formal in structure. Having more flexibility in the reporting process for these events as part of this Integrated Guidance process would be helpful.

Stakeholder engagement is very important; however, when directed it is an unfunded mandate. Providing funds at the local level would be beneficial in obtaining more authentic engagement at the district level.

How do you ensure community members and partners experience a safe and welcoming educational environment?

In all interactions GSD strives to provide a welcoming and respectful environment. Safety protocols are in place for arrival of guests that are implemented by welcoming office staff. As a small district, visitors are often able to meet with administrators and other staff on a walk-in basis. In each interaction we are intentional about building trusting, respectful, and transparent relationships. When we conduct meetings we focus on equity to promote broad engagement and thinking, and we often develop group agreements to promote safe participation.

In specifically addressing the integrated guidance work, administrators, teachers and instructional assistants who were on the engagement team were present for all community engagement opportunities. Food was provided and a casual, welcoming atmosphere was present. Upon entering the buildings, visitors were welcomed by the team and locations of meetings were clearly posted. We always focus on using plain speech (not education language) with our community.

If you sponsor a public charter school, describe their participation in the planning and development of your plan.

NA

Who was engaged in any aspect of your planning processes under this guidance?  
(Check all that apply)

- ☒ Students of color
- ☒ Students with disabilities
- ☒ Students who are emerging bilinguals
- ☒ Students who identify as LGBTQ2SIA+
- ☒ Students navigating poverty, homelessness, and foster care
- ☒ Families of students of color
- ☒ Families of students with disabilities
- ☒ Families of students who are emerging bilinguals
- ☒ Families of students who identify as LGBTQ2SIA+
- ☒ Families of students navigating poverty, homelessness, and foster care
- ☒ Licensed staff (administrators, teachers, counselors, etc.)
- ☒ Classified staff (paraprofessionals, bus drivers, office support, etc.)
- ☒ Community Based Organizations (non-profit organizations, civil rights organizations, community service groups, culturally specific organizations, etc.)
- ☐ Tribal members (adults and youth)
- ☒ School volunteers (school board members, budget committee members, PTA/PTO members, booster club members, parent advisory group members, classroom volunteers, etc.)
- ☒ Business community
- ☐ Regional Educator Networks (RENs)
- ☐ Local Community College Deans and Instructors; Local university deans and instructors
- ☒ Migrant Education and McKinney-Vento Coordinators

- ☐ Local Workforce Development and / or Chambers of Commerce
- ☒ CTE Regional Coordinators
- ☐ Regional STEM / Early learning Hubs
- ☐ Vocational Rehabilitation and pre-Employment Service Staff
- ☐ Justice Involved Youth
- ☒ Community leaders
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

How were they engaged?  
(Check all that apply)

- ☒ Survey(s) or other engagement applications (i.e., Thought Exchange)
- ☒ In-person forum(s)
- ☒ Focus group(s)
- ☒ Roundtable discussion
- ☒ Community group meeting
- ☐ Collaborative design or strategy session(s)
- ☐ Community-driven planning or initiative(s)
- ☒ Website
- ☐ CTE Consortia meeting
- ☒ Email messages
- ☐ Newsletters
- ☒ Social media
- ☒ School board meeting
- ☒ Partnering with unions
- ☒ Partnering with community-based partners
- ☒ Partnering with faith-based organizations
- ☒ Partnering with business
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

### Engaged Community (250 words or less per question)

You will be asked to upload your top five artifacts of engagement. Smaller districts, as outlined above, are required to submit their top two artifacts.

List Artifacts with google drive links

- Community Engagement Survey
  - [Survey Results](#)
  - [Open-Ended Responses](#)
- Community Conversations - [agenda](#), [notes](#), and [pictures](#)
- [Empathy Interviews/Community Contact Summaries](#)
- [Elementary Student Input](#)
- [Staff Meeting Input Slides](#)

Why did you select these particular artifacts to upload with your application? How do they show evidence of engaging focal student populations, their families and the community?



Overall, these artifacts show continued engagement with all stakeholders, from developing a shared vision for education to discussions around improving opportunities for students. The community engagement survey was important for determining trends in information and gathering strengths/weaknesses and surveyed the broad community including parents of focal student populations. It also provided for open-ended comments to get specific feedback. Community conversations were a way to allow small groups of stakeholders to share their stories (both positive and negative) and to provide specific ideas for improvements. Empathy interviews allowed the district to obtain information from the families of targeted focal groups. The questions were individualized and provided an opportunity for transparent feedback. Student surveys were vital in obtaining student voice.

Describe at least two strategies you executed to engage each of the focal student groups and their families present within your district and community. Explain why those strategies were used and what level of the [Community Engagement Spectrum](#) these fell on.

Community conversations were available to all stakeholders; additionally, email and/or phone invitations were provided to individuals (students, parents) of focal student groups. After analyzing the survey results, it was determined that there was data missing from some focal student groups. Empathy interviews were conducted with families of focal student groups to obtain further input and to encourage each individual to complete the community engagement survey. These strategies recognized that families of focal groups might not always feel welcomed to events, thus the individualized invitations. Additionally, families experiencing poverty or families of special needs students might not have the focused time to complete a lengthy survey, but they might be willing to share their story/concerns in a short phone conversation. Both of these activities sought specific feedback and were on level 3 (Involve - Voice & Power Shift) of the engagement spectrum.

Describe at least two strategies you executed to engage staff. Explain why those strategies were used. Explain why those strategies were used and what level of the Community Engagement spectrum these fell on.

Staff were encouraged to participate in the community engagement survey and were given time within the workday to complete it. Staff were also invited to attend the Community Conversation opportunities. The superintendent met with the staff from each school to provide an overview of the solicited input from the community engagement survey, share progress toward previous CIP, SIA, and HSS goals, and ask for further input/insights in the form of an exit ticket. These two opportunities were on level 3 (Involve - Voice & Power Shift) of the engagement spectrum. Additionally, all staff were invited to be on the community engagement team. Those who chose to be on the team participated at a level 4 (Collaboration - Delegated Power) of the engagement spectrum.

Describe and distill what you learned from your community and staff. How did you apply that input to inform your planning?

We learned that families and students are seeking learning opportunities that are relevant, and connected to future college and career readiness. They want learning to be fun and engaging. As a small school, we seek to provide varied coursework and an array of enrichment opportunities; however, there is always room for additions and improvements. We learned that there is a desire for more opportunities in music and art as well as a greater variety of activities and electives. Input data indicated concerns with student behavior, bullying, and accountability as well as need to focus on inclusion supports for targeted focal groups. Clear communication and transparency was another area of input that was reflected through input data.

This input had a significant impact on the plan we are submitting. Of course we also reviewed student outcome data to finalize our decision making. Where input and data indicated the same needs, we were especially interested in adopting strategies for improvement. All of these thoughts and concerns are addressed and embedded in our district outcomes and strategies.

### **CTE Focus (250 words or less per question)**

How will you intentionally develop partnerships with employers to expand work-based learning opportunities for students?

There are a limited number of businesses within our small community. Currently we have added a welding program that has been greatly supported by a local business. They have provided support and materials; they continue to partner with the program to provide students with work-based learning opportunities. The CTE manufacturing program has also partnered with a local manufacturing company to provide students with real-world applications of learning. The CTE program offers a Construction Geometry class focused on building sheds that are later sold to the community. This opportunity provides a real-world experience for students in design, building, marketing, sales, and customer service. The CTE program has also partnered with other schools on construction projects to give students the opportunity to make/install cabinets and countertops home construction. The local fire department teaches a fire science course for students at the high school which exposes students to the field of fire-fighting. Industry guest speakers and field trips to businesses also provide work-based learning opportunities for students.

### **Affirmation of Tribal Consultation**

If you are a district that receives greater than \$40k in Title VI funding or have 50% or more American Indian/Alaska Native Students, you are required to consult with your local tribal government. As evidence of your consultation, you will be asked to upload documentation of your meeting(s) containing signatures from tribal government representatives as well as School District representatives. As this consultation includes all aspects of the Integrated Plan you will be asked to upload the "Affirmation for Tribal Consultation" within this application.

This question does not pertain to GSD; however, the families of Native and Indigenous students participated in the Community Survey and were invited to all other engagement events.

## Strengthening Systems and Capacity (250 words or less per question)

How do you recruit, onboard, and develop quality educators and leaders? How are you recruiting and retaining educators and leaders representative of student focal groups?

During the pandemic, hiring was a challenge; however, the district made efforts to retain staff by providing them with additional compensation by utilizing resources from recruitment and retention grants. We work hard at recruiting on an ongoing basis. We attend job fairs and work with schools of education to recruit our teachers. In these efforts we are especially determined to diversify our workforce to represent the students we serve. Over the past year, Gaston has significantly increased our number of bilingual staff further reflecting student demographics.

Once we hire staff we go to work on retention. We provide mentorship to our new teachers and work at providing a competitive compensation package. Our small district offers a tight knit and welcoming staff who embrace, support, and encourage new teachers. Their success is central to our collective success.

We believe in quality professional development and produce exceptional learning opportunities for our teachers each year. Equity is central to our work and is intentionally included as part of each PD we deliver. In addition, staff are encouraged to seek continuing educational opportunities through tuition reimbursement plans to support degree advancement. The district financially supports staff who are willing to seek licensure in difficult-to-fill positions through our grow-your-own program.

What processes are in place to identify and address any disparities that result in students of color, students experiencing poverty, students learning English and students with disabilities being taught more often than other students by ineffective, inexperienced, or out-of-field teachers?

Our small size (we have approximately 40 students per grade) requires that every student has access to almost every teacher on staff. For the most part, core classes are heterogeneously grouped to expose all students to quality, rigorous instruction. Focal group students are encouraged to take advanced coursework and CTE classes. We work to ensure the teachers we hire are highly qualified for their assignment.

We are a data driven school district and we disaggregate data regularly looking for discrepancies. If we find any, we go to work correcting the issue.

How do you support efforts to reduce the overuse of discipline practices that remove students from the classroom, particularly for focal student groups?

Both buildings use PBIS as a positive approach to teaching appropriate behaviors. Restorative approaches to behaviors are implemented in conjunction with expectations for appropriate behavior. Both buildings have implemented calming corners to help students problem-solve within the classroom and keep them in the learning environment. Out-of-School suspensions are reserved for rare cases. Most discipline is handled on-campus to keep students, especially students in our focal student groups, engaged in learning as much as possible. The district athletic code of conduct also takes a restorative approach in dealing with misbehavior. Students are given the opportunity to change their actions and remain on the team.

How do you align professional growth and development to the strengths and needs of the school, the teachers, and district leaders?

Our administrative team provides professional development to staff throughout the year - not just to our certified teachers, but to our classified staff, as well. These PD sessions are focused on best practices such as PBIS, SEL (Character Strong), high leverage instructional routines, supporting students experiencing disabilities, and PLC practices according to the Solution Tree "PLCs at Work". All of our professional development is focused on improving our staff and systems such that student learning and outcomes improve.

How do you provide feedback and coaching to guide instructional staff in research-based improvement to teaching and learning?

Professional development is provided both at the building level and district-wide on an array of topics including student engagement, PLCs, trauma informed practices, social-emotional learning, restorative practices, differentiation, and depth of knowledge. Both building principals provide formal and informal feedback through the evaluation process. The district instructional coach provides opportunities for coaching cycles in both buildings. Next year the district will be participating in implementation of instructional rounds through the assistance of NWRESA.

At the elementary school, there is a peer modeling system set up so that 2x per year, each teacher is able to observe another teacher instructing something they would like to see modeled. We schedule it so that each teacher also receives 2 peer observations per year. These observations are covered from within the building by the principal so that the district instructional coach can attend the observation with the observing teacher to provide prompts, point out best practices, and help in a debrief meeting that follows the observation. The instructional coach invites teachers to participate in impact coaching cycles, and there are currently 5 teachers at the elementary participating in full impact coaching cycles.

What systems are in place to monitor student outcomes and identify students who may be at risk of academic failure? How do you respond and support the student(s) when those identifications and observations are made?

The Gaston school district has implemented a number of systems we utilize to effectively monitor student outcomes and support those who are at risk of academic failure. These efforts are central to who we are as a district including MTSS, RTI, PBIS (really all one integrated system), and our 9<sup>th</sup> grade on track program. We are good at these systems, but can always improve. In fact, if you scrutinize this plan you will find we are doubling down on these effective efforts with professional development, staffing, and time dedicated specifically to this work. We also regularly disaggregate student outcome data to ensure we are effectively supporting all students, especially our focal student groups.

Our teams meet regularly to review student data and examine referrals that come to the school office. We then review and or create individual student plans which will be monitored for effectiveness. If

adjustments are then indicated, we make them. This includes academic, social emotional, soft skills(adult success), and credit accumulation. Through these processes, we make sure all of our students succeed.

With our regular examinations of student outcomes, and disaggregated data reviews we sharpen our work through professional development and intentional system improvement.

How do you facilitate effective transitions between early childhood education programs and local elementary school programs; from elementary to middle grades; from middle grades to high school; and from high school to postsecondary education?

The only early childhood education program in Gaston is the school-based preschool. This program is part of our elementary school. Preschool staff are part of all professional development and students are part of all foundational educational programs. As a small district, on one campus, we have the ability to easily share information between buildings. At the end of each year, the 6th grade teachers meet with our JH staff to give background on students for the coming academic year. Interventions, behavior plans, and best-practice strategies are shared to provide a smooth transition. Students moving from 8th to 9th grade are provided a summer bridge program. This introduces them to one another, staff, and programs. It teaches them strategies to be successful in HS and prepares them for what to expect. The counseling department provides students with the ability to visit and investigate a wide array of colleges and trade schools for postsecondary planning. The counseling department assists with applications (for college, trade school and/or work force), FAFSA forms, scholarships, and overall postsecondary planning. The district partners with College Possible, a program that empowers students from underserved backgrounds to become college graduates.

## **Attachments Completing Your Submission**

### **[Integrated Planning & Budget Template](#)**

The plan must cover four years, with a two-year budget, and include outcomes, strategies and activities you believe will cause changes to occur and meet the primary purposes of the programs included in this integrated plan: HSS, SIA, EDM, CIP, EIIS, CTE / Perkins. It also should reflect the choices you made after pulling all the input and planning pieces together for consideration. This plan serves as an essential snapshot of your expected use of grant funds associated with the aforementioned programs.

**[Gaston School District Integrated Planning & Budget](#)**