



2017 Spirit of North Carolina Application			
Organization Name	Gaston County Schools		
Street Address	943 Osceola Street	City/St: Gastonia	Zip 28054
United Way Name	United Way of Gaston County		
Application Contact	Name: Philip Ratchford	Email: pmratchford@gaston.k12.nc.us	

School – Student Size <i>Check the appropriate box</i>	Type of School/School System <i>Check the appropriate box</i>	Employee Size <i>Check the appropriate box</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> UP to 300 Students	<i>Individual School:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Up to 50 employees
<input type="checkbox"/> 301-500 Students	<input type="checkbox"/> Elementary School	<input type="checkbox"/> 51-100 employees
<input type="checkbox"/> 501-700 Students	<input type="checkbox"/> Middle School	<input type="checkbox"/> 101-200 employees
<input type="checkbox"/> 701-1000 Students	<input type="checkbox"/> High School	<input type="checkbox"/> 201-500 employees
<input type="checkbox"/> 1001-1,500 Students	<i>School System:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 501-1000 employees
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1501-3000+ Students	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> School System	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1000+ employees

Standards of Excellence Checklist		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1.	Community engagement and volunteer culture – OUTSIDE OF UNITED WAY RELATIONSHIP <i>Up to 10 Points</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2.	Partnership WITH UNITED WAY to raise community awareness of needs & foster a spirit of giving <i>Up to 10 Points</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3.	Employee Participation Level <i>Up to 10 Points</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4.	Student/Parent Engagement <i>Up to 10 Points</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5.	Special Events <i>Up to 10 Points</i>

Signature of the nominating United Way CPO or his/her designee:

Deborah Ally

Printed Name

Signature

ALL APPLICATIONS MUST BE SUBMITTED USING THIS FORM and COMPLETED "AS IS!"
Please do not add borders, headings, color, etc.

Organization Overview

Brief summary for use during Awards Ceremony

Philanthropic culture of organization:

Vision:

The vision of Gaston County Schools is to inspire success and a lifetime of learning.

Mission:

Through outstanding employees and community partners, Gaston County Schools provides innovative educational opportunities for all students in a safe and nurturing learning environment.

Philanthropic Culture:

Gaston County Schools works diligently to promote collaboration with business, civic, community and faith based organizations to impact student success and promote strong character. Gaston County Schools also strives to give back to and lend a helping hand, whether the need comes from our community, our state, or our nation. For the past several years, all of our schools and central office departments have participated in a fundraising effort called "Nickels 4 Neighbors". This effort has helped collect approximately \$20,000+ each year for school children and school districts that have seen unfortunate hardships or experienced natural disasters.

Creative strategy, engagement opportunity, volunteer activity or special event that ignited campaign success

We realized that we needed to make some changes to help revitalize our annual United Way campaign. This year, each principal was able to nominate an employee from their school who has shown incredible leadership skills and/or potential. This individual was given the opportunity to be their school's Campaign Coordinator and take on a great leadership role.

To kick off our 2017 United Way Campaign, we hosted a Campaign Coordinator breakfast. Each school's Campaign Coordinator was invited to attend for a time of fellowship, networking, activity brainstorming, campaign protocol, and further education about how the United Way of Gaston County impacts our community, including our students and their families. As part of this campaign kick off, Daughtry Hopper, Director of Community Impact and Resource Development for the United Way of Gaston County, discussed the multitude of programs offered by the United Way and how each person's contribution does make an impact.

We introduced a district-wide incentives scale, promoting an increase in giving. Each level of the scale added on to the last, allowing a donor to receive multiple incentives for greater contribution amounts.

Three numerical successes you wish to highlight:

- An Elementary School had a 335% increase in giving, with contributions growing from \$330 to \$1,435!
- A Middle School had a 262% increase in giving, with contributions growing from \$1,102 to \$3,986!
- As a district, we increased our total giving by 12% and saw our highest contribution total in over 5 years!

Standard 1 – Community engagement and volunteer culture – OUTSIDE OF UNITED WAY RELATIONSHIP. Include relationship/work with other community stakeholders and partners.

- Describe how the school/school system works in tandem with community stakeholders to problem solve and create solutions that build stronger communities/families.
- How does the school/school system benefit from being involved in serving the community/families?
- Are there specific ways the school/school system builds a volunteer culture?
- What % of employees are engaged in volunteer work in the community?

Up to 10 points

Gaston County Schools takes pride in the fact that we have the opportunity to work with our community to support our students and their families, as we all work to build a stronger community.

Obesity and chronic disease are very prevalent in Gaston County, and North Carolina as a whole. As a way to add to our efforts to increase physical activity and foster a health aware environment, members of our staff regularly work with our local hospital to promote family health and wellness initiatives, both in our schools and in our community.

Given North Carolina's roots in the tobacco industry, there is also a large population of tobacco users in our community. Our local Department of Health and Human Services works with our schools to help promote tobacco awareness and ensure our staff is up-to-date on the most recent trends in tobacco education.

These are just a couple of quick examples of how Gaston County Schools works with community stakeholders to help identify problems in our community and work towards a solution that will help lead us to become a stronger, healthier community. If we can work to strengthen our communities, then we will certainly strengthen our students and their families.

Each of our schools makes it their priority to foster a sense of volunteerism in our students. Schools host a variety of activities in which they show students the value of helping others and understanding the emotional reward, rather than seeking a monetary reward. Our students and staff frequently see and have the opportunity to volunteer, whether it is the mentors that volunteer with our students or asking our students to help with a district event or community project or having our staff work with community partners to host a back-to-school kick off to provide school supplies and vaccinations for students.

Standard 2 – Organization’s partnership WITH UNITED WAY to raise community awareness of needs and foster a spirit of giving.

- Document ways in which the school/school system worked with United Way to generate enthusiasm for community involvement and family support.
 - Unique awareness activities such as meetings, tours, speakers, and fairs.
 - Information sharing opportunities such as PTA meetings/teacher meetings, etc.

Up to 10 points

As mentioned previously, we decided to bring all of our school campaign coordinators together for a kick off breakfast to start our 2017 campaign. It would be safe to say that 90% of the school campaign coordinators were not very familiar with the programs and offerings of the United Way of Gaston County.

So, to help bolster our efforts to increase giving, we wanted to be sure everyone leading the charge in their school truly understood what the United Way does for our community and how they impact our students and their families.

Daughtry Hopper, Director of Community Impact and Resource Development for the United Way of Gaston County, helped facilitate the kick off breakfast and spent time discussing the valuable programs available in our county. The school campaign coordinators learned about the FamilyWize prescription savings program, utility assistance programs, and the multitude of programs that help support their efforts to impact our community's education, financial stability, and health.

To ensure leaders across the district were ready to support their staff, Mr. Jeffrey Booker, Superintendent of Gaston County Schools, shared information about the campaign at a district wide meeting of all principals prior to the start of the campaign. He provided encouraging remarks about the work that the United Way does in Gaston County and how everyone in the room could support their school campaign coordinator to ensure we made the campaign successful.

Mr. Booker also serves on the United Way of Gaston County Board of Directors and is a member of the Community Impact Committee which evaluates the needs of the community.

Valerie Yatko, the Gaston County Schools Director of Business and Community Partnerships, served on the United Way board for several years and continues to partner with the UW staff on projects such as the annual School Tools Campaign.

School staff members provide guidance on the McKenny-Veto Homeless Assistance Act for the Continuum of Care for Homelessness in Gaston County, a HUD program that the United Way of Gaston County administers as the Collaborative Applicant.

The Gaston County Schools implemented the UW/NFL Character Playbook Program as a resource available to all seventh grade advisory teachers during the 2016-17 school year. Eleven schools provided 3,007 hours of learning to 1,678 students.

Standard 3 – Employee campaign coordination, recognition, and incentive

- Describe the work of the campaign coordinator and/or committee, *listing successful planning tools, specific activities, and strategies* that propelled the campaign to success
- Detail how the *employees were recognized* within the school for their investment of time and resources
- Share any *specific incentives used with employees* that proved to be effective in building motivation and resolve to give or volunteer

Up to 10 points

The biggest difference in our campaign this year, was the kick off breakfast. In recent years, we have not had a kick off event of this nature and our principals have typically been at the helm of their school's campaign. We wanted to ensure we identified individuals that had time to devote to the campaign, while also allowing the principal to be a cheerleader and campaign supporter, rather than the actual fund raiser. That being said, some principals take pride in promoting the United Way in their school and still elected to act as their school's campaign coordinator.

For the 2017 Campaign, we introduced a district-wide incentives scale, promoting an increase in giving. Each level of the scale added on to the last, allowing a donor to receive multiple incentives for greater contribution amounts. Each school's campaign coordinator was allowed to work with their principal to determine the best fit for their school though. This provided enough flexibility in the incentives to allow coordinators to make the incentives appealing for their colleagues.

One of the big hits was "free lunch period", where the principal would work with other staff to allow a contributor to have a lunch period away from students. Another big incentive was "jean days". This was an almost an incentive scale of its own. Each contribution level came with additional days to wear jeans to work. The school staff loved it!

Standard 4 – Participation Level

- How does the school/school system ensure that all employees have an opportunity to participate in the United Way campaign? List specific steps taken to reach and educate all employees.
- Describe any efforts for outreach with specific groups such as new hires, substitute or part-time teachers, retirees, etc.

Up to 5 points

By every school and department sending a representative to our 2017 Campaign Kick Off Breakfast, we ensured that we directly communicated, in person, with each school and department. This allowed everyone to hear the same information about the campaign and the programs offered through the United Way of Gaston County.

At the conclusion of the kick off, each school and department was given enough contribution forms for all of their staff members. The campaign coordinators then scheduled their meetings within their schools or departments to kick off their campaign and distribute the contribution forms. It was suggested that each school work from a staff list to ensure everyone was given the opportunity to participate in the campaign.

We had 5 schools and 6 departments achieve 100% participation during the 2017 campaign, which is a 57% increase over the number of schools and departments that achieved the recognition in 2016.

Complete the chart below: Up to 5 Additional Points

2.5 Points are awarded for positive percent change in Number of Givers

2.5 Points are awarded for positive percent change in Percent of Participation

Total possible points for Standard 4 = 10

Year	Total # of Employees	% Change	Total # Givers	% Change	Points Awarded	% Participation	Points Awarded	Total Points
2017	3,960	+8 %	1,522	+3 %		38 %		
2016	3,680		1,476			40 %		

Employee % change – 2017 number of employees minus 2016 number of employees divided by 2016 number

Givers % Change – 2017 number of givers minus 2016 number of givers divided by the 2016 number

Standard 5 – Special Events

Successful special events are often the catalysts that educate and energize campaigns. Provide information below on 1-2 special events used to motivate/excite/reach **students and parents or the community at-large**.

- How did the event attract or impact potential and ongoing donors/volunteers?
- Describe event/impact results (quantitative and qualitative, if possible)
- Share creative event details

Up to 10 Points

Our schools did a lot to help spread the word about the campaign to our students and their families. Schools came up with outstanding and creative ideas to help get students involved, from bake sales to dress-up days.

One of our Middle Schools was able to set up a snack station after school to help raise money for their campaign. Through this effort by the staff and students, the school was able to raise an additional \$2,000! These funds were contributed by students, as they purchased items from the snack station.

While the after school snack station was our highest fundraising event, several of our Elementary Schools were able to get their students involved by having "wear your Halloween costume to school" days, throwing a pie in the principal's face, and by just allowing students to contribute to the campaign, even if it was just loose change.

To look at it from another view point, our schools' efforts to have events and activities that got students and their families involved is what helped us reach our highest contribution total in over 5 years!