Board of Education Meeting

August 10, 2026
6:30 PM, in the Stearns Education Center Boardroom

Members Present: Chairman Ashworth, Vice-Chairman Mr. Covil, Ms. Allen, Ms. Gibbs, Ms. Jackson, Ms. Page, Mr. Stich

Members Absent: None

Others: Superintendent Todd Murphy, Director of Curriculum and Instruction Jan Crump, Human Resource Specialist Tonya Odel, Director of Operations Brandon Schweitzer, and Attorney Chris Campbell.

Call to Order and Welcome
Mr. Ashworth called the meeting to order at approximately 6:30 PM and welcomed all in attendance.

Pledge of Allegiance

Recognition of Departments
Superintendent Todd Murphy thanked all departments for their hard work throughout the summer. He noted that significant behind-the-scenes efforts are required to support each school day and recognized the staff whose contributions may not always receive recognition. Mr. Murphy also invited Dr. Schweitzer to highlight the exceptional work completed by the Technology Department over the summer.

Approval of June 8, 2026, Board Minutes and June 30, 2026, Board Minutes (Action)
Chairman Ashworth called the Board's attention to a copy of the June 8, 2026, Board Minutes and June 30, 2026, Board Minutes. Mr. Ashworth asked if there were any additions or corrections and there were none. Mr. Ashworth entertained a motion to approve minutes as presented. Ms. Jackson made the motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Stich seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

I. INSTRUCTIONAL

Pre-K Half Days- Lori Byars (Information)
Director of Pre-K Lori Byars informed the Board of the beginning of year schedule for Pre-K, and that Pre-K students would attend half days for the first week. She stated that the half days give the students extra time to become acclimated to the setting, and it gives Pre-K staff time for the extra required training.

II. ADMINISTRATIVE

Summer Food Giveaway – Jennifer Peeler (Information)
Jennifer Peeler, Child Nutrition Director, presented information from the presentation electronically attached to the agenda. Ms. Peeler thanked Ashley Allen for preparing the slideshow and reported an increase in participation in the summer food program. The six-week program served children from birth through age 18, with a total of 2,486 individuals served. Ms. Peeler recognized the efforts of her staff, Stearns staff, and the many volunteers whose support contributed to the success of the program.

Out of District Tuition Approval – Todd Murphy (Action)
Superintendent Murphy presented an "out of district" tuition recommendation to the Board. He reminded the Board that CFO Lovelace calculates the "per child" receipt of local revenue to arrive at the yearly figure, and this year's calculation resulted in a recommendation of $3,363 per student for Out of District tuition. Chairman Ashworth called

for a motion to approve the Out of District Tuition. Mr. Stich made a motion to approve the tuition, and it was seconded by Ms. Page. The Out of District Tuition was approved 7-0.

2025-2026 Year-End Budget Amendment – Debbie Lovelace (Action)
Debbie Lovelace reviewed the budget amendment included with the agenda. Chairman Ashworth asked for a motion that the budget amendment be approved as submitted. Ms. Allen made the motion, which Mr. Covil seconded. Chairman Ashworth called for questions or comments and there were none. The motion was approved 7-0.

Micro-purchasing Resolution – Debbie Lovelace (Action)
Superintendent Murphy presented a Micro-purchasing Resolution to the Board. This is the same resolution from previous years that must be approved annually. This resolution affords the CFO and the Superintendent the ability to make purchases up to amounts for different source purchases to be sure all funding streams are consistent with Board approval thresholds. Chairman Ashworth called for a motion to approve the Micro-Purchasing Resolution. Mr. Stich made a motion to approve the Micro-Purchasing Resolution, and it was seconded by Ms. Gibbs. The Micro Purchasing Resolution was approved on a vote of 7-0.

Student Transfer Requests – Brandon Schweitzer (Action)
The Board agreed to vote on the Student Transfer Requests as presented. Chairman Ashworth called for a motion to approve the Student Transfer Requests. Ms. Gibbs made a motion to approve the Student Transfer Request as submitted and it was seconded by Ms. Page. The Student Transfer Request was approved 7-0.

Facilities Update – Brandon Schweitzer (Information)
Dr. Schweitzer spoke briefly regarding the presentation that was attached electronically to the agenda. Chairman Ashworth called for questions and there were none.

Lottery Reimbursement Request – Brandon Schweitzer (Action)
Dr. Brandon Schweitzer presented to the Board eight lottery reimbursement requests. Each of these requests were attached to the electronic agenda for review. Chairman Ashworth called for questions or comments and there were none. Ms. Jackson made a motion to approve lottery requests, and the motion was seconded by Mr. Stich. The lottery requests were approved as presented 7-0.

Superintendent Update – Start of 26-27 School Year – Todd Murphy (Information)
Superintendent Murphy reported that the first day of school proceeded smoothly and that he visited all schools throughout the district. He reported a first-day enrollment of 2,087 students for the 2026–2027 school year and noted that enrollment may fluctuate during the coming days. Enrollment by school was reported as follows: Polk County Early College, 67; Polk Central Elementary, 361; Polk County High School, 579; Polk County Middle School, 427; Saluda Elementary, 156; Sunny View Elementary, 112; and Tryon Elementary, 385. He noted that the district's total enrollment after the first ten days of the previous school year was 2,107 students. Superintendent Murphy will provide an enrollment update at the next Board meeting.

III. OLD BUSINESS
None

IV. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Murphy reported that he had no new business to discuss. Ms. Allen requested that the Board have a discussion regarding the appropriate use of Chromebooks in the classroom, including considerations related to the amount of use and appropriate age levels. She referenced *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt and encouraged Board members to conduct their own research and share their thoughts on the topic.

Superintendent Murphy noted that he and Dr. Schweitzer have recently discussed the issue and will collaborate on a presentation for the Board addressing the use of Chromebooks in the classroom.

Chairman Ashworth asked for an update on the implementation of the district's cell phone usage policy on the first day of school. Superintendent Murphy reported that middle school students were required to keep their phones in their lockers, while students at the high school, and early college were required to secure their phones in Yondr pouches. Mr. Murphy stated that he did not observe any students using or displaying cell phones at any of the schools. He also noted that he was present for two lunch periods at the high school and was pleased to observe that no students were using their phones.

V. INFORMATION

2026-2027 School Year: First day for all Polk County Schools: August 10, 2026
June/July 2026 Preschool Monthly Report
July Pre-K Financial Report
June Monthly Financial Report
July Monthly Financial Report
June Credit Card Report
July Credit Card Report

NCSBA OFFERED OPTIONAL BOARD TRAINING

2026/2027 NCSBA Video Library
Central Leadership Education and Development, September 2, 2026, Raleigh, NC
WRESA Leadership Education and Training-September 3, 2026, at WRESA
Southeast Leadership Education and Development, September 8, 2026
Piedmont-Triad Leadership Education and Development, September 9, 2026
2026 Fall Law Conference-October 5, 2026, Asheville

VI. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

VII. CLOSED SESSION

Closed Session

At 7:16 PM Mr. Ashworth entertained a motion to go into closed session for the purpose of discussing personnel. Ms. Gibbs made the motion to go into closed session and it was seconded by Ms. Jackson. The motion carried 7-0.

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

Resumption of Regular Session: With all discussion concluded in closed session, Mr. Ashworth called for a motion to return to open session. At 8:19 pm, Ms. Gibbs made a motion to return to open session. Ms. Jackson seconded the motion. The motion carried 7-0.

Mr. Ashworth called the Board's attention to those matters on the personnel agenda that required Board approval. Mr. Ashworth asked the Board's pleasure in regard to a motion. Ms. Allen made the motion to approve the recommendations of the Superintendent and the Human Resource Specialist. Ms. Gibbs seconded the motion. The motion carried 7-0.

Information:

Name	Position	School	
Maria Freeman	EC Teacher	PCHS	Resigned
Maureen Hankala	EC Teacher	PCHS	Resigned
Rachael Karpinski	Teacher	PCMS	Resigned
Paula McFarland	EC Teacher	PCMS	Resigned
Keith Jenkins	EC Teacher Assistant	PCHS	Resigned
Shanon Rosa	EC Teacher Assistant	PCHS	Resigned
Gary Beheler	Custodian	PCES	Retiring 9/30/26
Kim Gdoviak	Cafeteria Assistant	TES	Resigned
Susan Powell	Cafeteria Assistant	SVE	Resigned

Action:

Name	Position	School	Hometown	College	Licensure Area	Years Exp
Amanda Irvin	Assistant Principal	PCHS	Shelby, NC	UNC Charlotte	Administration	2
Stella Baily	Teacher	PCHS	Moore, SC	Converse	Social Studies	13
Michael Brown	EC Teacher	PCHS	Columbus	ASU	Education	0
Lauren Dotson	Teacher	PCMS	Mill Spring	NC A&T	Science Ag Ed	0
Savanna Cashion	EC TA	PCHS	Tryon	Warren Wilson	N/A	N/A
Jessica Conner	EC TA	PCHS	Columbus	N/A	N/A	4
Ruth Ann McArthur	TA	Saluda	Rutherfordton	ICC	N/A	4
Christy Thompson	EC TA	PCMS	Forest City	N/A	N/A	6
Miranda Ingle	Receptionist	PCHS	Rutherfordton	N/A	N/A	7
Amber Tate Fowler	Cafeteria Assistant	SVE	Forest City	N/A	N/A	0
Kayla Heath	Cafeteria Assistant	PCMS	Spindale, NC	N/A	N/A	N/A
Evelyn McMahan	Cafeteria Assistant	PCMS	Mill Spring	N/A	N/A	N/A
Rachel Nespeca	Cafeteria Assistant	TES	Mill Spring	N/A	N/A	N/A
Celia Pittman	Afterschool Group Leader	PCES	Columbus	N/A	N/A	N/A

Property Agenda

Upon a motion by Mr. Covil, seconded by Ms. Gibbs, the Board unanimously voted to amend the agenda to include consideration of the Special Warranty Deed of Gift from Bradley Fund, LLC, to the Polk County Board of Education. The property is described in Deed Book 472, Page 1588, Polk County Registry. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Ashworth called for a motion to approve the acquisition of the Special Warranty Deed of Gift from Bradley Fund, LLC. Mr. Stich made the motion, which was seconded by Ms. Page. The motion carried unanimously, 7-0.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

With no more business to come before the Board, Mr. Ashworth declared the meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.

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Mr. Ashworth, Board Chair

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Todd Murphy, Board Secretary
TM/RC