

Board of Education Meeting
September 14, 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 John Henning.

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

Student Presentation – Tryon Elementary

Principal Dr. John Mauldin introduced Tryon Elementary School kindergarten teachers Lucy Lewis, Caroline Smith, and Jessica Wilkins, along with several kindergarten students. The students presented information about the Character Strong program, which the school began implementing this year. Ms. Wilkins provided additional information about the program, and the students performed a song for the Board. The students introduced themselves, and Board members complimented them on their presentation and performance.

Approval of August 10, 2026, Board Minutes (Action)

Chairman Ashworth called the Board's attention to a copy of the August 10, 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. Mr. Stich made the motion to approve the minutes as presented. Ms. Jackson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

I. INSTRUCTIONAL

Overnight Field Trip Requests –Todd Murphy (Action)

Superintendent Murphy requested Board approval of the PCHS FFA State Veterinary Science Career Development Event overnight field trip. Chairman Ashworth called for a motion to approve the presented overnight field trip request. Ms. Jackson made a motion to approve the request, which was seconded by Mr. Stich. The motion was approved by a vote of 7-0. Ms. Jackson requested that, in the future, overnight field trip requests be submitted at least six weeks in advance.

Accountability Update - Angela Dufford (Information)

Accountability and Testing Coordinator Angela Dufford presented an accountability update to the Board, including the 2025-2026 testing report, which was included with the electronic agenda. Ms. Dufford noted that fifth-grade science was the area most in need of improvement. Director of Curriculum Jan Crump affirmed that the district is already working to identify and implement strategies to improve student performance in this area.

Chromebook Use Presentation – Brandon Schweitzer

Dr. Schweitzer presented an update on responsible fleet management and purposeful student use of technology, accompanied by a slideshow that was electronically attached to the agenda. He explained that, beginning in approximately 2024, he and the technology team began developing a new approach to the use of technology in classrooms. As a result, the district has reduced the number of devices in classrooms by 52%. Dr. Schweitzer outlined the district's current device-use model. Students in grades K-2 utilize shared device carts, while students in grades 3-5 have access to classroom sets. Students in grades 6-8 are assigned a device for use throughout the school day and return it at the end of each day. Students in grades 9-12 have consistent access to a device at school and are permitted to take the device home.

Dr. Schweitzer concluded the presentation by emphasizing that instructional purpose should guide device use. With devices now placed where they are most appropriate, the focus should be on using technology to strengthen student learning rather than using technology simply because it is available.

Federal Programs - Jan Crump (Action)

Jan Crump presented a request for approval of the Federal Programs Consolidated Application. Ms. Crump stated the funding supports the district's work with at risk students, Pre-K students, summer remediation, professional development and several other program areas. Chairman Ashworth asked if there were any questions or comments and there were none. Mr. Ashworth called for a motion to approve the Federal Consolidated Application for 2026-2027. Ms. Gibbs made a motion to approve the Federal Consolidated Application Plans for 2026-2027, and it was seconded by Mr. Stich. The motion was approved 7-0.

II. ADMINISTRATIVE

Electronic Transaction Policy for Athletics Credit Cards – Debbie Lovelace (Action)

Finance Officer Debbie Lovelace presented the Polk County Schools Procurement Card (P-Card) program, which is designed to provide an efficient and cost-effective method for purchasing approved goods and services for official school business. She explained that cardholders are entrusted with organizational funds and are responsible for ensuring that all transactions comply with applicable policies and ethical standards. The Procurement Card is a Commerce Bank Purchasing Card.

Athletics Director Michelle Fagan requested a Procurement Card for Polk County High School to purchase food, beverages, and other approved items for concessions and athletic events. Ms. Lovelace explained that all purchases would be charged to the athletic account, and supporting documentation for all transactions would be submitted to the Finance Office for review.

Chairman Ashworth asked if there were any questions or comments regarding the policy. Mr. Stich suggested using the amount spent during the previous year as the spending limit for the card. Ms. Gibbs expressed concern that this amount may not be sufficient due to inflation. Mr. Stich noted that the inflation rate was approximately 2%. Ms. Gibbs and others disagreed. Chairman Ashworth and Mr. Covil asked who would be responsible for monitoring the card. Ms. Lovelace stated that she would oversee and monitor the card. Chairman Ashworth called for a motion to approve the Electronic Transaction Policy for Athletics Credit Cards. Mr. Covil made a motion to approve the policy, which was seconded by Ms. Page. The motion was approved by 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. Jackson. The Student Transfer Request was approved 7-0.

Superintendent Update- Todd Murphy (Information)

Superintendent Murphy provided an update on the successful start to the academic year and reported a current district-wide enrollment of 2,059 students. Enrollment by school is as follows: Polk Central Elementary School (PCES), 346 students; Polk County Early College (PCEC), 69 students; Polk County High School (PCHS), 571 students; Polk County Middle School (PCMS), 418 students; Saluda Elementary School, 158 students; Sunny View Elementary School, 115 students; and Tryon Elementary School (TES), 382 students.

Mr. Covil asked about the district-wide enrollment at the same time during the previous school year. Superintendent Murphy reported that enrollment at that time was 2,115 students.

Superintendent Murphy informed the Board that Polk County Schools will be applying for the NCDPI Needs-Based Grant again this year. The application deadline is October 2, 2026. If awarded, the grant would require the county to provide a 5% matching contribution. The grant funds would be used to construct a Career and Technical Education (CTE) building at Polk County High School, potentially allowing the district to enclose the rear portion of the existing building, remove the modular units, and provide space to house the Early College program.

October 12th Board Meeting – Work Session – Todd Murphy (Action)

Superintendent Murphy asked the Board how they would like to structure the October meeting, specifically regarding the work session on school improvement plans. The Board agreed that the October 12 meeting schedule will be as follows:

- **5:00–6:00 p.m.** – Work Session with Principals
- **6:00–6:30 p.m.** – Dinner
- **6:30 p.m.** – Regular Board Meeting
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III. OLD BUSINESS

None

IV. NEW BUSINESS

Social Media Litigation – Todd Murphy (Action)

Superintendent Murphy reminded the Board that the district had been approached by a law firm regarding participation in a class-action lawsuit against social media companies. Mr. Murphy directed the Board's attention to the information included in their Board packets, which had been provided by School Board Attorney Chris Campbell. Attorney Campbell had informed the Board of the class-action lawsuit involving social media companies and noted that several North Carolina school districts had joined the litigation. He recommended that the Board consider the matter and vote at the September Board meeting regarding whether to participate in the lawsuit. Mr. Campbell emphasized that his firm

is not involved in the litigation and would not receive any compensation; that the attorneys involved believe a settlement this winter is very likely; that he could not predict what recovery, if any, the Board may receive; and that several school boards are considering participation in the litigation due to concerns regarding the impact of social media on students.

Following discussion of the matter and additional information provided by Attorney John Henning, the Board expressed its desire to join the litigation. Chairman Ashworth called for a motion to join the Social Media Litigation. Mr. Stich made a motion to join the Social Media Litigation. The motion was seconded by Ms. Page. The motion was approved by a vote of 7-0.

V. INFORMATION

September Head Start Policy Council Minutes
September Preschool Monthly Report
September Pre-K Financial Report
September Monthly Financial Report
September Credit Card Report

NCSBA OFFERED OPTIONAL BOARD TRAINING

2026/2027 NCSBA Video Library
Southwest Leadership Education and Development - September 22, 2026 - Kannapolis, NC
Fall Law Conference - October 14, 2026 - Asheville, NC
2026 NCSBA Annual Conference - November 9, 2026 - Greensboro, NC
2027 NCSBA Annual Conference - November 15, 2027 - Greensboro, NC

VI. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

VII. CLOSED SESSION

Closed Session

At 7:29 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. Allen. 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 8:11 pm, Ms. Jackson made a motion to return to open session. Ms. Gibbs seconded the motion. The motion carried 7-0.

Chairman 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. Mr. Stich made the motion to approve the recommendations of the Superintendent and the Human Resource Specialist. Ms. Page seconded the motion. The motion carried 7-0.

Information:

Name	Position	School	
Michelle Bowman	EC Teacher	PCHS	Resigned
Matthew Dellinger	CTE Teacher	PCMS	Resigned
Katherine Geisler	Teacher Assistant	PCES	Resigned
Kayla Heath	Cafeteria Assistant	PCMS	Resigned
Evelyn McMahan	Cafeteria Assistant	PCMS	Resigned
Savanna Cashion	EC Teacher Assistant	PCHS	Resigned
Danielle Jolley	Teacher Assistant	PCES	Transferred from Pre-K to Kindergarten
Joshua Trejo	Transferring to CTE Digital Art	PCMS	
Marquez Williams	Substitute	PCHS	Adding Substitute to list of duties

Action:

Name	Position	School	Hometown	College	Licensure Area	Years Exp
Colleen Dolan	PreK TA-Floater	PCES	Columbus	University of Montana Western	Early Childhood Ed	2
Laura Sprinkle	PEAK Afterschool Director	All	Columbus	N/A	N/A	N/A
Kelsey Kasprzyk	Peak Group Leader	PCES	Tryon	N/A	N/A	N/A
Kaydence McKinney	Peak Group Leader	TES	Columbus	N/A	N/A	N/A
Melinda Cutshall	Food Service Aide	SVE	Mill Spring	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hannah Rimer	Tutor/Sub	TES	Columbus	Western	Elementary Ed	5

Claudia Clark	Substitute	Pre-K	Tryon	Gardner Web	Education	14
Anne Pierce	Substitute	All	Campobello	N/A	N/A	N/A
Kimberly Fish Ruppe	Substitute	All	Bostic	Limestone	Education	4

VII. ADJOURNMENT

With no more business to come before the Board, Mr. Ashworth declared the meeting adjourned at 8:12 pm.

Mr. Ashworth, Board Chair

Todd Murphy, Board Secretary
TM/RC