

Board of Education Meeting
September 8, 2025
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

Student Presentation – Saluda Elementary

Students from Ms. Rackley's class at Saluda Elementary delivered a presentation on their A+ Force and Motion projects, which they have been developing this the school year. The Board expressed its appreciation to the students for their hard work and informative presentation.

Special Recognition – CTE West Regional Teacher of the Year – Ashley Gilbert

Ashley Gilbert, Agriculture Teacher at Polk County High School was honored as the West Regional Teacher of the Year by the North Carolina Agriculture Teachers Association.

Approval of August 11, 2025 Board Minutes (Action)

Chairman Ashworth called the Board's attention to a copy of the August 11, 2025 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. Ms. Page seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

I. INSTRUCTIONAL

Overnight Field Trip Requests –Todd Murphy (Action)

Superintendent Murphy requested approval from the Board to approve the overnight PCHS SkillsUSA Field Trip. Chairman Ashworth called for a motion to approve the presented overnight field trip request. Ms. Gibbs made a motion to approve the request and it was seconded by Ms. Jackson. The overnight field trip request for the PCHS SkillsUSA Field Trip was approved 7-0.

Accountability Update - Angela Dufford (Information)

Accountability & Testing Coordinator, Angela Dufford, presented an accountability update to the Board. She presented the 2024-2025 testing report that was attached to the electronic agenda. Ms. Dufford noted that mathematics is the area most in need of improvement. Superintendent Murphy affirmed the district will continue making strides for improvement.

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 2025-2026. Ms. Page made a motion to approve the Federal Consolidated Application Plans for 2025-2026 and it was seconded by Mr. Covil. The motion was approved 7-0.

District's Occupational Therapist Pay Scale –Tonya Odel (Information)

Human Resources Specialist Tonya Odel, in collaboration with the Occupational Therapist Pay Scale Committee, has reached out to neighboring school districts to gather data for the development of an Occupational Therapist pay scale. The committee's findings will be presented to the Board for review and approval at a future meeting.

Superintendent Update- Todd Murphy (Information)

Superintendent Murphy provided an update on the positive start to the academic year, noting a current district-wide enrollment of 2,115 students.

Thanks to funding from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant, the district is able to offer a total of 272 afterschool program slots across all schools. Current student participation by school is as follows:

- Polk County High School: 21
- Polk County Middle School: 30
- Polk Central Elementary: 56
- Saluda Elementary: 38
- Sunny View Elementary: 36
- Tryon Elementary: 62

The grant is also supporting 47 afterschool staff positions across the district.

Superintendent Murphy emphasized that the afterschool programs not only offer essential academic support, but also provide a safe, structured environment for students who require care during the afternoon hours.

II. ADMINISTRATIVE

Insurance Premium Rates- Debbie Lovelace (Information)

Ms. Lovelace spoke briefly regarding the upcoming changes to the 2026 insurance premiums. The new rate deductions will begin in December to take effect for January coverage.

Travel Reimbursements Rates- Debbie Love (Action)

Ms. Lovelace informed the Board that the standard IRS mileage reimbursement rate for 2025 is \$0.70 per mile. The district's current reimbursement rate of \$0.585 per mile has remained unchanged since 2022. Following a brief discussion, Chairman Ashworth called for a motion to adopt the updated mileage rate in alignment with the current IRS standard effective immediately. Ms. Jackson moved to approve the rate increase, and the motion was seconded by Ms. Gibbs. The motion was unanimously approved by a vote of 7-0.

Cafeteria Benefits RFP – Debbie Lovelace (Information)

Ms. Lovelace announced that a Request for Proposal (RFP) will be issued for the district's cafeteria plan. She will update the board with the findings upon completion of the process.

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.

III. OLD BUSINESS

None

IV. NEW BUSINESS

None

V. INFORMATION

August Preschool Monthly Report
August Pre-K Financial Report
August Monthly Financial Report
August Credit Card Report

NCSBA OFFERED OPTIONAL BOARD TRAINING

2025/2026 NCSBA Video Library
WRESA Leadership Education and Training-9/19/25 at WRESA
2025 COSSBA Federal Advocacy Conference-September 7-9 in Washington, D.C.
Best Practices for Governance Teams-September 26, 2025-Raleigh, NC
2025 Fall Law Conference-October 8-10, 2025 in Asheville
Annual Conference-November 12-14, 2025 in Greensboro

VI. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

VII. CLOSED SESSION

Closed Session

At 7:39 PM Mr. Ashworth entertained a motion to go into closed session for the purposes of discussing personnel. Mr. Stich made the motion to go into closed session and it was seconded by Ms. Page. 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 7:52 pm, Mr. Stich made a motion to return to open session. Ms. Gibbs 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. Gibbs made the motion to approve the recommendations of the Superintendent and the Human Resource Specialist. Ms. Jackson and Ms. Allen seconded the motion. The motion carried 7-0.

Information:

Name	Position	School	
Alexis McCraw	Group Leader After School	Polk Central	Resigned
Anna Russell	Preschool Assistant	Tryon	Resigned
Kaye Hall	Bus Driver	Tryon	Resigned
Anita Bowyer	Custodial	Polk Central	Resigned
Lauren Harris	Group Leader After School	Sunny View	Resigned
Amy Allman	OCS Teacher Assistant	PCHS	Resigned

Action:

Name	Position	School	Hometown	College	Licensure Area	Years Exp
Sarah Cantrell	English Teacher	PCHS	Mill Spring	Gardner Webb	English 9-12	9
Amy Allman	OCS Teacher Assistant	PCHS	Columbus	Blue Ridge Community	N/A	N/A
Lindsey Dotson	EC Teacher Assistant	PCMS	Mill Spring	N/A	N/A	N/A
Shanon Rosa	Teacher Assistant	PCHS	Tryon	N/A	N/A	N/A
Clowie Upton	Preschool Assistant	Tryon	Lake Lure	N/A	N/A	1
Vinca Hebbard	Assistant Site Director	Polk Central	Tryon	Isothermal	N/A	N/A

Danae Roos	Assistant Site Director	Sunny View	Lake Lure	N/A	N/A	N/A
Bonnie Bailey	Group Leader	Sunny View	Mill Spring	N/A	N/A	N/A
Timothy Bradley	Group Leader	Polk Central	Mill Spring	Isothermal	N/A	N/A
James Odel	Group Leader	Sunny View	Mill Spring	N/A	N/A	N/A

Superintendent Murphy informed the board that he wanted to reapply for the NCDPI Needs-Based Grant, following last year's unsuccessful application. While we were not awarded funding previously, reapplying presents no downside and offers significant potential benefit. If awarded, the grant would support the construction of a Career and Technical Education (CTE) facility. The goal of this facility would be to provide workforce training in areas such as Emergency Medical Services (EMS), firefighting, and other high-demand professions that are critical to the needs of Polk County.

The Board has recommended proceeding with the grant application.

Superintendent Murphy provided an update on the Cell Phone Policy, noting that its implementation is going very well. A meeting has been scheduled with representatives from Yondr to explore their Phone-Free Program and lockable pouch system as a potential solution for managing phone use at Polk County High School and Polk County Early College.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

With no more business to come before the Board, Mr. Ashworth declared the meeting adjourned at 7:59 pm.

Mr. Ashworth, Board Chair

Todd Murphy, Board Secretary
TM/TO/RC